

**100 years
for socialism**

Journal of The Socialist Party — Companion Party of The World Socialist Movement

Socialist Standard

www.worldsocialism.org

September 2004 Vol.100 No. 1201 £1



A century of socialist journalism

Genocide in Sudan?

A letter to the FBU

The Greasy Pole in 1904

Democracy as a way of life

The antidote to the capitalist media

Contents

Fifty years ago	2
Editorial	3
A century in print <i>DAP looks back at the content of the Socialist Standard over the last 100 years . . .</i>	5
A design for life <i>. . . and Keith Scholey considers the production and design changes that have taken place.</i>	8
Greasy Pole <i>Looking forward to 2004 – in 1904</i>	10
More words . . . <i>Paul Bennett reviews five important pamphlets.</i>	12
Letters	13
Democracy as a way of life <i>Socialism and democracy are indivisible.</i>	14
Some black sheep <i>The fates of five founder members.</i>	16
Same old answers <i>State capitalism – are there still ‘Any Questions?’</i>	19
A letter to the Fire Brigades’ Union <i>We urge the FBU not to repeat the mistakes of a century ago.</i>	19
Darfur: not yet a genocide? <i>When exploitation turns to slaughter.</i>	20
Book reviews <i>Bad Company: The strange cult of the CEO</i> <i>Anarchism</i>	21
Meetings	23
Obituaries <i>George Meddemen</i> <i>Daphne Cottis</i>	23
Voice From the Back	24

Fifty years ago

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS . . .

The style of the STANDARD then, as now, owed to two principal sources: the sociological textbooks of the time and popular journalism. From the latter it drew a peculiar Joe Miller waggishness that was part of the stock-in-trade of successful newspaper columnists, easier to exemplify than describe. Thus, the Editorial Committee apologizing for a writer who had not made himself clear to a correspondent: “He developed what he calls his style by studying a burr-walnut piano case in foggy weather”. A debate with a suffragette was irresistible, and its report was resplendent with quips about “ye gallant knight Anderson” and “the poor girl”. Perhaps the acme of this sort of wit was with a highly dramatic poem which had the refrain:

“Go! Reckon your dead by your forges red,
And in factories where we spin;
If blood be the price of your cursed wealth,
By Christ! We have paid in full.”

The poem was called “Gawd Struth We Have.”

The writers on economics, socialist theory and political issues put forth their subject-matter lucidly and without frills or ambiguities; style which came naturally through close acquaintance with Engels, Kautsky, Plechanov and the other classical exponents of Marxism. The popularisation of academic and technical subjects influenced later writers, and is still doing so – “science for the citizen” has made its mark. Just as on the platform, the people addressed are more widely informed and less concerned with theoretical questions. That does not mean, however, that the modern writer – or speaker – may neglect theory; it means that he must apply it more widely in a world with wider horizons.

And so it goes on; the business of persuading people to think straight, because that is what the Socialist wants. Words are our weapons. Words, words, words . . .

(From an article by R. Coster,
Socialist Standard, September 1954)

The challenge of a better future

On Sunday, 12 June 1904, a meeting was held at Printers' Hall, Bartlett's Passage, Fetter Lane, London. It had been called by a Provisional Committee of ten and was attended by some 140 or so people who then formed the Socialist Party of Great Britain. These were men and women who were determined to uphold socialist principles and work without diversion for a clearly defined socialist objective. As former members of the Social Democratic Federation they had become deeply dissatisfied with its increasingly reformist policies. They had also become victims of its undemocratic practices. Given their socialist analysis of problems and their commitment to organise unswervingly for a new society based on common ownership, democratic control and production solely for needs, circumstances gave them no option but to form the new party.

In September 1904, these founder members of the SPGB produced the first issue of the *Socialist Standard*. Its editorial began, "Having inaugurated The Socialist Party of Great Britain, we find it indispensable that we should have a journal in which our views may be expressed." We now look back on a remarkable record of monthly issues over 100 years. For over a century the *Socialist Standard* has met its monthly deadline without fail.

The *Socialist Standard* has applied a consistent socialist analysis to events and trends as they unfolded throughout the century. This set these in a clear socialist perspective, reinforcing time and again the argument that only socialism could solve the problems caused by the capitalist system. In this way the *Socialist Standard* has also kept alive the hopes of all people for a world of peace, well-being and happiness. This has been a great tribute to the men and women who set out on this socialist course of "sane and sound pronouncement", and of course to all those who have since taken up their example.

Although regrets at past failures of the working class to change society are of little practical use, it is both instructive and relevant to the present to recall the political arguments which were decisive in setting the 20th century on its disaster-filled course. This happened because the ideas that won the day amongst the various parties of the working class movement, at the beginning of the 20th century, held no possibility that the problems of the great majority of people could be solved.

The great reformist hope was that having won the vote, at least for working men, an elected working class government would be in political and economic control. Then, through a programme of reforms, nationalisation, measures to tax the rich out of

existence and, in unity with the trades unions fighting on the industrial front, such a government would raise the living standards of all workers. Some took the view that such a programme would introduce a new socialist society.

As these ideas gained ground and went on to contribute to the founding of the Labour Party, the socialists who broke away from the Social Democratic Federation understood very well that the hopes placed in these reformist policies were illusory. They applied socialist theory in a way that gave them a full understanding of the economic limitations of political action within the capitalist system.

An article, "A Plain Statement", in the February 1905 edition of the *Socialist Standard* said the following:

"The Socialist Party of Great Britain presents the plain issue. They say the ownership of a few people of the means of life is the cause of working class misery. They say the only remedy lies in the common ownership and control (ownership and control by the whole people) of these means of life. Which is socialism.

Therefore we say that those who know that socialism alone is the remedy and yet make alliances with those who are not Socialists, with the object of realising certain reforms that cannot, even if realised, benefit the workers, are betraying the cause of labour. They may have the best of intentions but the result is the same. By their work they are delaying the time when the workers will see the truth and apply the remedy. To that extent they are keeping the power of the capitalist strong."

The writer could not anticipate that this would need to be repeated in the columns of the *Socialist Standard* throughout the next century. To say the least this has been unfortunate, but any disappointment that we may feel cannot offset the continuing truth and predictive

The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next Executive Committee meeting will be on Saturday 4th September at 2pm at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee at:

The Socialist Party,
52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN
Tel: 020 7622 3811
Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org
Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

power of what he wrote. Since then, despite social reform and the policies of Labour and Social Democratic governments the capitalist system still rules our lives. More and more people struggle to live within the wage labour/capital relationship; more people produce goods for profit. There is a greater pool of capital still being accumulated from the exploitation of workers than ever before. Capitalist states are stronger with more arms and greater powers of destruction. The capitalist system has spread as a global system. It now exists as a gigantic structure, with economic events in one place having repercussions throughout the world.

The socialists who founded the Socialist Party and its journal understood that the capitalist system operates primarily as a system of labour exploitation, profit and capital accumulation. This imposes a definite framework of economic limitations on the actions of governments, corporations and on society as a whole which cannot be evaded. The political consequences of this are immense; ultimately they shape our society. The idea that any government, however well-meaning or inspired by revolutionary sentiment, can replace profit and the accumulation of capital with the needs of the community as the objects of capitalist production is a misguided doctrine that has led to failure, broken promises and boundless political confusion. It has put back the clock of social progress and made the sound work of building the socialist movement more difficult.

There has been no worse example of this than the events that followed the Bolshevik takeover of power in Russia in 1917. Whatever may have been the revolutionary intentions that motivated these activists the *Socialist Standard* was very early in pointing out that in the backward economic and political conditions that existed, and particularly in the absence of a socialist working class, there was no realistic prospect for the establishment of socialism. After noting with approval the fact that having taken Russia out of the war the Bolsheviks had "stopped the slaughter", on the question of whether they had also achieved the "establishment of the social ownership of the means of life", the August 1918 *Socialist Standard* said: "Unless a mental revolution such as the world has never seen before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than history has ever recorded, the answer is 'No!'"

In July 1920 the *Socialist Standard* was already seeing the system in Russia as a state capitalist system. Whilst this was not denied by Lenin he nevertheless justified it. In April 1918 he said: "Only the development of state capitalism, only the painstaking establishment of accounting and control, only the strictest organisation and labour discipline, will lead us to socialism." This could not happen and it never did happen; it was unfortunate that this myth of a society advancing towards socialism captured the minds of many millions throughout the world.

The reality was that from the beginning, the Bolshevik leadership, first under Lenin, then under Stalin and later others, used every means of intimidation and terror to run a state capitalist system for their own power and personal advancement. This had countless victims and one of these was the language of socialism which was corrupted by its association with state oppression. Against this, it was left to the *Socialist Standard*, over the next 70 years to point out the brutal tyrannies of the Russian state-capitalist system whilst maintaining a clear idea of what socialism means.

The great and enduring contradiction of the capitalist system, which has devastating consequences on our lives and which is at the root of most of our problems, is that whilst it has developed immense powers of production, it is incapable of using them for the benefit of the whole community. By putting profits before needs, the rule of market forces, which are unpredictable in movement and direction, places the production of goods and services, on which all our lives depend, outside the control of society. Market forces serve minority interests and generate the insecurities, crises, wars and civil conflicts that shape the way we live. In line with this view that was first expressed by socialists, every government, has acted out these forces to great human cost.

The passage of time has done nothing to diminish the validity of the socialist analysis of problems. On the contrary, it has vindicated the principled stand taken by the first members of the Socialist Party in the first issue of the *Socialist Standard*, and by their successors in every issue since. But we do not rest on this case. When most parties prefer to erase their past actions from political debate, and to pretend that all options are new, for which they have new policies, socialists take the more sound view that we should address the failures of the past and learn from them. To be politically disconnected from experience and to not learn its lessons provides fertile ground in which false hopes can flourish and mistaken ideas can lead to more disaster; the dangers in this are immense.

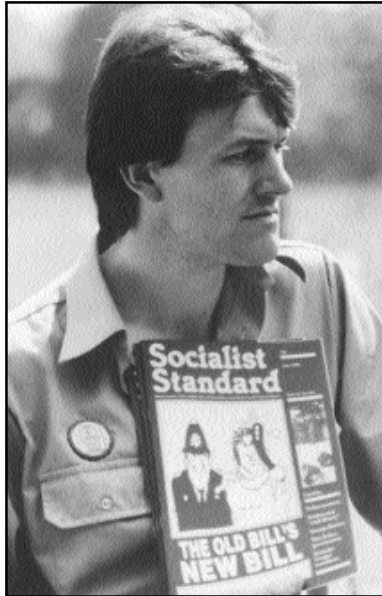
Whilst the capitalist system continues, so will the socialist analysis continue to have a timeless relevance. A democratic system organised solely for needs would bring not just a sane way to live but a world-wide celebration of all that is best in being human. This could be so easily within our grasp. There is nothing in the human make-up that prevents this from becoming a reality. We are all capable of co-operating in each other's interests.

It would be tragic indeed, and it is difficult to imagine the catastrophic circumstances in which it could happen, if one hundred years hence, a Socialist Party will find it necessary to bring out a bi-centenary edition of the *Socialist Standard*. The way to avoid this is to join in the work of organising for socialism and bring it to success. There can be no better cause.

A century in print

In September 1904, three months after the founding of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the first edition of the *Socialist Standard* appeared. It made a modest start with an ambitious declaration of future intent. The first ever editorial commented that:

“We are all members of the working class, and cannot hope that our articles will always be finely phrased, but we shall at least endeavour to lay before you on every occasion a sane and sound pronouncement on all matters affecting the welfare of the working class. What we lack in refinement of style we shall make good by the depth of our sincerity and by the truth of our principles . . . We shall, for the present, content ourselves with a monthly issue, but we are confident that the various demands upon us, by the quantity of matter at our disposal, and by the growth of our party, will necessitate in the near future, a weekly issue of our paper.”



The business of a revolutionary paper: analysing the current situation and putting the alternative.

Looking back, the writer certainly need not have been quite so bashful about the *Standard's* content as over the period since it has developed a well deserved reputation for a style of political journalism – not dissimilar in many respects to popular science writing as it developed throughout the twentieth century – which has been characterised by clarity of expression and use of vernacular language wherever possible. Whatever disagreements some of our readers may have had with us, misunderstandings based on the style in which we have put across our case have been comparatively few and far between, for while many groups on the political left have chosen to mark themselves out from their competitors more through the invention of their own particular liturgy than through the distinctiveness of their political positions, we have always done our best to say it as it is, in language readily understandable to our readership. Given the propagandistic and educational roles of the *Standard*, this has been important.

One hundred years on, and 1,200 issues later, we are still a monthly journal (the sought-after transition to weekly publication has so far eluded us) but can legitimately claim to have published without interruption ever since, being Britain's longest-running socialist political press. Given the financial travails at various points in our history – not to mention two world wars in which many of our members were sent to prison or went ‘on the run’ – this is no small achievement, sometimes brought about through huge personal sacrifice impelled by massive commitment to the cause.

Just as remarkably, considering the forthright and

direct use of language by writers for the *Standard* over the years, we have been sued only once (though admittedly threatened with it on a few more occasions than that). This action was, ironically enough, brought by a trade union – the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants –

who objected to an attack on their General Secretary, Richard Bell MP, on the front page of the August 1906 edition. When the case came to court nearly a year later, Bell was awarded a token £2 worth of damages by the Judge after our comrades Fitzgerald and Anderson had stoutly defended the case against the union's King's Counsel.

During the two world wars, the *Standard's* political stance led it into conflict with the authorities and on both occasions the consequences could have been far more serious than any likely libel action. Throughout the First World War the *Standard* largely defied the Defence of the Realm Regulations introduced in November 1914 concerning comment prejudicial to the conduct of the war, and on the advice of ‘E’ Branch of MI5, the *Standard* was prohibited by the Home Office from being sent to any destination outside the United Kingdom. In 1917 the Party's offices were raided too,

with several members questioned about their political activity. The matter had come to a head after an article for the *Standard* by Adolph Kohn had been sent from America and intercepted by the authorities there. During the Second World War, the Defence Regulations introduced in May 1940 were even more strictly upheld and the *Standard's* opposition to the conflict was expressed codedly, with no overtly anti-war articles appearing after 1940.

On only three occasions have outside agencies otherwise directly and deliberately interfered with articles due to be printed in the *Standard*. In February 1916 a printer refused to print an article on Lloyd George and the Clyde workers that our comrade Jacomb had set into type, leading to a brief explanation and an otherwise blank column. Then in March 1952 an article about the institution of the monarchy and King George VI entitled ‘The King Is Dead’ didn't appear because the compositors disagreed with its contents. The third occasion was in March 1988 when the printers (without the consent of the Editorial Committee) issued their own disclaimer at the end of an article on sectarian violence in Northern Ireland which had attacked the political gangsters of the IRA in the wake of the Enniskillen atrocity.

A matter of style

Articles in the *Standard* have always tended to reflect the Socialist Party's origins in Britain's movement of self-educated workingmen in the late nineteenth century and

early twentieth century; written by volunteers, they have exhibited a style which has relied heavily on formal definitions and logic, together with the use of statistics and quotations designed to support an approach that can typically be described as critical and polemical.

While items have always been characterised by a clarity and directness of approach, they have nevertheless evolved over the last century to reflect wider changes in the use of language and in writing style. Early articles sometimes seemed written with the intent of bludgeoning the sceptical reader into submission, and correspondents – for the *Standard* has enthusiastically opened up its correspondence pages to friend and foe alike from the outset – had to tread warily lest they incurred the wrath of a hawk-eyed Editorial Committee on the look-out for ‘unsound’ or ‘unscientific’ arguments.

The pages of the *Standard* were replete with attacks on ‘capitalist cant’, ‘quack remedies’, ‘currency cranks’, ‘labour fakirs’ and ‘apologists for reformism’ though these rhetorical and polemical pieces were typically intermingled with theoretical articles (some reprinted from Engels, Kautsky, Guesde and others) involving eloquent explanations of complex issues. Whether it was Fitzgerald on the intricacies of Marxian economics, Housley on the materialist conception of history, or Freddie Watts waxing forth like the best popular science writer in pieces like ‘Is Society An Organism?’, contributors to the *Standard* were able to translate complex arguments into accounts and propositions that were readily understandable to the readers.

This is a tradition that has been continued in the years since, both in general, theoretical articles and in pieces which have sought to apply Marxian theory to specific conditions and developments within capitalism. In the first category, various theoretical articles – particularly in the 1920s and 30s – by Robert Reynolds (‘Robertus’) and Gilbert McClatchie (‘Gilmac’) on history and the evolution of society, by Raspbridge (B.S.) on the nature of the banking system and Goldstein on the labour theory of value are amongst the finest of their kind; eloquent interpretations and expositions of complex analysis and argumentation made comprehensible to the man or woman in the street. This was a tradition which was sustained after the Second World War, but with the field of engagement widened to include ecology, psychology and discussion of theories relevant to the refutation of ‘human nature’ arguments against socialism.

Applied economics

Where writers for the *Standard* perhaps had most to contribute was in the practical application of Marxist theory to political and economic issues facing the working class. This had been a hallmark of the journal since the

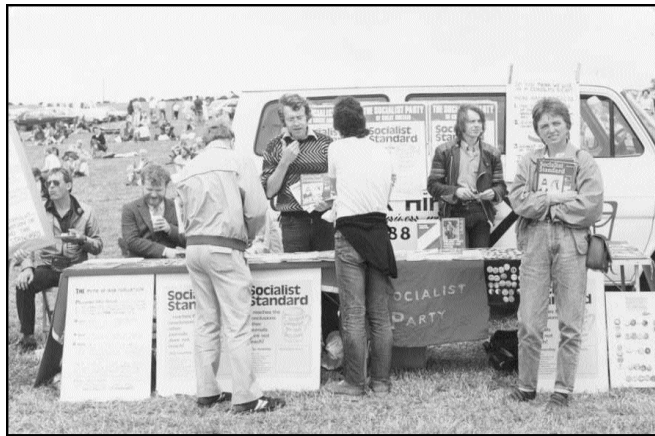
early days when, through applications of Marxian economics, writers had expounded on the reasons why taxation is not ultimately a burden on the working class but on capital, on the irrelevance of tariff reform or the concealed dangers in proposals for free maintenance for schoolchildren. Similarly, the *Standard's* analysis of the development of state capitalism in Russia and the rise of Nazism in Germany were excellent examples of the application of Marx's materialist conception of history to new issues and developments within capitalism as they confronted the working class.

Particularly with the advent of the Great Depression in the 1930s and the various political and economic proposals of the reformers of the time to tackle it, the *Standard* came into its own. Hardy (‘H’) analysed the economic crisis from the Marxian standpoint and derided the arguments of the capitalist reformers who desperately sought to save the system they supported: from the ‘social credit’ acolytes of Major Douglas through to the Gold Standard abolitionists, the advocates of higher prices and the tax reformers.

Similarly, after the war the *Standard* spent much time debunking the arguments and proposals of the supporters of John Maynard Keynes, who developed the main economic theory which underpinned the reformist political intent of the period. In a masterly series of articles over the years, Hardy and others demonstrated the flaws of Keynesian economic theory and how it would never be able to put any lasting end to unemployment and poverty within capitalism, instead merely resulting in persistently rising prices because of the excess issue of inconvertible paper currency it typically involved. These articles were not formulated solely at a theoretical level – Hardy, in particular, was an empiricist as much as a theoretician, and the attack on the dominant economic theories and practices of the post-war world was supported by detailed empirical evidence to supplement contentions borne out of Marxian theory. This was equally the case with the spread in influence of the so-called ‘monetarist’ economic doctrine from the mid 1970s when it replaced Keynesianism as the dominant theory; the *Standard* was not taken in by the elaborate claims made on its behalf and through detailed argumentation dismissed it primarily as a return to the discredited old ‘bank deposit theory of prices’ masquerading under a new name.

Social comment

The advent of the ‘consumer society’ in the 1950s saw some changing attitudes within capitalist society and the development of a new type of article in the *Standard* in response to it. This was the informed Marxist social



The Socialist Standard is the first point of contact between the Party and fellow members of our class.

commentary, focusing on lifestyle changes affecting the working class. The comprehensive education system, modern advertising, consumer credit, immigration, the growth of television and popular music were all phenomena analysed from the Marxist materialist standpoint and stylishly too, by Coster, Critchfield and others. Looking back on them now, it is hard to not be impressed by their elegance as pieces of social comment, and by their prescience and foresight at a time of rapid social change and uncertainty.

As single issue-campaigners came to the fore from the 1960s onwards (CND, squatters, feminists, Welsh and Scottish nationalists) so the *Standard* turned its attention to them and their limited visions and definitions of political success. At times it regained some of its old feistiness, but with obvious concessions to the style and language of the burgeoning youth culture of the times. Many have seen the mid-60s to early 70s as one of the *Standard's* many 'golden periods', with well-crafted articles on galloping inflation and the return of economic crisis from specialists in Marxian economics like Hardy, sitting alongside biting social comment and polemics against the 'new left' from Steele, Crump and other sixties firebrands who had been attracted to the libertarian socialist politics of the SPGB.

The modern *Standard*

From the late sixties onwards, the *Standard* has noticeably sought to increase its coverage of events outside Great Britain, in response to the ever more interconnected nature of capitalism and its development as a 'global village' with issues such as globalisation, environmentalism and capitalism's now constant state of warfare looming large for writers, particularly. The sardonic wit of contributors like Weidberg ('workers of the world – wake up!') and Coleman has also been a prominent feature and has ensured that serious socialist comment has often been supplemented by generally well-chosen humorous observations and asides.

Today's articles tend almost exclusively to have a contemporary news focus, with even theoretical pieces being linked to current events and issues within capitalist society. As in previous years, there is a balance between those that are commissioned by the editors and those that are sent in by individual writers as and when they can contribute pieces. It is pleasing to note than in recent times a number of new writers have appeared to complement those who have been contributing over long

periods, often decades.

Indeed, on this note, it would be remiss of us not to comment here on the remarkable contribution that a great many Socialist Party members have made to the *Standard* over the years, whether as designers, writers or editors. The journal's production has been helped hugely in this respect by a certain continuity of service – by way of example, when McClatchie and Hardy retired from the

Editorial Committee at the end of 1959, they had each put in just over, and just under, forty years continual service respectively. And today, two of our writers have been regularly contributing to the *Standard* for over fifty years, our comrades Alwyn Edgar (A.W.E.) and Ralph Critchfield ('Ivan'), the latter also with prolonged spells on the editorial committee. The three members of the present editorial committee have been writing for the *Standard* for around ninety years in total too!

Anniversary

To mark the one hundredth anniversary of our journal, the Socialist Party has recently published a special book. Entitled 'Socialism Or Your Money Back – Articles From the Socialist Standard 1904-2004', it is an anthology of 70 articles (with period commentaries) from the *Standard*, analysing events within capitalism over the last one hundred years as they unfolded. It is in part a tribute to the men and women who have done so much to

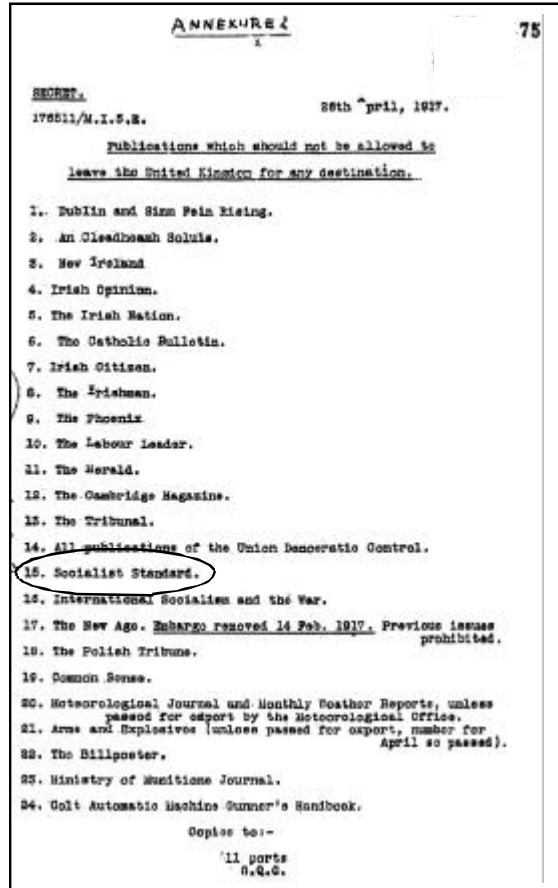
ensure that the Socialist Party has been able to make a regular and uninterrupted political intervention through our press during this time, and also an important repository of insightful commentary and socialist analysis, on issues and events from the sinking of the Titanic to the Iraq war.

The *Standard* has evolved over time and will no doubt continue to do so. It never stays still and to this end we always welcome new writers that can help us sustain and grow Britain's longest running socialist political paper. We have an important job to do, in keeping the socialist analysis of capitalism and the alternative vision of a genuinely better world before the working class, and we are always keen to encourage those who wish to help us in our fight for a better world by writing for our journal.

Finally though, a gentle warning to readers. From the January 1920 issue, but just as relevant now as then:

"Be careful how you handle the *Socialist Standard*. It is powerful stuff and is fatal to working-class political ignorance."

DAP



An MI5 order banning export of the *Socialist Standard* during WWI.

A design for life

Compared to most modern magazines and journals, the first *Socialist Standard* was huge, measuring a full 15-1/8" by 10" (38.4 cm by 25.5 cm). It was printed by Jacomb Brothers at their shop in Stratford, east London. A.E. Jacomb, the socialist half of the brothers, was one of the founder members, responsible for not only meeting the Party's printing needs but also for much other behind-the-scenes organisation. The banner at the top of the *Standard's* front page was configured in trendy art nouveau lettering. The price was just one penny for eight pages.

For the first few years perhaps the most noticeable things about the *Standard* were the full pages of 'Party Notes' and verbatim reports of Party meetings. The SS – as it used to be called for short until this was abandoned, for obvious reasons – therefore could function as a kind of newsletter for members, helping create the *esprit de corps* which has been a feature of the Party ever since. Noticeable also, although never numerous, were the adverts. Perhaps the most interesting of these was for The Stores at 127 York Road, Battersea, purchases at which would render funds to the Party. In this the influence of the Party's parent body, the Social Democratic Federation, with its boot works and bazaars, can be traced. The most familiar of the early features was 'A Look Round', a short items column partly based on newspaper snippets; a tradition which has been carried on over the decades in columns like 'Notes By the Way' and 'The Passing Show', and still evident in the current 'Voice From the Back'.

In March 1908 a new pictorial banner was introduced. This was designed by F.C. Watts, a woodcarver by trade, and depicted a rising sun surmounted, slightly awkwardly, by the Party's globe emblem. This little sketch summed up the exhilarating prospect of a "speedy termination" to capitalism which then seemed so likely. By this time many of the early features, such as the adverts, had vanished and 'Party Notes' was much reduced, to be banished to the back page to dwell with the branch directory, notices of meetings and the Declaration of Principles (which has appeared in every single issue of the *Standard*).

Subtle changes

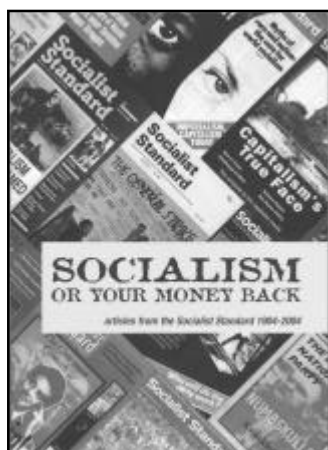
The outbreak of the First World War did not immediately bring any major changes, although with many Party members 'on the run' before long, or just dropped out of activity, filling the *Standard* became a tough job. Towards the end of the war paper rationing brought a reduction of pages from eight



A.E. Jacomb – socialist writer and first printer of the *Socialist Standard*

to four, and the pages themselves reduced in size in September 1918. This new slimmed down *Standard* in cheap paper lacked the exuberant pre-war banner, bearing instead a plain title in gothic script (incidentally very similar to the contemporary appearance of *Justice*, the SDF paper). This was more fitting for the sober Party which emerged from the war. With the new look came also the snapping of ties to Jacomb Bros and a connection made instead with R.E. Taylor and Son of Banner Street. This was to be a long relationship which lasted from 1921 until 1966.

By the beginning of the 1930s the SPGB was growing rapidly, largely as a result of the Depression. Whether or not it was because the end again seemed nigh for capitalism, the pre-war socialist sunrise returned in September 1932. Accompanying this was a new innovation – a list of contents – a useful feature which has been present for the vast majority of the period since. The Edwardian-era symbolism must have seemed quaint and anachronistic even then, for within a year a new banner with plain serif letters was introduced and which possessed a spikiness which seemed suited for a party with all barbs out in defence of Marxism against the



SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

To mark the centenary of both the Socialist Party of Great Britain (June) and the *Socialist Standard* (September) we have brought out a 300-page book, *Socialism Or Your Money Back*, made up of articles from the *Socialist Standard* from 1904 to this year.

The seventy articles provide a running commentary from a socialist perspective on the key events of the last hundred years as they happened. The two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the General Strike and the rise of Hitler are covered, as well as the civil war in Spain, Hiroshima, the politics of pop, democracy and the silicon chip, and much else.

The book will not just be of interest to socialists but also to those wanting to study the political, economic and social history of the twentieth century.

The price is £9.95. Copies can be ordered (add £2.00 for postage and packing) from: 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN (cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain").

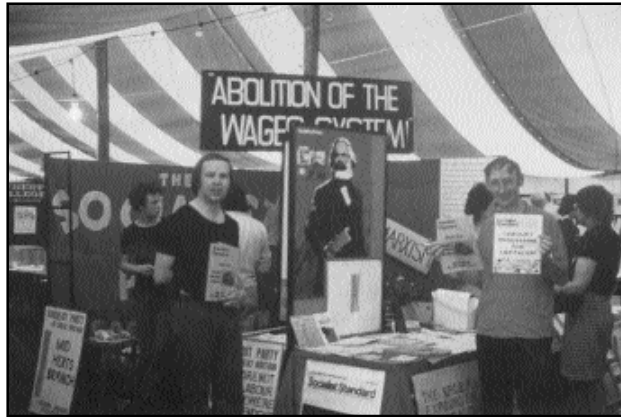
pseudo-socialist pretences of Labour and the CPGB.

Further changes came in 1939 with a completely new look, influenced by modernist advertising and design techniques. With its bold typefaces, bright-looking yellow covers, and well-spaced layout, this was in many ways an apogee for the *Standard*. It was, however, fairly short-lived. The outbreak of the Second World War instantly stripped off the *Standard's* yellow shirt and paper shortages soon put paid to the rest of the fandoodle. Indeed, by mid-1942 the *Standard* was an eight-page propaganda sheet, tightly written in a tiny typeface. Although 'peace' brought an increase in page numbers, the *Standard* stayed utilitarian in visage throughout the late 1940s. War-time problems, such as the destruction by bombing of the type and articles of the January 1941 issue, and power stoppages during the fuel crisis of early 1947, meant bringing out the *Standard* was at times a struggle, but it still came out regularly throughout the decade.

From organ to journal

Despite a few innovations, such as the introduction of cartoons, drawn by Robert Coster (Barltrop) in 1953, the *Socialist Standard* in the 1950s was a rather conservative looking periodical and by the end of the decade it was obvious that the design needed some attention and fresh input. This was an especially vital and pressing problem given the increasing difficulty of holding outdoor meetings, which up until this time had been the Party's most important propaganda method. Therefore in 1959 the *Standard* was revamped, the first edition in May being ready for a big push during the Hackney and Bethnal Green election campaigns. As well as a spacious layout and a new banner, the introduction of photographs greatly modernised its appearance (and it became a "journal" rather than the faintly obscene "organ" it had previously been). The changes inaugurated a great period of almost constant experimentation in the design of the *Standard* which lasted throughout the 1960s. The new wave culminated in 1967-68 with a series of excellent covers professionally designed by Lionel Selwyn, who was responsible for the layout during this decade.

The early- to mid-1970s in contrast saw the *Standard* slip back to a more conservative look, even with a return to 1950s-type cartoons and non-pictorial covers for a time. But towards the end of the 1970s it once again improved in appearance, culminating in yet another makeover in June 1979, just in time for the 75th anniversary of the Party. With internal pictures, a professional layout and an adjustment to true A4 size, this defined what became the '80s layout, with – by the mid-80s – a highly professional design, with innovative



The 75th Anniversary Exhibition for the Socialist Standard, in 1979

typefaces and striking front covers together with increased use of specialist columns, most notably the TV Review.

From the beginning of the 90s, typesetting – or rather typing to diskette – was taken over by Party members, thereby reducing production costs. In fact, for a period the *Standard* was also printed at the Party's Head office from plates prepared by an outside firm. Further format alterations came in 1994 when the design and printing was taken over by Nigel McCullough from Belfast, who introduced a very slick and distinctive look for the *Standard*. The layout and design is still done by Party members. The turn of the century saw the appearance of an on-line version, at www.worldsocialism.org/spgb, where an increasing number read it, and the introduction of Peter Rigg's ever apposite cartoon "Free Lunch".

Today, the *Socialist Standard* has the distinction of being the longest running party political journal in the country. Despite world wars, depression, recession and slump, it has appeared every month without fail for 100 years. For an ordinary publication this would be a matter for self-congratulation. For ourselves, however, such longevity is to be regretted as we would rather have seen socialism established long since. However, we shall continue until the job is done – and a visually appealing and combative *Socialist Standard* can only aid us in that process.

KEITH SCHOLEY

Back copies of the Socialist Standard for year back to the First World War are available for purchase. Write to 52 Clapham High Street for details, with the year and month you are interested in.

Central London

**Discussion meeting
Wednesday 22nd September
8pm**

"Anarchism and Socialism"

Stan Parker and Richard Headicar will
open the discussion.

**At Head Office, 52 Clapham High St.
(Nearest tube: Clapham North)**

Contact:

Central London Branch Secretary
52 Clapham High St London SW4 7UN
email: spgb@worldsocialism.org
phone: 020 7622 3811

Greasy Pole

Looking forward to 2004
September 1904

Almost nine years have passed since Oscar Wilde was sent to prison at the Old Bailey for the offence of sodomy. He and his friends were not alone in their disappointment at the sentence because the judge, before waving the famous dramatist down to the Court cells, gave voice to his frustration that he was restricted to a sentence of only two years hard labour which was, he snarled, "totally inadequate" for "the worst case I have ever tried . . . a circle of extensive corruption of the most hideous kind among young men".

The judge did not bother himself that to criminalise homosexuality as "hideous corruption" is a symptom of capitalism's inhumanity. Nor did he muse on the corruption that was partly responsible for Wilde being in the dock before him. The dismay among Wilde's supporters at his sentence was aggravated by the well-founded suspicion that he had been sacrificed – arrested, charged, tried, sentenced – to divert attention from somebody else. It was obvious that the beneficiary must have been someone the authorities were anxious to protect from exposure. Among what was then known as the uranian community it was an open secret that Lord Rosebery was as active a homosexual as Wilde. In fact the Marquess of Queensbury, who had obsessively persecuted Wilde in retaliation for his relationship with his son, had made it quite clear that if Wilde was not prosecuted he, Queensbury, would ruin Rosebery by denouncing him as another sodomite.

Suicidal

The nub of the problem was that Rosebery was not just a peer of the realm and therefore an aristocrat who was supposed nobly to set an example to the rest of us, but the Prime Minister in the Liberal government. Before Wilde's trial the blackmailing pressure from Queensbury was so fierce that Rosebery – said to be brilliant, erratic and unpredictable but obviously also a mite fragile – was fearful and depressed to the point of being suicidal. Soon after Wilde was safely behind the cell door at Pentonville and Queensbury's fire had been quenched, Rosebery's health miraculously improved and, benefiting from the corruption endemic in capitalist politics, he could continue contentedly being Prime Minister along with his other distractions. It was his bad luck that he did not enjoy coincidental good health and high office for long because a month after Wilde's trial the Liberal government was out of power.

There would not have been the same concerns about the man who – a couple of years ago – succeeded to the job of Prime Minister, once held so tenuously by Rosebery. Arthur Balfour is another with a reputation for unusual brilliance but he has never shown the slightest interest in attaching himself to a female or a male. So on that score, if not on others which should be of more interest to the working class, he is safe. Balfour is known

as an aloof, self-satisfied man who is more comfortable in discussion of remote philosophical and religious abstractions – the less relevant the better – than in confronting the real world of poverty, disease, international conflicts. At Cambridge he spent what was called a "scandalous" amount of time watching or playing tennis and industriously built a reputation for idleness and for intolerance of anything he assessed as ignorance – but which may have been the very reality which he protected himself from.

Contemptuous

To behave like that it helps to be an aristocrat with the proper blue-blooded connections. Balfour went to Eton, his father and his grandfather were Conservative MPs and, even more to the point, he was the nephew of the late Lord Salisbury, who succeeded to the Prime Ministership when Rosebery's Liberal government was defeated in 1895. Some years before that Salisbury, while taking an avuncular lunch with Balfour, broached the subject of politics as a career for him along with watching tennis and taking part in pointless arguments. At the time it just so happened that there was a vacancy at Hertford, a parliamentary constituency where the selection of the MP was controlled by Salisbury because he owned the place. Balfour regards politics as a kind of amusing game – clearly overlooking the unamusing, devastating effect which political decisions can have on the lives of the useful, non-aristocratic, working people in society. He was sure he could fit in attending the Commons with his other strenuous activities so yes, he would give it a try. In due course he was elected as the Honourable Member for Hertford. Thus Balfour was another who has reason to be grateful for the power of political corruption.

That when it comes to the ruling class blood is thicker than water was demonstrated in 1878 when Salisbury, who was then Foreign Secretary, made Balfour his private secretary. In 1885 Balfour was elected as MP for East Manchester; a week spent among his supporters there he described as "loathsome but necessary", which perhaps meant that he had to spend some time in the slums of Ancoats or Salford. This contemptuous attitude, which he usually managed to hide beneath a mask of elaborate courtesy, surfaced again when he sneered at the rising suburban and provincial Tories "with their vineries and pineries" and in his comment that an industrialist who had what he considered "civilised" tastes was "a rare avis". All of this has been ammunition for those critics of Balfour who see him as a pretend politician who makes elegant speeches which do not contribute much to the question at issue – not that it mattered if they did. It fits in with the impression that he is an MP simply because it was the thing for a blue-blooded Old Etonian to do.

Poverty

But in spite of his affected langour and detachment Balfour has handled some weighty ministries, so that not too many of his Conservative colleagues were offended when, as his uncle Salisbury ceased to be Prime Minister in 1902, Balfour moved smoothly into the job. It will not be the last time a politician has cloaked their rampant ambition beneath a show of disinterest. Edward VII had just been crowned and the South African War, with its nasty shocks for the British military, was at an end. In some senses it was an abrasive conjunction of events as the crowning of a new king encouraged some of the customarily stupid jingoism at a time when the Boer farmers had uncovered evidence suggestive that the global power of the British ruling class is in decline. On the Continent Germany is overtaking Britain, for example accounting for about 22 percent of world production of steel compared to Britain's 15 percent. In manufacture the respective shares are 17 percent and 19 percent. How long will it be, before British capitalism regards Germany as a competitor too threatening to be assuaged by mere diplomacy? We are told that the Entente Cordiale, settled in April this year, is an instrument for peace as it re-assures France that there is a buffer against the ambitions of Germany. Another way of putting this is that the treaty lays out some of the issues over which the next war will be fought.

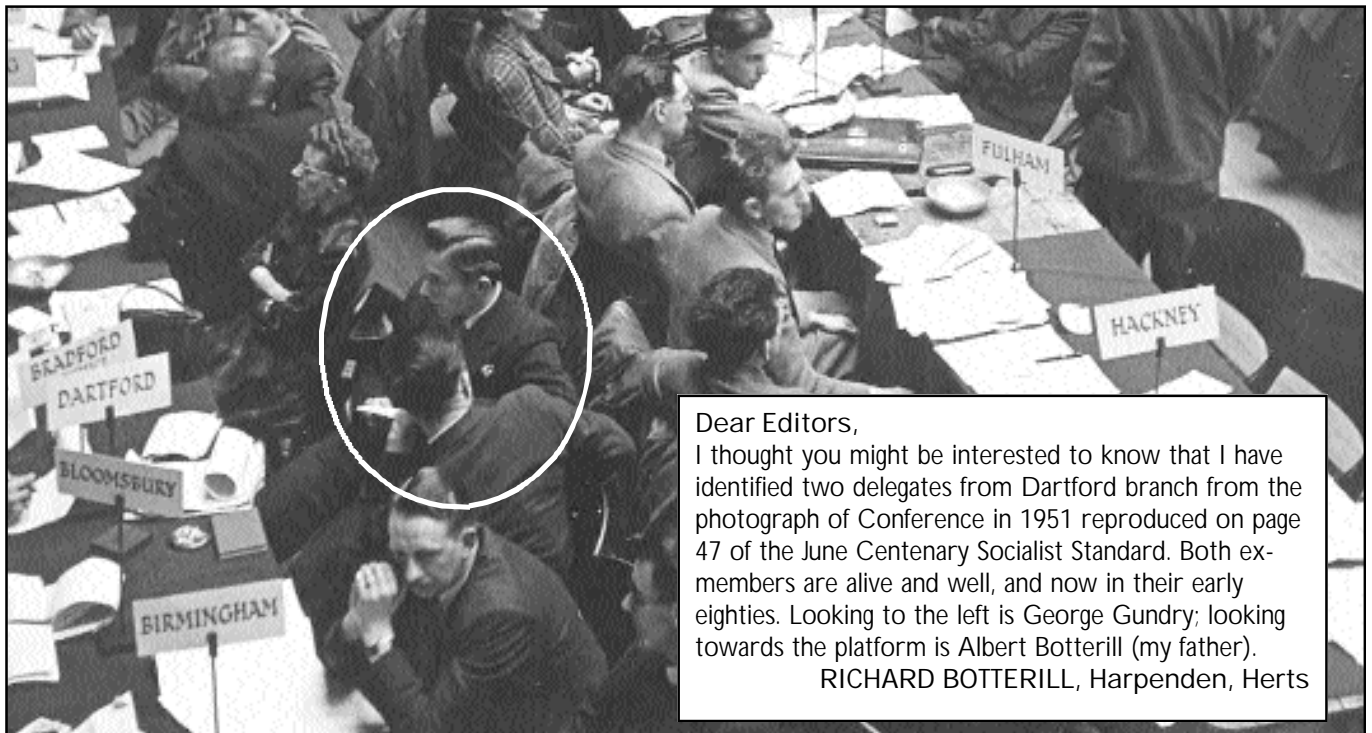
At home the work of Rowntree and Booth has illuminated the fact that the workers who cheered the coronation of the new king often did so from the depths

of poverty. Booth's study of the people in the East End of London found about 30 percent of them living below what he set as a 'poverty line'. These are people whose means are barely sufficient for a decent independent life or, even worse, are actually insufficient for that life. Rowntree's report on the people of York came to much the same conclusion; nearly ten percent of the people were found to be in 'primary poverty', with means insufficient to maintain merely physical efficiency, and another 18 percent are in the slightly more manageable 'secondary poverty'. Unemployment, which is an aggravating factor in poverty, stands at ten percent of the working population. These problems, with the suffering they cause to the class who produce everything but own nothing of any consequence, are the very stuff of capitalism and Balfour, for all his supposed effortless intellectualism, has been powerless to affect them.

How long will capitalism endure? If it is still here in a hundred years, what will the socialists of the year 2004 look back on? They will review a century in which millions will have died in wars or through hunger or avoidable diseases. A century in which the contrasts of riches and impoverishment remain as stark as ever. Whatever progress will be made in the technologies of communication and production will have gone to further enrich the ruling class while merely reshaping the poverty of the workers. And all of this will have been governed by political leaders notable in history for only their corruption, deceit and impotence.

IVAN

Identity parade



Dear Editors,

I thought you might be interested to know that I have identified two delegates from Dartford branch from the photograph of Conference in 1951 reproduced on page 47 of the June Centenary Socialist Standard. Both ex-members are alive and well, and now in their early eighties. Looking to the left is George Gundry; looking towards the platform is Albert Botterill (my father).

RICHARD BOTTERILL, Harpenden, Herts

More words . . .

Since it first published its *Manifesto* in 1905, the Socialist Party has produced dozens of pamphlets, as these give the chance to expound on questions at greater length than an article in the *Socialist Standard*. Pamphlets have ranged from discussions of contemporary issues to more substantial considerations of matters of theory and practice. Here we will look, in chronological order, at five which are of particular significance, dealing with religion, nationalisation and other reforms, Bolshevism and the nature of socialist society, briefly placing each of these in their political context.

In 1910, when *Socialism and Religion* was published, socialist ideas were mainly spread by outdoor meetings, the same places where religious speakers were peddling their nonsense. Hence the need for an extended statement of the materialist case against religion. It was also a time when some supposedly Marxist parties were declaring religion a private matter, on which their members could take different views. In contrast, this pamphlet stated unequivocally that socialism and religion were incompatible, first by explaining how religious ideas arose. The idea of gods developed as people worshipped a dead chief and turned his grave into a temple. Christianity grew gradually out of various other faiths: it is neatly described as "a cemetery of dead religions". Whereas science, by developing its understanding of the world, becomes more complete and systematic, religion consistently retreats in its claims as it is confronted with the real world. So many tenets once viewed as central to Christianity have come to be viewed by adherents as merely allegorical. Further, religion serves the interest of the ruling class by helping to make workers meek and submissive; by offering them salvation in the next world, it renders them more prepared to accept suffering in this. On the other hand, the religious question is secondary to the wider battle for working-class emancipation, and abolishing religion would not abolish exploitation.

The 1943 pamphlet *Family Allowances: A Socialist Analysis* was remarkable in its demonstration that an aspect of the much-vaunted welfare state would not be "an entirely unmixed blessing for the working population". The *Beveridge Report* had recommended the payment of family allowances and the government had accepted this proposal. It was widely felt that this would bolster living standards and put an end to the worst aspects of poverty, but the Party was able to show that this would not happen. This was partly on the basis that wages are the price of labour power, and, together with whatever state handouts are available, provide workers with just enough to keep their heads above water. But remarkably, a large part of the evidence for this position was taken from the words of the reformers themselves. Independent MP Eleanor Rathbone had long been a campaigner for family allowances, and the pamphlet quotes her as saying that they would involve "simply redistributing the available resources for the remuneration of the workers and so effecting a reasonable revolution". The aim, then, was to

keep the workers quiet without costing the capitalists much at all. Sixty percent of men had no dependent children, and the employers were in effect paying them for the upkeep of children they did not have, rather than just paying for the worker and their partner if any. Rathbone's solution was to fund family allowances by reducing wages in general – a very different picture from the philanthropic one usually depicted.

Among other policies for which many had high hopes in the immediate post-war period was nationalisation: the 1945 pamphlet *Nationalisation or Socialism?* argued that this idea had no connection with socialism and would do little to change the way society was run. Much space was devoted to explaining why industries were nationalised and how this suited the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. It was undertaken, for instance, when an industry that was necessary for capitalism was insufficiently profitable for its private owners, or when some group of capitalists had a monopoly and could charge exorbitant prices to their capitalist customers. Winston Churchill, for one, is quoted as follows: "There is a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds." While some earlier supporters of nationalisation had advocated simple confiscation of capitalist property by the state, the general view in the 1940s was that compensation would be paid. It was even assumed that capitalists would be given government bonds or stock and so would continue to receive a healthy rate of interest. The capitalist would thus be deprived of *control* of industry, whereas the Socialist Party had always emphasised the importance of *ownership* (as in the first clause of our Declaration of Principles). The community would not control the means of production until they

The texts of most of the Socialist Party's pamphlets, including the five mentioned here, are available from the "Downloads" section of our website:

www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

For those who don't have access to the internet copies can be printed by us for the cost of photocopying plus postage. Write for details.

Other long out-of-print pamphlets on the website and available under the same conditions are:

Socialism and Religion (1911)
Should the Working Class Support the Liberal Party? [debate] (1911)
Why Capitalism Will Not Collapse (1932)
War and the Working Class (1936)
Should Socialists Support Federal Union? [debate] (1940)
Beveridge Re-Organises Poverty (1943)
Family Allowances: A Socialist Analysis (1943)
Is Labour Government the Way to Socialism (1946)
The Racial Problem: A Socialist Analysis (1947)
Russia Since 1917 (1948)
Art, Labour and Socialism (William Morris) (1962)

were owned in common.

Russia Since 1917 (published in 1948) was unusual in consisting solely of reprints from the *Socialist Standard* rather than original material. As the preface noted, some points of detail would have been phrased differently with the benefit of hindsight, but on the whole the articles demonstrated the soundness of the Party position on Russia and Bolshevism. The earliest post-Revolution articles are remarkably cautious, noting the lack of available information (partly owing to the censorship operating under the Defence of the Realm Act). Due credit is paid to the Bolsheviks, for stopping the slaughter on the Russian front and conducting negotiations in public. Allegations of massacres by the Bolsheviks were dismissed as a tissue of lies. On the other hand, there was no mincing of words when it came to criticising them. A lengthy article from August 1918 made it clear that the Russian people were not convinced of the necessity of Socialism, though it also stated that "members of the working class took control of affairs in Russia" (note: *not* the working class as a whole). The analysis of Russia as state capitalist was first broached in July 1920, citing Lenin's support for state capitalism. Later articles endorsed the analysis of Russia as capitalist, and a remarkable review of *The Soviet Union Year-Book* (from September 1930) emphasised the staggering profits made, e.g. an average of 96 percent profit on capital invested in 1927-8. The existence of Soviet millionaires was noted, and party officials were seen as part of a privileged section of the population, though not explicitly described as a capitalist class.

The publication of *Socialism as a Practical Alternative* in 1987 reflected a feeling within the Party that more needed to be done to fill in some of the details of how a Socialist society could function, though naturally what was said was seen as a set of proposals only, and not in any way laying down the law for the future. One significant point made was the importance of decision-making in local communities. Co-operation at higher levels would also be needed, perhaps with some existing organisations being adapted to the new Socialist world. The expertise of the Food and Agricultural Organisation, for instance, could be taken over to co-ordinate world food production. But it was envisaged that, after a while, global and regional levels of organisation might give way to more local administration, though the very idea of "local" becomes harder to define in a global village. A particularly intriguing idea that is broached is that of "conservation production", which would involve the conservation of raw materials, with most being recycled and re-used. Parts of goods that were not subject to wear and tear could be made from durable materials, and only a small fraction of the materials used would be permanently lost. A useful comparison is made with gold: because it is a "precious" metal, it is hardly ever discarded, so gold mined by the early Egyptians is still in use. While this is an unusual case in commodity-based society, it could certainly be extended in a system of production for use. This pamphlet contains many other valuable ideas about how socialism could be organised.

PAUL BENNETT

List of Available Socialist Pamphlets and Books

Ecology and Socialism.....£1.00

From Capitalism to Socialism . . .
how we live and how we could live.....£1.00

**Socialism – As a Practical
Alternative**.....£1.00

**Some Aspects of Marxian
Economics**.....£1.50

How The Gods Were Made
by John Keracher.....£1.50

Marxism and Darwinism
by Anton Pannekoek.....£1.50

**How We Live and How We Might
Live**
by William Morris with a modern
assessment.....£1.50

**The Right To Be Lazy and
other articles**
by Paul Lafargue.....£2.00

Marxism Revisited.....£2.00

Socialist Principles Explained.....£2.00

The Market System Must Go!
Why Reformism Doesn't Work.....£2.75

A Socialist Life
by Heather Ball.....£3.75

All of these titles:.....£15.00

**For six or more of any publication, reduce
total price by a third.**

**All pamphlets are available from Head
Office at cover prices**

Prices include post and packaging. Please make all cheques and postal orders payable to:
The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Democracy as a way of life

Unfortunately, democracy is one of those carelessly uttered words (like freedom, peace, love, justice etc.) that is constantly misused and prone to expedient adaptation. HL Mencken, for instance, mischievously declared: "Adultery is democracy applied to marriage." Politically, however, its misuse is contemptuously cynical and rarely funny, so it is especially important for socialists to be as precise as possible when explaining it. For us it is the heartbeat of every activity and has been so ever since the party was founded in 1904.

Perhaps the best conventional definition is to be found in *Chambers*: "A form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people collectively, and is administered by them or officers appointed by them." Replace the word government with society, or better still community – a word without what the Austrian philosopher, Martin Buber described as "the attendant structural poverty of society" – and, give or take a semantic quibble or two, it moves some way towards a basic definition that even socialists would find acceptable.

William Morris wrote very well about democracy and every place visited in his book about a future society (*News From Nowhere*) is veritably imbued with the democratic spirit. Points of view are exchanged in a charming, tough, frequently highly opinionated manner. Yet every discussion, as it should, displaying a deep and mutual regard for the right to differ. Here is a passage in which he explains the mechanism of democracy most beautifully:

"Said I 'So you settle these differences, great and small, by the will of the majority, I suppose?'
'Certainly,' said he; 'How else could we settle them? You see in matters which are merely personal which do not affect the welfare of the community – how a man shall dress, what he shall eat and drink, what he shall write and read, and so forth – there can be no difference of opinion, and everybody does as he pleases. But when the matter is of interest to the whole community, and the doing or not doing something affects everybody, the majority must have their way . . . in a society of men who are free and equal – the apparent majority is the real majority, and the others, as I have hinted before, know too well to obstruct from mere pigheadedness; especially as they have had plenty of opportunity of putting forward their side of the question.'"

Morris was well aware that democracy could not be left to mature on its own like a good wine but needs to breathe out of the bottle, kept fresh by continual practice. This is something we endeavour to do in the Socialist Party but we cannot honestly claim that it is easy to get everything right. Since we assert that a stateless society is a viable proposition and recognise democracy as essential to its function, we are obliged to pursue it now to better understand its complexities and the difficulties that can

arise. Unquestionably, even in the most enlightened community, because it would depend upon the cooperation of free (and potentially awkward) individuals, minorities would sometimes experience dissatisfaction and frustration. Giving rise to what most anarchists darkly refer to as "the tyranny of the majority". To deny the possibility, indeed, probably the likelihood of this problem, would be absurdly complacent and Socialists do not do so.

In a letter to *Commonweal* (the journal of the Socialist League) on 5 May 1889, Morris wryly observed: ". . . experience shows us that wherever a dozen thoughtful men shall meet together there will be twelve different opinions on any subject, which is not a dry matter of fact . . . and often on that too . . ."; an observation the accuracy of which may be swiftly confirmed whenever Socialists repair to the pub.

Anarchists, of course, might contend that in democracy the majority actually constitutes authority and Morris concedes that, for all it is worth, it might be so defined. But when free, uncoerced human beings voluntarily enter into a process where inclusive, open and (if necessary) prolonged debate concludes with a majority decision – to describe it as authoritative is the logic of the absurd. To call it tyranny, a word redolent with connotations of oppression and cruelty, makes a mockery of language. Later, in the same letter, a dagger thrust is delivered: "For if freedom means the assertion of the advisability or possibility of an individual man doing what he pleases in all circumstances, this is an absolute negation of society . . ."

Morris readily acknowledges that a number of anarchists might well add a qualification: that in pursuing their own freedom they would feel obliged to consider the effect of their actions upon the freedom of others. Such an acknowledgement clearly recognises that it is not sufficient to regard democracy as a purely administrative, decision making, regulatory mechanism. Crucially, its very essence of principled and graceful conciliation needs to pervade the everyday interaction between members of any community aspiring to live co-operatively. One day, perhaps, it may no longer be considered necessary to use any. One day, perhaps, it may no longer be considered important to use any particular word to describe such eminently reasonable behaviour.

In another splendidly succinct passage in *News From Nowhere*, Morris explains that leaders have no role in a democratic society: ". . . a man no more needs an elaborate system of government, with its army, navy and police, to force him to give way to the will of his equals, that he wants a similar machinery to make him understand that his head and a stone wall cannot occupy the same space at the same moment." Sadly, the idea that *homo sapiens* might co-exist harmoniously, without any kind of government or leaders – not to be confused with the essential administration of things – is dismissed by most people as impossible.

When Socialists speak of a community based upon co-operation, of free access, of democratic administration but the absence of government; a society where the fundamental needs of every human being could be met; often the listener will nod sagely and sigh: "Yes, that would be very nice but it's impossible – it's against human nature." Yet such an exchange though seemingly fruitless is frequently redeemed when, oddly enough, the sage immediately excludes himself from this gloomy conclusion, protesting: "It's not me, it's the other people who would fail."

A famous piece of graffiti states "Democracy is too good to share with just anybody." It makes us smile but makes a sinister assumption which is all too prevalent – an elitist assumption – that most human beings are congenitally incapable of becoming free enough to co-exist without coercion. That only a select few will ever be able to develop their potential to the required level. This pernicious notion has been carefully nurtured by all those who control the system, whatever name they choose to call themselves. For capitalist 'democracy' depends on containing that potential.

In order to do so they rigorously maintain a callous, exploitative and hierarchical system based on domination and privilege. By means of increasing propaganda and economic control, the self-belief of most of the population is seriously undermined. Reluctant to assert themselves, the subservient majority seek security through conformity, mistakenly assuming that they lack the power to change things. An unhealthy situation largely accepted not only as 'normal' but also immutable and inducing a condition of political acquiescence; for which the ruling powers are extremely grateful.

Since the only possible basis for creating an enduring, truly democratic, community is through the conscious choice of strong, independent, politically aware individuals, it might seem to be, at best, a distant prospect; but it need not be. Thankfully, though, the shared capacity of human beings to develop their conscious potential may become dormant but it can never be eradicated. Our present predicament was perfectly expressed by Thoreau, who wrote: "millions are awake . . . but only one in a million is

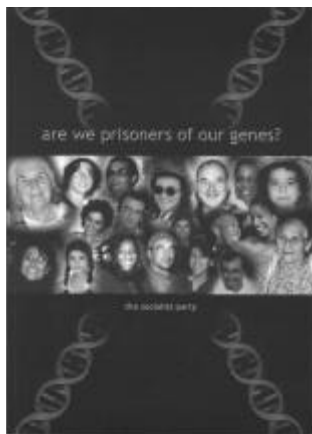
awake enough . . . We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake . . . by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us even in our soundest sleep."

Like all Socialists Morris was confident that this reawakening was within our grasp, once the last great illusion of our powerlessness had been overcome. In his lecture *The Society of the Future*, he said: "Therefore my ideal of the society of the future is first of all freedom . . ., the shaking off the slavish dependence, not on other men, but on artificial systems . . ." And later: "First you must be free, and next you must learn to take pleasure in all details of life; which, indeed, will be necessary for you, because, since others will be free you will have to do your own work."

One of the most pernicious untruths ever perpetrated is that there is some kind of unbridgeable chasm between independence and co-operation. Socialists are right to emphasise the significant determining factors of our social and political environment but also to reject the discredited notion of absolute determinism. Democracy, far from being an impossible concept, is something – unconsciously – we frequently exercise. In the relationship we have with our families, friends and colleagues; in the common courtesies we regularly show to one another; in the underlying decency of the behaviour of most human beings. A concept far more practical and sensible than the lunatic world of market manipulation and state control that presently masquerades as reality.

Socialism and democracy are complementary; more than complementary – indivisible. In the sense that a democratic society can only result from free, conscious choice, it is a by-product of freedom. But in both a social and a political context freedom can only exist as a by-product of democracy. Whichever way round it is will not matter, when it is thriving in that community yet to be established, where though it still rains, we still quarrel and new problems confront us every day – we have learned to accept that, just occasionally, we may be wrong but rejoice in the fact that tomorrow we retain the incontrovertible right to be wrong again.

RICHARD HEADICAR



ARE WE PRISONERS OF OUR GENES?

A new pamphlet in book form (50 pages) refuting the arguments of the biological and genetic determinists that a socialist society could not work "because it's against human nature". Shows how recent advances in the science of genetics have confirmed that humans are "genetically programmed" to be able to adopt a wide range of learned behaviours; that behavioural versatility and flexibility is a key feature of human biological nature; and that humans could therefore live in a peaceful, non-hierarchical, co-operative society of common ownership and democratic control.

Price £4 or, by post, £4.75. Six copies by post £19. Cheques should be made payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" and sent to:
52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Some black sheep

What have a Labour member of the House of Lords, a President of the TUC, a member of the Army Council of the IRA, a Communist Party journalist, a Syndicalist pamphleteer, and a Tory mayor and magistrate have in common?

Answer: this was the subsequent fate of six of the 140 or so present at the meeting on 12 June 1904 which set up the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Obviously, we are not proud of what these particular founding members became, but it does at least show that the meeting did have some significance even from a non-socialist point of view. And, since more is known about the lives of these six individuals than for most of the others who set up the SPGB, their political trajectory before and after 1904 can give some idea of the sort of people involved and of political developments in the first half of the last century

The Labour Lord

The future Labour Lord was Valentine McEntee. Born in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) south of Dublin in 1871, the son of a doctor from the Protestant minority, he was orphaned at an early age and was apprenticed as a carpenter. He was an early member of the Irish Socialist Republican Party which had been founded, largely on the initiative of James Connolly, in 1896 as the Irish equivalent of the SDF. In 1899, like many Irish workers, he emigrated to America, to New York, but within a year returned to Europe, but to London not Dublin. He joined the SDF and was also the secretary and chairman of the Walthamstow branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.

At the inaugural meeting of the SPGB he moved that the name of the new party be "The Socialist Party of Great Britain and Ireland" but his motion only obtained six votes, presumably because the others felt that workers in Ireland should organise their own socialist party. His membership was not to last long since in December 1904 he was nominated by his union as a potential parliamentary candidate, which would have meant him standing for the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labour Party. Called to account for this, which would of course have been contrary to the SPGB's principles, he was eventually asked to resign and did so in February 1905.

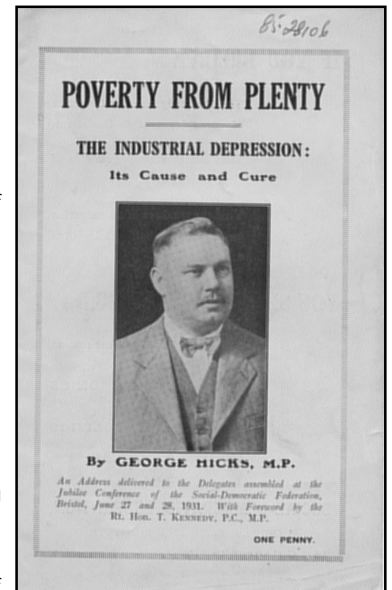
After that he rejoined the SDF and began his career as a budding Labour politician. In 1908 he was an (unsuccessful) candidate for Walthamstow council. In 1909 he self-published a short pamphlet entitled *Socialism Explained*. This was a general criticism of capitalism but went out of its way to claim that socialism "is neither pro nor anti-Christian" and was supposedly supported by "ministers of the Gospel of all denominations".

In 1920 he was finally elected to Walthamstow Council and in 1922 as Labour MP for Walthamstow West. Defeated in 1924 he was re-elected in 1929 and remained an MP till he retired in 1950. In 1951 he was made Baron McEntee of Walthamstow. He died in 1953.

The leftwing Trade Union leader

George Hicks was also to become a Labour MP, for East Woolwich from 1931 to 1950, but it was as a leftwing trade union leader at the time of the 1926 General Strike that he has a place in working-class history.

He was born in 1879 in Venham Dean, near Andover, in Hampshire where his father was a builder. In 1904 he was working as a bricklayer and (like a number of



other founder-members) an active member of the Operative Bricklayers Society. The records show that he resigned in March 1905 but rejoined in December 1908, resigning again a few years later as his trade union career took off. In 1912 he was appointed a national organiser of the OBS. By 1919 he was its General Secretary and President of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives. In 1921, having successfully seen through the amalgamation of this federation into a single union, he became the first general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, a post he was to occupy for the next twenty years. As such he was elected a member of the General Council of the TUC.

In 1925 he was one of a group of leftwing trade union leaders who went to Moscow where they agreed to set up an Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee. Stalin and the Russian government had an interest in this as they wanted to build up mass support in countries like Britain against military action to invade Russia, but it is difficult to see what was the advantage for the trade union movement; no doubt the trade union leaders involved, including Hicks, mistakenly felt that what existed in Russia was some sort of workers' regime. When the general strike occurred in Britain the following year, the leftwing trade union leaders on the Anglo-Russian Committee were unable to prevent the majority on the TUC General Council betraying the miners. Trotsky saw this as a heaven-sent stick with which to try to beat Stalin for relying on "left lackeys of imperialism" such as "Purcell, Hicks and other traitors". But Trotsky, who by this time was on his way out, had clearly lost touch with reality, wanting to "orient the working class toward a general strike and an armed insurrection in the course of a war". Hicks, whose turn it was to be TUC President in 1927-28, survived. Trotsky did not.

Hicks rejoined the reconstituted SDF, now affiliated to

the Labour Party, and in 1931, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its founding, was invited to give the keynote address. This was later published as a pamphlet *Poverty from Plenty. The Industrial Depression: Its Cause and Cure*. He began: "its cause is capitalism: its cure is Socialism". Although his analysis was rather too underconsumptionist, it did show some evidence of his passage through the SPGB.

In 1941 he became a junior minister – Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Works – in the war-time coalition government, with as his parliamentary private secretary none other than the future Lord McEntee. He died in 1954.

The Communist Party hack



When the Communist Party of Great Britain was founded in July 1920 among the founding members was Thomas (T. A.) Jackson. Born in Clerkenwell, North London, in 1879, he left school at 13 to be apprenticed as, like his father, a compositor. He joined the SDF in 1900. In his autobiography *Solo Trumpet*, published in

1953, he claimed to have been only marginally involved with the SPGB, which he doesn't mention by name simply referring to some mysterious "impossibilist" (in his original manuscript he had written "leftist") group. The records show, however, that he was a very active member for nearly five years, being on the committee that drafted the Declaration of Principles, speaking outdoors and indoors, writing articles, serving on the executive committee and even acting for a short while as General Secretary (and he married another founder member, "Miss K. Hawkins").

These activities resulted in him having difficulty in finding a job in his trade and, in 1909, as he frankly told some Party members at the time, he decided to sell his speaking abilities to other propagandist groups in order to survive. He thus ended up joining the ILP but without really believing in what they stood for. When he moved to Leeds he got a job speaking for the Secularists. Later he was a freelance speaker, depending on his audience putting money in his hat.

During the war he was able to find employment as a storeman. By its end he had joined the SLP and it was as a member of its pro-Bolshevik wing, which was one of the constituent organisations that set up the CPGB, that he became a founder of that party. For the rest of his life he was a paid writer and journalist for the CP and its papers the *Sunday Worker* and then the *Daily Worker*. In the 1920s

he was in fact one of the leading figures in the CP, editing its first weekly journal, *The Communist*, and a member of its central committee and executive committee. In 1929, when Stalin ordered the parties in the Comintern to "turn left", he was one of the leaders who were removed as "rightists". He remained a CP member, but only as a journalist and writer. As such he wrote numerous articles and a number of books, but none of them showed the slightest evidence of anything he had learned while in the SPGB, not surprising for someone who declared that he had come "to see Marx and Engels through the spectacles provided by Lenin and Leninism". Quite the worst was a long turgid book on *Dialectics* (1936), pretentiously subtitled "The logic of Marxism, and its critics: an essay in exploration", which regurgitated Lenin's ideas on philosophy. He wrote a nationalist history of Ireland, *Ireland Her Own*, for which he dishonestly allowed himself to be billed as a "Protestant Nationalist" (when his connection with Ireland was very tenuous). He also wrote a book on Dickens and other literary subjects. He died in 1955.

The Tory Mayor

The strangest case is that of Jack Kent. Prior to joining the SPGB, he had been a prominent member of the SDF, serving on its national executive, writing in its journal *Justice* and organising its activities. As such he was probably the most high-profile SDF member to have gone over to the SPGB. Born in Lambeth, in South London, in 1870, in 1904 he was working as a clerk at the head office of Whitbreads, the brewers. In the elections for the Party's 1905 Executive Committee he topped the poll; he was an outdoor speaker and indoor lecturer, wrote a regular column in the *Socialist Standard*, organised speakers' classes, and in 1907 was the Party's treasurer. He resigned in 1908. He had been promoted at work to departmental manager and was able to afford to move to the then up-market west London suburb of Acton. Here he turned his coat completely, helping to form an organisation called the "Constitutionalists" whose aims were "to uphold the Constitution, advocate a Consolidated Empire, to oppose Socialistic legislation, to propagate Tariff Reform, and to contest Municipal elections". As this outfit ran street-corner meetings, no doubt the skills he had acquired in the SDF and the SPGB proved invaluable. In 1912, after sitting on the local Coronation Committee, he was elected a member of Acton Council. From then on it was downhill all the way. Joining the Acton Volunteers to serve British capitalism (if only on the streets of Acton rather than in the trenches of Northern France), he was chairman of the local Conservative and Unionist Association in 1918, a magistrate in 1920, Mayor of Acton in 1922-23, and a Middlesex County Councillor. At the time of his death in 1945 he was chairman of the local magistrates bench as well as of the local Tory Party. Why did he turn? Initially at least, probably for the same reason as Jackson: to earn a better living. Yet further proof of how unfree workers are under capitalism and its wages system, forced by economic circumstances to compromise their views.

The Syndicalist pamphleteer

One of the youngest founder members of the SPGB was Ernest Allen, or E. J. B. Allen as he was known. Born near Oxford in 1884 the son of a butcher, he had joined the SDF there when only 16, later moving to London where he played an active role in the "impossibilist revolt" within the SDF. A speaker and writer, he was particularly interested in the trade union question. The early SPGB had not yet worked out a fixed policy on this and Allen was one of those who favoured the setting up of a socialist union in opposition to the existing trade unions based on the sectional interests of their members. At the party's first annual conference in 1905 he moved that as soon as the party had attained 5000 members it should set up a socialist union. There was no seconder.

In 1906 a series of special party meetings were held at which the matter was thrashed out. Many members were hostile to the existing unions because of their non-socialist nature and their association with moves to set up a reformist Labour party. In the event no agreement could be reached and the position was left as it had been before: that SPGB members could be members of the existing ones (as many of the founder-members had been, McEntee and Hicks for instance), supporting any action of theirs on sound class lines and opposing all actions on unsound lines. Although the votes were close, and despite the subsequent myth put about by later opponents (starting with the Labour activist and historian G. D. H. Cole), the SPGB never took up an anti trade union position. Ironically, the SLP, which Allen was to join for a while, accused the SPGB of being pro-trade union! Before the debate within the SPGB on the trade union question was over, Allen had joined an organisation called the "Advocate of Industrial Unionism", whose aim was to set up in Britain the equivalent of the IWW in North America. As the SPGB did not regard the IWW as a socialist organisation he resigned. In the years that followed Allen passed through all the variant positions associated with those who advocated "socialist industrial unionism" to overthrow capitalism: from holding that this should be complemented by political action at the ballot box (the SLP position), through arguing that industrial action alone to "take and hold" the means of production would be sufficient (the anarcho-syndicalist position, expressed in his 1909 pamphlet *Revolutionary Unionism*), and then ending up as a propagandist for Tom Mann's Industrial Syndicalist Education League which advocated industrial action for reformist ends too.

In 1912 he emigrated to New Zealand where he continued his syndicalist activity. His pamphlet was reprinted, and for a while he was president of the General Labourers Union in Auckland. When the war came he supported it, including conscription. This destroyed for ever his reputation as any sort of revolutionary. After the war he ended up as a supporter of the NZ Labour Party and later of the leftwing breakaway party set up by ex-Labour MP John A. Lee for whose *Weekly* he wrote articles. He also wrote and spoke for the NZ Rationalist Association. He died in 1945.

The IRA man

Con (Cornelius) Lehane, who was the Party's General Secretary for the first two years of its existence, was born in Cork and, like Valentine McEntee, had been a member of the Irish Socialist Republican Party before moving to England and transferring to the SDF. He worked as a clerk and later trained to be, and became, a solicitor. In school, as part of the Gaelic revival, he had learnt Irish which he spoke fluently, ending one of his contributions to the *Socialist Standard*, in the Irish spelling of the time, "Saoghal fada dho! – Conchubhar". It was in fact through militant Irish nationalism that he came to socialism. However, it was not this that led to him leaving the SPGB. Yet again, it was an issue related to the trade union question.

Lehane was on the wing of the Party which (unlike another former ISRP member, James Connolly, who was a founder member of the SLP in Britain) didn't think much of the so-called "economic power" of the working class and insisted that socialists should concentrate on getting the working class to first win control of political power, i.e. to expropriate the capitalist class politically so as to be in a position to then expropriate them economically. He fell out with the Party because he felt that the Executive Committee was not taking a tough enough attitude towards industrial unionists who had joined the Party. To protest against this, in 1906, the Islington branch, of which he was a member, suspended all propaganda activities and got itself expelled for dereliction of duty. After his expulsion Lehane published a couple of pamphlets attacking the SPGB for having gone off the rails.

Ironically, he was next heard of as a supporter of Jim Larkin, the leader of the ITGWU who favoured syndicalist tactics. It is not clear when he reverted to his original Irish republicanism, perhaps when he was in America during the First World War. In any event, during the 1930s he was a member of the Army Council of the IRA, which earned him an 18-month jail sentence in 1935 for sedition after the Council issued a statement promising "maximum support" for a strike of Dublin transport workers. After his release he left the IRA and, together with former IRA Chief of Staff, Sean MacBride, and others was of a founder-member in 1940 of the leftwing republican party, Clann na Poblachta. In 1948 he was elected a Clann member of the Dail for Dublin. Following this election, in which it had won 10 seats, the CnP joined in an anti-Fianna Fail coalition government. So, ironically for a one-time "impossibilist" who had advocated political power for the sole purpose of achieving socialism, he ended up as a supporter of an openly capitalist government. He lost his seat in the 1951 general election.

ADAM BUICK

Correction

In the article "Siberian Capitalism" in the August issue it was printed, with regard to Norilsk in the opening paragraph, that "Before 1955, there was nothing there except a few reindeer and reindeer-hunters". The date should have been 1935.

A letter to the Fire Brigades' Union

Dear General Secretary,

At its meeting of 3rd July 2004 our Executive Committee asked me to write to you to express our welcome of your union's recent decision to reverse your historic mistake of affiliating to the Labour Party.

For nearly 100 years the Socialist Party has held a clear and consistent position that trade unions and political parties need to remain separate. We have considered it bizarre that trade unionists in public sector unions should hand over their dues money to their, effective, political employers. Feeding the hand that beat them.

We have observed that trade unions need freedom to manoeuvre and represent the interests of the membership – distinct groups within the working class. This freedom of manoeuvre means getting the best deal for their members within capitalism, often as against the general policy of a political party, which has to at least attempt to represent the general interest of its constituency. Political parties and trade unions only harm each other by shackling themselves to one another.

In the case of the Labour Party in Britain, it is clear that there have been numerous clashes between themselves and the Unions. The Attlee government used troops to smash a dock-workers strike. Wilson's government floundered over the refusal of the unions to accept the 'In Place of Strife' income controls policy. Your own union members were

branded traitors and threatened with legislation to deprive them of their freedom to strike in your recent dispute.

This is not caused by individual wickedness of Labour ministers, but by the hard logic of administering capitalism. The same hard logic that saw Labour governments tear up railways and close down more pits than the Tories ever did. Capitalism is founded on the principle of no profit no production, and if a government is to keep capitalism running, it must obey this hard and fast law.

We thus wish to express our hope that your union will not seek to affiliate with any other political party, and most specifically, not try to recreate the Old Labour disaster that has blighted the workers movement for more than a hundred years. We hope you will use all your union's resources and funds to defend your members' interests, rather than those of your political employers.

We further hope that your members will come to understand that any resolution of a pay-deal within capitalism means their continued exploitation by the tiny capitalist class, and that their best interest lies in joining their fellow workers in a movement with the express and single aim of "the abolition of the wages system" and its replacement with common ownership and the free association of producers.

Yours for the World Socialism,

Bill Martin (Acting General Secretary).

Same old answers

On Saturday 3 July, the lunchtime edition of 'Any Questions' on BBC Radio 4, that doyen of the Left Arthur Scargill made a return appearance onto the national stage. In the light of the recent experiences of the Left here and around the world, might he have revised his world outlook? Would the failure of Keynes, the rise of Thatcher and Reagan, the defeat of the miners' strike, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of New Labour and numerous attempts to get his Socialist Labour Party elected, cause this once colossus of the Left to think a little wider about society?

Arthur's lack of an understanding of our capitalist world was displayed when he called for Mr Bush and Mr Blair to be in the dock with the tyrant Saddam. He imagines that workers could, under his leadership, provide enough pressure to force capitalists in the USA to put their own man, Bush, on trial for dancing to their own tune.

Next, in answer to a question posed on the ex-Sainsbury Boss, Peter Davis' £2m bonus that forced him out, Arthur declared he would, presumably if he were to become Prime Minister, nationalise Sainsbury's, Tesco M & S and all the banks etc, etc and use the profits for the good of the workers and pensioners.

Here Arthur, like Tony Benn, George Galloway, Tommy Sheridan and the rest of the left, has learned nothing from the failures of both Keynes in the West and the Bolsheviks in the East. Both groups in a similar way, the latter, slightly more

extreme than the former, thought that they could make capitalism work in a national-centric arena for the workers and call the result: 'Socialism In One Country'.

The left work to accomplish a compromise, as proposed by Keynes, with the ideology of the wages system which exploits human labour for profit and places a monetary value on that labour and its products (as commodities). An ideology which fosters the creed of competition and contest, which leads to human estrangement, brings first squabbles among us then violence and ends with war and death. An ideology which will deny the human race the talents of all the humans as many are blighted and stunted by a life of miserable wage labour producing useless and cheating products for market and in duplication 100 times over. An ideology which will preserve the existing partition of humans into economic units (countries or regions) governed by leaders who will seek to protect their power and interests, which are different from the workers, through the rule of law and factitious process of parliamentary democracy.

Finally, Arthur called for more financial investment into the process where we, in Britain, could produce winners for the world sporting arenas. Not just one Henman, but many many Henmans, across all the sports.

I guess old king coal is still a merry old soul, in his little world of grand delusions.

WILLIAM DUNN

Darfur: not yet a genocide?

Once again the world is faced by an artificial humanitarian disaster. Once more pictures and accounts of victims of a war not of their making confront us daily. Taking advantage of the respite provided by an "interim" "peace settlement" signed in April the Government of Sudan has turned its attention to its troublesome citizens in the western region of Darfur. Killing, rape, pillage and abduction are the order of the day. The international "community" and its political leaders, while frequently condemning genocide elsewhere, have been slow to interfere for fear of jeopardising the recent ceasefire between Khartoum and its southern rebels.

As with the conflicts of the past twenty years in Sudan the situation in Darfur is not simply a bloody-minded continuation of long-standing ethnic conflict. It is part of a struggle over resources. Claims that uncontrolled rebels alone cause the mayhem are untrue. The victims are pawns in a power struggle over the distribution of the profits from oil and other resources, and the economic advancements they make possible. The exploitation of the oil reserves in the south of the country – some of which underlie the southern part of Darfur province – are leased to foreign oil companies from as far apart as Canada and China. Central government has redrawn internal boundaries so that the benefits of development are appropriated by the Northern elites through their control of the state machine. Revenue from the oil industry is now used in an attempt to repress rebellion there.

Shut out from the possibilities of social advancement in Khartoum part of the excluded ruling elite have taken advantage of local grievances in the hope of using them to topple the ruling National Islamic Front. Darfur has a history of clashing economic interests over access to water, land and grazing. The two main groups are the largely nomadic "Arab" pastoralists who herd camels or cattle, and the mainly "African" sedentary subsistence farmers. In the past these differences, both within and between groups, were worked out locally by elders of the tribes concerned. However a period of drought, increasing desertification, and subsequent large-scale population movements, have recently sharpened differences. It is these troubled waters that outside interests have begun to fish.

The government of Sudan had in the 1980s started providing weapons for militias of Arab descent (the "Jangaweed" armed horsemen) who were already in the habit of raiding both Arab and non-Arab alike in search of plunder. According to Amnesty International, the Jangaweed now "work in unison with government troops, with total impunity for their massive crimes." Crimes mainly against people taking no part in the armed rebellion.

In response to this proxy military and policing arm local tribes have now started arming and training their own defence militias. Claims and counter claims are made about supposed attempts to appropriate the best land and about supposed minority domination of the local administration in Darfur.

The ruling National Islamic Front has only a very low level of support in Darfur and has suffered defections to other parties there. In 2000 Hassan al-Turabi (then speaker of parliament in Khartoum) split with the NIF and in a bid for popular support made advances toward the majority but marginalized non-Arab population. In reaction the central government jailed al-Turabi until late last year. According to the International Crisis Group, he and others have hijacked the Darfur rebellion for their own purposes.

The manipulation of "race" and ethnicity has polarised the situation. Assertions of Arab cultural and economic superiority

have been made in order to justify their claims to greater representation at all levels of government. The uncovering of an alleged plan to establish Arab domination in Darfur backed by disaffected Islamists from outside the region has led to the mobilisation of non-Arabs. Local army opinion favoured negotiations with the rebels with the intention of reaching a political solution. This was rejected by the central government and the then-governor of North Darfur, was sacked for making the suggestion. A number of initiatives by exiled opposition leaders and others aimed at reaching a peaceful political settlement all failed.

In the meantime denial of access to Darfur has prevented international relief aid reaching those most in need and a programme of village burning has been implemented aimed at denying the poor what very little they do have. President al-Bashir has opted for a military solution: "Our priority from now on is to eliminate the rebellion . . . We will use the army, the police, the mujahedeen, the horsemen to get rid of the rebellion."

Opposition to the the government in Khartoum has, according to the recently emerged Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, coalesced around them. Their objective according to their Political Declaration issued in March, 2003 is "a united democratic Sudan on the basis of equality, complete restructuring and devolution of power, even development . . . and material prosperity for all Sudanese." A viable unity must be based on an economic and political system that addresses the uneven development in Sudan and ends "political and economic marginalisation" under "a decentralised form of government based on the right of Sudan's different regions to govern themselves autonomously through a federal or co-federal system."

To the outside world the twenty year long civil war with its death toll of an estimated two million was presented as an ethnic and religious conflict between an "Arab" and Islamic north and an "African" and Christian or animist south. As usual this picture is vastly oversimplified for ease of sound-bite presentation and consumption. Other Northern groups who are also Arab and Islamic oppose the government in Khartoum, dominated by an elite centred on the northern river provinces. In the south much of the fiercest fighting has been between nominally Christian African tribal groups forming and reforming a shifting system alliance and defections as the leaderships pursue personal gain.

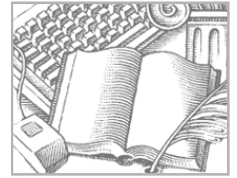
In reality the civil war concerns interests related to economic development between a politically privileged central ruling group of capitalists and a politically and economically marginalised periphery of would be capitalists. The outcome of the struggle will settle just who determines the priorities of economic development of land, water and oil. The Sudan Liberation Movement/Army were not included in the Naivasha Agreement on Wealth Sharing signed in January. This interim agreement covered the division of oil and non-oil revenues, the management of the oil sector, the monetary authority and the reconstruction of war-affected areas and the SLM/A are concerned to make sure they do not miss having a say in the carve-up.

And precisely how long the current "interim" agreements will last is unclear. On past evidence the whole process could break down and return again to a vicious resource war between organised armed groups and the consequent murder and displacement of local populations none of whom will benefit economically from any final outcome

GWYNN THOMAS

Archetypal fat cats

Book reviews



Bad Company: The Strange Cult of the CEO by Gideon Haigh. Aurum £6.99

They used to be called something like 'general manager', but nowadays the main term for the head of a big capitalist company is 'chief executive officer'. While they are nominally salaried employees, their pay as archetypal fat cats is so high that they are in fact clearly members of the capitalist class.

It was the growth of limited liability from the early nineteenth century that gave rise to the modern capitalist corporation and hence to the CEO. Firms were originally run by their founders (or their heirs), but the owners faced the debtors' prison if they went bankrupt. So few would buy shares in a company unless they could be personally involved in supervising how it was run. Limited liability meant that shareholders were no longer personally liable for any misdeeds or bankruptcies, so owners could delegate day-to-day control to a salaried manager, with a board of directors overseeing the whole thing.

As the title of this short volume suggests, the CEO has become a kind of cult figure, with in many cases a celebrity status and a pay packet to match (averaging over \$30 million a year in large US companies in 2002, for instance). Many CEOs work long hours, apparently, though of course a lot of this time is spent in luxury hotels and swanky restaurants, and they are seemingly surprised when their employees fail to share their taste for sixty-hour weeks. Their income is reinforced by the curious idea of a 'guaranteed bonus', and of a 'golden parachute', paid to them if they are sacked by the board of directors.

And what does a CEO do in return for this generous remuneration? It's clear that they do not in any real sense run the company, since big corporations are far too complicated to be managed by individuals. Rather, they concern themselves with the company as a business, often having little detailed idea about what it actually produces, and give orders that others have to implement. The impression gained from Haigh's book is that if the share price keeps rising, irrespective of any medium- or long-term benefits to the company, then shareholders and directors are happy. Reducing costs by cutting staff is a favourite, and none too sophisticated, approach.

With golden parachute in pocket, a

number of CEOs go into politics – President Bush's cabinet, for instance, is full of them, from Dick Cheney to Donald Rumsfeld. As Haigh quips, "the Bush administration is more a CEOcracy than a theocracy." The extent of this cosyng-up is fairly new, but governments do not have to be full of ex-businessmen in order to serve capitalist interests.

Haigh makes the useful point that, while workers are urged to keep wage demands in check so that they can compete with other workers (especially those in other countries), CEOs instead always want to be paid more so as to be in line with their counterparts overseas – the idea of 'internationally competitive' has different meanings for bosses than for workers. While he is well aware of the absurdities of CEO pay, he has some odd ideas about the way capitalism works. For instance, he claims that "Companies do not exist to make profits; they make profits in order to exist." He seems to think this is an important correction to a common myth, but in whichever version it just means that companies are motivated by profit-making. Nevertheless, his book does give a useful picture of what CEOs do and don't do, and of why we have no need of them and their fellow-exploiters.

PB

Anarchism by Séan M. Sheehan. Reaktion books, 192 pp. £12.95

The term "anarchism" covers a multitude of sins. From the egoism of Stirner, through the free market for small producers advocated by Proudhon, the revolutionary romanticism and posturings of Bakunin, Kropotkin's anarcho-communism, revolutionary syndicalism, to various avant-garde artists and writers.

Sheehan's book was prompted by what he sees as the unconscious re-emergence of anarchist ideas and tactics in the "anti-globalisation" protests that began in Seattle in 1999. His aim is to present anarchism to such activists, even though not an anarchist himself. The result is a readable run-through of anarchist ideas.

Marx also comes into it. Sheehan realises that there is a world of difference between Marx's ideas and what in the 20th century came to be widely regarded as "Marxism", i.e., the official doctrine of the Russian State, but which is more properly called Leninism

and which, in its various forms, stands for state capitalism rather than socialism as understood by Marx.

Sheehan in fact pleads for a rapprochement between Marxism and anarchism. Certainly, those in the Marxist tradition and a minority of anarchists – the anarcho-communists and the class-struggle anarchists – share a common analysis of capitalism as a society based on the exploitation of the working class and want to see it replaced by a classless, stateless, moneyless, wageless society. But most anarchists today are into "direct action", as an alternative to reformist electoral action, to try to get changes within capitalism and are not interested in longer-term, global change. When it comes down to it, they are just as reformist as any Labourite (or Liberal-Democrat) or Trotskyist, differing from them only in completely ruling out elections as a way to get reforms.

Marx, on the other hand, always insisted (as we do) on the need for the working class to win control of state power before attempting to change the basis of society from class ownership to common ownership. He also saw elections as one possible way of doing this. For anarchists, political action in this sense is anathema. The state must not be captured, it must be confronted. Anti-capitalists should not contest elections, they should boycott them. Confronting the state – as some of Sheehan's "anti-capitalists" tried in Genoa – is a senseless policy, especially when it's a question of a minority confronting a state supported, even if only passively, by a majority. The state will always win in such confrontations since it has much more force at its disposal.

As to the time when there will be many, many more anti-capitalists (socialists), then boycotting elections – agreed there's not much point in voting today, where all the candidates stand for the continuance of capitalism in one form or another – would also be senseless since this would be to leave state power in the hands of the pro-capitalists. Much more sensible would be to organise to take this power from them. That's the difference between Marxian socialists and anarchism, a gap which, despite Sheehan, could only be bridged by anarchists dropping their dogmatic opposition to elections and political action. Hopefully, they will.

ALB

The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways etc.) by the capitalist or master-class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

(This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the Party in 1904, its original language has been retained.)

United Kingdom

London

Central London branch. Corres: Richard Botterill, 21, Ashwell Park, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 5SG. Tel: 01582-764929.

e-mail: richardbotterill@hotmail.com

2nd Weds 8pm, Penderel's Oak,

286-288 High Holborn. WC1V 7HG

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues 8pm.

Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18.

Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

Email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk.

Pimlico: C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge St, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 6186.

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm.

Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London

SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811.

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm,

Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace

(Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4.

Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY.

Midlands

Birmingham branch. Thurs. 8pm, The Square

Peg, Corporation Street.

Tel: Ron Cook on 0121 553 1712

Northeast

Northeast branch.

Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade,

Hebburn, NE31 2AL. Tel: 0191 422 6915.

Northwest

Bolton: Tel: H. McLaughlan, 01204 844589.

Cumbria: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St,

Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.

Lancaster branch. P. Shannon, 71 Coniston

Road, Lancaster LA1 3NW.

Email: lorna@kaibosh.freemove.co.uk

Manchester branch. Two Mons a month.

Corres: P. Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy

Lane, M21 7LB Tel: 0161 860 7189.

Rochdale R. Chadwick, 01706 522365.

Southeast Manchester: Enquiries: Blanche

Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH.

Northern Ireland

Belfast. R. Montague, 151 Cavehill Road

BT15 1BL. Tel: 02890 586799.

Scotland

Ayrshire: D Trainer, 21 Manse Street,

Saltcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294 469994.

Email: derricktrainer@freeuk.com.

Dundee: Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit,

Newport-on-Tay DD6 8PX. Tel: 01382 541 643.

Edinburgh branch. See meetings page 19 for

update.

Glasgow branch. 1st & 3rd Wed, 8pm.

Community Central Hall, 304 Maryhill Rd.

Corres: Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall

Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 579

4109. Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com.

Lanarkshire: William Dunn, 39 Burn Terrace,

Eastfield, Cambuslang, Glasgow G72 7DN.

Email: spgblanarkshire@yahoo.com

West Lothian: 2nd & 4th Weds in month,

7:30-9:30pm. Lanthorn Community Centre,

Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston.

Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae,

Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian EH5 6UW.

Tel: 01506 462 359

South/Southeast/Southwest

Bournemouth and East Dorset:

Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole

BH16 5RP. Tel: 01202 632769

Brighton: Corres: c/o 52 Clapham High

Street, London. SW4 7UN.

Bristol: Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol

BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 951 1199.

Cambridge: Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby

Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel:

01223 570292.

Canterbury: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal

Kent. CT14 6AB.

Luton: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive LU2 7LP.

Portsmouth: Dan Read, tel 07880803673 or

email mgoo_oioioi@hotmail.com

Redruth: Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas,

Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1OB.

Tel: 01209 219287.

Wales

Cardiff and district John James. 67 Romilly Park

Road, Barry, CF62 6RR. Tel: 01446 405 636.

Swansea branch 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian

Church, High St (next to Argos).

Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well St,

Wauan Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: 01792 643 624.

Yorkshire

Doncaster: F Edwards. Tel: 01302 530 454.

Huddersfield: Richard Rainford, 28 Armitage

Rd, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield, W Yorks.

HD4 7PD

Hull: Keith Scholey. Tel: 01482 444651.

Skipton: R Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth,

Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: 01756

752621.

World Socialist Movement

WSM Companion Parties

World Socialist Party (New Zealand):

PO Box 1929, Auckland N 1. New Zealand

World Socialist Party of the United States:

PO Box 440247, Boston MA 02144. USA

Email: wspboston@mindspring.com

Socialist Party of Canada/ Parti Socialiste du Canada:

PO Box 4280, Victoria BC V8X 3X8. Canada

Email: SPC@iname.com

International Contacts:

AFRICA

Gambia: World of Free Access, c/o 21

Dobson St, Banjul.

Kenya: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428,

Nairobi.

Namibia: Anthony Amugongo, PO Box 1502,

Oshakati.

Swaziland: Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981,

Manzini

Uganda: Socialist Club, PO Box 217, Kabale.

EUROPE

Denmark: Graham C. Taylor, Spobjergvej 24,

DK-8220 Brabrand.

Email: grahamt@sol.dk.

Germany: Norbert. Email: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Netherlands: David Steele, 27 Meidoorn-

straat, 2225 SJ, Katwyk ZH.

Norway: Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

Meetings

All our meetings are free
and open to everyone

Edinburgh

**Edinburgh Branch meet the
1st Thursday of the month at a
new venue.**

Check website for venue updates
subject to change:

www.geocities.com/edinburghbranch

**The Forest Cafe, 3 Bristo
Place, Edinburgh**

Contact: J.Moir 10 Park Ave.
Bilston, Roslin, Lothian EH25 9SD
tel: 0131 440 0995
email: JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk

West London

**Tuesday 21 September,
8pm**

WILL THERE BE TOO MANY PENSIONERS?

**Discussion on this pseudo-issue
opened by Adam Buick**

Committee Room
Chiswick Town Hall

Heathfield Terrace, W4
(Nearest Tube: Chiswick Park)

West Lothian

**Edinburgh Branch's West
Lothian Socialist Discussion
Group**

**The Lanthorn, Kennilworth
Rise, Dedridge, Livingston
2nd and 4th Wednesdays each
month**

**Wednesday 8th September
"Socialism or your money
back"**

An examination of how a free access
will work in practice. Is there a plan B?
Do we need one? Is there a plan at all?

**Wednesday 22nd September
"Art and Labour in Capitalism
and Socialism"**

A look at past and contemporary
mores with some indiscrete
conclusions.

These discussion meetings are
lively, short intros with plenty of
feedback from visitors and members
alike.

All welcome – admission free.

Manchester

**Monday 27 September,
8 pm**

CHANGING THE WORLD

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill,
City Centre

Ramble

**A COUNTRY WALK IN THE
HERTFORD AREA**

Meet at Hertford North
railway station.

Sunday, September 12th, 11.00am

Contact: Vincent Otter
07905-791638.

Obituaries

George Meddemmen

We are saddened to have to report the death at the end of June, at the age of 84, of our comrade George Meddemmen. He was born in Camberwell, South London, in 1920 and joined the old Bloomsbury branch in 1947. In later years he was a member of Central Branch living in Rayleigh, Essex. Comrade Meddemmen taught art and design and much of his contribution to the party was in this field, designing for instance posters and the front covers and inside illustrations of the pamphlets on war, Ireland and the miners' strike we published in the 1980s. Asked last year to record his reminiscences he wrote: "I was on demob leave in 1946 after six year war 'service' in the artillery (a number of my works, painted during the Italian campaign, are in the archives of the War Museum) and thanks to Tony Turner in Hyde Park, I learned of the party and joined. Apart from my artwork, I've done little of note for the cause. My dizzy heights were reached in the 50s, when I chaired

one of the Party's Sunday evening public meetings in a T. U club in Gt. Newport St, W1. (Those meetings were very well attended, before TV gripped so many people's bottoms.)" Which shows that being a soldier is not a bar to later being receptive to socialist ideas

Daphne Cottis

We are sorry to also have to report the death in June of comrade Daphne Cottis of Southend who originally joined the Party – in Southend – in 1944. Older and not-so-old members will recall that she often represented Southend branch at Conference, together with her husband Harold (who died three years ago), as well as volunteering to run the literature stall that is always set up on such occasions and maintaining a *Socialist Standard* round locally. She was also a keen supporter of Southend United football club and for many years acted as a steward at their home matches.

Voice from the back

An oil business

It is not just socialists who point out that the present conflict in the Middle East has a basis in the need for oil in modern capitalism. John Chapman, who was a former assistant secretary in the British civil service from 1963-96, expressed similar views in the *Guardian* (28 July). "Saddam controlled a country at the centre of the Gulf, a region with a quarter of world oil production in 2003, and containing more than 60 percent of the world's known reserves. With 115bn barrels of oil reserves, and perhaps as much again in the 90 percent of the country not explored, Iraq has capacity second only to Saudi Arabia. The US in contrast, is the world's largest net importer of oil. Last year the US Department of energy forecast that imports will cover 70 percent of domestic demand by 2025. By invading Iraq, Bush has taken over the Iraq oil fields, and persuaded the UN to lift production limits imposed after the Kuwait war. Production may rise to 3m barrels and about double 2002 levels." It is surely no accident that the Bush administration is heavily backed by western oil giants, is it?

Another Labour triumph

"The gap between rich and poor has widened since Tony Blair took office, and social class and ethnic background still influence heavily an individual's life chances, a report by the Institute of Public Policy Research, a centre-left

think-tank, says" *Times* (2 August). Is there anybody out there who still imagines that the Labour Party has got anything to do with socialism?

A wake up call

The news that HSBC, Britain's largest bank, rang up record six-month profits of £5.2bn at the same time that they are in the process of cutting 7,500 jobs, of which 4,000 are being transferred to low-wage call and processing centres in Asia brought forth a burst of righteous indignation from a top bank trade union official. "Yesterday's figures drew condemnation from unions representing HSBC's employees. Rob O'Neill, Unifi's National Secretary, said: "We don't know how HSBC's directors can sleep at night. Instead of rewarding staff for their part in making HSBC as profitable as it is, the bank is slashing jobs in the UK and exporting more and more work to Asia in an attempt to cut costs" *Independent* (3 August). We imagine the directors and shareholders will sleep just fine, it is O'Neill who should wake up. The purpose of all capitalist concerns is to make as big a profit as possible, one of the ways they do that is by cutting costs. If O'Neill imagines the purpose of capitalism is to reward workers he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

Crime and punishment (1)

A piece of summary "justice" that even Labour's tough guy David Blunkett

might balk at occurred recently in Russia. "A passenger riding the Moscow Metro without a 20p ticket has been shot by a policeman. The unnamed 29-year-old has been charged with attempted murder. Labourer Rustam Balbekov was shot in the mouth and doctors say he is lucky to be alive . . . The bullet smashed his jaw and went through his neck. Witnesses heard the sergeant say: 'Do you want to get shot?' before he opened fire after getting no response" *Sky News* (4 August). Capitalism just gets madder and madder!

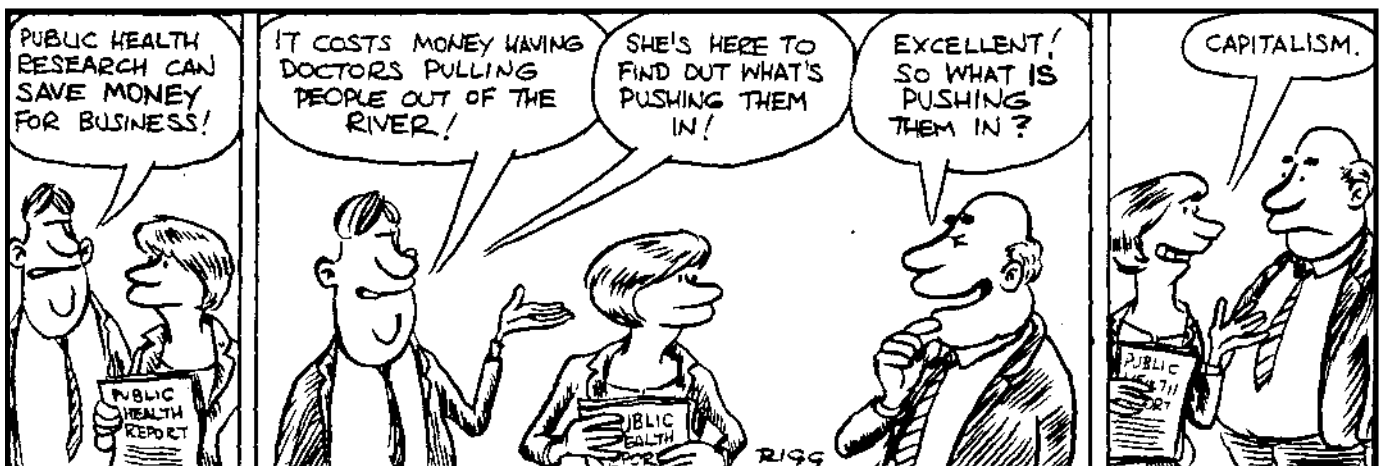
Crime and punishment (2)

The dreadful carnage keeps increasing in Britain's women prisons. "Officers in Holloway prison are cutting down five women a day from nooses, the *Guardian* has learned, and recently saved one inmate six times in a single night. But these women are the lucky ones. Already this year 11 female prisoners in English and Welsh prisons have apparently taken their own lives and campaigners fear that this year will see the greatest number of female jail deaths since records began . . . At the heart of the problem is overcrowding. The female prison population, like that of men, has soared in the past 10 years from 1,811 in 1994 to 4,475 at the start of last month" *Guardian* (9 August). What a society capitalism has become. Shoplifters committing suicide!

Meetings All our meetings are free and open to the public. See page 23

Free lunch

by Rigg



ISSN 0037 8259

Published and printed by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN