

■ in depth

■ in touch

■ insight



9 770037 825006

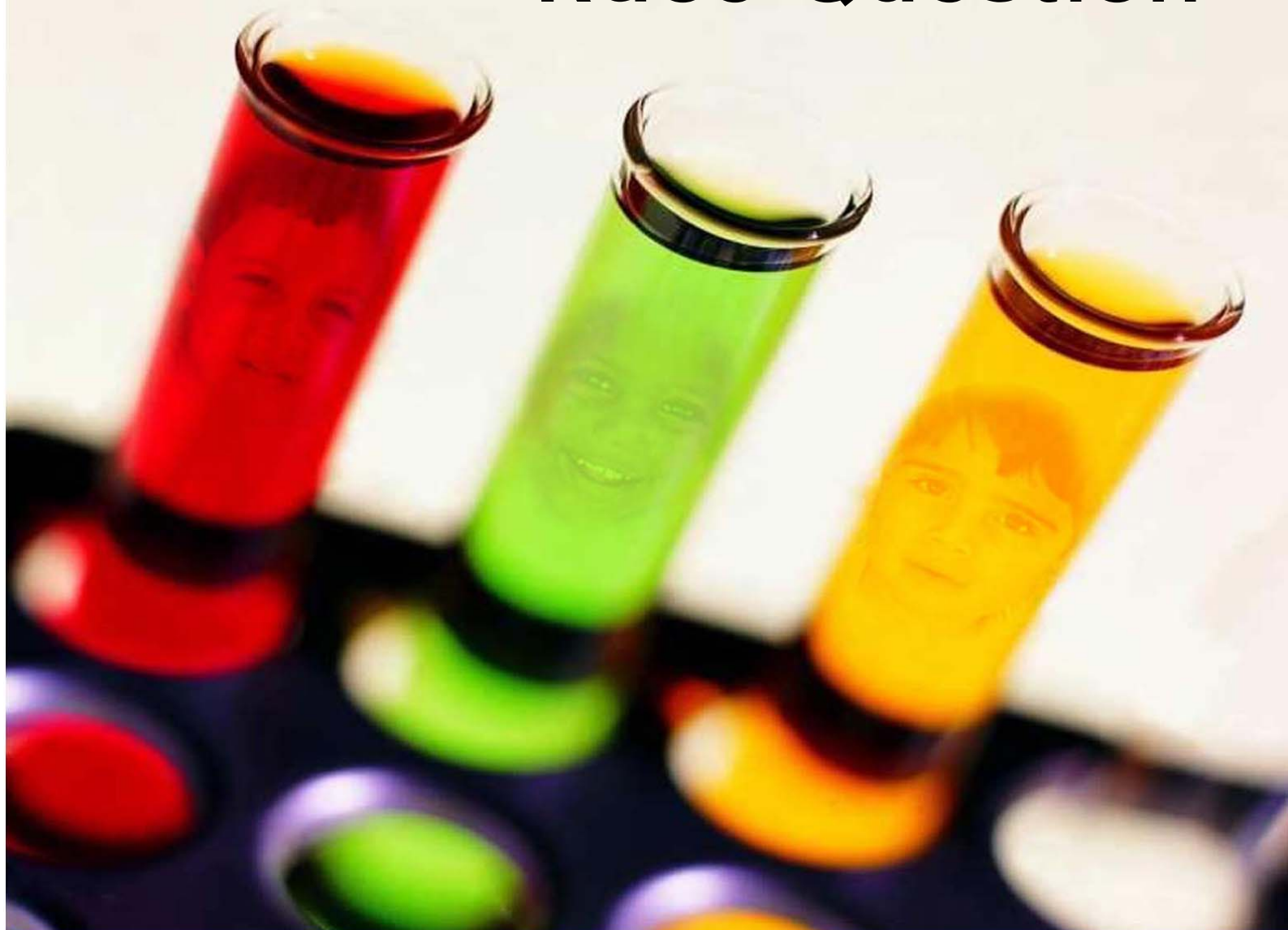
socialist

February 2007 Vol. 103 No. 1229 £1

standard

Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

The Colour of Truth - Science and the Race Question



Racism, race
and science
page 6



Sectarianism in
Ireland
page 15



Kelly bears the
yolk
page 19



socialist standard

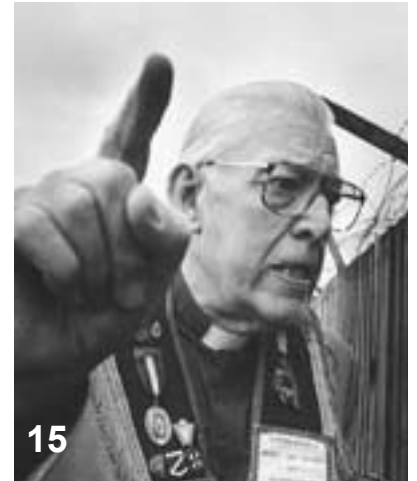
website: www.worldsocialism.org



6



9



15

contents

FEATURES

- 6 Racists can't define race**
Race is a completely unscientific concept, as is shown by the fact that racists have been unable to define what a race is other than in completely arbitrary ways.
-
- 9 Terrorism: means to a dead end**
Terrorism is now associated with Islamic extremists, but in the early 1970s there were terrorist groups on the "far-left." We look at the half-baked "socialist" notions from the New Left that these terrorists took.
-
- 11 Patents: Capitalism versus Technological Advance**
The technological dynamism of capitalism is undeniable. But the functioning of capitalism also means the shelving of many useful inventions.
-
- 13 The money trick**
It was probably a rich person who devised the saying, "Money can't buy happiness". But there is more truth in the cynical retort that at least it allows you to be miserable in comfort.
-
- 15 Beyond sectarianism**
David Ervine, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for a loyalist area of east Belfast, who died in January, saw that working class Protestants and Catholics had both been conned.

REGULARS

- 3 Editorial**
Blair is right!
-
- 4 Pathfinders**
Junk shopping
-
- 5 Letters**
-
- 5 Contact Details**
-
- 12 Cooking the Books 1**
The poverty line
-
- 15 Cooking the Books 2**
International non co-operation
-
- 17 Reviews**
Worlds Apart; Zapata of Mexico; The Communist Club; Kennington Park
-
- 18 Meetings**
-
- 18 50 Years Ago**
Macmillan must go!
-
- 19 Greasy Pole**
The trouble with Kelly
-
- 20 Voice from the Back**
Viva Las Vegas; New York, New York; the insecure society, and more
-
- 20 Free Lunch**

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

RATES

One year subscription (normal rate) **£12**
One year subscription (low/unwaged) **£7**
Europe rate **£15** (Air mail)
Rest of world **£22** (Air mail)
Voluntary supporters subscription **£20** or more.
Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 3 February** 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

E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial Blair is right!

Former Labour Cabinet Minister, Claire Short, describes Tony Blair as "delusional". We don't know about that, but he does seem to think that he too, like his buddy George Bush, is the commander in chief of his country's armed forces.

Last month he was televised making a speech on board a warship in the Plymouth naval base surrounded by khaki-clad soldiers and camouflaged armoured cars. Exactly the sort of background Bush chooses to make his pro-war pronouncements, but he has an excuse in that, constitutionally, he is the commander in chief. Blair is just the Queen's first minister.

Blair told the assembled military personnel that he wanted them and the rest of Britain's armed forces to be "warfighters" and not mere "peacekeepers" and pledged, to prepare for the future wars he foresees, "increased expenditure on equipment, personnel and the conditions of our armed forces".

It was an extraordinary display of gung-ho militarism from the head of a Labour government whose first Foreign Secretary declared that Labour, unlike the Tories, would pursue "an ethical foreign policy" and from the leader of a party that once used to pride itself on being the peace party. But, given world capitalism, his argument has a ruthless logic.

Blair drew a distinction between "hard power" (military might) and "soft power" (diplomacy) and argued that if Britain "retreated" into maintaining its armed forces merely for peacekeeping then "inexorably" its "soft power" would be weakened too. According to the Financial Times (12 January), he said that "the main risk for the future was not gung-ho leaders too keen to embark on military adventure - but those who concluded that military engagement was too difficult and thereby fall into a passive disengagement"; in which case "the result would be 'Britain's reach, effect and influence qualitatively reduced'".

It's an argument that can't be faulted. Capitalism is a world-wide system involving a competitive struggle for profits in which all states vie with each other to influence the course of events in favour of profit-seeking enterprises

from within their borders. Normally this takes the form of diplomatic initiatives and manoeuvres but the weight other states attach to these depends on whether they think the state in question has the means - and the determination - to back them up.

The means can be - still in the realm of Blair's "soft power" - economic retaliation or sabre-rattling, but to be credible a state must ultimately be prepared to do more than merely have big sabres or just rattle them. Blair's model, Mrs Thatcher, understood this well (even if at the time he himself didn't, sporting as he then did a CND badge). Which is why when third-rate power Argentina took over the Falkland Islands she sent out the "task force" to recover them. If she hadn't, Britain's credibility and standing in the international pecking order would have gone down.

So Blair is right. Without armed forces trained and equipped for "war fighting" (and killing and dying) beyond its frontiers, Britain's "reach, effect and influence" to further the interests of its capitalist class in the international arena will be weakened. The terrifying fact is that it is not him who is deluding himself (at least not on this point) but those who believe that an ethical foreign policy is possible. The international state-system that world capitalism has engendered is not one where there are any rules. It's every state for itself, no favours given and woe to the weak. If Britain's rivals on the world stage thought that its government had moral scruples about going all the way in employing its armed forces they would give less weight to its diplomatic initiatives in defence of its capitalist class.

So, what are we to conclude? By all means let those who want a world without war denounce every war that takes place but without the illusion that we can get states within capitalism to renounce war as a policy option. This will never happen as it goes against the whole logic of the capitalist state-system. Once again, it is quite literally true that world-wide socialism is the only framework within which a lasting peace can exist. Let us, therefore, work for it as the priority of priorities.

FREE
3-MONTH TRIAL
SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

socialist standard
socialist standard
socialist standard

The An finds a target
Marketing Mind
Take Your Cu
Trade, Earth, and Ear

**YES, I WOULD LIKE A 3 MONTH FREE TRIAL
SUBSCRIPTION TO *The Socialist Standard***

Name

Address

Postcode

Country

socialist standard

■ in depth ■ in touch ■ insight

**RETURN TO: Socialist Standard, FREEPOST,
London SW4 7BR**

Junk Shopping

Just on the off-chance that any of its readers retained the dimmest flicker of enthusiasm for the annual cash-orgy known as Christmas, the *Independent* determined to render it even more pointless and masochistic by itemising with Scrooge-like malice the stupendous waste involved in the whole exercise (23 December, 2006). Thus we learned that six million trees, enough to form a line from London to the North Pole and back again, would be dumped or incinerated, ditto a billion greetings cards, enough to go round the world five times, 83 km² wrapping paper, and 125,000 tonnes of plastic packaging. 40 percent of all festive food would go in the bin, and 41 percent of all children's toys would end up broken in landfill within 3 months.

Britain is, of course, triumphantly at the top of the household waste European league tables, disposing of more than 27m tonnes each year, 7m tonnes more than Italy, and a whopping 17m tonnes ahead of Germany, which has a population 25 percent larger (*BBC Online*, 9 October 2006). An area the size of Warwick - 109 square miles - is already landfill and landfill space is expected to be used up by 2016. According to a survey by the Energy Saving Trust, Britain also comes gratifyingly top in energy wastage, apparently because we leave our lights on, our TVs on stand-by and our phone chargers plugged in (*BBC Online*, 23 October 2006).

Pursuant on the popular media theme that we are all feckless children who need strong governance, even *New Scientist* can't resist having a dig at us, with talk of our 'adulterous' consumption - endlessly deserting our possessions for the novelty of younger, flashier models (6 January). The average domestic power tool, we are told, has an active lifetime of only ten minutes before spending thousands of years rotting underground. To be sure, they dig a little deeper and expose, without ever using the word, the alienation at the heart of production and consumption, blaming mass-production for the fact that we have no personal relationship with made goods, they have no history for us, they embody no 'narrative'. Paradoxically, we don't care about these goods, but we depend on possessing them to give us our sense of identity. They have the power to remake us which we ourselves lack.

Socialists know this syndrome by the infelicitous term 'commodity fetishism', yet even Marx could surely not have imagined the stupendous energy that capitalism was destined to pour into this large-scale Junk Production. With our eyes glued always on the latest model, we ignore the rising range of waste as it towers behind us to the far horizon.

Of course there is nothing wrong with encouraging individuals to take more responsibility over what they waste, but one can't help feeling there is an agenda of misdirection behind much of what the media tells us about ourselves, focussing as they do on the relatively minor waste output of the domestic household and ignoring or downplaying the staggering waste produced by the capitalist system of production as a whole. Statistics from the UK Department of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) reveal the true picture for total waste in Britain in 2004. Of a total 335m tonnes of waste produced annually, 32 percent is construction and demolition, 29 percent mining and quarrying, 13 percent industrial, 12 percent commercial, and just 9 percent domestic (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/waste/index.htm). So while you're being guilt-tripped into staggering down to the rain-swept recycling bins with your bags of bottles, you'll be pleased to reflect that the real giants of junk production are clinking glasses in Downing Street.

It wouldn't be so bad if the waste produced by capitalism was simply accidental, an unfortunate by-product of a less than optimal method of doing things. Defenders of capitalism might argue that a certain amount of waste is inevitable in any society of mass production, given that the huge economy of scale, together with the normal operations of a competitive market, can sometimes lead to goods becoming so cheap as to be literally disposable. Thus we find that it is often cheaper to buy a new computer printer than to buy a replacement ink

cartridge for the old one, that new battery-powered toys and gizmos can be cheaper than the batteries in them, and that as far as clothes go, Huxley's injunction from *Brave New World* still applies: spending is better than mending. Even more worryingly, the nature of mass-production enforces a uniformity of taste on the consumer, which in turn creates the 'need' for aggressive marketing. Arguably, if society didn't produce mountains of crap in the first place, it wouldn't need to work so hard to make us buy it all.

What is particularly hard to take for a socialist, or indeed anyone who dislikes pointless waste of time, effort and resources, is the way much of this can be described quite reasonably as deliberate. A friend relates how he was taken on a tour of the R&D laboratory of a famous plastic biro manufacturer, there to discover company technicians destruction-testing the pen shafts. The idea, he was told, was not to make the shafts shatter-proof, but to make them shatter at the nib end after a predicted period of use, thus allowing the manufacturer to put less ink in the reservoir tube and thus save money, as well as forcing the consumer to buy at a faster rate. Planned or built-in



2.4m fridges and freezers are dumped annually in the UK.

obsolescence of this sort is one of the most iniquitous features of capitalist production, a true crime against society and against the environment, and it is rife wherever manufacturers can obtain either a monopoly or a cartel agreement to avoid the competitive pressure to improve rather than degrade quality. In the PC world, chip manufacturers regularly change motherboard configurations for spurious reasons, ensuring that upgrades or replacements are impossible, while software giants like Microsoft deliberately remove support for older operating systems. Mobile phones, now the must-have street-cred accessory, ape the fashion industry with new styles and features every year while only 10 to 15 percent of old phones are recycled. The media likes to upbraid us as individuals for our shallow consumerist habits, but the fact is that the manufacturing industries are doing everything they can to make us buy, again and again and again, fearing as they do that our natural tendency is to be conservative and make do with what we've got.

It's not hard to imagine, in a social system designed around production for use instead of sale, how common sense would be applied to the mountainous problem of waste. In the first place, people in socialism, having to work voluntarily to produce, would be hardly likely to design faults and short lifespans into their goods. Nor would they need to produce a vast array of 'brands' of varying quality. Many 'comfort goods', gadgets, gewgaws, gimmicks, fads, fashions and fripperies would just not be made, nor the need for them felt. Most packaging would go, and there would be no point in advertising materials. Some mass-production would of course be maintained, but many more things would be likely to devolve to local production, thus reducing the phenomenal amount of transportation presently required, and re-imbuing goods with that personal 'narrative' which makes us value and care for them. Production would continue to be led by technological advance, but not by novelty for its own sake, and the design and costing process would take into account both durability, reparability, and the disposal process at lifetime end as part of the overall production footprint. In fact, socialism would aim for zero-waste by converting every waste stream into a recycled resource stream. Most importantly, a key feature of a use-led society would be that consumption is a shared process, and many things which we now consider personal domestic items might actually be used more communally, either through more communal living habits or through an extension of the library system to include things like power tools, films, jewellery, kid's toys, even clothes, thus reducing the overall need for production in the first place. Capitalism can of course address the problem of waste to some extent, but it doesn't have the power to stop trying to sell, sell, sell. We however have the power to switch off capitalism and its power-hungry display of commercialism. Socialism is still on stand-by. We just need to press the button.

Naked bonobos?

Dear Editors

I agree with much of "Bonobo Fides" (Pathfinders, January), but I would like to take issue on a few significant points.

The author follows the sources on which he relies in placing too much emphasis on the power of the "combined females" as a deterrent to male violence. Bonobos of both genders keep the peace mainly by using friendly activities-grooming, play and sharing food as well as frequent sex-to soothe the tensions that might lead to violence. (They don't "run off into the bushes," by the way, but have sex in plain view of others. Here the author is mixing up bonobos with humans.) It also helps that with bonobos, unlike chimps, the males can't tell which females are ovulating, so they are unable to compete to sire offspring.

Bonobos may "live largely as vegetarians," but they do have a taste for meat. "Like chimpanzees, they are ready to grab and eat small antelope infants. They eat flying squirrels and sometimes earthworms" (*Demonic Males*, p. 216). Unlike chimps, however, they never eat monkeys. Instead, bonobos play with monkeys as though they were pets. Monkeys are terrified of chimps but show no fear of bonobos. Apparently, this reflects a cultural taboo against killing and eating fellow primates, and such a taboo may be one reason why bonobos rarely attack and never kill one another. (Local humans have a similar taboo against hunting bonobos.)

Would chimps adopt bonobo behaviour in a bonobo environment and vice versa,

"given long enough"? I think this is an exaggeration. Bonobos are a distinct species, not a kind of chimpanzee. ("Pygmy chimp" is a misleading term that dates from the time when this was not yet recognized.) To the extent that bonobo sociality is a product of genetically determined characteristics like large sexual organs and always being on heat, environmental change can affect it only to a limited degree. Over a period long enough for evolution to occur the bonobo might lose these characteristics, but then it would no longer be a bonobo!

Especially for socialists, the good news about the bonobo is how close it is to man. We have 98.7 percent of our genes in common with the bonobo. That's the same figure as for the chimpanzee, but in numerous respects we-and also, according to physical anthropologist Adrienne Zihlman, our proto-human ancestors living in Africa 3 to 5 million years ago-are closer to bonobos than to chimps. This applies, for example, to bodily proportions, facial appearance (look at the photos in Frans de Waal and Frans Lanting, *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape*), posture (bonobos walk upright much of the time, along trails that they make themselves), and of course sexual functioning. In 1967 Desmond Morris gave ammunition to the "human nature" objectors to socialism by "exposing" man as *The Naked Ape*. It's not quite so bad if we change that to "the naked bonobo"!

Only a few thousand bonobos are left, all of them in the war-torn Congo. Their extinction would be a tragedy for man too, not least because they are living proof of the positive side of our evolutionary heritage.

STEPHEN SHENFIELD (by e-mail)

But What Can I Do?

"But what can I do?" How many times do you hear that or similar phrases from people too overwhelmed by the enormity of the task that they can't see the wood for the trees? Socialism isn't going to be born overnight, that has long been agreed. It's going to be a long uphill struggle by those with enough conviction against the million and one forces stacked against it, and I'm not talking about the forces of the imperial armies or the might of the transnational corporations, I'm talking about the likes of your brother-in-law who can only see as far as the next pay day and a six-pack in front of the TV, or the woman at work who can't understand that you won't buy a lottery ticket because winning the jackpot won't exactly mean you beat the system. Life can get tedious explaining the same old obvious thing to yet one more sceptical punter, however, if we don't-----?

This is about one of my bêtes-noires, which is, why do so many people drink Coca Cola? (insert your own pet-hate here.) Not only does this company have a terrible track record for union busting around the world even going so far as to be involved in killings by private militia, for depriving some Indian villages of water and poisoning wells through over-extraction in others, but it's so full of sugar and junk that it tastes horrible and it's harmful to health to boot.

All the restaurants, cafes and bars in the tourist areas close to here offer Coke or Pepsi whichever concession is dominant in the particular vicinity and it follows that their other soft drinks and bottled water are purchased through the same concession. In

continued on page 17

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS LONDON

Central London branch. 2nd Tuesday and 4th Monday. 7.30pm. Head Office 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4. Tel: **0207 622 3811**

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, 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

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: **020 7834 8186**

MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**. Corres: David Coggan, 13 Bowling Green Road, Stourbridge, DY8 3TT. Tel: **01384 348835**. email: djcoggan@hotmail.com

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL. Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: **01524 382380**

Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: **0161 860 7189**

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. **01204 844589**

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

Carlisle. Robert Whitfield. email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick. **01706 522365**

Southeast Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Hull. Hull: Keith Scholey, 12 Regina Ct, Victoria Ave, HU5 3EA. Tel: **01482 444651**

Skipton. R Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: **01756 752621**

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Bournemouth and East Dorset. Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole BH16 5RP. Tel: **01202 632769**

Bristol. Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: **0117 9511199**

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

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

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: **01209 219293**

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglia branch meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: **01692 582533**.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: **01603 814343**. Richard Layton, 23 Nottingham Rd, Clacton, CO15 5PG. Tel: **01255 814047**.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: **07890343044**

NORTHERN IRELAND

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough. Tel: **02890 860687**

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: **0141 5794109** Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: **01294 469994**. derricktrainer@freeuk.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: **01328 541643**

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506 462359**

Email: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: **01792 643624**

Cardiff and District. John James, 67 Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR. Tel: **01446 405636**

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Gambia. World of Free Access. Contact SPGB, London.

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

ASIA

India. World Socialist Group, Vill Gobarahanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

Japan. Michael. Email: marukusboy@yahoo.co.jp

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Spobjervej 173, DK-8220, Brabrand.

Germany. Norbert. Email: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford. Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia. Email: commonownership@yahoo.com.au

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. Email: wspanz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United States

P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. Email: wspboston@mindspring.com



Racists can't define race

Race is a completely unscientific concept, as is shown by the fact that racists have been unable to define what a race is other than in completely arbitrary ways

Most people are aware of the treatment meted out to Jews by the Nazis, the discrimination and violence, the forced emigration, leading up to the obscenity of the extermination camps in the so-called Final Solution. Anti-semitic propaganda had prepared the way for these policies, with Jews being blamed for almost all the ills suffered by German workers in the twenties and thirties.

But it was one thing to rant about Jewish conspiracies and other nonsense, and it was quite another to legislate and implement specific instances of discrimination. For, once there were laws forbidding Jews from holding certain jobs

or attending certain schools, the question inevitably arose of how 'Jew' was defined. How could law-abiding German officials know who to discriminate against? Jews did not resemble the lurid caricatures of Nazi posters, so it was hard to tell who counted as a Jew. It was not a matter of religion, since conversion to Christianity was not enough to save anyone who had been categorised as Jewish, so how could the demonised group be defined?

The same problem has haunted every attempt at race-based politics. For though racists see race as the driving force of human history, as being behind what makes people behave in certain ways, in practice it is a difficult, if not impossible,

concept to define. Human beings have wandered over the Earth for thousands of years, fighting and cooperating and mating, so that we are all mixtures in various ways, with different inheritances, resulting in a myriad permutations of skull shape, hair type, skin colour, build, and so on. Any attempt to draw firm distinctions within the human family is doomed to failure.

Governments often have to set up arbitrary criteria for nationality, with regard to such matters as entitlement to a passport or eligibility for conscription. Sporting organisations may well have regulations along similar lines, for instance that to play for a country you must have a

parent or grandparent from there - a mere great-grandparent will not do. Or you can play for the country if you've lived there for so many years. Now, nationality is something that can be changed, but race is a supposed integral part of a person, not to be altered by the mere act of filling in a form and providing satisfactory answers in an interview. The racist, however, needs to have a definition of race, or at least of a particular racial group, in order to put their vile ideas into practice.

The problem that racists encounter is described well by Richard Evans (*The Third Reich in Power*): "An insoluble ideological dilemma faced Nazi legislators: was the poison they thought Jewish blood carried with it into the bloodstream of the German race so virulent that only a small admixture would be enough to turn a person into a Jew, or was German blood so strong and healthy that it would overcome all but the most powerful admixture of Jewishness in a person's hereditary constitution? To such questions there was no rational answer, because there was from the beginning no rational basis to the assumptions on which they rested." In the absence of a rational answer, racists have adopted different responses in different times and places.

The Nazis' Nuremberg Laws of 1935 made 'mixed marriages', and indeed extra-marital relationships, between Jews and Aryans illegal. The Reich Citizenship Law defined an Aryan as anyone who lacked 'Jewish blood', and a 'full Jew' had to have at least three grandparents who professed Judaism (so there was a religious dimension after all). Various 'half-breeds' with one or two Jewish grandparents, were also defined. In one 1937 case, a man escaped being found guilty of 'race defilement' on the grounds that he was only half-Jewish, his biological father being an Aryan rather than his mother's husband. Or someone's racial classification might be based on the gossip and prejudices of neighbours. Many people needed help from experts in deciding how others should be characterised: one judge had to point out that a woman's blue eyes and blonde hair 'obscure her Jewish racial characteristics'.

It was eventually decided that half-Jews would not be counted as fully Jewish and thus subject to the harshest discrimination, unless they practised Judaism or were married to a full Jew (neither of which criteria of course relates to their ethnic origins). And even then Hitler had to be given the final word and the power to grant exemptions as he wished. In practice, to quote Richard Evans again, "all the authorities had to go on in establishing Jewish ancestry was whether or not someone's grandparents had practised the Judaic religion, a fact which rather made a nonsense of scientific claims about the importance of race and blood in determining Jewish or German identity."

But Jews were not the only group persecuted by the Nazis on racial grounds. Gypsies were also subject to vicious discrimination, but the basis for their treatment was slightly different from that of Jews. Pure Gypsies were seen as an inferior race but not as a threat to Aryan

purity. It was those who had a mix of Gypsy and Aryan ancestry that were problematic, as the supposed inherent criminality of Gypsies had thereby infiltrated and begun to undermine the Aryan race. The distinct attitudes to Jews and Gypsies again reveals the arbitrary basis of racist policies.

Apartheid-era South Africa also faced the problem of classifying people as white, black (referred to as 'Bantu'), coloured or Indian. Some felt that god had ordained the existence of different races; unfortunately the almighty had failed to make the distinctions clearly enough. The 'coloured' group was acknowledged to be a mixture, originating in the use of slave labour in the 17th century. The Population Registration Act of 1950 contained such definitions as: 'A White person is one who is in appearance obviously white - and not generally accepted as Coloured - or who is generally accepted as White - and is not obviously Non-White, provided that a person shall not be classified as a White person if one of his natural parents has been classified as a Coloured person or a Bantu'. So appearance and general acceptance were the main criteria used, but with family membership introduced in order to avoid too many embarrassing inconsistencies (you couldn't count as white if you had a black or coloured parent). Equally, 'A Bantu is a person who is, or is generally accepted as, a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa.'

In practice, people were often classified on the basis of how flat their noses were or whether a comb could be run through their hair. The references to 'generally accepted' give the game away, of course: race is a subjective and arbitrary matter of how people are labelled by others, not a matter of biological inheritance.

Slavery in the American South was, in theory, confined to black people only. 'Black' here meant having no European ancestry at all - anyone who could show they were of European descent even partially was assumed to be free (i.e. free to work as a wage slave rather than as the legal property of another). The ending of slavery led to an effective reversal of this position: anyone with just 'one drop' of non-white blood could not be regarded as white. In other words, you could not be part-black, just black or not. This was partly intended to limit mixed marriages and so keep the white blood line 'pure', since in the racist view anyone with one black and one white parent was black. It's been pointed out that this means that 'a white mother can have a black child but a black mother cannot have a white child.' The one-drop criterion was made illegal in 1967, and the US census of 2000 allowed respondents to choose more than one racial identity, so people could describe themselves as both black and white - but they would then count as black for the purposes of equal employment legislation. The American examples show again that



notions like 'black' and 'white' are not given in nature but are socially defined, dependent on the attitudes adopted by particular societies at particular periods.

The British National Party, in striving for a form of respectability, tries to downplay emphasis on race (in public, at least). Its website refers to 'the indigenous peoples of these islands', which it defines as "the people whose ancestors were the earliest settlers here after the last great Ice Age and which have been complemented by the historic migrations from mainland Europe". This is pretty woolly language, though we can assume that to be regarded as having a black or brown skin would disqualify a person from counting as indigenous. But how far back would a BNP government trace people's ancestry, and what would they do with those who have just one indigenous parent or grandparent? Like the Nazis and the National Party in South Africa, the BNP would be forced back on arbitrary distinctions and subjective rulings to decide who would be allowed to stay in their racial utopia.

Race, then, is not a scientific concept. Even those who see it as the linchpin of their politics cannot offer manageable definitions of it or workable guidelines as to how particular people should be categorised. The fact is that we are all human beings, with broadly similar



Above: a Roma woman with German soldiers during World War Two

abilities and characteristics, distinguished in various superficial ways such as eye colour and blood group, and divided now along the destructive lines of class and nationality. In the future Socialist

commonwealth, questions of race and ancestry will be a thing of the past, like money, passports and national anthems. ■
PAUL BENNETT

Racism (and race) is bunkum

Socialists stand for a system of society based upon the principle of providing each individual with what they need, as a pre-condition of social activity. That is, securing for each human being the clothes, food and housing they need, as well as the cultural and social goods of life, should be the first priority of any sane society. Of course, providing each with what they need means that different people will get different things. People are, of course, born with different needs, and people from related communities and extended families may well have a higher chance of having certain needs than others. That is, some people share genetically inherited features, such as susceptibility to particular diseases, which are passed on through human reproduction.

Genetic features, though, can be mixed and changed by the same process - there is no essential correlation between, say, skin colour and disease. Merely, there is a chance that the genes for these two separate features will be passed on from parent to child. Just as there is no specific correlation between skin colour and facial features, or eye colour and hair colour. That these features seem to belong together is an effect of the fact that each parent passes on half their genetic characteristics to their off-spring, and that historically people of similar appearance (and roughly common descent) have tended to breed with one another in similar climates.

The fact of the matter is that any human being from one of these groups could breed just as well with a member of the opposite sex from another group as they could with one from their own. We are all members of the same republic of genes, all related very closely to one another no matter what side of the globe we hail from. We are the surviving descendants of some less than 20,000 early humanoids. We share a common genetic trait, traceable back through the ages to just one female, many thousands of years ago.

It's also a fact that we developed as a species to be dependent

upon one another for our needs; but also able to communicate and co-operate with one another to meet those needs. Yet, today, we live in a society in which the needs of a great many people go unmet. It's clear to Socialists that the ideas surrounding race and racialism are bunkum, un-supported by the scientific facts. We can point to the history of the development of capitalism, to show how

the misapprehensions surrounding race developed along with the needs of capital to expand and control the globe, and to build loyal armies in pursuit of such conquest. Yet, they continue to do harm and deny our common humanity in the modern world. Socialists, as materialists, need to account for how such mistaken ideas can continue to exist in the world today, in the face of the evidence of the facts.

On the one hand there is the continued existence of poverty fed by ignorance, which nurtures the desire for people to cling on to what little they have, instilling in them a fear of a threat from apparent strangers.

On the other, capital's drives for efficiency, the need to cut out anything that interferes with or reduces the profit-making capacity of the industrial machine, which means that worker's whose needs cause costs (such as dealing with language and cultural differences) are squeezed out in a 'one size fits all' approach.

What socialists propose is a different world, wherein everyone has more than enough of the things they need, so they need no longer fear to lose it; where meeting and exploring our different needs becomes a past-time and an end in itself; where without conflicts of power and dominance - because we co-operate voluntarily and democratically - there is no limitation set on, nor distortion of, our endeavour to understand what it means to be a part of the human race. In short, socialism will allow us to be treated as unique individuals, rather than as a bureaucratically allocated race on an equal opportunities monitoring form. ■





Yakuza gangsters responsible for hijacking the Japan Air Lines aircraft 'Yodo-go' in 1970

Terrorism: means to a dead end

Terrorism is now associated with Islamic extremists, but in the early 1970s there were terrorist groups on what is commonly known as the "far-left." Taking the Red Army Faction in Japan as an example, this article looks at the half-baked "socialist" notions from the New Left that these terrorists took and then burned to a crisp.

Far-left terrorist groups, such as the Weathermen in the United States and the Red Brigades in Italy generally emerged at the tail end of the 1960s with the beginning of the disintegration of the various New Left movements. The members of these groups acquired some of their ideas, such as they were, from this movement. This is not suggest, of course, that the two sides are identical, which would be as absurd as the right-wingers today who are convinced Islam is inherently terroristic. The vast majority of the Left clearly rejected the tactic of terrorism.

At the same time, the terrorist groups did not arise fully-formed from the fertile soil of pure evil, either, nor can they be written off as some sort of government conspiracy (although police infiltration is always a sub-plot with such conspirational groups). Understanding the "logic" of the terrorists who advertised themselves as revolutionaries requires us to consider the weak aspects of the New Left movement (which included some rather *old* ideas). Instead of speaking in such generalities, though, I want to take the example of the New Left movement in Japan, which spawned a lethal group called the Red Army.

Before looking at the characteristics of the Japanese New Left, here is a short

rundown of the rap sheet of the Red Army. The group was formed in 1969 by a faction of the (second) Communist League who wanted to move beyond the street fights against riot police to utilize bombs and other weapons. Various defeats at the hands of the police, including the forced expulsion early that year of the radical students occupying Tokyo University, convinced some that the problem was insufficient firepower. The Red Army Faction of the Communist League, as the new group was officially known, argued that the task was to foment an armed uprising in Japan as the first stage in what would be a worldwide revolutionary war led by an international Red Army. The new organization immediately set about putting this idea, such as it was, into practice, beginning a campaign of attacking police boxes in urban areas with Molotov cocktails and exploding pipe bombs at train stations, under bombastic or bloodcurdling slogans such as "War in Tokyo! War in Osaka!" Military training was also conducted in a mountainous area in preparation for an attack on the Prime Minister's Residence. This attack was never carried out because the police arrested over 50 of the group's members, which took the wind out of the group's sails. The Red Army bounced back in 1970 when it became the first Japanese

group to hijack a plane, which was forced to fly to North Korea. This was apparently part of a grandiose plan to set up bases overseas for waging revolution. From this point on the group caused more trouble outside of Japan than within it, including a number of other hijack incidents. Some members allied themselves with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. On behalf of that group, the Red Army committed its most heinous crime, when three members used automatic weapons to kill 24 people who had the misfortune to be at the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv on May 30, 1972.

"Socialism" and "revolution"

The Red Army Faction justified its actions as necessary steps towards revolution, but like New Left as a whole the stated goal of *socialism* was poorly understood. The New Left activists imagined that they were making a quantum leap beyond the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) by calling for socialism and rejecting the "two-stage" strategy of first seeking a "bourgeois-democratic" revolution. But here their understanding of "socialism" was not half as new as they imagined, as it was largely taken from the tenets of the "old" left (Stalinism and Trotskyism).

The two organizations formed at the

(Stalinism and Trotskyism).

The two organizations formed at the end of the 1950s which became the nucleus of the new left movement—the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL) and the Communist League (or "Bund")—believed that the Soviet Union, for all its flaws, was at the very least a post-capitalist society. Trotsky famously coined the term "degenerated worker's state" to describe the Soviet Union, and the Japanese New Left advanced similar ideas, using different terminology, describing it for instance as an "alienated form of a transitional society." The socialist society they envisaged and sought to achieve would similarly have an economic foundation of nationalized industry and a "planned economy," but with a leadership wiser and more benevolent than the Stalinist bureaucrats.

There were a few on the New Left who argued that the Soviet Union was a state capitalist society, such as the theory developed by Tadayuki Tsushima in the fifties. But the actual content of this theory was not radically different than Trotsky's idea of a revolution "betrayed." That is, Tsushima believed that a socialist revolution created a post-capitalist workers' state in Russia, but the country later reverted to capitalism by foolishly failing to implement a proper system of labour vouchers and a Paris Commune-style state.

In short, the New Left activists took it for granted that the Soviet Union provided an example of a society that was at least post-capitalist, and they considered the Russian Revolution a model for their own revolution in Japan. The expectation was that a Japanese revolution would similarly arise out of some social crisis—whether an economic collapse or war—and in such a situation a small but determined vanguard party could literally push the radicalised working class in the direction of socialism at the critical moment. They had no patience for, or even awareness of, the idea that a socialist revolution would require most of the members of society to desire that change. So naturally they did not view their task as propagating socialist ideas to convince as many people as possible of the desirability and feasibility of a socialist society while exposing the futility of reforming capitalism. On the whole, the working class was viewed as an unthinking mass that the force of events, guided or even accelerated by the hand of the vanguard party, would propel in the direction of fundamental social change.

The Red Army's strategy was an extension of this mistaken understanding of both the ultimate end and the means of getting there. They also believed revolution would arise naturally out of a crisis, and more specifically a revolutionary war, with their own task being to foment the crisis and lead the workers on to victory in a global battle for socialism. It must be said, though, that the ultimate victory interested them far less than the heroic combat itself, which was pictured along the lines of the cartoonish scenes of bloody class war in Jack London's *Iron Heel*.

Reforms painted red

With all of their talk of socialism and revolution, one might think that the New Left activists would have shunned reformism. But in fact they viewed struggles over reforms as a springboard to revolution. And since no economic crisis

was on the horizon in 1960s Japan, where capitalism was in fact developing as rapidly as in China today, the revolutionaries felt they would have to manufacture a political crisis themselves to awaken the working class by sabotaging government policies. Here they had a view of how a "revolutionary situation" could be brought about that was every bit as mechanical as the "domino theory" used to justify the US military action in Vietnam. The activists felt that if this or that reformist political struggle were to succeed, it would help to create a crisis and would thus be the first step on the revolutionary road.

This approach was evident in the movement against the 1960 revision in the US-Japan Security Treaty, which was the first major political struggle for the New Left to engage in. The student radicals who played a key role in that movement imagined that if they blocked the Treaty they would create a crisis for US and Japanese imperialism. It is interesting that the JCP also participated in this movement, but opposed the Treaty on the equally fictitious grounds that it would strengthen Japan's status as a "semi-colony" of the United States.

Perhaps because they were often taking part in the same reformist movements that the JCP was involved in, the New Left groups placed an emphasis on the tactics employed, particularly the use of physical force to confront the riot police or occupy buildings. They felt such confrontational tactics were inherently revolutionary, or at least preferable to the more legalistic approach of the JCP. This was also connected to the idea that socialist ideas would emerge out of such action, rather than there being a necessity to work out a political program first. This action *über alles* attitude was expressed in the founding document of the Communist League, which said that the "programme for the emancipation of the proletariat can only emerge in the midst the trial by fire of praxis involving a response to the tasks of the class struggle that emerge every day." Ironically, in practice (or "praxis") this is a fiery rewording of arch-revisionist Eduard Bernstein's belief that, "The final goal, no matter what it is, is nothing; the movement is everything."

One psychological side-effect of mechanically linking reformism to revolution was that the activists exhibited symptoms of manic depression. Pinning so many hopes on reformist battles that in most cases were doomed to failure, and at any rate would always ultimately fail to open up a revolutionary situation, their initial euphoria inevitably turned to despair and bitter reflections on what should have been done. The desperate and doomed attempt to manufacture a political or social crisis is taken to its absurd extreme with the criminal acts of the Red Army.

Crossing the line

Violence was a general characteristic of the New Left in Japan. The street battles with the riot police, just mentioned, were considered an integral part of the revolutionary movement and raised nearly to an art form, with activists donning construction helmets (featuring painted logos of their organization), wielding long wooden staffs or steel pipes as weapons, and engaging in winding "snake dances."

The sight of this entranced more than a few outside observers, such as French literary critic Roland Barthes who described student riots as a "writing of actions which expurgates violence from its Occidental being," adding that, "there is a paradigm of colours—red—white—blue helmets—but these colours contrary to ours, refer to nothing historical: there is a syntax of actions (*overturn, uproot, drag, pile*), performed like a prosaic sentence, not like an inspired ejaculation." (*Empire of Signs*)

Setting aside the question of what Barthes was smoking, such observers might have been less ejaculatory themselves had they witnessed the violent clashes between new left organizations. In part the internecine violence was a result of overblown organizational egos, with each group convinced it was *the* true vanguard. But there were other issues at stake that any yakuza gangster could understand. University campuses were the primary operational base for most groups, and each had a vital interest in controlling university student governments, which offered access to buildings and funds. In the struggles to hold on to strongholds or take over the bases of other groups, student activists did not hesitate to rely on brute force.

In his engrossing memoir *Toppamono* (Kotan Publishing, 2005), Manabu Miyazaki, a student activist who later returned to the criminal underworld he grew up in, describes how he and his comrades attacked a member of a rival group which had seized a student union room at their university: "We lifted him on our shoulders and banged him against the wall of the student union room a few times to quiet him down. We also took him to the hut in Ome, where we beat him until he fainted. But after that, all we did was force Suntory Red whiskey down his throat and then, when he was good and drunk, strip him of his clothes and set him loose." Considering that the author was a member of the JCP's student group, which was considered less violent than many of the new left groups, one can get a rough idea of the atmosphere. And in relating this incident, Miyazaki emphasizes that this was a mere prank compared to the violence a few years later because activists had yet to even consider killing their adversaries.

The line separating beating to a pulp and murder was frequently crossed in the early 1970s. Typically students were kidnapped, as in the tale above, tortured to extract a "self-criticism," and killed in the process, whether intentionally or not. Even more chilling than the senseless murders themselves, were the statements sometimes issued in justification of such acts, invariably claiming that a "tool of the state" or "spy" had been necessarily eliminated. Here is precisely the demented mindset of the Red Army fanatics as well.

(Just I was finishing this article a Greek outfit calling itself "Revolutionary Struggle" took it upon itself to shoot a rocket-propelled grenade at the US Embassy in Athens. An article in the *New York Times* informed me that this is a *Marxist* group, but their journalist should have heeded Marx's own advice about how it is best to not "judge an individual by what he thinks of himself.") ■

MICHAEL SCHAUERTE

Patents: Capitalism versus Technological Advance

The technological dynamism of capitalism is undeniable. But the functioning of capitalism also means the shelving of many useful inventions.

Capitalism has been widely celebrated for its capacity for rapid technological advance. Thus Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production." A century later Joseph Schumpeter declared that "creative destruction" is "the essential fact about capitalism" (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1942). And surely this fact has never been truer than it is today, in the age of microelectronics and bioengineering?

The technological dynamism of capitalism is undeniable, especially in comparison with earlier historical formations. This, however, is only half the story. The functioning of capitalism also entails the shelving or suppression of many useful inventions. One common cause of neglect is the limited purchasing power of those who stand to benefit from some discovery, as in the case of drugs to treat tropical diseases (see "*Nonprofit Production: Wave of the Future?*" in last month's issue). Another key factor behind the non-use of inventions is the patents system.

A patent is a legally protected exclusive right to use a new product or process, valid for a fixed period of time (typically 20-25 years). Patent rights supposedly belong to "inventors" and promote technological advance by giving inventors a substantial material interest in the results of their work. It's a dubious rationale because most inventors are members of the working class and the patents on their inventions, like the windfall profits from them, belong not to them but to their employers. If they're lucky they might get a small bonus. They go on inventing things because it gives them satisfaction.

That's human nature.

Nevertheless, the patents system does encourage companies to employ research scientists and engineers and in *some* cases to exploit patented inventions or license other companies to exploit them. In many other cases, however, a particular invention is viewed primarily as a threat to profits from the sale of an existing product, demand for which it would undercut. It will then seem more profitable *not* to make the new product while using the patent to prevent anyone else from making it. According to various studies, 40-90 percent

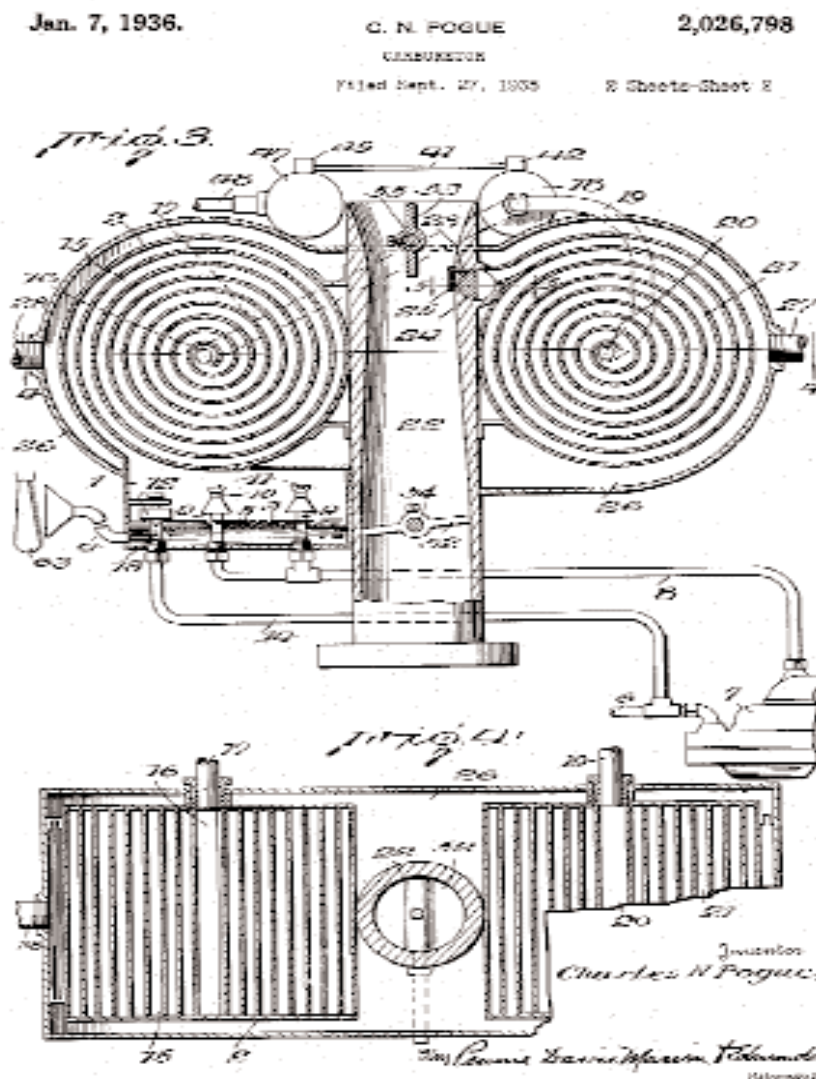
of patents are never used or licensed.

But what if the patent on the unwelcome invention is already owned by a competitor who plans to exploit it? Even in this situation there is often some action that can be taken to ward off the threat. Firms interested in developing new technologies tend to be financially weak and vulnerable. They may be threatened, paid not to use their patents, or simply taken over, patents and all. The permutations are endless: there are many ways to skin a cat, as they say.

Let's consider a few examples. They are taken from articles by Kurt Saunders, an expert on business law at California State University, and Linda Levine, an engineer at Carnegie Mellon University. (The articles are available at <http://www.mttr.org/voleleven/saunders.pdf> and <http://jolt.law.harvard.edu/articles/pdf/v15/15HarvJLTech389.pdf>)

Quashing a "wonderful advance"

Anaemia is a worldwide scourge, with a disproportionate impact on women, children, and poor people (due to iron-deficient diet). Even in the US it affects an estimated 3.5 million people. It is treated with a drug called erythropoietin (EPO), which promotes the formation of red blood cells. A big problem with EPO is that the body secretes it almost immediately, so doses have to be very high. That makes EPO very lucrative for AMGEN, the company that owns the patents, while the patient suffers distressing side effects and



foots the bill. Thus, a person on dialysis for kidney failure requires lifelong EPO at \$10,000 a year. Most of the world's sufferers, of course, have no access to such costly treatment.

In 1997, Gisella Clemons, a scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, discovered a protein binding factor for EPO—that is, a protein that sticks to it and blocks its excretion. Combining this protein with EPO increases take-up by 10-50 times, vastly reducing the dosage required and making the drug both safer and more affordable.

AMGEN was not interested. The company refused to make the more effective form of EPO themselves or to allow others to make it by giving them access to the patents in its possession. Martha Luehrmann, a colleague of Clemons, gave vent to her frustration: "A wonderful advance that could save hundreds of thousands of children from anaemia and death stays on the shelf because the patent system protects a company that doesn't want to see any risk to its bottom line."

Another example from the pharmaceutical industry. Bloch, a medical researcher employed by Smith-Kline UK, devised a new dietary supplement for use in diuretic therapy. His supplement, a balanced combination of magnesium and potassium compounds, overcame the main defect of existing diuretic drugs, including Smith-Kline's own Dyazide—namely, potassium depletion and its effects (fatigue, dizziness, confusion, etc.). In 1974 Bloch and Smith-Kline concluded a licensing agreement by which Smith-Kline undertook either to develop the supplement itself or to surrender its exclusive rights to Bloch. In the event it did neither. Bloch went to court, where his claims were accepted but no effective action was taken.

Keeping products inefficient and dangerous

Many inventions have been suppressed in the motor vehicle industry. Several of these could have greatly improved the efficiency of fuel use and

reduced or even eliminated polluting emissions. In 1936, for instance, Charles Pogue invented a carburettor that enabled a car to run over 200 miles to the gallon at speeds of up to 70 mph. More recently, Tom Ogle designed a car in which a series of hoses fed a mixture of gas vapours and air directly into the engine. Tested in 1977, it averaged 100 miles per gallon at 55 mph.

It is the oil corporations rather than the automobile manufacturers themselves that have the strongest interest in suppressing inventions that improve fuel efficiency and thereby reduce gasoline consumption. Thus, Exxon is said to have purchased and buried the design for a "momentum engine" with high fuel efficiency.

Patents do not last forever. For that among other reasons, many new products do eventually see the light of day, even if only two, three or four decades after being invented. Patent owners imposed such long delays on the appearance of many now familiar products. Thus, the fluorescent light bulb was patented in the 1920s but kept off the market until 1938 in order to keep energy efficiency low and demand for electricity high. A "safe" (or at least safer) cigarette, from which much carcinogenic material had been removed, was invented in the 1960s but suppressed in favour of the more dangerous kind until the last few years. The same thing happened to the telephone answering machine, the plain paper photocopier, the auto-focus camera, emission control devices for motor vehicles, the electronic thermometer, and artificial caviar.

Patent law reform or social use of knowledge?

There are two divergent tendencies in patent law. On the one hand, patents are recognized as a form of property. An owner of property has the right to use that property or not at his or her discretion, and this applies to patents as it does, say, to land. On the other hand, legislators created patent law for the purpose of promoting technological advance in the public interest,

so should the courts not try to discourage its misuse for the opposite purpose? Legal reformers like Saunders and Levine advocate changes to patent law that will strengthen the "public interest" tendency and impede the suppression of useful inventions.

The provisions of patent law do matter. The law already places certain restrictions on the rights of patent owners; otherwise inventions would be suppressed even more thoroughly. So legal reform might have a beneficial effect. But, as in other areas of industrial regulation, companies will find means of complying with the letter of any new requirements while thwarting their spirit. Let us suppose that the owner of a new patent is required to put it to use within a fairly short time interval or otherwise forfeits the patent (and Saunders and Levine do not suggest anything nearly as drastic). Could he not start production of the new product while "sabotaging" it to make sure sales of the old product would not be affected? For instance, the new product could be produced on a small scale and in deliberately slipshod fashion, sold at a very high price with hardly any advertising, and so on.

How much does it really matter if an invention has to wait a few decades before it is widely applied? Not very much, perhaps, if it's a new kind of camera or photocopier. The delay is harder to tolerate if it's an effective treatment for a previously incurable disease. And, with global warming upon us, new sources of environmentally harmless energy and new devices to raise energy efficiency are a matter of life and death for the planet. We can't afford to wait until capitalists finally find it profitable to make the switch to new technologies. It is high time to put knowledge and human creativity at the direct disposal of the community. ■

STEFAN

The poverty line



Cooking the Books (1)

Back in the days when the Tories were openly and deliberately the nasty party John Moore, Thatcher's Secretary of State for Social Security (so-called), declared that poverty no longer existed in Britain. That was in a speech in May 1988 (the same month that Thatcher declared that there was no such thing as society), published the following year as a pamphlet, *The End of the Line for Poverty*.

What he meant was that destitution (people without enough to buy food, shelter and other necessities to survive) had disappeared thanks to handouts from the state. He rejected any definition of poverty as relative as an invention of those who

wanted to "call Western capitalism a failure".

Now the Tory Party has abandoned this approach and has embraced the view that poverty is a relative concept, measured in relation "to prevailing social norms which change over time"

(www.socialjusticechallenge.com/uploads/tx_ev3evnews/SJPG_Clark_brief_final.pdf).

Poverty in the EU, and so in Britain, is officially measured in relation, not to changing views as to what are "necessities", but to the living standards of the general population. The median take-home income including state benefits for each type of household (single, couples, couples with children, etc) is calculated on the basis that this is the income level at which there are just as many below as above it (about £330 a week, according to Daniel Finkelstein in the *Times* of 22 November, or about £17,000 a year for the average household). The poverty line is defined as 60 percent of this. This is just a one definition, and a rather arbitrary one (it used to be defined as 50 percent), and other countries such as the US have a different one, but

it's an attempt to measure how many have significantly less income than the other members of society.

It does lay itself open to Moore's criticism that it means that poverty will never be abolished or, to be absolutely precise, would only be in the highly unlikely event that there would be no households with an income of more than 40 percent above the (moving) median, i.e., today, no more than about £24,000 a year for the average household.

To prepare their U-turn, the Tories got one of their MPs, Greg Clark, to analyse the statistics on poverty in Britain. He made an interesting discovery: that a large number of those classified as poor fell just below the 60 percent level; which meant that "poverty" could be reduced by increasing their income just enough to move them from 59 percent to 61 percent. He claimed that this was all the Labour government had done since 1997.

Socialists are not committed to an EU-type definition of poverty. We don't need this to show capitalism's failure to meet human needs adequately. While accepting that what are "necessities" is historically and socially determined and so varies over time and between (and even within) different countries, we define poverty, not in relation to people's consumption (how much food, clothing, shelter and the like they can buy) but in relation to the means of production (whether or not they own any means for producing wealth).

The vast majority of people in the developed capitalist parts of the world are propertyless in the sense of not owning any means of production. The only productive resource they possess is their own ability to work, their working skills, their labour-power. They are thus poor in terms of ownership of the means of production, irrespective of how much they are paid and of how many personal possessions they may have. The line that divides the capitalist class from the working class, that's the real poverty line.



The money trick

It was probably a rich person who devised the saying, "Money can't buy happiness". But there is more truth in the cynical retort that at least it allows you to be miserable in comfort.

Money, is portable wealth, a universal medium of exchange that gives its possessor the power over most things. It is the ultimate commodity, the embodiment of capitalism. The poet Shelley put it rather well:

*Paper coin, that forgery
Of the title-deeds which we
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of earth.*

Marx in an early essay on the subject said, "That which exists for me through the medium of *money*, that which I can pay for, i.e. which money can buy, that *am I*, the possessor of money.... If money is the bond that ties me to *human* life and society to me, which links me to nature and to man, is money not the bond of all *bonds*?" (*Money*, Paris Manuscripts. Original italics).

Money in various limited forms

existed for hundreds of years before the advent of capitalism but because it is an indispensable element in the workings of capitalism its general usage expanded universally with the development of that system.

For a start, it is the device whereby capitalism separates the worker from the fruits of his or her labour; an indispensable part of the process whereby a minority class of capitalists ration the consumption of the great majority who as workers of one sort or another produce all the real wealth of society.

Stock Exchanges

Real wealth, the essential goods and services used to sustain society, is not produced in Stock Exchanges. Stock exchanges are simply commercial casinos where capital is gambled on the products of labour. Not a single iota of the necessities of life is produced in these palaces of speculation nor in the board rooms of companies and corporations where production and distribution is planned solely on the basis of anticipated profit.

So money is at the core of human activity from the cradle to the grave. It dominates all of our lives and it is the master plan, the implacable, limiting paradigm, within which political parties administering the political and economic affairs of capitalism must work.

Within capitalism wealth is produced in the form of commodities, that is goods and services with a real or imagined use value produced for the market with a view to profit. This wealth is created, and can only be created by the application of human labour power to the resources of nature. In other words, the totality of real wealth is produced by the working class in exchange for a wage or salary that generally reflects

what may from time-to-time ensure to the individual worker a sufficient ration of those necessities of life that is consistent with the prevailing rate for his or her employment. Enough to allow for existence between pay-days but insufficient to allow the worker to live without continuing to sell his or her labour power.

We are not immediately concerned here with the fraudulent process by which the wages system works to ensure that those who produce wealth at best 'get by' while the non-producing class of capitalists accumulate greater and greater wealth.

Our intent, rather, is to look at the appalling waste capitalism's money system involves in both its productive and distributive processes; to look at the vast armies of wage and salary workers who spend their lives carrying out functions made necessary only by commodity production. Thereafter we might look briefly at how socialism would operate and how society would benefit from the monumental reduction of labour time and waste that would result from the direct production of human needs solely for use as opposed to the current system of production for profit.

The waste makers

Some appreciation of the extraneous functions that capitalism's buying and selling system involves can be gained from the movement of workers in towns and cities in the morning and evening of the 'working week'. Apart from the mass of shops and stores duplicating each other's activities in a competitive melée for sales, there are usually towering office blocks where masses of clerks and sales personnel work.

Banks, financial services, insurance offices, advertising agents, solicitors,

brokers, security staff, estate agents; check the functions of the masses of offices on the main arteries of any town or city and you will find the overwhelming majority of them pursue functions directly or indirectly concerned with trade or commerce or with other activities peculiar to a buying-and-selling economy. Indeed in many places today the number of workers 'servicing' capital and capitalism exceeds the numbers engaged in the actual production of goods and services.

Even the poverty that capitalism creates as a result of inadequate incomes, unemployment, sickness and infirmity has to be policed and serviced by vast numbers of people checking, spying, filing, form filling and forced to make brutal and dehumanising decisions. Not only are these multifarious functions wasteful and without a useful end product for those spending their lives performing them, but they in turn have to be transported, housed and provisioned by legions of other workers.

Then there is the crime business which apart from judges, lawyers and criminals engages tens of thousands of police personnel as well as prison staff. Crime in capitalist society is a vast business and like the rest of the enterprises created by capitalism has, in turn, to be provisioned by further extensive ancillary services.

The 'defence' industry

The so-called defence industry and its mammoth support services employs most of the world's scientists. These are usually highly specialised people employed in the business of devising ever more sophisticated means of slaughtering human beings or frustrating the work of other scientists rivalling their work for other governments. Worldwide, military establishments employ millions of men and women as armed forces as well as vast numbers of civilian employees while millions more are engaged in producing armaments and other needs of the killing industry. Additionally, of course, the activities of these military establishments foster imitative resistance, or terrorist movements which governments respond to with a financial priority beyond that of the social needs of their citizens.

The legend is that this vast vortex of destructive wealth exists for the defence of the citizen but the average citizen of one country does not threaten the average citizen of another country, the 'average citizen' of most of the developed world is a member of the working class who does not

possess anything that might encourage aggressive tendencies by those of similar status in another area of the world.

The truth is that armaments, armed forces, diplomacy and all the other things associated with war have nothing whatsoever to do with the working class and the problems of that class - other than the fact that it is workers who will do the fighting and the killing. Otherwise, the ordinary citizen is not consulted when alleged democratic governments decide to engage in armed conflict. Wars and the incredible destruction of human life and property are about the wealth of the capitalist class; in fact it is the predatory conflicts of the marketplace spilling over on to the battlefield.

An obscene aspect of the system of social organisation we are told represents the pinnacle of capitalist civilisation is the actual distribution of wealth globally and nationally. A United Nations report featured in the *Guardian* (6 December) reveals the depravity of the system by telling us that:

"The first ever study of global household assets shows that half of the world's adults own just 1% of the world's wealth while the world's richest 1% own 40% of all wealth."

This is why we have world hunger; why we have poverty and insecurity; why we have terrorism, wars, appalling social problems like alienation and crime and this is the justification for the frightening threat to our environment. This truly bears testimony to the utter absurdity of capitalism and the mode of life it imposes on society.

Socialism

The irony of capitalism is that it is maintained and sustained on the credulity and ignorance of its victims, the working class. Not only does the working class produce capitalism's vast wealth but it is conditioned by the existing educational processes, by the media and by politicians to believe that there is no rational alternative to the system of capitalism.

This does not mean that the workers are contented and docile or that they approve of the way capitalism functions. On the contrary, dissatisfaction and alienation are rampant. Resistance to wars and cynical, reckless market globalisation has become a universal protest against aspects of world capitalism and everywhere the value systems that maintained a quiescent working class are breaking down.

In the UK, for example, crime figures

soar, more than 80,000 people are in prisons in Britain and new prisons are urgently required. A large section of the population are on anti-depressants and, if the media tell it right, the use of hallucinatory drugs have reached epidemic levels. Vandalism and anti-social behaviour especially among the young evidence a marked degree of alienation and the escalation of the suicide rate, again especially among the young, demonstrates the lack of social cohesion within our rat-race society

Continually, the capitalist controlled media tells us that there is no poverty now and it is true that an explosion in productive capacity wrought by new technologies has banished much of the old hard-core destitution that was prevalent in the first decades of the last century. But poverty is a relative condition not a comparative one; it is an inevitable aspect of social inequality and has to be measured against prevailing conditions and relatively speaking poverty is still rampant even in the most highly developed nations of world capitalism

And whereas in the past the dispossessed could see hope in the massed political formations of Labour and Social Democratic parties and many were imbued with the belief that the Bolsheviks were building a future of hope, today those illusions have been banished by time and the realities of the system. The dream of applying rational solutions to the anarchy of capitalism and its wages and money system has been shattered.

Whether these illusions were part of a necessary process of social education is open to doubt but at least now we know from our experience that neither political parties nor armed insurrectionists can create a truly social democratic society while leaving the structures of capitalism like its money trick and its wages servitude intact. Today we have to face the fact that we live with capitalism and its appalling problems or move forward to its logical alternative: Socialism.

Socialism will be a system of social organisation that, by its nature, can only be brought about by overwhelming democratic consensus. It will involve the political disestablishment of the concept of ownership in society's means of life - the land and the instruments for producing and distributing all the things human beings need as the material basis of a full and happy life.

Essentially, socialism will be a voluntary association of free people cooperating in creating at regional and global levels the goods and services they need and availing of those goods and services as required.

Even such a brief statement clarifies the fact that all the wasteful functions we have referred to and which are essential within a market economy will disappear, freeing hundreds of millions of human beings from the demeaning servitude of functions associated only with the machinery used by our masters for our exploitation.

■ RICHARD MONTAGUE

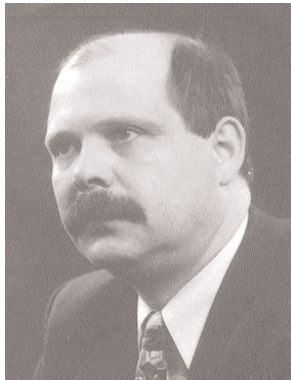


Illusionists

Beyond sectarianism

David Ervine, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for a loyalist area of east Belfast, who died in January, saw that working class Protestants and Catholics had both been conned.

Ervine recounted how in July 1972 as a young man on what came to be known as Bloody Friday he watched as the IRA carried out 22 bomb attacks in Belfast killing



innocent people and ripping the commercial heart out of the city. For him it was the final straw; he decided to join the protestant UVF then engaged in a sectarian war against innocent Catholics who it regarded as the soft underbelly of the IRA. Ironically, Ervine was reacting to the other side of the same politico-religious stimuli that had created the material basis for the emergence and recruitment of the Provisional IRA in 1970. His 'war' ended when he was caught ferrying a bomb and was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment.

David Ervine was a Belfast man from the east of the city, an area which in the sectarian demography of Belfast is mainly 'Protestant'. Though the area was heavily industrialised and the workforce was overwhelmingly Protestant and Unionist, the acres of mean back-to-back houses demonstrated the poverty of those who were fed the fiction that they were the special concern of the Unionist government.

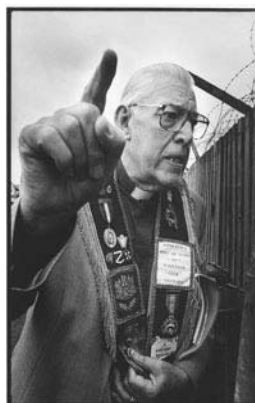
Some on the political Left tried to emphasise this point but the active political Left painfully avoided a class analysis of the local political situation - a failure which ultimately, in 1948, caused a split in the Northern Ireland Labour Party on sectarian lines. After that split, four Labour candidates in three overwhelmingly Protestant constituencies in east Belfast won seats in the Stormont parliament. Labour was by no means socialist but it represented the political philosophy of many on the Catholic side who thought it was, thus



exposing the nonsense that working-class Protestants would always support Unionism because they were 'a labour aristocracy'.

Capitalism had sundered any little sense of unity within the working class. Catholics and Irish nationalists, including Sinn Fein, reflecting the ignorance and bigotry of the Orange Order and the Left utterly failed to offer any real alternative to what was, and remains, a conflict of opposing capitalist nationalisms.

This was the world David Ervine was brought up in. In his early youth he might well have imbibed the dregs of bigotry and hatred and looked with deep suspicion on workers who were Catholics equally bigoted, equally embittered. He would have learnt from the demagoguery of Ian Paisley, then forging a rich fiefdom in bigotry, that the removal of the property qualification in the local government franchise, the establishment of a fair system of social housing distribution and the abolition of gerrymandered electoral constituencies would have been a defeat for his religion and his national culture.



Maybe he was caught up in the vibrant youth culture of the period; maybe he didn't give a damn but the combustibles of conflict were gathering and like many other working class young men and women on both 'sides' of the artificially-devised sectarian barrier he would become a victim of that conflict, condemned and criminalised by holy men and politicians and those who combined these functions and greatly enhanced their mean earning power.

To his credit, despite his experiences, Ervine rose superior to the politics of bigotry and hatred. In his wry way he was to show the extent of his learning when a few years ago he said publicly that he looked forward to the day when he and Gerry Adams could have a pint together. Those who know the territory will appreciate just how far David Ervine had come and the courage it took to voice such a sentiment.

On the evening of his death a camera crew visited a working class club Ervine frequented in east Belfast. The drinkers, Protestants to a man, praised Ervine, the loquacious peace monger, the man who told them that working class Protestants and Catholics had been conned. Specifically, he was praised as 'a socialist'. That he was not, but he was motivated by the same political honesty and concern for his class that motivates socialists; he had learnt to detest the political and economic realities of capitalism. The next step would have been an appreciation of the fact that the problems of his class, including the generation of division, were inevitable aspects of that system. ■

RM

Cooking the Books (2)



International non co-operation

In the December *Socialist Standard* we dismissed as quite unrealistic the claim put forward by Sir Nicholas Stern in his report to the

government on the economic impact of global warming that, despite measures to cut carbon emissions affecting the competitiveness of different countries differently, this "should not be overestimated and can be reduced or eliminated if countries or sectors act together".

Perhaps, if countries and sectors could be got to act together. But that's precisely the problem. Companies from different countries and within different sectors are in competition with each other for a share of world profits. It is not in their nature or interest to act together or let one of their rivals get a competitive advantage over them. If one country or company feels that the adoption of some measure would result in this they won't agree to it and will try to sabotage its adoption.

Stern's pet measure to try to reduce carbon emissions was not, as might be expected in view of how serious he says the problem is, coercive legislation to force companies to comply, but carbon trading, or the buying and selling of a decreasing number of permits to emit carbon dioxide. The EU has already established such a scheme which has been functioning, not too successfully, since 2005. It is due to be renewed, in theory in a beefed-up form, from 2008 for a further four years.

At the moment it is essentially only power stations that are covered but the EU Commission is now proposing to extend it to other sectors, including air transport. Under a draft proposal published on 20 December, as from 2010 airlines would be required to record their carbon dioxide emissions and from 2011 would either have to keep their emissions down below a set level or purchase permits to emit more. This would initially apply just to flights within Europe but from 2012 will be extended to all flights leaving or entering Europe.

The airlines are not happy (except with the rather generous levels of emissions permitted). British Airways says that applying the scheme to flights going outside Europe will undermine its competitiveness. A BA spokesman declared:

"It would disadvantage all EU long-haul carriers against their competitors around the world. All our flights would be covered but, for a US carrier, it would only be a small proportion" (*Times*, 16 November).

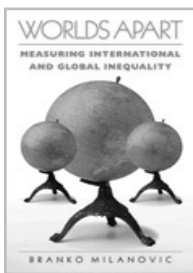
The Association of European Airlines predicted it would lead to "trade wars" while the US Air Transport Association said it "violated international law". The US association added that such a scheme was unnecessary anyway as airlines were already taking adequate steps to reduce emissions.

That's more like capitalism. Trade wars. International disputes. Denials that there's a problem. If Stern's warning in his report about what will happen if nothing or too little is done is not just scare-mongering, capitalism offers a truly disturbing future:

"Our actions over the coming decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century".

Unequally Poor

Branko Milanovic: *Worlds Apart: Measuring International and Global Inequality*. Princeton University Press £22.95.



How unequal is the world, and is inequality getting worse? Has globalisation increased or reduced inequality? These are some of the questions that Milanovic deals with here, but he starts by discussing how inequality should be measured.

Three different ways of doing so can be distinguished. The first is unweighted international inequality: examine the per capita income or GDP of a country, irrespective of its population. The second is population-weighted international inequality: do the same, but take account of the fact that different countries have different-sized populations. The third is world income distribution: measure the incomes of all individuals in the world. This last is the most informative, but it requires a great deal of information for every country, much of which is simply not available. So it is the first as well as the third concept of inequality that Milanovic makes use of. Even then, though, there are varying ways of quantifying inequality - but the contrasts between Gini coefficients and Theil entropy indices can probably be ignored for present purposes.

Between 1982 and 2000, unweighted international inequality increased, i.e. countries diverged in their economic performance, with poor countries doing on average less well than the rich. One interesting way of looking at events is to classify countries in terms of wealth (i.e. GDP per capita) and compare how they fared between 1960 and 2000. Milanovic divides countries into four groups in 1960: 41 rich countries (all at least as rich as the poorest country in Western Europe), 22 'contenders' (no more than a third below this poorest Western European country, and so within striking distance of joining the rich), 39 in the Third World (between one-third and two-thirds as well off as this same poorest Western European country), and 25 in the Fourth World (GDP per capita less than one third of the poorest country in Western Europe). By 1978, only three contenders had made it into the rich group, while eight rich countries had fallen into the class of contenders and three into the Third World. Of the Third World group, just two had become contenders and 14 had joined the Third World. None of the Fourth World countries had moved into a higher group. Between 1978 and 2000, a further eleven contenders had fallen into the Third World and two into the Fourth World. Milanovic gives a lot more figures, but it is plain that there was far more downward than upward mobility. Algeria, for instance, counted as a rich country in 1960, a contender in 1978, and a member of the Third World by 2000. Bulgaria was a contender in 1960, in the Third World in 1978 and the Fourth in 2000. In 2000 all African countries bar five were in the Fourth World: Milanovic refers to 'the unremitting downward mobility of the entire continent', a picture more or less repeated in

Latin America.

But of course this says little about the incomes of actual people, since even poor countries can contain rich individuals. This is where the third concept of inequality, world income distribution, comes in. In terms of purchasing power parity, the top 10 percent of the global population receives about half of world income. Between 1988 and 1993, the poorest 85 percent of the world saw their real incomes decline; things were not quite so bad between 1993 and 1998, except for the very poorest 10 percent.

Milanovic's book contains a lot more information that we can't summarise here. While all the statistics, tables and charts mean that it's often hard going, it certainly gives a vivid picture of the unequal condition of the world today, and the fact that things are not in the process of changing
PB

Land and liberty

Peter E. Newell: *Zapata of Mexico*. Freedom Press, £9.50.



The Mexican Revolutionary War which began in 1910 saw political power transferred from a reactionary military dictatorship allied to foreign capital to the liberal constitutionalists of the rising national bourgeoisie.

Zapata supported the overthrow of dictatorship but once this was achieved his Liberation Army of the South refused to disband until their primary objective had been fulfilled. That objective was the return of communal lands that had been appropriated by plantation owners during the period of dictatorship. The new government refused to redistribute land and so fighting continued for the rest of the decade until Zapata's peasant forces, a people in arms, could no longer maintain a guerrilla war against the larger and better armed government forces.

Zapata resisted entering the politics of the national government, though he encouraged the tradition of direct democracy in the communities he fought for. At the height of Zapatista military success they conquered the country's capital. When Zapata was invited to sit in the presidential chair in the National Palace, he is quoted as saying 'It would be better to burn it, for I have seen that everybody who has sat in this chair has become an enemy of the people'. Despite opportunity and popular support Zapata refused to install himself as national president.

Though Zapata's political writings and speeches are restricted to the aims of the revolutionary peasant army it is thought that he was influenced by the ideas of Ricardo Flores Magón, a Mexican anarchist who was then publishing a newspaper from the USA. The Zapatista slogan of *tierra y libertad* - land and liberty - was taken from Magón. However, the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* (House of World Workers), an anarcho-syndicalist industrial union founded originally by Magón, considered *Zapatismo*

to be reactionary. They opposed the peasants politically and militarily until increasing industrial action led to the new liberal government proscribing the union. Many members subsequently switched sides. Zapata did use the examples of the new governments repression of industrial workers as evidence of the counter-revolutionary nature of Mexico's new political leadership.

Zapata is not thought to have been religious, in fact he is said to have written 'ignorance and obscurantism have never produced anything other than flocks of slaves for tyranny', but he deplored the anti-clerical violence of the new liberal government which aimed to reduce the power of the churches. The banner of his 'Death Legion' depicted 'Our Lady of Guadalupe', a Mexican apparition of the Virgin Mary, above a skull and crossed bones.

Since the revolutionary war, inspired by the popular image of Zapata's heroism and virtue as a leader, rhetoric from anarchists to governments promising reforms have invoked the name of Zapata. Zapata has even appeared on banknotes. Newell's respected biography does not dwell on personality traits, military aptitude or leadership skills but describes the material history that produced Zapata, the revolutionary war and its outcome.

This republication of Newell's book of 1979 begins with a new introduction which relates Zapata to the contemporary *Zapatista* movement, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*. The book contains a list of sources, references, bibliography and internet links and an appendix which discusses the land question in greater detail.

PDH

Popular history

Keith Scholey: *The Communist Club Past Tense (c/o 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton St., London SE17 0AE), October 2006. £1.*

Stefan Szczelkun: *Kennington Park Past Tense*, June 2006. £1.

The Communist Club was the informal name under which German Workers Educational Association came to be known. Established in London in February 1840, as the name implies, the Association functioned mainly as an educational and social club for German workers in London. Usually meeting in rooms above pubs, the Association's first venue was the Red Lion pub in Great Windmill Street. Some of the same members were also involved with the Communist League, the organisation which commissioned Karl Marx to write the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847. The reading and adoption of the *Manifesto* probably happened at the Club's new premises in Drury Lane. The Club went on to play important roles in the Chartist movement, the First International, anarchism and socialism in Britain. In 1903 the Association now at Charlotte Street played host, in part, to the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The main outcome of this Congress was the emergence of Lenin's Bolshevik faction within the RSDLP.

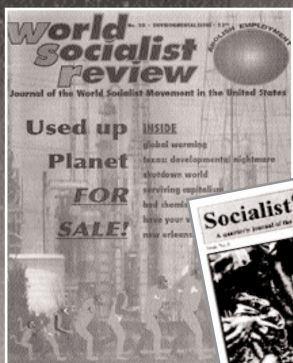
The Socialist Party had its first

headquarters at the Communist Club (June 1904 to September 1905) and often held its Annual Conferences and Quarterly Delegate Meetings there up to 1919. The Club was closed a few years later and the building was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. In view of its importance in the history of the British working class and the Socialist Party, it is to be hoped that a more detailed version of this short pamphlet will be forthcoming.

The subtitle of Szczelkun's pamphlet, "The Birthplace of People's Democracy," is something of a misnomer. The allusion is to Chartism. But the Chartist rally of April 1848, held at Kennington Park, marked the end of working class agitation for democracy in nineteenth century Britain. And this pamphlet contains other contentious statements. We are told, for example, that "History is not objective truth." Undoubtedly much history is written from a ruling class point of view, but this does not mean that an objectively true account of the past is unattainable. Presumably Stefan Szczelkun intends this work to be more than merely his point of view, particularly if he wants to persuade others about what really happened in the past. We are also told that "Socialist parties" (apparently including us) either considered working class culture to be a distraction or were active in encouraging our members to follow "middle class" forms of recreation (p. 14). Of course, the author provides no evidence for this preposterous assertion insofar as it refers to the Socialist Party. Apart from that, this work tells you all you could reasonably want to know about the history of London's Kennington Park.

There is much that is valuable in this short pamphlet and works like it. Both publications are produced in conjunction with the South London Radical History Group. It is part of the process of rediscovering the truth about what happened in the past in our localities, and forms an indispensable part of the struggle for our socialist future. Where is *your* equivalent?
LEW

World Socialist Literature



World Socialist Review: the journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States. £1.30 including postage.
Socialist Banner: the quarterly journal of the World Socialist Movement in Africa. £1.00 including postage.

From The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.
Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

The capitalist century, by a socialist journal. A running commentary of one hundred years of history - as it happened.

- Two World Wars
- Russian Revolution
- General Strike
- The rise of Hitler
- Spanish Civil War
- Hiroshima
- The Silicon Chip
- Pop music
- ...and much more



This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.
THE INDEPENDENT
A refreshing read...inspiring...a gem...
UNDERGROUND FOCUS

Available inland for **£9.95** (plus £2.00 postage) from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'



socialist standard socialist standard

- In depth
- In touch
- insight

www.worldsocialism.org

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX
An index of articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via www.worldsocialism.org

letters continued

In towns and villages outside the tourist areas is unusual to be offered bottled water at restaurants, coffee houses, bus station cafeterias and the like. Water comes in a jug from the tap. Village water here is clean, unadulterated and abundant. Many town-folk can be observed stopping at their favourite spring by the roadside to stock up with several days' supply of what is considered the best drinking water. In the towns where chlorine etc is used in the public supply local shops deliver large containers of natural spring water (the preferred option) to homes and businesses.

In our very local favourite restaurant which served water bottled by the Coca Cola Co. here in Turkey (acknowledged in letters so small as to require both good light and good eyesight to see it and which has been guilty of union-busting here too), we would ask for a jug of village water from the tap, - no Coca Cola bottled water for us thank you! Over time and with a few more Turkish lessons under our belt we painstakingly explained our position to a number of employees and to the owners. One tack they understood and warmed to was that there are a number of small local water bottling plants, soft drink manufacturers and fruit juice companies (for the environment generally speaking local is better than national and national better than international). Very soon we noticed the presence of a local company's bottled water on the tables in place of the earlier offence to the eye and the conscience. And my water from the tap now tastes even sweeter.

We've had similar results with another restaurant we patronise, up in the mountains by a fast-flowing river. All the food served here comes from within just a few miles and now that includes the bottled water too.

So, 2 down, 999,999 to go. A drop in the ocean? Yes. A message in a bottle? Maybe.
JANET SURMAN, Turkey.

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Early 20th Century South Africa
- Colonialism and Capitalism
- Religion, Race and Class
- Sharia Law in Nigeria
- Education system in Ghana
- Tribalism

Available from The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN. £1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Manchester Branch

Monday 26 February

RACISM

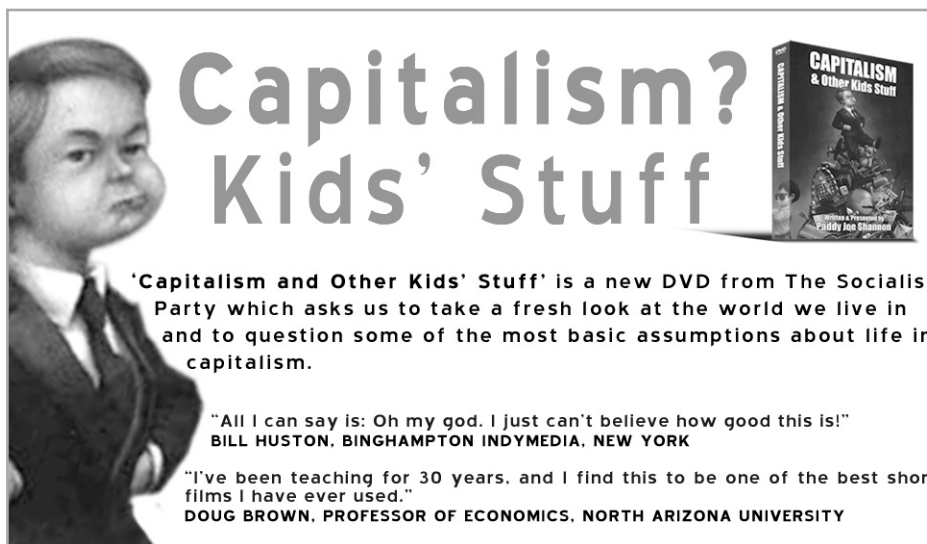
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
8.15

Central London

Sunday 24 February

THE REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Speaker: Pat Deutz
Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).



Capitalism? Kids' Stuff

'Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff' is a new DVD from The Socialist Party which asks us to take a fresh look at the world we live in and to question some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

"All I can say is: Oh my god. I just can't believe how good this is!"
BILL HUSTON, BINGHAMPTON INDYMEDIA, NEW YORK

"I've been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used."
DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Macmillan Must Go!



If we were Labour or Communist vote-catchers we would be campaigning for "Macmillan Must Go!" and telling anyone silly enough to believe it, how successful we had been with our last campaign for "Eden Must Go!"

Since the S.P.G.B. was formed in 1904 there have been ten such campaigns for getting rid of a no-good Prime Minister. There have been rather more than ten governments because some of them, after being pushed, pulled or squeezed out have managed to get back again. When we survey the list we marvel at the rich variety. Scots, English, Welsh, and half-American (Churchill); spellbinders like Lloyd-George, and others who didn't know how to gild the lilies of oratory; philosophical types like Balfour and Asquith and "plain, blunt men" like Baldwin; semi-Pacifists and war-mongers; business men and professional politicians; the

relatively poor and the passing rich; religionists and agnostics; aristocrats and commoners; Tory, Liberal, and Labour.



There are the differences: What of the similarities? They have all had a strange belief that the country was very lucky to have them at the helm. They have all come in generously promising how much better they will make life for the people and have all gone out little lamented.

And what difference has it made in the one thing that ought to be of paramount concern to the workers, the question of establishing Socialism in place of Capitalism? Just no difference at all. That job has yet to be done and it won't matter in the least whether the next Prime Minister who tries to administer Capitalism is Mr. G., or

Mr. B., Mr. X or Mr. Y.

("Notes by the Way" by H, *Socialist Standard*, February 1957).

Declaration of Principles

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.

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 organize 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.



The Trouble With Kelly

“During the 1997 election she was heavily pregnant, which must have been worth not a few votes to her”

There was a time when the Labour benches in the Commons were thickly strewn with men whose leathery skin and calloused hands told of a past as coal miners, dockers or shipyard workers. Let these men pin you in a conversational headlock and you were likely to be anaesthetised by reminiscences of picket-line battles, wage bargaining carried relentlessly into the small hours and parliamentary struggles over some unmemorable reform. All this flavoured with the defiant pride of someone describing themselves as self-educated, of drowsing over heavy tomes of history and economics while outside the dawn broke over the back-to-backs. If you were allowed a word in edgeways you might have been able to ask why such a background had failed to sensitise them to the waste of supporting the Labour Party style of trying to control capitalism in preference to that of the Tories. Such questions were unlikely to stem the flow of self-deception, or indeed to have been heard.



Well things have changed since then and those same benches are now peopled by a more furtive generation of Labour Members, although the divergence between their professed ambitions for a different society and their everyday support for their party of capitalism is as wide as ever. For example there is Ruth Kelly, one time Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Secretary of State for Education and Skills and now Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Kelly's skin is not roughened (unless it be through changing nappies among of her four children) and she was not self-educated for she went to exclusive private schools. A scarily responsive pupil, she graduated in Philosophy Politics and Economics at Oxford, then took an MSc in economics at the London School of Economics. A spell as an economics reporter for the *Guardian* was followed by another as deputy editor of the Bank of England quarterly inflation report. These excursions into the jungle of deluded "experts" did not deflate her ambitions and in 1997 she won Bolton West from the Tories - which of course meant that had to prove her demotic credentials by supporting Bolton Wanderers, just as Blair supports Newcastle and Mandelson used to support Hartlepool.

Promotion

When she was promoted to Education, after the sacking of Charles Clarke, Kelly was, at 36, the youngest ever member of the Cabinet by ten years. In fact she has a record of filling the shoes of fallen ministers. She was promoted at the Treasury into the job of the embarrassing Paul Boateng after patience with him ran out and he was shipped off to be High Commissioner for South Africa; her present job is a new ministry, created when John Prescott's standing descended into farce - not all of it due to his affair with his diary secretary - and he was relieved of responsibility for communities and local government. It seems that Kelly has been seen as a rare, highly prized, safe pair of hands. In more ways than one; during the 1997 election she was heavily pregnant with her first child, which must have been worth not a few votes to her. She has shown some ability to balance the demands of her job with the needs of her family, trying to restrict her working hours and when she was at the Treasury she refused to take home her red box. Tory MP Boris Johnson has declared the he admires "...the way she has managed to be a real person as well as succeeding in politics. She must be identical twins". It remains to be seen how much damage this endorsement from Johnson - who does not strive to be a real person - does to Kelly's career.

Opus Dei

While still in her thirties, Kelly conforms to some of the most desirable stereotypes in politics: female, well educated, experienced in journalism, banking and ministerial power. A busy, devoted mother. Not much else would be needed to make her eventually a strong candidate for Number Ten. Except that as she got into her stride as a minister the "not much else" began to look like a great deal by way of obstacles to her ascent of the greasy pole. Her time at Education was marked by trouble, over disputes such as replacing GCSEs and A levels and the plans to introduce trust schools. In one

clash with the NUT she was written down as the worst ever Education Secretary. An additional problem has been her possible membership of Opus Dei, a catholic pressure group the membership of which is by invitation only and which aims to promote catholicism on matters such as abortion. Kelly has always refused to discuss whether she is a member but she has conveniently avoided parliamentary votes on matters such as gay equality, she refused to work at the Department of Health because of her opposition to abortion and at the Department of International Development because of its encouragement of the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and Aids.

Rebels

And what of other issues on which Kelly, as a bright, heavily educated political leader, has expressed her views? She was a firm supporter of Identity Cards, in spite of all that that implies about a further assault by a growingly intrusive state on what are called civil liberties. She was a strong supporter of foundation hospitals, at a time when the "reconfiguration" of the NHS has provoked even the most robotic of New Labour acolytes - such as Hazel Blears and John Reid - into a rebellion, even if a modest one, against the closure of hospitals. Kelly was in favour of student top-up fees, although when she was Minister of State for the Cabinet Office she was involved in drafting Labour's 2005 election manifesto, when she may have noticed that the 2001 promise "We will not introduce 'top-up' fees and have legislated to prevent them" had been re-written as "The new proposals for higher education will...restore grants, and abolish upfront fees". Her support for the Iraq war was definite, although she would have known that it would be a struggle in which tens of thousands would be killed in the cause of protecting the interests of western capitalism in that oil-rich region and she could not have been so stupid and naïve as to believe that a stable, happy Iraq would quickly emerge from the wreckage there. All of these votes were motivated, not by any religious convictions but by what Kelly sees as her duty as a politician to stand for the interests of the British ruling class and so to assist in the continuation of the system of capitalism, with all the devastation it inflicts on the human race.

Dyslexia

Any doubts about Kelly's capacity for duplicity should have been stilled by the revelation of her choice of school for her eldest child, her only son, who is classified as having special needs because he is dyslexic. This lad has been attending the English Martyrs Roman Catholic School in Tower Hamlets, which is widely regarded as one of the strongest educational authorities in the country. Kelly has removed her son from that school on the grounds that it is unable to cater for his "particular and substantial learning difficulties". Instead he will be a boarder at the Bruern Abbey school, where the fees are £15,000 a year. The local authority does not agree with this move, saying that "We have a strong record in helping children with a wide range of learning needs to succeed". An OFSTED report on the English Martyrs in 2002 stated that "Pupils...with special educational needs make particularly good progress...The needs of these pupils are identified clearly. They are given work that is well matched to their needs and effective support in lessons so they make good, often very good, progress...The result of good teaching is that, by the end of Year 6, many pupils with special educational needs ...reach the nationally expected standard in English and mathematics".

Of course Kelly is not the only Labour leader to place their children at expensive private school. It may be that such schools do achieve to higher standards with their pupils but that is beside the point. For the vast majority of the working class - the people who are deceived by Labour promises about education, health, employment and so on - simply can't afford to place their children anywhere other than the state sector schools. The lesson of Ruth Kelly, her career and her son, is that capitalism sets different standards. The better, higher, standard is to be enjoyed by those able to afford it. The worse, lower, standard is for the rest, to be endured by them. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

Is This The Way In Amarillo?

"In March, 2005 a nuclear warhead almost exploded in Texas. The near miss accident occurred in Amarillo, when workers at the Pantex nuclear weapons plant bungled the dismantling of a W-56 warhead, a weapon 100 times stronger than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima during World War 2. Details of the averted catastrophe have been kept under wraps until last month, when the Department of Energy (DOE) fined the



Dismantling a W-56 warhead at Pantex

company that operates the plant, BWX Technologies, \$110,000 for safety violations. In a letter obtained by the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), technicians at the plant blamed the accident on severe working conditions, including mandatory 72 to 84 hour work weeks. One nuclear scientist told POGO that he "would not work on his car engine if he were fatigued from a 72-hour work week, and sure as hell would not work on a nuclear weapon." (*The Nation*, 18 December) \$110,000 fine is hardly reassuring but what is worse is the news that the plant has set its 2007 production aims for a 50 percent increase.

Viva Las Vegas?

The city of Las Vegas likes to promote itself as a tourist paradise of fun and entertainment, but there is another side to it. "This is a boomtown, but it is also scattered with signs of bust - namely homeless people. And the city is taking a hard line against them. With mixed success in the courts and on the streets, Las Vegas has tried sweeping away their encampments, closing a park where they hang out, making it a crime to feed them, even passing a ban on sleeping within 500 feet of faeces." (*Associated Press*, 18

December) The mayor has even proposed moving the homeless to an abandoned prison 30 miles outside the city. The area has a population of 1.8 million but has 14,500 homeless. The mayor may seem heartless, but capitalism is a heartless society.

Post Xmas Blues

At a time when many workers are reeling from credit card demands and other reminders of our debts it is heartening to know that this is not the fate of everyone. "Sales of high priced items such as designer shoes and celebrity jewellery are breaking records, while John Lewis's director of retail operations, Gareth Thomas confirmed that the department store group is poised to record its best-ever performance. ... Sales have been buoyed up by shoppers buying flat-screen televisions for second and third rooms. ... Mark Henderson, chief executive of tailor Gieves and Hawkes, said: "There is a definite return to formality and a flurry of sales of traditional dinner jackets starting at £1,200" (*Observer*, 24 December) Fellow workers, as you sit watching your third flat-screen television in your traditional £1,200 dinner jacket you must often reflect that capitalism isn't such a bad system after all.

New York, New York

"Food or rent? That is the daily choice faced by about 1.2 million of New York's 8.2 million people. Faced with that choice, mostly they pay rent and rely on emergency or charity food to survive, poverty activists say. ... Hunger is not unique to New York. More than 12 million households - or 35 million Americans - struggled with hunger in 2005, according to the US government. ... About 3,800 people were living on the streets in 2006, according to New York City statistics." (*Reuters*, 26 December) When Sinatra sang about "The City that never sleeps", he was telling the truth - it must be hard to sleep on the street with all that traffic.



The Insecure Society

In Dundee after the Second World War

the NCR company in Dundee employed over 7,000 workers, but over the years this has fallen to less than 1,500. So when Bill Nuti, the company's chief executive announced 14 months ago that he was "one million per cent committed to the Dundee operation" the remaining workers felt relieved, but capitalism doesn't work that way. "A total of 650 factory workers in Dundee were dismissed via transatlantic videolink by their American employer yesterday after being told that production was to be switched to cheaper plants overseas. Employees at NCR, which makes automatic teller machines, were summoned to a meeting at midday yesterday where amidst angry scenes, the job loses were announced by videolink by Bill Nuti, the company's chief executive." (*Times*, 12 January)



Priorities

Two items appearing in the same newspaper on the same day illustrate the priorities of British capitalism. "Patients face much tougher rationing of treatments and restricted access to breakthrough drugs if the Government does not rethink its plans for health spending, the NHS's treatment regulator has told *The Times*. Professor Sir Michael Rawlins, the head of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), cited treatments ranging from new life-saving drugs to free food for the elderly in nursing homes as examples of care that could suffer if ministers slowed the rate of spending, as expected." And ... "Tony Blair defended his policy of intervention and said that more money would have to be spent on the Armed Forces to improve conditions and equipment, enable Britain to stay a war-fighting power and face the threat of terrorism." (*Times*, 13 January)



Medicine or murder: no contest

Free lunch

by Rigg



ISSN 0037 8259