

socialist standard

July 2016
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



**The British
take 'their'
country
back...**

Plus 100
years of
(no)
socialism
in the
USA



**Sanders'
'socialism'
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socialist standard

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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.

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Let's really take control

SO, CONTRARY to what Cameron banked on and what Big Business wanted, Britain is to leave the EU. The Tory leaders of the Brexit campaign, experienced vote-catching politicians that they are, were able to convince enough workers, including many of the worst off, to carry the day.

Whether many of their voters believed their extravagant promises of a rosy future is another matter. Many would have been registering a protest vote against what global capitalism was doing to them. A vote for Remain would have been a vote for this to remain. Which, offered the chance to register an opinion, they could hardly have been expected to endorse. But if they really believed that the EU was responsible for their lot, they misidentified the culprit. As we said in our manifesto for the referendum, 'The problem is not the EU ... it's capitalism'. As capitalism will continue to exist after Britain withdraws so too will the situation they protested against.

While the promises of the Brexiters – more money for the NHS, a reduction in VAT, higher wages for the unskilled

– were the usual empty promises that politicians trade in, the dire predictions of the Remain camp were exaggerations designed to scare people into voting for them. It didn't work but nothing much will change. Big Business will be able to live with Brexit and adapt to it. They will want continued free access to the single tariff-free European market with common standards and will expect the government to negotiate this.

One of Brexit's more attractive slogans – in fact, minus the 'of our borders', its only attractive one – was 'take back control', with its suggestion that people should be in a position to control their destiny, a powerful appeal to people unable to control what global capitalism has done and is doing to them.

While, after Brexit, the British Parliament will regain its power to enact what laws it wants, this will prove to be more nominal than real. Governments cannot control the way the profit system works. It's the other way round. Governments have to adapt their policies to fit in with the economic laws of capitalism which dictate that making

profits has to take priority over meeting people's needs. Voters, parliaments and governments may propose, but capitalism disposes.

Brexit won't change this. It was the case before Britain joined the EU in 1973 and will be the same after Britain leaves in 2019. Those who were led to think that Brexit will allow them to control their destiny have been cruelly deceived.

Socialists have always wanted working people to 'take control' of their collective destiny. That's what socialism is all about. This is not possible under capitalism because it is a system governed by uncontrollable economic laws which impose themselves on people whatever they want or decide. The only way to take control ('back' is out of place since the majority class of wage and salary workers has never had any control) is to take control of the places where we work and where wealth is produced and run them for the benefit of all.

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Guns, Gays and the NRA

THE APPALLING murder last month of around 50 people in a gay club in Orlando may have passed from the front pages, but the ramifications are likely to linger on.

In the first place there is the shooting itself. The gun lobby, in a macabre way, continues to do well out of these massacres, and gun sales always spike in the days afterwards. The gun lobby argues that a lone 'whack-job' gunman won't get far shooting at people who are themselves armed and able to shoot back. Of course this is true up to a point, but this then implies that for maximum safety everyone should be armed, even school children. It's not hard to see what's wrong with this logic. The fact that everyone around you is tooled up like an extra from *The Wild Bunch* is likely to make you feel less safe, not more so. Society would be drunk with anxiety and nervous tension. Massacres could be sparked by cars backfiring. Bar and football fights like the recent Marseille riot would become Tarentino bloodbaths. Divorce would be by nine millimetre. Cities would be war zones which police would patrol in tanks and helicopter gunships. Students would wear Kevlar onesies and their teachers would look like Mad Max. Americans would be climbing the barriers en-masse to get into Mexico. Even the National Rifle Association would have a hard time describing *that* society as desirable, progressive and free. But hey, this is capitalism, don't complain, buy shares in Smith & Wesson.

Secondly, America is close to an election. This could be the tipping point Donald Trump needs to be tipped into the White House as panicky voters decide he and not Hillary is the man most likely to stick it to the Islamicists. Socialists don't expect much from capitalist puppets of any ilk, and we know that for all their big talk they never really accomplish anything because they have to take their orders from the market.

But it's never



encouraging when, in times of perceived crisis, populations choose to vote for a bully or an idiot.

Then there is the homophobia. The Orlando slaughter spotlights this egregious feature of Islam which is not confined to extremists but is pretty much endemic. In the days after the shootings some Moslem gays in America did try to speak up in solidarity with the LGBT community, but their problem is that they are despised by their own religion and so are caught between a rock and a hard place, unable to speak up for either religion or gay pride.

Western liberals who draw a discreet veil over Moslem homophobia, sexism and.. well...veils, really deserve to have their cowardly arses kicked. Like Jainist monks determined to cause no harm, they cause harm by proxy, refusing to take any kind of stand or defend those who need defending. At the same time, moderate Moslems need to confront their religion's endemic sexism and homophobia if they want to see any real integration in advanced capitalist societies, which is after all where the money is. Perhaps Orlando is a watershed moment, after which the fire-breathing imams will not dare to open their bilious mouths and pour further scorn on a community which now has 49 bona fide martyrs. But that's a fond hope. No such reservations bothered the 'reverend' Pastor Roger Jimenez of the Westboro Baptist Church, who complained in a sermon that the shooter hadn't killed enough of these 'pedophiles' and expressed the hope that the government would round up the rest and 'blow their brains out'. In many countries you would be arrested for saying such a thing, but apparently it's ok if you say it from a pulpit in the name of the Lord.

Gay people continue to be persecuted, beaten, raped and murdered almost routinely in many parts of the world, sometimes allegedly in order to 'cure' them. Homosexuality remains outlawed in 80 countries and is a capital crime in five of them. Even in western countries, where the gay-bashers of the 1970s have mostly died, retired or rotted away in prison, gays still have reason enough to feel insecure. The law makes 'hate speech' an offence, but it can't legislate homophobia away. Conversely, state tolerance of gays is just about the *only* reason anyone would want to go and live in North Korea.

Of all the absurd prejudices workers have – many of which actively prevent socialist revolution – homophobia makes possibly the least sense. Why would a heterosexual resent someone whose orientation makes them *less* of a direct competitive threat? Historically it makes no sense either, since homosexual

behaviour has been documented throughout human history and is also known to occur among dolphins, raccoons, lions, giraffes, cats, dogs, chimps, bison, bears, horses, elephants, marmosets, foxes, koalas... to say nothing of the many bird, fish, reptile, amphibian and insect species.

In short, rather than homosexuality being 'unnatural' as the gay-haters claim, it is homophobia which is unnatural and which needs explaining.

One can speculate how homophobia could have developed and become engrained into the moral and religious codes of many early agricultural societies (China being an interesting exception). If life in the Iron Age tended to be nasty, brutish and short, with high mortality due to warfare, disease and bad diets, there would have been an urgent need to breed new soldiers, farmers and child brides. Those displaying prime breeding attributes would gain high status while homosexual behaviour could be seen as letting the side down. Over time this view could have become encoded into religious teaching and 'sacred' texts which came to global prominence in the Middle Ages, where many people still live.

In modern times, however, we have science. What does the science say?

Nothing definitive. The best guess is that homosexuality is a by-product or side-effect of heterosexuality, caused by wandering ratios of male and female sex hormones. This would explain why many people see themselves not as either/or but somewhere on a 'gay-straight gradient'. What exactly is going on at the genetic level is hard to say, because cause and effect are almost never one-to-one but many-to-many, creating a cascade of complexities whose decipherment proceeds at a glacial pace. Moreover nobody is in much of a hurry to study homosexuality because of the political and ethical concerns, and because real diseases are more pressing.

Even if it's a side-effect, it doesn't matter much. Animals are full of bodes, accidents, redundancies, 'design' flaws and downright mistakes which give die-hard Creationists the night sweats but don't bother biologists. Things don't survive because they are fit and flawless – they survive if their flaws don't matter. Homosexuality doesn't matter to evolution, any more than it matters to socialism.

For socialists, homophobia is like any other irrational hatred that divides the working class so that it is too weak to challenge the dominance of the ruling elite. While the poor tear at each other's throats, the rich are laughing at all of us.

What kind of revolution?

Dear Editors,

Your article on the General Strike weapon (May *Socialist Standard*) whilst informative and useful is quite faulty on a few key points. First, you grossly underestimate and demean the importance of workers' class consciousness growing, which set the basis of the workers' advances from mere legal/truncated trade/craft union actions. General strikes tend to move affected parts of the class and allies to more militant, anti-capitalist wider fightback and their own demands and build socialist clarity.

Second, you contradict, by your own emphasis on narrow parliamentary activities that many advances to General Strikes also incorporate political trends and tendencies, socialist work, and getting a favourable and influential hearing from masses of active/combined workers. The workers in combined actions, working, co-operating, in spreading support bring more workers to see in reality the latent power of their own class unleashed from capitalism's legalist jails and electoral illusions, and raising the needed spirit of organizing as a wider, united class against waged slavery and capital's wider hegemony over society . . .

Third, you try to separate, almost with a Chinese wall, almost the whole economic struggle from the political conflict with capitalist rule. In fact at whatever the level of struggle, class conflict needs to raise both fronts of battle to the fore, in the terrain of the workers' lives for them to strengthen their educating and organizing as a class against the bosses rule economically and through the capitalist state machine monopoly of controls.

There is no guarantee of immediate advance to revolution and workers taking the power. But the training of industrial and bona fide socialistic political education and action raises the workers to be serious challengers to the rule of the bosses dominance, exploitation robbery, racism and wars.

In your snipes on the 'Soviets', (Books, April *Socialist Standard*), the workers' councils advanced struggles, your prejudice against mass combined industrial political tactics leads you to distort the history of the workers' councils risings. Your assertion that workers councils just arise 'spontaneously' and in less developed countries is flat out wrong! The workers' councils did not just step into history in 1905 and 1917 in Russia, but also in rebellion to the imperialist World War 1 in advanced industrial nations as Germany, Austria and Italy, etc and played a huge role in forcing the bourgeois rulers to halt the carnage of WW1 and both the workers, as large sections of the armed forces in councils rebelled against the continuing barbarism and after. That their efforts went furthest in Russia but could not advance to full socialism is hardly the western workers/farmers fault. Given the amount of repression, counter revolution, isolation, capitalist intervention and blockades and state capitalist controls resulted in the defeat of the huge revolutionary waves by the early 20s.

In Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, etc the workers' councils had not the time to deepen political understanding assisted by their new Marxist revolutionary parties like the experienced Bolsheviks, as had happened in Russia. The Western European workers' councils, soldiers/sailors and workers included strong influences of reformists, careerists and fakers in addition to harmful influences of nationalist reaction too. Thus these councils occupations, mass actions, general strikes and near civil war did not achieve the tactical and strategic clarity they had in Russia, at least for a few years. Also, as a result of illusions in bosses 'democracy' and slick parliamentary facades, followed by political division, repression, and isolation, their diffuse attempts to establish workers rule were defeated by the ruling exploiter classes.

Finally, is it not at least a tad of wooden and ossified thinking for you to say that the workers' councils (albeit in different forms and experiences) cannot again emerge in countries like the UK


or the USA, etc., especially in periods of capital's crises/plunder that will probably be even deeper, bloodier, more global in scope?

NEIL CHERTCORR (by email from USA)

Reply:

1. We don't see how, in pointing to the limitation of the general strike as a working class weapon, we are demeaning anything. General strikes are sometimes necessary to defend workers' wages, working conditions and the right to organise. As with all strikes, some you win, some you lose. The 1926 British General strike was a failure. It did lead to a move away from relying on industrial action towards political action but reformist political action via the Labour Party. The 1968 French General Strike was a success in terms of improving wages and conditions but, from your standpoint, was no doubt a failure as it did not lead to overthrow of capitalism. But that was never the aim and, if it had been, would not have succeeded given, despite the high degree of trade union consciousness, the lack of majority socialist consciousness amongst workers and the fact that the state machine was controlled by pro-capitalist elements. As we said, general strikes are ok as a weapon of the defensive class struggle under capitalism but not as a weapon to overthrow capitalism. The syndicalists are wrong about that.

2. You seem to think that we are opposed to workers organising in the workplace and in communities. We are sure this will happen alongside direct political organisation once the movement for socialism develops, but, as with the general strike, we don't see these being able to overthrow capitalism in the absence of majority socialist consciousness and independently of political action using the electoral system to win control of state power (of which 'parliamentary activities' will be marginal and mainly propagandistic). Those councils you mention (apart from the factory councils in northern Italy which were part of an industrial dispute) came into being in autocratic dynastic empires which had collapsed under the impact of WW1. They were substitutes for local councils and, as you yourself point out, in Germany reflected the view of most workers that the aim should be political democracy not socialism. As to Russia, we don't see what happened there as an example to be repeated – or likely to be – where an 'experienced' vanguard party rode to power on the basis of popular discontent over the war and shortages, using the 'soviets' as a cover and then, once in power, emasculating them – *Editors.*



Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory

The Socialist Standard examines their case

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Halo Halo

God, Broadband and Buddhists

BACK IN November David Cameron pledged that by 2020 every home in the UK would have access to fast broadband, although there was some doubt as to whether this could be achieved.

Now, however, the Church of England has come to his aid and is to allow some of its churches to have their spires adapted as broadband beacons bringing broadband access to the approximately one million homes in remote or rural areas of the UK still without it (*Guardian* 17 May).

We don't have the full details of God's involvement or his IT expertise yet, but think of the possibilities. Gone will be the hassle of using that old technology where you had to get on your knees to pray whenever you wanted to contact the Almighty. Now (as long as heaven has a reliable connection) you will have direct access to God whenever you want, and from the comfort of your own home or laptop.

Hopefully Judaism and Islam will modify their synagogues and mosques to operate a similar service for Jews and Muslims,

and all the smaller, independent gods will get in on the act too. Assuming all areas of heaven have the necessary technology and are aware of the marvels of Skype, everyone down here will be able to enjoy a face to face discussion, confession, or whatever, with the god of their choice, whenever they want.

One advantage is that by allowing us to see what God gets up to in heaven it may put an end to all that bickering about which god is the best: well, nearly all the bickering, Zen Buddhism may still present a bit of a problem.

It's like this. Although Buddhists appear to be mainly inoffensive ex-hippies whose only concerns are meditating and not stepping on beetles, some Christians are concerned about what they actually believe in. They may not sacrifice babies to Beelzebub, but they don't have a bible, they don't have a god, and to be honest, they don't appear to be in any kind of hurry to get one.

And according to another *Guardian* report (18 May), this is causing a bit of friction at York minster where some evangelicals have been complaining that Zen Buddhism just isn't Christian enough.

What has happened is that for the past two years, much to the annoyance of the regular users, Zen Buddhists have been meeting in the cathedral precinct every two weeks for 'silent meditation' sessions. These were set up by the canon chancellor of the minster who himself practices Zen meditation, describes himself as 'religiously bilingual' and admits that 'there are those who think I'm an out and out heretic'. 'There is a recognized phenomenon now' he said, 'called "dual religious belonging" where people have a foot in more than one religious camp'. Well, if religion is all it's cracked up to be what's wrong with having two, or more, different ones?

Christian Concern however, the conservative evangelical organization, are wary about putting their feet anywhere where the Buddhists have been meditating. 'The archbishop of York must take swift action' said one member of the Church of England's general synod, 'this type of confusion undermines the Church of England's current initiative to encourage Christian prayer'. Don't know how you're going to sort that one out God, have you tried teaching them to love their neighbours? **NW**



cooking the books

No basic change

IN JUNE Swiss voters – they get the interesting things to vote on – rejected a proposal to introduce a basic income from the state for everyone as of right whether they are working or not. Perhaps surprisingly, only 23 percent voted for with an overwhelming 77 percent against.

According to the *Times* (6 June), critics denounced the proposal as a 'Marxist dream'. We don't think Marx did dream of a basic income. What he had in mind was the abolition of the wages system and its replacement by 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'. This would mean that, after cooperating to produce things and provide services, people would have free access, without having to pay, to what they needed to live and enjoy life.

The voters were asked to decide only on the principle of introducing an unconditional universal basic income without any mention of its level. However, its promoters such as BIEN Suisse did publicise a figure of 2,500 Swiss francs a month, or 30,000 a year, an amount just slightly above the

poverty line in Switzerland.

In previous articles analysing Basic Income schemes we have always pointed out that this would result in a strong downward pressure on wage levels resulting eventually in a fall in wages. As we wrote when the Green Party included this measure in their manifesto for the 1987 general election:

'If wage or salary earners are paid £100 a week by the government, they can use this income to maintain themselves; which means that the employer will be relieved of having to include an amount to cover this expenditure in the wage packet or salary cheque. Economic forces will therefore tend to ensure that wages and salaries fall to a level which, when added to Basic Income, will allow the employee to maintain him or herself. In other words, wages or salaries would become sufficient only to top up Basic Income to the economically determined level' (*Socialist Standard*, September 1988).

The Swiss proposers of the scheme didn't even bother to argue against this. Not only did they accept it but they incorporated it into their scheme. In an article in French costing the scheme on the website of Génération RBI (Generation Unconditional Basic Income) they emphasised, with graphs and numerical examples, that everybody

earning more than the poverty line would be no better off financially as, they said, their wages would be reduced by the amount of the Basic Income:

'Wages are going to adapt themselves to become a complement to Basic Income. For example with an Unconditional Basic Income of 2,500 Swiss Francs, someone who at present gets 8000 Swiss francs from their employer will not get more than about 5,500 or so wages which will come to be added to their Basic Income' (<http://rbi-oui.ch/laboratoire-sur-le-financement-du-revenu-de-base-inconditionnel/>).

So their total income would be the same, only under their scheme, instead of all of a worker's total income coming from their employer, a part would come from the state and a part from their employer. This would not be a subsidy to employers (another danger of such schemes) as taxes on employers would be increased to pay for this. And of course a basic income equal to the poverty line is neither going to undermine the wages system nor break the link between work and consumption, as other supporters of such schemes have argued.

We commend them for their honesty and logic at the expense of the credibility and attractiveness of their scheme to reform capitalism.



European Union? Civil War?

HAVE YOUR Say was the advice we were bombarded with from both sides in the European Referendum. Meanwhile the argument which raged between the factions Remain and Leave was not just between the main parties; in the case of the Tories the internal rift was sufficiently bitter to be dubbed a 'civil war'. There was no concealing the fact that the conflict was central to the competing ambitions of Cameron and Boris Johnson, with the prize being Number Ten Downing Street. In a TV clash between a group of Front Bench MPs, Labour's Angela Eagle blasted Johnson that his group's campaign bus was touring the country flying a slogan that membership of the EU involved a British payment of £350 million a week, although a clutch of financial experts were definite that this figure was an exaggeration. So Johnson should ensure, Eagle raged, that it was removed from the streets. Another participant helpfully suggested that the figures Number Ten, illustrating Johnson's inflating ambition, should be on the bus in place of that £350 million. Johnson's response was to slip his hand into his breast pocket.

John Major

At the same time Cameron condemned the Tory Brexit argument about the cost of EU membership as '...perpetuating an economic con-trick on the British people', part of an intention to be 'reckless and undemocratic in failing to outline an economic plan for Britain outside of the EU'. On the matter of tricking the voters, Cameron should be reminded that from the security of his personal wealth he has



led a government which will go down in history for its policies of depressing the living standards of masses of desperately impoverished people – a reality which justified a Eurosceptic MP in his party

describing his latest move as 'crass' and 'a slap in the face'. A similarly gruesome incident in the civil war was when ex-Prime Minister John Major, who occasionally appears in public exuding a sleek self-satisfaction, sneered at Johnson as a 'court jester' who was running a campaign which in its false claims about the levels of immigration was 'squalid... deceitful... depressing' - adjectives which could well have been applied in relation to the policies of the Thatcher government of which Major was so prominent a member that Thatcher favoured him as her most favoured successor.

Meanwhile there was no need for concern about Boris Johnson's ability to defend himself in the Brexit trenches. On one of the main matters of the Referendum he warned that David Cameron '...can't be trusted on immigration' and that his regular promises to cut immigration were 'deeply corrosive of popular trust in democracy'. This attack on Cameron would have been more impressive if Johnson had been able to support it with an explanation of why, and how, he had so recently been so firm a supporter of him from the vantage point of his Mayoralty of London and as a Member of Parliament.

Erotica

Among the less publicised supporters of Leave was Andrew Rosindell, the Tory MP for Romford. This is a seat he first took in the 2001 election – one of the few to be won back after the 1997 Labour landslide. Part of his campaign then was to parade Spike, a Staffordshire bull terrier, wrapped up in a Union Jack. During the next three elections, with the help of Spike, he increased his majority. Rosindell is one of Parliament's natural Right Wingers. Among other things he was a member of the Monday Club, until Iain Duncan Smith forced him to resign; he is a supporter of the death penalty; he expressed 'huge admiration' for President Pinochet; in 2015 he introduced a Ten Minute Bill aimed at enforcing control over British borders with the European Union. A less publicised feature of the career of this 'flag fanatic and super patriot' was in 2010 when he sponsored a fund-raising dinner at the House of Commons for what was known as Erotica House – an 'adult entertainment show' – followed by a dinner when it was obligatory to wear 'kinky fancy dress' (it is not known whether this requirement extended to any of Spike's friends). Erotica Ltd is based in Romford and is owned by one of Mr Rosindell's wealthy supporters.

Michael Gove

Less arousing than Rosindell and his dog was Michael Gove, Minister of Justice, one-time close friend and neighbour of Cameron, who took a key role in spouting the case for leaving the EU, spiced with some typical Gove phrases. For example he



condemned Cameron and his supporters for 'scaremongering', of treating the British people like '...mere children, capable of being frightened into

obedience by conjuring up new bogeymen every night'. Gove has had a varied career; there was a time when he might have been within reach of the party leadership but a very public clash with Theresa May caused him to be pushed down the Greasy Pole until his promotion to the Justice Ministry, which led to him becoming one of Boris Johnson's leading supporters in Leave. He was so keen on this that he was encouraged to reveal that he came from a family of North Sea fishermen, with all that implies by way of hard work in tough conditions. In response a leader of the Labour Party Remain group, Alan Johnson, blasted Gove's speech as 'bluster', part of his need to '...wish away reality but the truth is very credible'. Alan Johnson is no stranger to the stresses of politics; at a time when the Labour Party was in one of its spells of deeper disarray he was unwise enough to take on the job of Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer only to be rapidly removed from it. He is however a renowned electioneer, which gave a particular force to his dismissal of Gove.

Have Your Say was the official advice from both sides in the Referendum. A hopeful change from the usual electoral dictate amounting to Shut Up, Believe What We Say And Vote Likewise. Which missed the fact that in this matter as in all others there was nothing to choose between the variously competing groups, even when they themselves were in such confusion. Why should anyone have supported any of them? The EU battle exposed the essential cross-party unity of capitalism's politics, designed to defend and promote this class society and its inhumane divisions.

IVAN

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North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: 020 7609 0983 chris.dufton@talktalk.net

South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

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SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksr@worldsocialism.org 07973 142701.

South West regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat of even months. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane

Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. 0117 9511199.

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

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

East Anglian regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat. on alternate months (see 'Meetings' for details). Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billerica, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com. David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccleson-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.

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Population: what explosion?

MANY DOOMSDAY predictions are cited to express the urgency of the 'problem' of population growth. It is commonly held that reducing the population levels provides a partial solution to poverty, while some environmentalists consider the population problem as one of the most pressing ecological problems. The over-population argument is simple. Global population is 7 billion today. It will rise to 9 billion (or whatever) by X year. The planet cannot support this size population. Disaster will loom. Thus reducing the global population growth rate is crucial if disaster is to be avoided. But is there an overpopulation crisis? For sure, world population has risen over the past century from 1.6 to 7 billion and the problem of overpopulation appears to exist in large parts of the world where people are subjected to famines and disease.

Population projections are determined basically by the number of children women bear. The number of children a woman of child-bearing age will have during her lifetime over the last half-century has fallen from 4.91 to 2.36. In order to replace herself and her husband, a woman must have two children, plus a bit more on average to make up for women who never give birth and for children who die. In most of the advanced economies, the rate is 2.1. According to Joseph Chamie, a former director of the United Nations Population Division, historic declines in fertility rates is occurring, resulting in a halving of the world's average rate to 2.5 births per woman in virtually every country. 75 countries, or close to half of the world's population, are experiencing fertility rates below the replacement level and by mid-century that number is expected to nearly double, reaching 139 countries and by the end of the century, it will be 184 countries with the global fertility rate falling below two births per woman.

But why is global population still climbing? Because of lifespan.

John Wilmoth, director of the population division at the United Nations, explains that the decline in child mortality and increased life expectancy are the primary reasons for the population growth. Since 1960, longevity has increased almost 50 percent, from low 50s to nearly 70 globally. But it is not at the beginning of the lifespan where the

problem is found, for although children consume without producing, they are the future who will build their communities and the world. They represent future production that outweigh their current consumption. The problem is either voluntarily or out of sheer necessity, old people cease to produce, but they do not cease to consume. In fact, their consumption of resources, such as in health care, increases.

Environmentalists should ask themselves, what will be the solution if people reject socialism as the answer? Is it the euthanasia of the elderly and the culling of babies?

The EU Commissioner for Justice, Franco Frattini pointed out in 2007:

'In spite of the recent enlargement, which has pushed the EU's total population up to some 490 million, the number of people living in the EU is set to decline in the next few decades. By 2050 a third of them will be over 65 years of age. Labour and skills' shortages are already noticeable in a number of sectors and they will tend to increase. Eurostat's long-term demographic projections indicate that the total population is expected to decline by 2025 and the working age population by 2011.'

Italy's health minister, Beatrice Lorenzin, commented after the news that the country's birth rate – 8.4 per 1,000 people

– is its lowest since the foundation of the modern state in 1861. 'We are at the threshold where people who die are not being replaced by newborns. That means we are a dying country.'

Italy is not the only European country facing a population in decline. Germany has fewer children than any other country in Europe. The lower number of young people in Europe could put its social systems under strain in the future because there will be fewer taxpayers to fund care for the elderly.

The percentage of over 65s in the total population has doubled in France between 1901 and 2005 and nearly trebled in the UK. Europe faces the 'profound structural challenge' of almost half its population being aged 50 or over by 2050, according to Eurostat. Dr. Robin Niblett, the director of the think-tank Chatham House, said that significant net migration is necessary to keep worker-dependency ratios across the EU at their 2010 levels. In order to keep the workforce at its 2010 level, total Europe-wide immigration of 25 million is required by 2020.

The anti-immigration lobby should ask themselves how they will reverse the population declines if they reject the idea of a world without borders. Is it to turn women into baby-making machines?

ALJO



Too many birthdays?

The World Socialist Party of the US turns 100

It is now just a century since the WSP established itself in the USA. Other such organizations arose at about the same time in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, from similar circumstances: SPGB comrades became world travelers to escape conscription in The Great War, spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism as they went. In the Twenties and Thirties these early parties took steps to form what we now call the World Socialist Movement.

In Detroit, Michigan, British 'slackers' Moses Baritz, Adolph Kohn and others conducted a series of classes on Marxian theory at Duffield Hall. Out of these classes, some 43 individuals, 19 of them belonging to the Michigan section of the "Socialist" Party of America (SP of A), held a conference on 7 July 1916 at which they voted to form a revolutionary socialist party based on the SPGB's object and principles. They chose to name the organization The Workers' Socialist Party, since the SP of A objected to 'Socialist Party of the U.S.'

Among these original founders of the WSP(US) were Bill Davenport, its first Secretary; Bill Gribble, a Canadian, its first Organizer; Isaac Rabinowich, usually called simply 'Rab,' around whom Boston Local was to form; and Walter Green, influential in establishing a Local in New York.

With the infamous Palmer 'Red raids' of 1919, the group felt it prudent to reincarnate themselves as the Socialist Education Society. Not till 1931 did the SES Locals in Detroit, New York and Boston reconstitute the Workers' Socialist Party.

Two good sources for early WSP history are Bill Jerome's in the *Western Socialist* (No 4, 1966) and more comprehensive account, *Role-modeling Socialist Behavior: The Life and Letters of Isaac Rab*, by his grand-daughter Karla Rab (November 2010 (Lulu.com); available on Amazon.com) from which much of this present article is drawn.

The Thirties, Forties and to some extent the Fifties were the years of greatest sustained activity for the WSP(US). During WWII, many comrades were drafted, and Party Rules prevented members of the Armed Services from being in the organization; but when draftees returned, they usually rejoined. It was a time of 'keeping the 'social' in 'socialism' as some comrades put it: party socials at Headquarters and in comrades' homes were almost weekly events.

In 1947 the *Workers' Socialist Party* became the *World Socialist Party*, thanks to a push from the trotskyite 'Socialist Workers Party. The postwar 'anti-communist' hysteria brought a McCarthyist makeover of the Palmer period; it was, if possible, still more artificially contrived — but with the same chilling effect. The WSP's activities drew fewer newcomers as a result. There were enough comrades to keep

things going, although membership was declining.

SPGB Comrade Gilbert McClatchie (Gilmac) paid his first of many visits to the USA in 1954. He got to meet East Coast comrades in Boston, and also visited California on that trip.

Out West, Jack MacDonald was propagating socialist ideas from his bookstore in San Francisco; other Canadian expatriates, like Bill Hewitson (Winnipeg) also turned up in California over the years.

In Los Angeles, W.Z. Miller, Frank Neale, Fred Evans, Walter Henderson and others had formed a Local, sometimes meeting in MacArthur Park. Bill Pritchard, one-time editor of the *Western Clarion* and a famous co-defendant at the Winnipeg General Strike trial who tied up the proceedings

with an epic filibuster, was to become involved with Local Los Angeles as well. A member of the old Socialist Party of Canada (but who left the socialist movement when that SPC expired in 1926), Pritchard found his reputation had preceded him; he was allowed to stay in the U.S. after 1938 on a promise *not* to 'join any organizations.' And he kept a low profile until the Sixties, when he officially joined the WSP and began writing articles for the *Western Socialist*. (In 1939 the 'new' SPC had moved the *WS* to Boston to evade the wartime censorship.)

During Gilmac's later visits and those of other British comrades following his example, comrades in Boston and elsewhere were always able to arrange speaking opportunities for them, often on the radio where there was good

exposure. Cyril May, Jim D'Arcy, Adam Buick (who spent ten weeks with the Boston members in 1964, including an excursion up to the SPC's Toronto and Montreal Locals) and many others came and took advantage of American propaganda opportunities during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Tony Turner also visited, following his resignation from the SPGB.

By 1966, Johnson's escalation in Vietnam was reaping the whirlwind in the form of a vociferous and growing anti-war movement, adding to the Civil Rights struggle already engulfing the Establishment. An ongoing debate arose within the party around how to respond to the Civil Rights movement: of course, the right of African Americans to vote was a cause that socialists must support — but was the fight for civil liberties ultimately just an attempt to make capitalism work better? Broadly speaking, Rab argued, it was not, but the drive to establish equal rights for all before the law *was* essentially a reform, because it did nothing for establishing *real* equality among all people. It was an illusion to think Black capitalists had common interests with Black workers.

Internally, the party was having a hard time finding



members to carry out basic administrative tasks, but it was forging ahead again: a minor renaissance was taking place, with membership growing during the late Sixties in both numbers and enthusiasm. Promising new members like Bill Jerome and Steve Butterfield (who wrote as Stan Blake) joined the party. Both wrote for the *Western Socialist*.

Enough new members joined in the Boston area to revive the LAC, or Local Administrative Committee, which consisted

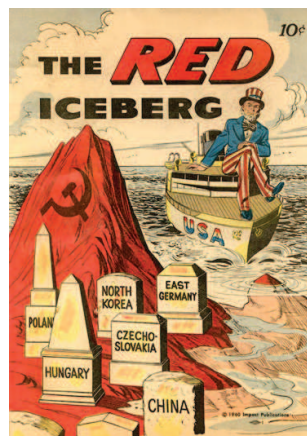
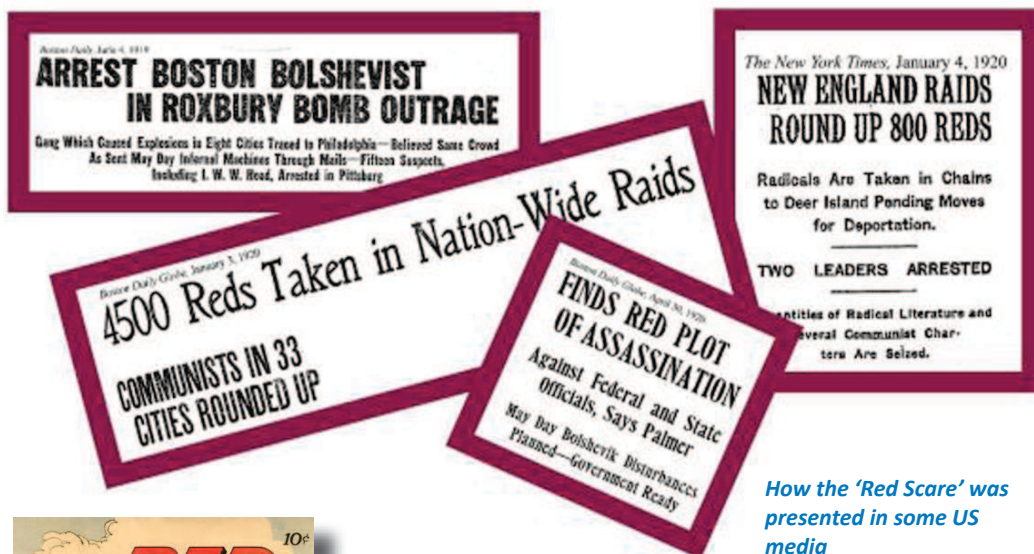
important tasks were not yielding expected results.

By the late Sixties, most party activity was occurring in Boston. New York Local, which in the early years had been the center of activity, had lost its fire. Years went by when no new members joined. Even Sam Orner, an old Wobbly who had led the 1937 taxi drivers' strike, could no longer inspire anyone apart from his family to join the struggle for a better world. Orner argued that New York Local was not adequately publicizing its existence, but his was a voice in the wilderness.

The mid-Seventies brought one golden moment: PBS Channel 44 offered a half-hour of prime time free on 'Catch 44' to any community group requesting it. The party jumped at the chance, producing three videotaped segments. The first two used a "talking heads" format; the third was a dramatization.

By the end of the 70s, Local New York was defunct. Local activity

in Boston was dwindling, too. The World Socialist Party (US) now found itself a party of members at large, placing its organization on a tenuous national basis for the first time in its history. In fact, it was a member at large who did arguably more work for socialism than any other American comrade during that period. Starting in 1976, Sam Leight, a real estate broker in Tucson, Arizona ran a series of radio broadcasts from which he generated two books: *World Without Wages (Money, Poverty and War!)* and *The Futility of Reformism*. (Earlier, Leight had also participated in the NAC as a member at large.)



of five younger members (Steve Butterfield and his wife, Connie; George and Karla [Rab] Ellenbogen, and Bill Jerome) and oversaw all activities within the Boston Local, mainly indoor meetings, outdoor meetings held on Boston Common, covering protest meetings, and so on.

The older members

like Rab, Harry Morrison and George Gloss, all of whom spoke often on the Common, tended to concentrate at the NAC level, but younger members like George Ellenbogen and Bill Jerome, for instance, might also find their way onto the National Committee. Jerome, elected to the NAC, was quickly co-opted onto the Editorial Committee as well to replace Len Fenton. This was symptomatic of a party in which too few members were having to wear too many hats.

Aware of this problem, the WSP(US) back in 1950 had moved its National Office from Boston to Detroit in an attempt to free up the Boston comrades to do more propaganda work by reducing their administrative tasks. For five years Detroit comrade Irving Canter served ably as National Secretary, but to no avail, and the National Office returned to Boston.

Annual conferences were sometimes rowdy; one comrade from Glasgow returned home with the alarming impression that the WSP(US) was about to implode from infighting. But these fireworks really only registered a predictable frustration among comrades who perceived that very



A 1966 meeting of the WSP(US)

Late in the Seventies, the *Western Socialist* dropped to two issues a year, ceasing publication entirely in 1980. The West Coast's already sporadic activity grew faint. Boston was now the only active center left, yet this was precisely when things took a turn for the worse. From 1973 on, Rab suffered from Alzheimer's Disease; on New Year's Eve, 1986, he finally succumbed to pneumonia. The party, doubting its ability to make good use of a bequest from a member, voted to send the money to the SPGB. And in 1982

continued page 22

The Socialist Party of America: Dashed on the Rocks of Compromise

Other than in our Socialist Party, way too much thought on revolutionary socialist organisation gets written advocating Lenin's way as the one and only way and applying historic conditions under Russian feudalism to Western democracies today, and whose justification amounts to thinly veiled apologetics for 'history is written by the victors'. *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* by Jack Ross, published last year, joins the comparatively smaller range of literature not from this vanguard perspective, and even opposed to it. Ross declares that the Socialist Party of America was unique in the history of American politics as a minor party that enjoyed a consistent level of public support, a wide ranging impact and respected place in the national conversation for half a century. The term 'social democracy' he argues, captured more accurately and precisely their goals marked also by a commitment to the ballot box as a means of advancing a political economy in the interests of the working class represented by the trade union movement.

Eugene Debs

The Socialist Party of America (SPA) was formed in 1901 by the merger of the Populist movement remnant led by Eugene V. Debs and the dissenting faction led by Morris Hillquit of the 'increasingly sectarian' Socialist Labor Party (SLP) of Daniel De Leon. Before Lenin, revolutionary insurrection was not the



Debs on release from prison in 1921

goal and Marxists looked to the electoral success of the German SDP. The founding principles, the Rochester platform from 1899, adopted by 125 delegates, were compromised from the start, adopting the short and succinct list (albeit as an addendum) of 'immediate demands' of the Social Democrats such as Debs, Job Harriman and Victor Berger.

The SPA believed in independent action on class conscious lines and refused to seek to wrest control of the main trade union body, the American Federation of Labor (AFL). They believed themselves worthy of trade union support. A Chicago convention they packed in 1901 saw them voting down forming a Labour party. They respected the autonomy of unions engaged in



struggle and rejected movement towards a general strike. Ira Kipnis wrote in *The American Socialist Movement 1897-1912* that 'by the 1904 convention, the party had already divided into three loose factions, left, right and center.' Ross argues this history is discredited and no-one in the SPA pre-1905 rejected the ballot box outright but the adoption of 'immediate demands' (other than socialism) was to prove its undoing.

In 1904 these 'immediate demands' were an eight hour day, social insurance, an income tax, inheritance tax, abolition of child labour, women's suffrage, the initiative referendum and recall at all levels of government. A resolution also passed against the syndicalist idea of dual or 'revolutionary' unionism. Ross says it was probably in the platform debates of 1904 that the label 'impossibilist' emerged describing the 'utopian' belief that socialism was impossible through legislative reform and could only be created through revolution. Nevertheless SPA Presidential candidate Eugene Debs declared 'Government ownership of public utilities means nothing for labor under capitalist ownership of government' and won just under three percent of the vote.

In 1908 the immediate demands from 1904 were made 'more comprehensive', 'but still concise, establish[ing] the general program that would remain largely unchanged through the end of the 1930s' and a train 'the Red Special' was even leased for the 1908 presidential campaign. The American trade union body the American Federation of Labor (AFL) endorsed the Democratic Party, a rare constant for the twentieth century. Sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset argues the obstacles could all have been overcome had the AFL endorsed the SPA. This conclusion is the wrong way round and the AFL probably quite correctly judged the Democrats as better able to deliver immediate demands, and the immediate demands of the SPA as a poor imitation departing from socialism. Ross tacitly acknowledges 'popularity of the SPA did not come from any 'boring from within' of parliamentary trickery whereby the unions were to be put on record as supporters of socialism, but by socialists ... converting them to their way of thought.'

Keir Hardie visited in 1909 calling for an Independent Labour Party as a united formation. Thankfully this wasn't without opposition, although (p. 139) Ross seems to conflate the majority 'impossibilist' opposition (and the IWW) with the minority 'Left-wing' opposition (under *International Socialist Review*). One member W.E. Walling summed it up: 'Labor parties adopt the ethics and philosophy of capitalism ... denying the class struggle.'

That anti-Labor party impossibilism was not synonymous with 'the Left wing' was aptly demonstrated when Berger, Hillquit, Harriman and Spargo all agreed 'any member who opposes political action or advocates crime, sabotage or

other methods of violence as a weapon of the working-class to aid in its emancipation, shall be expelled.' Even Debs was 'against sabotage, and every other form of violence and destructiveness suggested by what is known as direct action.' Both peak vote and peak membership were achieved in 1912 when Debs ran for President and achieved six percent of the vote and membership reached 150,000 paying dues.

At this point, it should have been clear that a long-term strategy of rejection of Labor party immediate demands, commitment to the ballot box and rejection of direct action insurrection and respect for trade union autonomy was not only sustainable but an effective strategy. If their strategy was good, the same could not be said for their policy. Immediate demands were kept, with Roosevelt 'annexing a large slice of the reform program' and the large Debs vote was misleading ('The Pseudo Socialist Vote', *Socialist Standard* January 1913).

There were two other factors that came into play, one was World War I and the other was Bolshevism. The mainstay SPA publication *Appeal to Reason* (under new ownership) came out in favour of the war, and while Keir Hardie was helping conscription efforts in Britain (contrary to Ross' assertion on p. 157 that Hardie was anti-war), Eugene Debs was locked up for publicly calling to resist conscription. This imprisoning of those perceived as socialists was part of the first Wilsonian Red Scare. The *Daily Kos* review of Ross's book (www.dailykos.com/story/2015/6/19/1394861/-Book-Review-Socialist-Party-of-America-a-Complete-History) comments 'organized labor swung firmly behind the war effort ... There is little evidence to support the idea that the anti-war tradition would have continued to be dominant in a genuine Labor Party.'

As we commented in the *Socialist Standard* at the time: 'Victor Berger, one of the most anti-Socialist leaders of the SPA, has also been given 20 years, though he supported the Mexican War and militarism. He was widely known as a pro-German. While Berger wrote the pro-German articles for the *Milwaukee Leader*, Simons did the pro-Ally work on the same

periodical.' 'The mass of S.P. membership can be estimated by their continual support of the official clique and by their sticking to such a rotten organisation. Morris Hillquit, the "brains of the S.P.," one of the many lawyers on the National Executive, offered to organise an army of Socialists to help to explain democracy to the Germans overseas. He also admitted that if he had been a member of Congress he would have voted for the war' ('Class Struggle in the USA', *Socialist Standard*, September 1919).

At this point, 42 SPA members left the Detroit local. With others who had not been SPA members they formed the Socialist Party of the United States on July 7 1916. They later described the SPA as confused reformers and confused direct actionists (*Western Socialist* #4 1966). The SPA threatened them with a lawsuit over their name and so they renamed themselves the Workers Socialist Party of the United States. No mention is made of them in Ross' book.

The second factor of interest, was a personal visit by Trotsky to an SPA member in Brooklyn on Jan 14 1917 who 'personally initiated and inspired much of the left-wing fury, ... motivated by his pathological hatred for Hillquit in particular.' At the 1919 August 30 convention, John Reed assaulted SPA chair Julius Gerber leading one member to comment 'Many believe it is not only possible to follow the Russian example but mandatory. They declare that they alone hold the secret of success and it is their duty to impose it on the party.' Ross mentions the expulsion of John Keracher's Proletarian Party from Michigan as a 'tiny sect almost entirely based in Detroit until the end of the 1960s.'

A measure of the socialist understanding of the members of the SPA was the anti-war St Louis Platform. This lost more pro-war members from the SPA than were lost to Bolshevism and the American Communists who boasted that they could change their line in 24 hours. Victor Berger commented 'in this game of would-be radical phrases, the emptier the barrel the louder the sound.'



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Norman Thomas



Thomas speaking in 1937

The 1919 conference saw the 'Communist Left-Wing' depart the SPA to form their own party. And in 1920 the SPA reaffirmed its disinterest in a Labour party by declaring its refusal to work with other groups. In 1927 the SPA launched its own radio station called WEVD which managed to broadcast until the 1980s. Two founding figures were lost when Eugene Debs died in 1926 and Victor Berger in 1929. A new faction rejecting the ballot box appeared, called the Militant faction proving past lessons

hadn't been learned.

In 1934 the SPA held a rally at Madison Square garden which was attacked by Communist Party members. Against the insurrectionary rhetoric of the Militant Faction inside the SPA stood the 'Old Guard' of the SPA who issued a 1934 restatement of principles calling themselves the Committee for the Preservation of the Socialist Party. It argued for education and propaganda not direct action and insurrection. In 1935, the SPA went on the offensive, Norman Thomas debated Earl Browder the new leader of the Communist Party and the 'Old Guard' dissolved twelve New York Militant branches.

The new presidential candidate Norman Thomas' vote peaked in 1932, proving not quite as popular as Debs. New president Franklin D. Roosevelt received Norman Thomas and Morris Hillquit at the White House following the 1932 election shortly before Hillquit died a year later. Roosevelt's New Deal would successfully co-opt all radical opposition and the following election in 1936 saw the SPA not on a record number of state ballots. This is the dire consequence of political trading with shrewd operators like Roosevelt.

Some resolve prevailed intermittently, with Norman Thomas observing and commenting: 'Trotsky and above all Stalin, pioneered in that contempt for pity, and that Machievellian ruthlessness in which Hitler has become so adept' and expelled Trotskyist entryists in the SPA, leading one prominent Trotskyist, Hal Draper, to form the Socialist Workers Party (US). The SPA unambiguously opposed World War II and in 1940 expelled the Militants, but on the other hand also watered down even their immediate demands.

It is strange that Ross should neglect to mention at all (even in the footnotes) the World Socialist Party, a non-Leninist and non-reformist group but he also dismisses the SLP (US) as 'sectarian' without fully explaining why (where Kipnis devotes at least one chapter to the SLP). The SLP (US) expelled SPA members from the IWW union, seemingly disenchanting the SPA with syndicalism, before the SLP (US) found themselves expelled (see 'Marxism in the USA', *Socialist Standard* December 1968). To explain this would highlight Ross' attachment to syndicalism and forming a Labor party by trade unions. Ross casts the 19th century Populist Party and the early 20th century Progressive Party as missed opportunities for the SPA. Ross claims 'a Labor party, had it emerged would have profoundly differed from post-war liberalism'. This is to go against the experience of the Labour Party in Britain.

Trotskyism and the New Left

In 1952, the SPA presidential candidate Darlington Hoopes polled so disappointingly poorly that the SLP(US) outpolled them for the first time ever, and the SPA stopped fielding

presidential candidates for good not long after. The SPA had survived the Commies in 1919 and survived the Militants in 1934, but it was one-time Trotskyist Max Shactman who would prove their undoing in the 1960s.

One SPA member wrote 'I can't see why the official pacifist groups have to spend so much time on piffling projects like those temporary fasts, White House picketing etc. when all it does is impress its terrible weakness applying some of the minor Gandhi tactics where their chance of success is infinitely smaller than that it makes them look ridiculous'.

Ross observes 'This transformation of the American left that began with the rise of the Popular Front in the 1930s amounted to the displacement of historic American Socialism by a deeply undemocratic approach to politics. Throughout the 1960s, Erich Fromm's 'Let Man Prevail' SPA manifesto was constantly in demand from the national office whereas Max Shactman's tome on the development of Stalinism, 'the Bureaucratic Revolution' gathered dust on the shelves'.

Ross writes 'The Shactmanite SPA majority endorsed the Democrats at the 1968 SPA conference.' 'A long wave of SPA resignations began.' 'In November 1970 the SPA and Democratic Socialist Federation jointly sponsored a rally for Israel, a merger had been in the works since 1969.' 'In December 1972 the SPA announced it would be known as the Social Democrats USA. The Wisconsin Socialists passed a resolution that they interpreted this to mean the SPA had ceased to exist.' 'In 1980 the SDUSA endorsed Ronald Reagan and invited the Nicaraguan contras to speak at their 1985 conference'.

The Socialist Party of America ceased to be in 1972 when the Chairman, Michael Harrington, resigned in October. Then in December it changed its name to 'Social Democrats, USA.' There was a minority without legal entitlement to the membership or assets, determined to continue. One minority later launched the SPUSA, a 'broad multi-tendency democratic socialist' organisation which exists to this day. It runs candidates for President and is doing so again this year.

Ross writes that the SPA was an exceptional party in an exceptional nation. The review of his book in the *American Conservative* argues 'Ross pays little attention to ideas and proceeds chronologically rather than analytically' and concluded that socialist parties in Europe embraced much the same blend of social welfare, economic corporatism, and militarized internationalism that had defined the Democratic Party at least since FDR. So perhaps America is not exceptional after all.

Two excerpts from our history demonstrate the foresight of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and our American companion party and provide a rather more fitting conclusion:

'If the Socialist Party of America had preached Socialism and got votes for Socialism, neither Republican nor Democrat could have enticed their votes away' ('Lessons from the American Elections', *Socialist Standard*, January 1929).

'Labor Parties are the same everywhere. They are all parties of reform. Names mean nothing. The Social Democratic Party of Germany, The British Labor Party and the Socialist Party of America—where the P. P. came from in 1919—are Labor Parties, whose purpose is to reform the capitalist system.

They gather into their ranks all kinds of cranks and misleaders voicing hazy notions of a land of promise somewhere in the future. Their history shows that their leaders were ever willing to betray the workers. During the war all the Labor Parties supported their respective governments. Even now in Britain where the Labor Government rules, nothing has or will be done to endanger the steady flow of profits into the coffers of the capitalists' (*The Socialist*, March 1930).

DJW

The 'democratic socialism' of Bernie Sanders

To a socialist Senator Bernie Sanders is far and away the least distasteful of the current contenders for the American presidency. He seems decent and sincere. Although he is running in the Democratic Party primaries, he has a long history as an independent politician, starting with his election in 1981 as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont. He is not corrupt – that is, beholden to *specific* capitalist interests in the way that Hillary Clinton (like Obama) is beholden to Wall Street or the Bushes were to Big Oil. And despite efforts of interviewers from the corporate media to get him to comment on the latest petty scandal he talks seriously about serious social issues of vital concern to working people – growing inequality of wealth, poverty, unemployment, healthcare, education, decaying infrastructure, the environment, climate change.

None of this, however, makes Bernie Sanders a socialist. If you read his website and those of his supporters and listen to videos of his speeches you will find that he never talks about a new system that might replace capitalism. When he calls himself a 'democratic socialist' he means that he wants to make American capitalism less unjust and more democratic. He wants to run capitalism in the interests of working people.

This is an old idea – one already tried by the Labour Party in Britain and by 'social-democratic' and 'socialist' parties in other countries of northern and western Europe. The results were always less impressive than originally expected and have eroded over recent decades as governments come under increasing pressure to cut social expenditures. Sanders often refers to this European experience as a model for the United States to follow, neglecting to mention the limitations and setbacks.

A 'progressive' economic agenda?

On his website Sanders sets out 'a progressive economic agenda that creates jobs, raises wages, protects the environment and provides health care for all'. Important points on this agenda are set out in the table.

The influence of the European welfare-state model is clear – although there is nothing about improving unemployment benefits, which in the United States depend on the circumstances in which a job is lost and last only six months. Certain points, such as the pro-union law and the big public works programme, are reminiscent of the 1930s New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), whom Bernie admires as 'a great American president' (Obama also promised a pro-union law but broke that promise; he did institute a public works programme, but on too small a scale to have much impact on either unemployment or the country's infrastructure).

Crucial to Sanders's economic agenda is his rejection of the 'neo-liberal consensus' in favor of 'globalization' – the unregulated movement of goods and capital across national borders. He denounces the free-trade agreements promoted



On the campaign trail in 2015

in recent decades by Democratic and Republican presidents alike and advocates protectionist measures to help revive the US manufacturing sector. He seeks to return to the previous system of separate national blocks of capital (capitals) represented on the world stage by national governments.

It is understandable that 'de-globalization' should appeal to workers suffering from the havoc wrought by globalization. However, it represents not progress beyond the boundaries of capitalism but rather a new swing of the pendulum within capitalism. Restoration of an older form of the world organization of capital, marked by the rivalry of separate nation-states, cannot be described as progressive. After all, it was this rivalry that gave us two devastating world wars in the twentieth century, not to mention the Great Depression. And it still generates military confrontations in those regions where it remains entrenched, such as the South China Sea.

Representing national capital

Sanders constantly says that he represents 'working class people' or 'working families' (see, for instance, *New York Post*, 11 October 2015). And it is true that he talks a great deal about the problems that American workers face and what he intends to do to help them. But often he gives his policy proposals a rather different rationale, justifying them in terms of the long-term interests of the United States as a nation competing with other nations in the world economy. Such arguments confirm the view that what Sanders primarily represents is *national capital*. Here are a few examples.

In a long speech on the floor of the Senate on 10 December 2010 Sanders said:

'if our goal is to create the millions and millions of jobs we need and ... *Make our country stronger internationally in a very tough global economy*, a better way to do that [than giving corporations tax breaks] ... is to invest heavily in our infrastructure... We remain far behind most other countries around the industrialized world. China is exploding in terms of the number of high-speed rail lines they have. We have to do better (*italics added*)' (*Bernie Sanders's speech: the complete historic filibuster on economic inequality, the declining middle class, our crumbling infrastructure... And what we can do about it* (2015)).

He proceeded to complain that the Federal Reserve had bailed out central banks in countries that were competitors of the United States, such as South Korea, Germany, Bahrain and Mexico. The US should be lending money to create jobs

at home, not in foreign countries. This highlights an easily overlooked but very important point: to the extent that Sanders does defend workers' interests these are the interests of *American workers only* (there is some overlap between the interests of national capital and the short-term interests of the national working class). A search for any expression of concern for the plight of workers outside the United States failed to turn up anything.

Similarly, on another occasion Sanders justified his proposal for free tuition at State universities as follows:

'in a highly competitive global economy in which we need a highly educated workforce does it make any sense that the US should be slipping behind other countries in the proportion of people with college degrees? We lose all of the intellectual potential of those young people' (www.youtube.com/watch?V=wcsiog8hbz0).

He went on to ask:

'does it make sense to have a cost-ineffective healthcare system designed to maximize the profits of health insurance and pharmaceutical companies?'

Here he pits the interest of national capital in cost-effective healthcare for the workforce against the special interests of particular sectors.

Speaking at Georgetown University on 19 November 2015, Sanders said:

'we need to develop a political movement that is prepared to take on and defeat a ruling class whose greed is destroying our nation.'

In other words, the capitalists are too greedy and shortsighted to see where their own long-term interests lie. They are devouring the goose that lays the golden eggs. FDR was called 'a traitor to his class' because he dared do what was necessary to save the capitalists from themselves. Now the senator from Vermont offers his services as a new FDR to a later generation of wealthy ingrates.

Sanders recalls that when he was elected mayor of Burlington he discovered that:

'local insurance companies were getting the city's business at substantially higher than market rates. I instituted a radical socialist concept, 'competitive bidding,' which saved the city tens of thousands of dollars' (Bernie Sanders with Huck Gutman, *Outsider in the White House* (Verso, 2015), pp. 71-2).

In other words, only a 'socialist' mayor, free of corrupt ties with specific businesses, can be trusted to run a city in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

Use of language

Sanders deserves due credit for pioneering certain positive changes in how Americans talk about politics.

Even though he is not a socialist in our sense, he has helped legitimize the word by using it in a positive sense (for further discussion of this point see 'American public opinion and the s-word' in the February 2010 *Socialist Standard*). Another scare word that he has not been afraid to use is 'revolution' – he talks about the need for a 'political revolution' to 'get big money out of politics and restore democracy'. He does not, however, call for a 'social revolution' or 'economic revolution'.

Sanders has also introduced a more truthful vocabulary for talking about social class. Unlike establishment politicians who divide and rule by pitting a hardworking and respectable 'middle class' against the shiftless and semi-criminal 'poor' (terms that in the US also have racial overtones), Sanders always stresses the conflict of interests between the 'ruling class' or 'billionaire class' and the vast majority of society.

Political reforms

Besides his economic agenda, Sanders seeks to halt and

reverse 'a rapid movement in this country toward a political system in which a handful of very wealthy people and special interests will determine who gets elected'. He will seek a constitutional amendment making it clear that the legislative branch has the power to regulate campaign finance, thereby overturning Supreme Court decisions based on 'the absurd notion that money is speech [and] corporations are people'. He will also 'move toward the public funding of elections', strengthen voting rights and make election day a national holiday (www.bernieanders.com/issues/money-in-politics).

Socialists welcome any steps to preserve and expand democratic elements in the political system because erosion of these elements makes it even more difficult to spread socialist ideas and establish socialism by peaceful democratic means. Nevertheless, the changes proposed by Sanders would hardly amount to a 'political revolution'. Big money would still have ample opportunity to make its voice heard. Thus Sanders does not appear to have definite ideas about how to loosen the stranglehold of the corporate media.

It should be noted that Sanders's plans for laws to constrain the behaviour of employers cannot be effectively implemented until class bias in the work of the police and the courts is overcome. For example, there seems little point in raising the minimum wage when private employers routinely flout existing minimum wage laws with impunity (only government employees are guaranteed the minimum wage).

Secret radical?

There has been some speculation among American leftists about whether Sanders may cherish secret hopes for social change more radical than his public programme. Is his 'political revolution' merely a first stage in a longer-term strategy?

Two reasons are given for thinking that this may be so. One is the possible influence of Bernie's older brother Larry. Larry was the first to get involved in politics when they were growing up together in Brooklyn and took Bernie under his wing. It is believed that Larry is further to the left than Bernie. Larry migrated to Britain in the late 1960s, was active in the Labour Party, left the Labour Party in 2001 to join the Green Party and is now its health spokesperson. Asked about his relationship with his brother, Bernie says that they remain in close touch but denies that they 'confer' – the days when Bernie looked up to Larry as his mentor are long gone.

The second reason is Bernie's experience of living and working for several months at a kibbutz in Israel in 1963, when he was aged 21. Sanders does not talk about this experience and we do not know what it means to him.

Thus the idea of Bernie as a secret radical has an extremely weak foundation. It may be recalled that people indulged in similarly baseless wishful thinking about Obama.

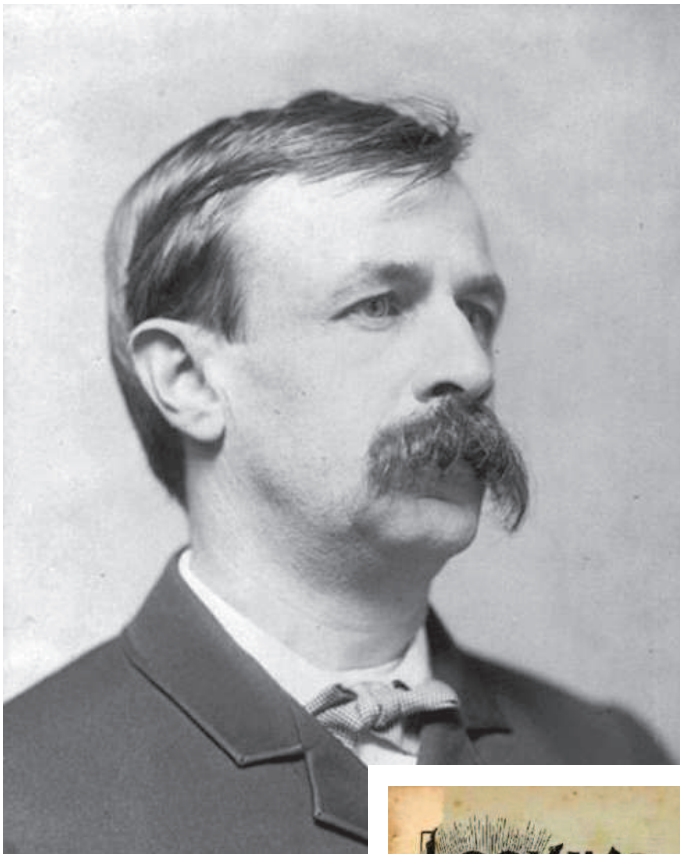
Prospects

Although Bernie Sanders has done very well considering the forces arrayed against him, he will not be chosen by the Democratic Party as its presidential candidate. Even if he manages to draw level with Hillary Clinton in terms of the popular vote, the convention 'superdelegates' – unelected representatives of the party establishment – will ensure that it is she who is chosen.

Nevertheless, the Sanders campaign has expanded the narrow confines of American political language and helped weaken the duopoly of the Democratic and Republican party establishments. This may open up new opportunities for people outside the 'system' – including genuine democratic socialists.

STEFAN (World Socialist Party of the US)

Looking back on Edward Bellamy



In 1888 a book by Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, was published which had an enormous impact at the time. It could even be said that it marked the take-off of modern socialist ideas in America.

Bellamy was a New England journalist and writer who had travelled widely. His utopian novel is based on the story of a rich young Bostonian, Julian West, who is sent to sleep by mesmerism and does not wake up until the year 2000, by which time a far-reaching economic and social revolution has taken place in America.

As explained to him by his host, Dr Leete, all land and industry is now the collective property of the whole community and run as a public service to supply people's needs. People no longer work for wages, and money has been abolished. Instead, everybody is required to serve in an industrial army between the ages of 21 and 45 and in return receives an annual credit, which is equal for everyone, in the form of vouchers entitling them to draw a given amount of goods and services from the common store. Differences between the nature of jobs would be taken into account by adjusting the number of hours the people doing them would be expected to work. The functions of government, Dr Leete explains, now reduced essentially to the organisation of production for use are exercised by the general council of the industrial army whose members are elected by those who have retired from industrial service, i. e. by the over-45s.

Bellamy depicted a technologically advanced society,

imagining some technological advances that would have taken place between 1888 and 2000, for instance moving pavements, music piped to every house, and goods delivered to homes by pneumatic tubes. Reality (airplanes, motor cars, radio, television, electronic computers, internet, mobile phones, etc) turned out to be much more amazing than anyone in 1888 could have imagined, but this strengthened rather than weakened Bellamy's case.

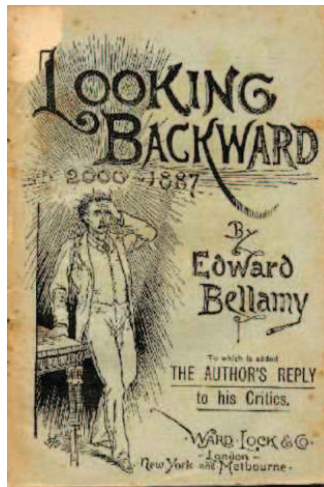
Although the industrial army aspect is over-painted (and Bellamy himself watered it down in his later writings), all the essential ideas of the socialist movement as it was to develop in America were there: collective ownership of all land and industry on a national scale, production for use not sale or profit, social service instead of working for wages, economic equality, industrial administration replacing political government.

Bellamy himself never referred to himself as a socialist, apparently feeling that the foreign associations of the word would put off American public opinion which he was seeking to convince. He referred to his system variously as 'national co-operation', 'nationalized industrial system' and even as 'public capitalism'. The movement which sprang up on the basis of the ideas expressed in his book was called the 'Nationalist' movement. Nevertheless, his was a powerful indictment of private capitalism and its effects on the propertyless majority which it both created and exploited. Many of those influenced by Bellamy were not afraid to call themselves socialists. In fact they easily moved from his Nationalist movement to Socialism, including Daniel De Leon who joined the Socialist Labor Party in 1890 and became its leading figure till his death in 1914.

The attraction of Bellamy's book was that it put forward a solution to the social problems, brought about in America by the development of industry under capitalist conditions since the Civil War, and which did not reject industry and industrialisation, but which on the contrary fully accepted them as providing the means to supply plenty for all.

When people like De Leon left the Nationalist movement and became socialists, they did so not because they disagreed with the goal but because they disagreed with Bellamy's strategy for reaching this goal. Bellamy thought that a 'nationalised industrial system' could come about gradually through the trustification of industry and then the piecemeal nationalisation of these trusts, and steadfastly refused till his death in 1898 to entertain talk about socialism and the class struggle. He got no further than supporting the People's Party (Populists); in fact most of the Nationalists who did not go over to calling themselves Socialists were absorbed into the Populist movement.

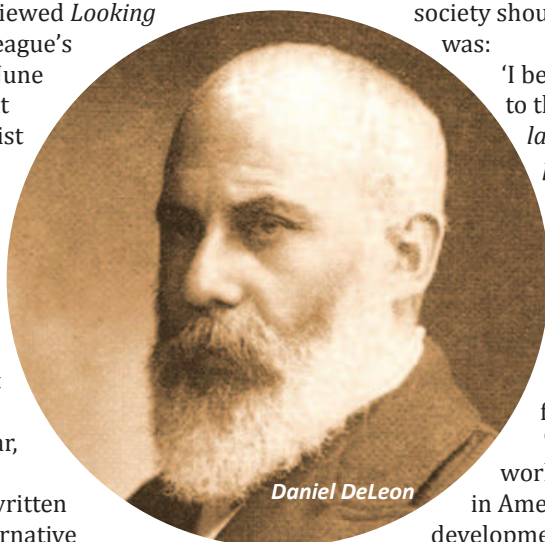
De Leon and the others who broke away over this issue saw Bellamy's system, which they were not afraid to call socialism, being achieved through the working-class victims of the competitive system organising politically and industrially to dispossess the private capitalists, so making all means of production the common property of the community (or rather of 'the nation' as they sometimes revealingly put it). Like Bellamy, they envisaged 'political government' being replaced by 'industrial government', though their conception of this latter was more democratic than Bellamy's since they envisaged the members of this 'central directing authority' being elected by those working in the various branches of



industry, an idea Bellamy had rejected in *Looking Backward* as being bad for the discipline of his 'industrial army'.

When William Morris reviewed *Looking Backward* in the Socialist League's paper, *Commonweal*, on 22 June 1889 he made the point that one of the dangers of socialist utopian novels was that some people would take them as a description of what socialism was going to be like rather than as seeing them as the author's preference as to what he or she would like it to be (a point to remember, as Morris himself made clear, when reading his utopian novel *News from Nowhere* written precisely to propose an alternative vision of the future to Bellamy's).

In his review Morris criticised the regimentation and centralisation Bellamy depicted and, like other socialists of the time, challenged his view as to how socialism would come about. Above all, he criticised Bellamy's attitude to work.



Daniel DeLeon

Like many others, Bellamy saw work as something inherently unpleasant which people had to be obliged to do and which society should aim to minimise. Morris's view, on the contrary, was:

'I believe that the ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of labour to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of pain in labour to a minimum, so small that it will cease to be a pain.'

Morris point is a reasonable one but views similar to Bellamy's still circulate amongst critics in America of capitalism, for instance in the Zeitgeist movement (which wants to automate everything) and Parecon (which is based on the assumption that nobody will work without some form of compensation as an incentive).

This said, *Looking Backward* was an important work in the development of the socialist idea in America which in turn had an influence in their development in other parts of the English-speaking world including Britain.

Looking Backward can be read online here: www.pagebypagebooks.com/Edward_Bellamy/Looking_Backward_From_2000_to_1887/

ADAM BUICK



Saving private capitalism

AMERICAN CAPITALISM is, apparently, suffering a 'crisis of faith', at least according to a 5-page article featured on the front cover of *Time* magazine (23 May). The author, Rana Foroobar (pictured), quotes the findings of an opinion poll which she finds 'startling':

'... only 19% of Americans aged 18 to 29 identified themselves as "capitalists". In the richest and most market-oriented country in the world, only 42% of that group said they "supported capitalism". The numbers were higher among older people; still, only 26% considered themselves capitalists. A little over half supported the system as a whole.'

One of the questions must have been odd if it invited people to identify themselves as 'capitalists' in the same sort of way that they might have been asked if they were socialists. A capitalist is not someone who believes in capitalism. It is someone who has enough capital to be able to live without being obliged to sell their labour power for a living. In America that will be well under 5 percent.

Foroobar's article, entitled 'Saving Capitalism', is taken from her forthcoming book *Makers and Takers*. Her argument is that the current problems of American capitalism are due to 'financialization'. Up until the

early 1970s, she says, finance served business:

'finance took individual and corporate savings and funnelled them into productive enterprises, creating new jobs, new wealth and, ultimately, economic growth.'

However, over the past few decades this has changed:

'finance has turned away from this traditional role. Academic research shows that only a fraction of all the money washing around the financial markets these days actually makes it to Main Street businesses.... Most of the money in the system is being used for lending against existing assets such as housing, stocks and bonds.'

She says that banks have become more interested in such 'trading' than in their traditional role of lending to business. But it is not just banks that have been affected. Businesses themselves have become increasingly involved in hedging, 'tax optimization' and offering financial services, to the detriment of productive investment. They have the money to do this because:

'Top-tier US businesses have never enjoyed greater financial resources. They have a record \$2 trillion in cash on their balance sheets – enough money combined to make them the 10th largest economy in the world.'

Her plan to save capitalism is 'removing finance in the real economy', putting 'the financial system back in its

rightful place, as a servant of business rather than its master.'

It's not the first time in the history of capitalism that finance capital has been seen as the enemy. Before WWI the Austrian Social Democrat Rudolf Hilferding wrote *Finanzcapital* in which he argued that banks had come to dominate and control industry. Lenin took this up and incorporated it into his theory of imperialism.

To merely denounce 'financial capital' is to support 'manufacturing capital'; which is Foroobar's (if not the Leninists') explicit position. She has appointed herself as a defender of manufacturing ('the makers') against finance capital ('the takers').



But she doesn't consider an alternative explanation for 'financialization': that it might be a consequence of slow economic growth rather than the other way round. Since previous profits are not being fully reinvested because it's not profitable enough a part of them accumulate as cash mountains, providing the stakes for 'trading' and 'hedging'. Like the Stock Exchange, these are zero sum games in which no new wealth is created but where representations of existing wealth are traded instead – where some capitalists get richer but only at the expense of other capitalists, competing against each for the largest share they can get of wealth already taken from the real wealth makers, the working class.



Branded Comedy

LABELLING A show as a 'sitcom' can make us assume that it'll be throwaway or shallow, however watchable. But some of the most well-known situation comedies

have said something interesting about society and how we cope with it. Perhaps the sitcom with the most ambitious ideas was *The Fall And Rise Of Reginald Perrin* (1976 – 1979, 1996). In each of its series it explored the alienation of being a middle-aged middle-manager, the hollowness of consumerism, communal living and a government takeover by senior citizens. *Butterflies* (1978 – 1983) followed a housewife feeling trapped in the role she's been pushed into. Its author, Carla Lane, also penned the once-huge, now-forgotten *Bread* (1986 – 1991) about a family's dodgy deals to find enough money. The same theme was the basis of the even more popular *Only Fools And Horses* (1981 – 2003). *Yes Minister* (1980 – 1984), *Yes Prime Minister* (1986 –

1988, 2013) and *The Thick Of It* (2005 – 2012) sent up the games played by politicians, civil servants and government advisers. *Twenty Twelve* (2011 – 2012) and *W1A* (2014 – 2015) satirised the corporate culture behind the London Olympics and BBC. Their mockumentary style was influenced by *The Office* (2001 – 2003), which had something to say about workplace hierarchies and dynamics, as did *Getting On* (reviewed in the December 2012 *Socialist Standard*). In this series, Jo Brand's character, Kim, worked in a geriatric ward of a NHS hospital. She and the other nurses had to wade through the swamp of market forces and stifling procedures to care for their patients.

Getting On's sequel, *Going Forward* (BBC4) revisits Kim when she's working as a domiciliary carer visiting elderly people in their own homes. The fictional company she works for, Buccaneer 2000 ('We care about your healthcare'), is on the shoddier end of the market, its clients often left waiting for carers that don't turn up. When Buccaneer 2000 stops caring about your healthcare and abruptly closes its domiciliary division, Kim loses her job and already-unstable income because she's on a 'zero hours' contract. The show doesn't

dwelt on how this type of employment is even more vulnerable and unfulfilling than other kinds. Nor does it explore the other problems commonly facing carers, such as the impossible pressures to adequately change someone's dressings, wash them, make food for them and perhaps even chat with them within a 15 minute appointment. Instead, the programme's emphasis is more on how money and the lack of it shapes the lives of its characters. Kim's ageing mother has to move to a care home after suffering a stroke. Her bungalow is sold and its proceeds are split between Kim and her neurotic sister, Jackie, played by Helen Griffin. Several months later, Jackie has spent her share, and the sisters realise that they won't be able to afford their mother's care home charges. When her health deteriorates further, she crosses the threshold of qualifying for those charges to be funded through the state. The series ends with Kim accusing Jackie of being happy about their mother being more unwell because of its financial upside. This is one example among many in the show of how money wraps itself around our lives. As well as distracting the sisters from their mother's wellbeing and pushing a wedge between them, money weighs heavily on the mind of Kim's husband. Portrayed by Omid Djalili, Dave works as a chauffeur with an income considerably less than those he drives around. His wide-boy colleague Terry tries to steer him into taking a driving job in Iraq, arguing that the high wages justify any risks. They also talk about another driver who received a £100 tip and now runs his own business. Throughout, getting money is associated with getting kudos, security and comfort, even though it is the money system which puts these at risk. The same point was also made in *Bread* and *Only Fools And Horses*, but with a brashness completely different from *Going Forward's* bittersweet, naturalistic style. Despite *Going Forward* being billed as a sitcom and 'dark comedy', it's more of a drama which uses wit to lighten up its otherwise grim themes. At times, it feels like a Mike Leigh play in the way they both find humour in otherwise sad or prosaic experiences, and with more emphasis on characterisation than plot. The characters in *Going Forward* are brought to life by a talented cast making the most of its intelligent, perceptive script. While its sister-series *Getting On* blatantly criticised the circumstances the NHS finds itself in, *Going Forward's* focus is more subtle and personal – how capitalism's rationing of resources affects how we care for and relate to other people. Unfortunately, the series only ran to three episodes, presumably due to a lack of budget rather than ideas.

MIKE FOSTER

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Who needs leaders?

Ken Livingstone, *Being Red: a Politics for the Future* (ed. Anna Minton), Pluto Press, 2016



Ken Livingstone is probably not an antisemite in any meaningful sense of the term, only a fairly loose-tongued, ill-considered critic of Zionism. The reason that he has been labelled as antisemitic

(among other things) is because he is a figure of hate for the *Daily Mail* and other titles of the right-wing tabloid press.

Livingstone was the leader of the Greater London Council, which took on Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s (and got abolished for their pains), MP for Brent East from 1987 to 2001 and then the Labour mayor of London from 2000 to 2008 (initially as an independent). As such 'Ken' became the public face and nasal voice of what the right wing tabloids labelled the 'loony' left.

Livingstone was a leader of the left and much of the left, with a shallow-rooted commitment to democratic forms, is obsessed with leaders. This is the appeal of Ken Livingstone to the new Left Book Club who have issued this review of his impact in political office. The book is a review of his career that approaches hagiography, including an extended interview with him, the reflections of the man himself on his political life and a chapter on his support for the arts.

Now Ken is not one to hide his talents under a bushel. His estimate of his own worth is not a small one. Hence he is constantly telling us how often the man and woman in the street comes up to him and thanks him for the difference he made in their lives. What might that difference be? Here the highlights of a lifetime's work within the organs of the British state are that he lowered rail and bus fares in London in the 1980s and supported the arts during his time as London mayor. Oh, and he was apparently a consensus boss, not one of those awful control freaks who have to micromanage everything (well that is his take on it anyway).

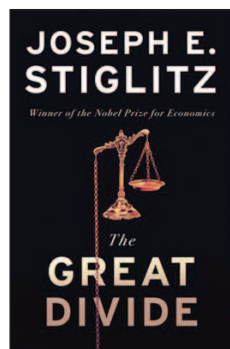
All well and good as far as it goes, after all who would argue against lower rail and bus fares, especially given the current grossly expensive public transport at a time of wages restraint on the part of employers? It's just that this doesn't go very far at all towards changing the balance of class politics in favour of workers (indeed many employers would

be in favour of nationalisation and public transport fares at cost, cheapening the price of hiring labour-power). Surely the left must want to go further than this and the Left Book Club must be able to aim higher for its left-wing political heroes? To elevate Ken Livingstone as being the height to which working class leadership can currently aspire is a desperately depressing state of affairs.

Not for us, thanks very much. When the political ambitions of the working class match its potential to be free of its current abject wage-slavery then it won't need leaders of Ken's calibre, or anyone else's. CS

Fairly Equal

Joseph Stiglitz: *The Great Divide*. Penguin £10.99.



Stiglitz is a kind of dissident establishment economist, a Nobel Prize winner and former Chief Economist at the World Bank, yet who is in some ways at odds with conventional views. This volume consists of shortish

essays from publications such as the *New York Times* and *Vanity Fair*, with some extra material. Most deal with the United States, but there is also some discussion of other countries, including China, Scotland and Mauritius.

The central theme is inequality and its consequences, though strangely there are no references to Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level*. As an example of the extent of inequality, an article from 2012 notes that the family that owns Walmart has wealth of \$90bn, equivalent to that of the poorest 30 percent of the US population. In three years of recession, median wealth declined by 40 percent, and workers are on average worse off than their parents were. In the first three years of the so-called recovery, 95 percent of the increase in income went to the top one percent. There is no equality of opportunity in the US, either, as the life chances of a child are dependent on their parents' income and education. The children of the poor suffer disproportionately from asthma and learning disabilities.

Among the consequences of a high degree of inequality are greater instability, lower growth and less aggregate demand. This is because the very rich consume less, as a fraction of their income, than lower-income individuals. So a less inegalitarian

system would supposedly lead to a more buoyant economy and almost everyone being better off. Moreover, the current astonishing levels of inequality are not inevitable but the result of deliberate policies, including the growth in importance of the financial sector.

Stiglitz sees the present system as an example of 'phoney capitalism', where 'losses are socialized and profits privatized' and markets are not truly competitive (a position more usually associated with the 'right' than with the 'left'). Corporate welfarism means the banks and so on are bailed out by the government, but those who own them still make big profits and their top bosses still get massive bonuses. He is particularly opposed to what economists term 'rent seeking', which includes preferential tax treatment, government subsidies and the profit from controlling a monopoly. It is a zero-sum activity, devoted to gaining a bigger share of the pie rather than increasing the size of the economic pie, and just leads to an increase in wealth at the top of the scale.

As for the kind of society he wants instead, Stiglitz says we should choose both capitalism and fairness. He prefers a far more equal system and rejects austerity, which weakens demand and so discourages investment. Inequality stifles growth, and committing resources to education, infrastructure and technology will be a way of 'putting America back to work'. With bland views like this, it is little wonder he is on the Labour Party's Economic Advisory Committee (with Thomas Piketty).

One essay here is entitled 'Of the 1 percent, by the 1 percent, for the 1 percent'. Nothing Stiglitz says suggests that he stands for a society where things will be different in any significant way from this.

PB

Twentieth Century "Socialism"?

Twentieth Century Socialism: A Minority Rule. By Paresh Chattopadhyay. *Economic and Political Weekly Mumbai*. 14 May, 2016.

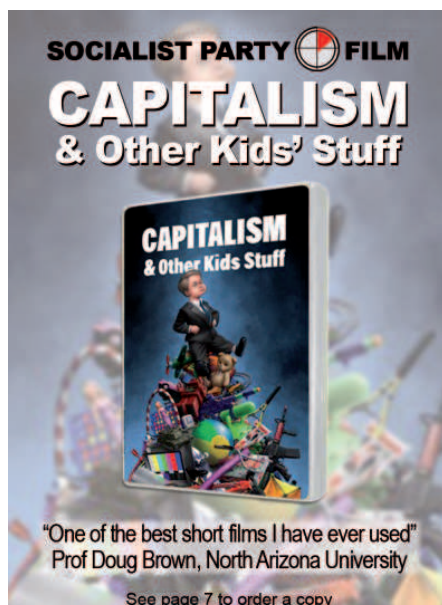
Although 'Dedicated to the memory of the great libertarian George Orwell,' in much of this article Paresh Chattopadhyay is spot on, carefully recounting some of the heinous misdemeanors perpetrated by Lenin, Trotsky and their Bolshevik coterie in Russia and upholding instead some pertinent positions and principles of Marx and Engels that are in opposition to them. However, he concludes this long interesting and informative criticism and citations with the Kronstadt revolt

and massacre, wherein he affirms 'The Kronstadt sailors and toilers called this incident the "Third Revolution," after February and October.' This he just cites without any comment presumably because of a 'libertarian' perspective. But Libertarianism, be what it may, is not Marxism. As world socialists we evaluate situations from a Marxist point of view. For argument's sake, even if the Kronstadters happened to be victorious, it was not going to be a socialist revolution anyway. You cannot achieve socialism without an exclusively clear-cut socialist goal and class-wide revolutionary organization within a matured revolutionary situation. The Kronstadters had no socialist agenda and organization and circumstances were non-socialist. They were asking for some liberal democratic rights only.

He says nothing about what we socialists have to do today to end the rule of capital.

'Twentieth Century Socialism' is the name he gives to Leninism-Bolshevism as the most prominent form of 'socialism' in the last century. This term is ill-conceived as it suggests that not only was Leninism-Bolshevism a form of socialism but that all who worked under the same name 'socialism' during the twentieth century, whether to educate or mislead, to organize or disarrange the working class, were as well. This use of the term 'socialist' is one-sided and misleading and has to be contested, as no doubt it would by Marx and Engels were they alive today.

It ignores the fact that, in opposition to all the sundry 'socialists', there were, and till today are, the genuine socialists in the same sense as Marx and Engels – the Socialist Party of Great Britain (ever since 1904) and the other Companion Parties of the World Socialist Movement, of which Professor Chattopadhyay is quite aware, being personally acquainted with the World Socialist Party (India) and familiar with our Movement's relentless presence



in the socialist milieu.

He creates an amalgam 'party-state', and equates this with the Leninist construct and frame. This is to confuse these two very different but transient institutions. True, the Leninist 'party-state' was a form of ruthless state capitalist dictatorship. But that doesn't necessarily lead to the conclusion that party and state are of no use for the working class. Both are necessary and useful during the 'political transition' (Marx) from capitalism to socialism, though certainly not in their present-day capitalistic forms. These organs will have to be revolutionized, transformed and converted from their present repressive forms into a participatory democratic form – as agents of emancipation in the hands of the victorious working class. Marx and Engels were neither against nor for the state and the party in the abstract. As scientists of the working class they analyzed their dynamics – their origin, evolution, and eventual ultimate demise.

To accomplish the revolutionary historical task of replacing capitalism by the 'free and equal association of the producers' (Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*) the workers possess only two effective weapons at their disposal – universal knowledge of history and a class-wide revolutionary organization i.e. a participatory democratic party and movement. This is indispensable. Without such a party and movement the workers are nothing but defenceless, wretched, competitive, alienated and mutually hostile wage slaves. When workers unite for higher wages and reforms they are merely a *class-in-itself*. They become a *class-for-itself* when permeated with socialist knowledge about their common radical cause and by uniting themselves politically 'to win the battle of democracy' (Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*) by unseating the bureaucratic ruling elites everywhere.

The working class will have to get this done by applying their franchise in elections state-wise and world-wide more or less simultaneously to seize the reins of states, and get them transformed to use to dispossess the capitalist class. This is done by lopping off their repressive organs, dismantling the bureaucratic-military structure, and by democratizing and absorbing the state's useful organs into the new socio-economic formations of production for use in place of production for profit – rearranging administration of affairs of life on local, regional and global organizational scales. This will usher in, as Marx put it, a new era of equality and freedom replacing the pre-history of humanity with history proper.

BINAY SARKAR

Lion Salt Works

The Cheshire salt towns lie near the valley of the River Weaver, on two bands of salt laid down over two hundred million years ago. Brine had been extracted by evaporation from them since the Iron Age, and rock salt mining began in 1670. Only in the nineteenth century did the salt industry become really large, though, as



exports via Liverpool increased and the chemical industry needed more supplies. By the end of that century, open-pan salt making was in decline, as the modern method of vacuum evaporation took over. Large companies now produce salt cheaply and with far fewer workers. The 125 employees of British Salt at Middlewich (owned by the Tata Group) produce about 800,000 tonnes of salt a year.

Traditional salt production was environmentally very unfriendly. In addition to air pollution, with the nearby towns covered in soot, one consequence was subsidence, as land was undermined by the removal of salt below and gave way, sometimes resulting in lakes known as flashes. A special method of building houses with timber frames so they could be lifted up after subsidence was developed.

The work of producing salt was extremely physically demanding, largely because of the excessive heat and humidity required in the pan houses. Clothes, and even clogs, rotted very quickly. There were complaints of scandals when women in shifts and petticoats worked alongside men stripped to the waist, which happened down to the 1870s. Salt workers worked long hours and the work was seasonal. Unions did their best to ensure that in slack periods work was shared round, rather than workers being laid off. A strike in 1889 led to some workers having more say about their hours but less overall control of their work.

The Lion Salt Works, at Marston near Northwich, alongside the Trent and Mersey Canal, opened in 1894. It closed in 1986, after the Nigerian Civil War had meant the loss of its main market. It is now preserved as one of only four open-



50 Years Ago

The seamen's struggle

THE SOCIALIST Party of Great Britain supports the strike of the members of the National Union of Seamen for higher wages and improved working conditions. As workers

ourselves we know that under capitalism we get nothing save through organisation and struggle. The social conditions of capitalism, where a tiny minority own the means of life, inevitably give rise to a struggle over the division of wealth. The class struggle will last as long as capitalism because the interests of workers and owners are irreconcilable. The seamen's strike is an expression of this class struggle though it is fair to say that very few seamen fully understand this. They do not recognise that there is an irreconcilable conflict between workers and owners everywhere. They do not recognise that workers have no country and that patriotism is a delusion and a snare. They do not recognise that the wages system shows up the dependence of the workers on the owners for a living.

The strike has a wider significance than the wages and working conditions of seamen. The Labour Government, as

caretakers for capitalism, have decided at last to stand up to organised workers in Britain. (...)

The Government hope to make an example of the seamen and so deter others from opposing their policy. This means that if the seamen lose then the wages and working conditions of the rest of us will be adversely affected over the next few years. This has happened before. In May, 1958, a Tory Government stood up to the London busmen and won and for the next year or so their wages policy was "effective".



Even if the seamen win and the dykes of Labour's wages policy are breached the Socialist Party points out that this is not enough. All the cards are stacked against workers under capitalism. Being propertyless they depend on the owners for a living. On top of this there is a further disadvantage. The Government represents the interests of the owning class. Any Government in Britain has at its disposal a vast arsenal of political weapons to oppose any economic action by workers, not least the strike-breaking

Emergency Powers Act invoked by the Government (and agreed to unanimously by Parliament, left-wingers and all) after a week of the strike.

(Editorial, *Socialist Standard*, July 1966)

Exhibition Review continued

pan salt works in the world, a museum with original buildings, machinery (pumps, boilers and steam engines), exhibits and informative displays. Some of the galleries are in the former Red Lion Inn, built to quench the workers' thirst. The Manager's House was where the owners,



the Thompson family, worked, taking orders and handing out wages. Recordings of workers talking about their labours are included, and there is information on how some of the flashes have become wildlife havens. There is an attempt by means of special effects to replicate the steam rising from the salt pans, but inevitably it is difficult to give any real impression of what the working conditions must have been like.

The Lion Works is a fitting tribute to the workers who toiled in a now-vanished method of labouring.

PB

continued from page 11

developers chased the WSP out of its fourth headquarters at 295 Huntington Avenue.

It was a bleak moment for the entire party; the NAC's administrative functions ceased to be carried out, and the meetings (now held in a comrade's home) became those of a correspondence committee, its Minutes an occasional 'Report to the Membership.'

Then in 1986, a young recently-joined Michigan member, collaborating with an SPC member from the Toronto area, brought out a new party publication, the *World Socialist Review* — a shoestring successor to the defunct *Western Socialist* produced on an office photocopier. After the second issue, Aaron Feldman, the new National Secretary, asked the present writer (a desktop publishing enthusiast) to see what he could do with it, and so a morphed *WSR* revived the SES tradition of an 'occasional' journal. Boston-area members (Fenton, Mike Philips, Ken Stewart, Karla Rab and myself) did stage a minor rally toward the end of the 80s, in tandem with a speaking tour by SPGB comrades Steve Coleman and Richard Montague; but not until nearly a decade later, in 1997, did a group of us set about re-establishing a functional NAC as a first step toward bringing the party back to life.

The new NAC has had its ups and downs, to be sure, although

the continuous revolutionizing of communications and computer technologies has opened up once unimaginable opportunities. The WSM has embraced the Internet, with all the companion parties having linked Websites, blogs, social media and so on. The *WSR*, thanks to the good offices of Comrade Morgan Miller on the West Coast, was transformed by referendum into a 'print-on-demand' yearbook — a very workable concept that bridges the gap between print and electronic publishing. This should soon allow the WSP to make better use of its resources — although at this writing, only the first such yearbook has been produced, and a second is planned.

And so, after a century, even if the World Socialist Party is not as active as we have been, we are still working to make socialists. Still lacking, unfortunately, is a conscious, political majority of socialists eager to move society on to the next phase of social evolution.

RON ELBERT (WSPUS)

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2015

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN

Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our Meetup site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

NORWICH

Saturday 9 July, 3.00 pm

Film 'Living Utopia (The Anarchists and the Spanish Revolution)'

with introduction by Darren Poynton.

Followed by discussion.

Venue: The Reindeer Pub 10 Dereham Road Norwich NR2 4AY

BRIGHTON

Tuesday 12 July, 7.30 p.m. – 9.30 p.m.

Brighton Discussion Group

Venue: The Brightelm Centre (Pelham Room – First Floor – lift available), North Road, Brighton, BN1 1YD

CANTERBURY

Saturday 16 July from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

WAKEFIELD Socialist History Group

Saturday 16 July 12.00 Noon

'Tolpuddle ... and the fight for trade union rights today'

Socialist Party Speaker: Adam Buick

Venue: The Red Shed, 18 Vicarage Street South, Wakefield, WF1 1QX

Free admission. Free light buffet.

BIRMINGHAM

Summer School – Money Talks

Friday 22, 6.00 pm – Sunday 24 July, 2.00 pm

Venue: Fircroft College, 1018 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LH

AUGUST 2016

NORWICH

East Anglian Regional Branch

Saturday, 13 August, 12.00 noon – 4.00 p.m.

Venue: The Heartsease Pub, 180 Plumstead Road, Norwich, NR1 4JZ

CANTERBURY

Saturday 20 August from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

Sunday, 17 July at 3pm

The Guildhall Pub

42 The Bayle, Folkestone CT20 1SQ



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.

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EC Meeting

Saturday 6 August, Socialist Party's premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Folkestone area Discussion Group

If there is anyone interested in the formation of a Discussion Group in the Folkestone area, contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or phone: 07971 715569.

A load of Koch

IF YOU wish to have some understanding of what is happening and how the 99 percent are suffering in Venezuela, who better to call than Daniel Mitchell? He has a PhD in economics and is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, originally known as the Charles Koch Foundation. With such a background, Mitchell's musings should come as no surprise: 'I feel sorry for the Venezuelan people, but I'm perversely glad that the country is collapsing. That's because it's nice to have proof that Margaret Thatcher was right when she famously warned that the problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money. To be sure, we already had proof from Greece, France, the Soviet Union, Brazil, and many other places. But it's still nice to have another piece of evidence that big government eventually produces very dire results. I also confess that I'm enjoying Venezuela's

economic decay because I get a warm feeling of Schadenfreude when watching leftists try to explain what's happening in that formerly rich nation' (cnsnews.com, 2 June).

Mitchell takes pleasure in the suffering of our class but conveniently forgets to mention that a small minority continue to enjoy the comforts available in what blogger Agustin Otxotorena describes as the 'upscale sectors of Caracas'. Shopping shelves there are not empty as elsewhere. 'If you have money' there is champagne, vodka, Belgian chocolates, lobster, brand-name clothes, etc. Exclusive restaurants, nightclubs, beaches, yachts, golf clubs, private schools and universities form 'a whole country within a country where there are no poor' – other than those working there. Such ostentatious privilege exists regardless of the government's orientation – left, right or centre.

Thatcher was right, at least when she

stated: 'There is only one economic system in the world, and that is capitalism. The difference lies in whether the capital is in the hands of the State or whether the greater part of it is in the hands of people outside of State control' (House of Commons speech, 24 November, 1976). Venezuela is not and never has been socialist. Neither are or were Brazil, Greece, France or the Soviet Union. Lenin wrote of Russia in 1918: 'reality says that State capitalism would be a step forward for us; if we were able to bring about State capitalism in a short time it would be a victory for us' (*The Chief Task of Our Time*). That same year, the old lie about Russia being socialist or communist (Marx and Engels used the terms interchangeably) was exposed in the August 1918 edition of this very journal. The idea of socialism in one country is rather like being a little bit pregnant.

Brand Venezuela... and tobacco in Cuba



Parasites beget parasites

THE 1 percent exist worldwide, in Russia and Venezuela, Norway and Italy. 'The world's youngest billionaire is worth an eye-popping \$1.2 billion, around £862 million. Alexandra Andresen comes in as one of the richest people on the planet, after inheriting millions from her businessman father Johan Andresen. The Andresen family own Ferd, a long-running private investment company' (mirror.co.uk, 2 June). We are also informed later of one major reason for Alexandra's wealth. 'her great-great-great grandfather bought J.L. Tiedemanns tobacco factory in 1849, which later became the country's

market-leading cigarette maker.'

Elsewhere (aljazeera.com, 4 June), we learn that 'the tobacco industry has annual revenues of nearly \$500bn. The number of cigarettes manufactured and sold has risen to six trillion every year worldwide – nearly double what it was four decades ago. Tobacco stocks outperformed the market in 2015 and have in fact done so for the past decade. The ... electronic cigarette market is now worth \$7.5bn.' Our labour, that of adults and children as young as five years old, is the source of this wealth. The tobacco products are then sold back to us at a profit and kill an estimated six million of us annually.

Wealth is product of human labour, acting upon nature-given materials, that is capable of satisfying needs. We work, they take and pass on. Some of today's capitalists have many centuries of legalised theft behind them. The richest families in Florence have been at it for the past 600 years. This fact was confirmed recently by two economists doing useful work for a change. Guglielmo Barone and Sauro Mocetti studied the records of Florentine taxpayers in 1427 with those in 2011 and after comparing the family wealth to those with the same surname today, concluded the richest families in Florence six centuries ago remain the same now.

FREE LUNCH

