

November 2019  
Vol.115 No.1383  
£1.50

# socialist standard

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain    Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



**ALSO:**  
**THE NUCLEAR THREAT**  
**CLIMATE VS. CAPITALISM**  
**FALL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE**



# socialist standard

## Contents November 2019

### Features

- 5 Brexit & Democracy**  
The Value of Your Vote
- 10 Climate vs Capital**  
The Juggernaut of Profit
- 12 Nuclear Threat**  
Resetting the Doomsday Clock
- 14 St. Monday**  
Ye Olde Holiday
- 15 The Barrier**  
Ex XR Member Gets Real
- 16 1989 and All That**  
The Fall of the Russian Empire
- 18 Knife Crime**  
Violence & Youth



### Regulars

- Editorial 3**
- Pathfinders 4**
- Cooking the Books 6**
- Wood for the Trees 7**
- Material World 9**
- Cooking the Books II 18**
- Proper Gander 19**
- Reviews 20**
- 50 Years Ago 22**
- Meetings 23**
- Rear View 24**
- Free Lunch 24**

## Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin air, and explains

why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different -- and

unattractive -- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The *Socialist Standard* is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is -- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

All original material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-ND 2.0 UK) licence.

## Editorial

### Towards a general election

For over three years political debate in Britain has been dominated by the inability of capitalist politicians to agree if, when and how capitalist Britain should leave the capitalist EU. In June 2016 the issue was put to the people and the people voted to leave. However, this didn't settle matters as it left open the question of what this meant. Did it mean simply leave the EU's political institutions and its political project or did it mean also leave its single market and customs union which provided for frictionless and tariff-free trade throughout Europe?

As explained on page 6, the capitalist class has been divided over the issue. Most of the 'business elite' never wanted to leave and favour as soft a Brexit as possible, one that would maintain free access to the EU's single market. A minority, mainly maverick financiers, want a clean break in order to avoid any EU regulation of its activities.

This split is mirrored amongst capitalist politicians, with parties and individuals lining up behind one or other section of the business elite. The Liberals, most of the Labour Party and some Tories are behind the mainstream majority and,

counter-intuitively, the Tories under Johnson and Farage's Brexit Party are behind the financiers who funded the Leave campaign and Johnson's Tory leadership bid. The SNP, who want an independent capitalist Scotland, have joined those opposed to Brexit, while the DUP, still fighting yesterday's battles in Northern Ireland, initially allied themselves with the Tories until Johnson decided to sacrifice them to get the sort of deal those who financed his leadership campaign want -- one where Britain leaves both the single market and the customs union.

However, even this is not in the bag as it remains to be negotiated. The dominant section of the business elite can still get a softer Brexit if there's a change of government. Most of them are resigned to seeking a softer Brexit rather than reversing it in a second referendum, which is just a LibDem vote-catching ploy and would be a festival of xenophobia.

Where do the workers come into this? Good question. We don't. While a no-deal Brexit would temporarily cause us unnecessary inconvenience and any Brexit will remove our freedom to move

throughout the single market area (and cause problems for those who have moved), basically this is not our dispute.

As we go to press, Boris Johnson has proposed an election on 12 December. One advantage of an election would be that it would allow other issues to be discussed. Unavoidably Brexit will be an issue, but it won't be the only one. This will allow socialists to go beyond saying that Leave or Remain is irrelevant as far as the class of wage and salary workers is concerned and to point out that the other issues -- climate change, health, schools, transport, etc. -- cannot be solved by the reforms to capitalism the other parties will be promising, but only within the framework of common ownership, democratic control, production directly to meet people's needs, and distribution on the basis of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need.'



# FREE

## 3-month trial subscription to the socialist standard



For a 3-month trial subscription to the **socialist standard**, or to request more details about the Socialist Party, complete and return this form to 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Please send me an info pack  Please send me a trial subscription to the **socialist standard**

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

**Subscription Orders should be sent to the address above. Rates: One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.**

# PATHFINDERS

## Socialism – there's an app for that

FUNNY HOW, if you do a column for long enough, you can meet yourself right back where you started. When this column began, in January 2005, the very first article asked if the popular computer simulation game, Sim City, could ever be used to create a realistic model of a global socialist society in operation. As there wasn't a computer big enough to do this at the time, we suggested distributed processing using a global network of home PCs crunching data in the breaks when their users weren't at the keyboard. In theory this might have worked, but in any case we had no suggestion at the time for how to make the model sophisticated enough. Simply consider one average human being, and the range of possible actions open to them in any given situation, and the variables quickly become enormous. Multiply those by the population of the world, and the task was beyond incomputable. We threw the question out there anyway, knowing we were asking for the moon on a stick.

Well, Moon, it's time to meet Stick, because things have changed. If 2005 doesn't seem that long ago, remember that the Sim City article appeared four months before the first ever YouTube upload, 'Me at the Zoo', by Jawed Karim. Facebook was just a year old and only 5-7 percent of people in western countries used social networking sites. In the same month Microsoft released its XP Professional operating system. Reddit was launched in June. Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Snapchat did not yet exist.

Since then, raw computing power has increased by orders of magnitude. The advent of big data, collected through trading sites and social networks, has created a new science of mass behavioural analysis. Artificial intelligence, given clear rules and parameters, can now out-think any human on the planet. We are starting to get thinking and planning tools that are unimaginably faster, and involving data sets that are vastly bigger than anything conceivable even in 2005.

A recent article in *New Scientist* shows just how far things have come, with a new generation of simulated models which are able to plot predictions at the crowd or mass level on the basis of individual behaviour. Multi-agent artificial intelligence (MAAI) allows 'predictions to be made with extraordinary accuracy by testing them in highly detailed simulations that amount to entire artificial societies' (5 October). This may sound far-fetched, but it's being done now. 'MAAIs are already being used to build digital societies that



simulate real ones with uncanny accuracy'.

Instead of primitive top-down social models, MAAI uses agent-based modelling, in which individual 'agents' are 'programmed to interact with one another and their virtual environment and change their behaviour accordingly'. One early non-AI model was developed to predict the spread of the Ebola outbreak in 2014, using known parameters ranging from demographics to disease pathology to cultural factors such as burial rites. At the same time researchers developed 'what if' interventions to see what might impede the disease spread. Without interventions, the model predicted 1.4 million infections. In the event, smart interventions suggested by the model kept the figure down to 28,000. This doesn't prove the model was responsible per se, or that unknown factors didn't play a role, but it is nevertheless powerful evidence in favour.

Even so, the model had to be kept simple, with a very limited range of individual behavioural options, because that was all the available computing technology could cope with. Instead of near-zombies, what researchers really wanted were 'intelligent agents' able to emulate the behaviour of thinking and acting for themselves.

MAAI is delivering just this. 'One of the things that has changed is an acceptance that you really can model humans,' says one researcher. 'Our agents are cognitively complex. They are simulated people with genders, ages and personalities. [...] They're social in the way humans are. They learn from each other, react to each other and to the environment as a whole.'

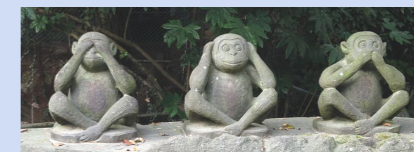
You might be impressed if they could do this at the scale of a village. In fact the technology can already model a city as big as London, and the plan is to scale it up

to a population the size of the US, then China, and ultimately the world. Just as so-called Industry 4.0 is introducing the digital twin, whereby a whole factory can be managed and monitored via its virtual equivalent using a vast array of sensors attached to every moving part, so it should soon be possible to 'build an artificial society, try things out and see what works'.

Today's researchers are understandably thinking about models which address questions internal to capitalism. But the possibilities for socialists are as dazzling as they are obvious. What if you could model a global, democratic, non-market society of common ownership? What might it look like? Could there be different but workable versions? What forms of direct or representative democracy would be most feasible and at what scales? Which forms of science and culture might bloom and which might wither on the vine? What might we lose, and what gain, without the cruel driving force of money? People comprehend what they can see with their own eyes. We could potentially bring the concept of socialism to life the way a 3D chart brings a table of data to life, and in ways we haven't even thought of yet.

But even if we could do all this, would it necessarily convince anyone? However sophisticated the model becomes, it is still just a digital model. As such, it doesn't prove anything in the real world. But socialists, like scientists, know that nothing outside of mathematics is ever really 'provable' in scientific terms. The most we can do is amass such a weight of evidence that people are gravitationally inclined towards it. MAAI will help us do this. Make no mistake, other political and commercial groups will use it, for their own manipulative purposes. We can use it too, but with no nefarious objective and with our code and parameters open to scrutiny. If our model reveals ways in which socialism might go wrong, or break down, say in circumstances of large-scale harvest failures, we would certainly want to know in advance. But if we can demonstrate that socialism works as a stable system, without the kind of wild fluctuations you get with market societies and the kind of inequality, wars and environmental damage that the market also produces, then it will be a lot harder for people to dismiss out of hand. Maybe we could get it on a phone app. Somebody down the pub says: 'Nah, it would never work, mate, not in a million years'. You say 'Really, you think so? Then have a look at this...'

PJS



## Thoughts on Democracy and Brexit

From the Chartists, through the Suffragettes, there has been an ongoing struggle for democracy. The suffrage, the vote, has been a focus of that struggle, the measure of just how democratic society has become. The ballot box is the echo chamber for the voice of the people. Except, it isn't.

Should I choose not to cast my vote I am upbraided for betraying those who fought for, perhaps even died for, universal suffrage by not recognising its value. However, the contrary is the case.

I value my vote so highly I will not simply fritter it away. It is not to be given to anyone or any party or cause that do not deserve it. It is all too easy to claim to grudgingly favour the best of a bad lot from a misplaced sense of duty. In the end a valuable asset is all too easily squandered.

So it was for the 2016 EU referendum. Plebiscites have, at best, a poor history. They are the favoured means by which despots seek a thin veneer of popular support for their tyranny. The fundamental weakness is the attempt to present a binary solution to complex issues. And, more often than not, there is insufficient or no factual data whereby a rational decision can be made.

So it was in 2016. Both Brexiteers and Remainers made assertions and shouted loudly, but detail was in very short supply. As economists frequently demonstrate, predicting the economic future is beyond our ken.

In capitalist terms, it is quite possible that the UK may well suffer short term difficulties if 'we' 'crash out' of the EU, but then go on to prosper, until the next inevitable recession that is. Staying in might well be an economically safer bet in the short term, but if Germany's manufacturing industry continues to decline it could drag the rest of the EU with it. Both sides might as well slaughter a chicken, metaphorically of course, and examine the entrails.

Therefore, not voting in the referendum was the most rational position to take: hold on to the vote, value it, and don't give it away to the mountebanks on both sides. Approximately 27 percent of the electorate did precisely that, they didn't vote. However, that vote uncast, my vote, still counts.

This means that while the outcome has subsequently been presented in binary form, the result was actually a three-way split. In rounded figures: 37 percent voted to leave, 34 percent voted to remain and nearly 29 percent abstained. What is often presented by Brexiteers as an overwhelming vote in their favour, is in fact a minority position, with 63 percent not voting for it.

Governments often gain office on the votes of a minority of the electorate. But at least individual constituencies are represented by individuals from various parties. The party accruing the largest minority of votes aren't then awarded

all the seats in the Commons. And that government can, of course, be subsequently voted out. There isn't the assertion that 'the people have spoken' and so there'll be no need for future general elections.

Staying in or leaving the EU will ultimately solve none of the problems fundamental to capitalism. Trade wars and actual wars will continue to rage around the world, economic crises will periodically haunt us all, the environment will be further degraded in the ceaseless quest for profit. It must be that way whatever the EU or any other trading arrangements decide. 'Leave' or 'Remain' – either way capitalism remains intact and dominant.

The solution is achievable through democracy, the vast majority of people consciously choosing socialism. That will involve casting votes, making them even more valuable. But in themselves they will not be enough. True democracy demands a greater commitment than simply turning up at the polling station occasionally.

Voting in a majority of socialist MPs will not lead to socialism unless they are the expression of the majority working actively to bring socialism about throughout society, and around the world. The ballot box is an indicator, not

the solution. Democracy has become a passive process playing upon false hopes, alienation and, unfortunately, prejudice. It has become an instrument to divide the working class against itself. Brexit being a clear example of this.

The referendum implies that singular issues can be isolated. However, all that actually happens is the political focus becomes so narrow and myopic that people fail to see what really needs to be confronted, to be dealt with in their own collective best interest.

Whether or not Brexit happens and how, climate change, war, low pay and insecure employment, recessions, poor housing and homelessness, desperate refugees, and so on and so on, will all

continue as features of capitalism. Not because capitalists are heartless, they may or may not be, but because capitalism exists for one purpose only, capital accumulation – the pursuit of profit.

In or out of the EU, this will remain the case. It's not a matter of leaving or staying, but of transcending the EU and all capitalist economic and political arrangements by the mass conscious choice of democratically establishing socialism. The true proof of democracy is the vast majority actively deciding on and pursuing a better way of living.

So we say it is worth holding on to your vote, don't squander it on short term solutions that actually solve nothing. It will prove to be far more valuable when used not as a palliative, but a democratic cure of society's present ills.

DAVE ALTON

**NOW ON SALE**

## SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICIAL LOGO BRASS BADGE

This full colour enamel-type badge is made on brass with a secure pin fastening. It measures 250mm in diameter



Price £4 each with inland postage & packing or £3 each if collected from Head Office

To order: write to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Please make remittances payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain or buy online at: <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/product/party-enamel-badges/>

Other merchandise and our extensive range of literature is also available from: <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/store/>

For prices for overseas or wholesale orders please email [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org) with badges as the subject or telephone 020 7622 3811

## COOKING THE BOOKS

### Divided business elite

Writing in the *Times* (3 October), its chief leader writer, Simon Nixon, insightfully explained the Brexit controversy as resulting from a 'division among Britain's business elite', or, as we would put it, among the British capitalist class.

Noting that 'one of the surprises of Brexit has been the strong support for leaving the European Union in some parts of the City and among a handful of Britain's wealthiest entrepreneurs' and that 'this support is in contrast with the continued anxiety over Brexit among the bulk of Britain's business leaders,' he explained that 'the hedge fund industry sits at the apex of the shadowy world of offshore finance that emerged in London in recent decades. This world is quite distinct from the traditional business of the City, which is serving as a domestic capital market for British and, since the creation of the single market, EU companies.'

It was not therefore surprising, he pointed out, that:

'[P]rominent hedge fund tycoons have turned out to be enthusiastic Brexiters. The hedge fund industry likes to operate in the shadows. It manages private pools of capital and believes that this entitles it to be exempt from

the more onerous rules that govern the rest of financial services. What turned much of the industry so virulently against the EU was the introduction of the Alternative Investment Managers Directive in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, which imposed modest reporting requirements on the sector. Although the impact of these rules was close to nil, this shot across the bows was deeply resented. Whereas the EU's status as a regulatory superpower has bought benefits to most sectors, creating opportunities to reap economies of scale across a single market, for the hedge fund industry it poses a threat.'

There you have it. A split in the British capitalist class. On the one side, the traditional and normally dominating section which benefits from frictionless access to the European Single Market and, on the other side, a section that wishes to avoid EU regulation of its lucrative financial activities.

The capitalist class is not a monolithic bloc with a single common interest (beyond – that is – seeing their property rights protected and the working class kept in its place). It is every section, indeed every company, for itself. Who gets their way depends on who has the ear of the government as their class's executive committee. The normal way capitalists

seek to influence government policy and legislation is through lobbying but, when this fails and the section concerned feels the issue is vital to their profit-making, then that section takes the matter to parliament and ultimately to the electorate, the vast majority of whom are members of the majority class of wage and salary workers.

With the referendum called by David Cameron in 2016, those that Nixon called 'the hedge fund industry' saw their chance. They poured millions into the Leave campaign (while the other capitalist section poured millions into Remain) and, unexpectedly, won. However, a subsequent general election returned a majority of Remain MPs. Hence the political impasse that has dragged on for over three years now, providing an initially amusing but now somewhat boring side-show.

It looks as if the working class is going to be called in to settle the matter. But why should we back one or other of the sides in this 'division among Britain's business elite'? Better to abstain or, even better, write 'World Socialism' across the ballot paper whether it's a referendum or a general election.

# WOOD FOR THE TREES

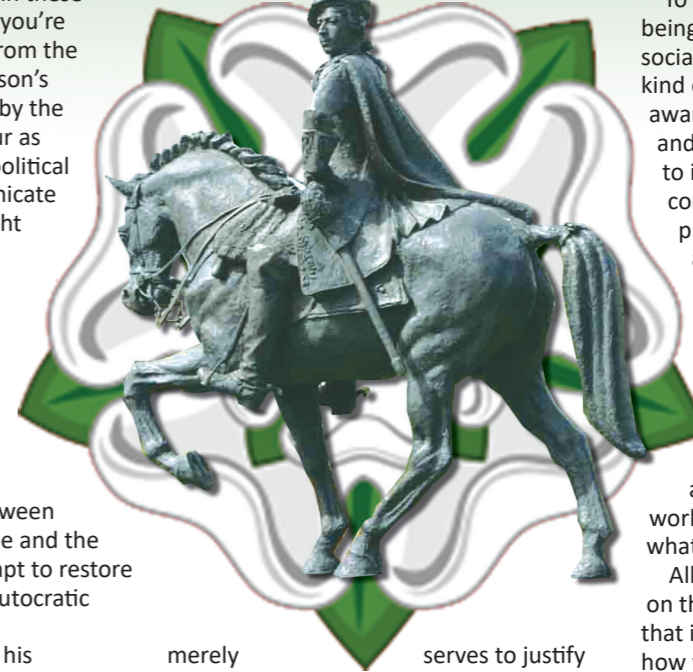
## Through a Glass Darkly

'A struggle has been going on in these islands for centuries of which you're only dimly aware' is a quote from the 1971 movie version of Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped*. It is spoken by the Lord Advocate to David Balfour as part of an explanation of his political ideology. He seeks to communicate the idea that his political insight (or consciousness) is superior to that of his young listener. Balfour's response: 'I can't argue with you; you've answers to questions I haven't even thought of' is a confirmation of this disparity of political knowledge. The historical context of the novel is the struggle in Scotland between the English-backed bourgeoisie and the reactionary highlanders attempt to restore the Stuart monarchy and its autocratic rule (the Jacobites).

The Lord Advocate couches his understanding of events in ideological terms by referring to his protection of the freedom of religion and equality under the law. A socialist would likewise accuse him of a naïve and superficial understanding of history by reference to the class struggle. We have here an example of three different political perspectives: Balfour's idealistic insistence on the moral integrity and rational coherence of the law, the Advocate's belief in the use of realpolitik to further the ideals of the Enlightenment (ideology) and Marxism's economic and political materialism that exposes the underlying class struggle. We can perhaps boil down these three polemical stances into idealism, ideology and materialism. Of course the three do occasionally overlap but they can still give us an insight into levels of consciousness or, to put it another way, into different degrees of awareness.

Socialists quite often refer to political or 'class consciousness' as a higher form of social awareness that is essential in seeing what lies behind the propaganda and ideological values of any given historical period. To some class consciousness is mistaken for an obsession with social status and socialists are accused of having 'a chip on their shoulder' or suffering from financial envy. But in reality an understanding of the social tectonics of class is the only way to cut through the ideological overgrowth of ideology that

Jacobite leader Charles Edward Stuart



merely minority serves to justify political power. But how can we be sure that this approach to politics is not also ideological? Do socialists force everything into a class context when an ideological or even moral perspective might be more revealing? It would be ironic indeed if Marxism could be accused of being ideological or even idealist since opposing these twin illusions was responsible for its very conception. One way to undermine such allegations would be to examine the existence of the reality, or otherwise, of the different levels of awareness (consciousness).

It would be nonsense to deny that some members of any community are more talented than others in certain areas of conception and/or production. The complexities of the technological age in which we live make a division of both intellectual and physical labour essential. Because everything is socially produced all these talents are totally interdependent and so there should be no question of a hierarchy in production creating any kind of elite (unlike today in class society). So we find a disparity of knowledge between those who studied and have experience of a certain discipline and those who have not. This is just stating the obvious but in politics everyone is expected to somehow have an equality of understanding even if they have made no effort to study the subject.

To object to this nonsense is to risk being accused of elitism. But those socialists who take an interest in this kind of philosophical inquiry are entirely aware that the ideas, language, laptops and electricity are all equally necessary to its creation and is therefore itself conceived of as a part of social production. Avoiding the emotional and intellectual seduction of the language of the idealistic, moralistic and ideological is impossible without some knowledge of their respective origins in terms of context, rhetorical structure and power source. Awareness that these elements obscure, distort and condition our experience of the world is vital if we are to lift the veil from what is real and authentic.

All of the above is, of course, dependent on the existence of an objective world that is, in some sense, independent of how we think about it (materialism). The efficacy of this 'higher consciousness' can only be tested empirically: the ability to make predictions based on research, etc. The fall of the Russian (sometimes erroneously called Soviet) empire was no surprise to socialists. Although the ideological rhetoric was a parody of Marxism every socialist knew that it was, in fact, just another form of capitalist economic imperialism that along with all the others of its kind (British, Japanese, German, Spanish, Portuguese etc.) would flourish and then decay with time. We knew this because we are not subject to the emotional, intellectual and moral illusions of ideology. If this is not proof of the existence of different levels of political consciousness then what is?

Those whose beliefs and values are not based on empirical evidence leave themselves open to accusations of dogma, delusion and self-deception which are a testament to the existence of vastly different levels of political consciousness. Such middle-headedness has resulted in untold suffering and an unerring ability to be wrong time and again. A critical response to the moral values and political mores of the culture into which we are born is not easy and depends on more than just the intellectual deconstruction of propaganda but without such an ability a viable political alternative is rendered inconceivable.

WEZ

**UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS**

**LONDON**  
**North London branch.** Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufon 020 7609 0983 [nlb.spgb@gmail.com](mailto:nlb.spgb@gmail.com)  
**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](mailto:tenner@abelgratis.com)

**MIDLANDS**  
**West Midlands regional branch.** Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 01543 821180. Email: [stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk)

**NORTH**  
**North East Regional branch.** Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.  
**Lancaster branch.** Meets 2nd Sun (Jan 3rd Sun), 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, [spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org).  
**Manchester branch.** Contact: Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. 0161 860 7189.  
**Bolton.** Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.  
**Cumbria.** Contact: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.  
**Doncaster.** Contact: Fredi Edwards, [fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk)  
**Liverpool.** Contact: D. Whitehead, [liverpool.spgb@gmail.com](mailto:liverpool.spgb@gmail.com)

**SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST**  
**Kent and Sussex regional branch.** Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: [spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org) 07973 142701.  
**South West regional branch.** Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR. Contact: Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Rd, Poole, BH12 1BQ. 01202 257556 or 07929627689.  
**Brighton.** Contact: Anton Pruden, [anton@pruden.me](mailto:anton@pruden.me)  
**Canterbury.** Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

**Luton.** Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.  
**Redruth.** Contact: Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. 01209 219293.  
**East Anglia.** Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccleson-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.  
**Essex.** Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. [patdeutz@gmail.com](mailto:patdeutz@gmail.com).  
**Cambridge.** Contact: Andrew Westley, [wezelecta007@gmail.com](mailto:wezelecta007@gmail.com). 07890343044.

**IRELAND**  
**Cork.** Contact: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. 021 4896427. [mariekev@eircom.net](mailto:mariekev@eircom.net)  
**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Belfast.** Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

**SCOTLAND**  
**Edinburgh branch.** Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. [jimmyjmoir73@gmail.com](mailto:jimmyjmoir73@gmail.com)  
 Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>  
**Glasgow branch.** Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. [peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk).  
**Dundee.** Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.  
**Ayrshire.** Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. [rainbow3@btpenworld.com](mailto:rainbow3@btpenworld.com).  
**Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.**

**WALES**  
**South Wales Branch (Swansea)**  
 Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.  
**South Wales Branch (Cardiff)**  
 Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff.

Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. [botterillr@gmail.com](mailto:botterillr@gmail.com)

**INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS**

**LATIN AMERICA**  
 Contact: J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

**AFRICA**  
**Kenya.** Contact: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 13627-00100, GPO, Nairobi  
**Zambia.** Contact: Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

**ASIA**  
**Japan.** Contact: Michael. [japan.wsm@gmail.com](mailto:japan.wsm@gmail.com)

**AUSTRALIA**  
 Contact: Trevor Clarke, [wspa.info@yahoo.com.au](mailto:wspa.info@yahoo.com.au)

**EUROPE**  
**Denmark.** Contact: Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, Floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J.  
**Germany.** Contact: Norbert. [weltsozialismus@gmx.net](mailto:weltsozialismus@gmx.net)  
**Norway.** Contact: Robert Stafford. [hallblithe@yahoo.com](mailto:hallblithe@yahoo.com)  
**Italy.** Contact: Gian Maria Freddi, Via Poiano n. 137, 37142 Verona.  
**Spain.** Contact: Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque. 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

**COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS**

**Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada.** Box 31024, Victoria B.C. V8N 6J3 Canada. [SPC@iname.com](mailto:SPC@iname.com)

**World Socialist Party (India)** 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, 033- 2425-0208. [wspindia@hotmail.com](mailto:wspindia@hotmail.com)

**World Socialist Party (New Zealand)**  
 P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

**World Socialist Party of the United States.**  
 P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. [boston@wspus.org](mailto:boston@wspus.org)

# MATERIAL WORLD

## HONG KONG: THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

SOCIALISTS CAN only applaud when workers around the world struggle for political democracy and freedom to organise as this is essential for the eventual struggle for socialism. After all, if workers are not willing to struggle for what they hold to be legitimate democratic rights, they are unlikely to strive for the wherewithal to effect that transformation.

In Hong Kong, hundreds of thousands have carried out a campaign to protect and extend the limited democratic rights which were granted to them when the People's Republic of China took it over in 1997 under an agreement called 'one country, two systems', where there is extensive devolution of administrative powers giving Hong Kong a degree of limited sovereignty. Due to anomalies this created, Beijing pressured the Hong Kong Legislative Council to amend some of their legal independence and permit the extradition of suspects to mainland China to face trial. This was perceived as undermining the freedom of political dissidents. The extradition bill has been withdrawn yet the protests continue unabated. They have now evolved into a direct challenge to Beijing as well as to the local authorities. Protesters are provocatively using slogans such as 'Free Hong Kong' and 'Hong Kong is not China'. This battle for basic political democracy is a battle against authoritarianism and to take the power out of the iron grip of Hong Kong and Chinese elites and – or so is the hope of the demonstrators – place it in the hands of ordinary people.

The protests are a repetition of the 2014 Umbrella Movement but because of the informal amorphous structure of the 2019 protests it is proving harder for the authorities to clamp down upon it. They organise through social media on the instant messaging apps like Telegram, on dozens of Instagram sites and online forums. There are no high-profile leaders to arrest. Unlike those

2014 protests, when leaders like Joshua Wong became widely known, activists are deliberately staying anonymous, using pseudonyms, making it difficult for the authorities to effectively target. It is a movement without leaders. Alex Chow, one of the 2014 leaders at the time, had the premonition that 'People will come back again, and they will come back with stronger force' and concerning the present movement, he confirms it is leader-free. It's not an issue of having 'no leader, it simply means that everyone is a leader', one 22-year-old Hong Kong student was reported as saying.

There are those on the Left who equate anti-capitalism with anti-Americanism

governments might support the protests in Hong Kong to advance their own interests, but it doesn't mean that the whole movement is promoted by them. What is disappointing but not unsurprising is that the protests are not resonating with mainland Chinese, who also believe that the protesters are dupes of Western propaganda, with Beijing concentrating its reporting on the violence of the demonstrators.

'Be water!' is an expression protesters have deployed, a phrase borrowed from Bruce Lee, who used it to describe his kung fu known for its flexibility and creativity to press an advantage and pull back when a strategic retreat is

needed. It reflects the flash mob strategy being employed to confront the police. However, the demonstrators need to guard against inevitably self-defeating violence that suffering and resentment are so likely to prompt. Non-violent resistance is a more effective method. A non-violent movement that challenges a well-entrenched dictatorship must be prepared for a long struggle and numerous casualties. After all, only one side is committed to non-violence. To combat despots with violence is to cede to them the choice of battleground and tactics. Amateurs using violence against experts is the quickest way to defeat. At the time of writing, China has doubled the number of troops garrisoned in Hong Kong, including specialised anti-riot units.

We can do little in support of our fellow-workers in Hong Kong except to voice our solidarity while at the same time maintaining our constant campaigning for socialism as the real hope of humanity.

ALJO



Alex Chow

# PUBLICATIONS

**PAMPHLETS (£4.00 each unless stated otherwise)**

- What's Wrong With Using Parliament? (£2.50)
- Ecology and Socialism
- From Capitalism to Socialism (£3.50)
- Africa: A Marxian Analysis
- Socialism as a Practical Alternative
- Some Aspects of Marxian Economics (£5.50)
- How the Gods Were Made by John Keracher
- Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek
- Art, Labour and Socialism by William Morris
- How We Live and How We Might Live by William Morris
- The Right to be Lazy by Paul Lafargue
- Socialist Principles Explained (£2.50)
- The State and the Socialist Revolution by Julius Martov
- An Inconvenient Question
- Sylvia Pankhurst on Socialism (£3.00)
- Why Socialists Oppose Zionism & Anti-Semitism (£3.50)
- Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism
- The Magic Money Myth

**BOOKS**

- Strange Meeting: Socialism & World War One: £4.50
- Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? £5.50
- Socialism or Your Money Back: £4.00
- Centenary of the Russian Revolution: £8.00
- All of the above books (25% discount) £16.00

**DVD**

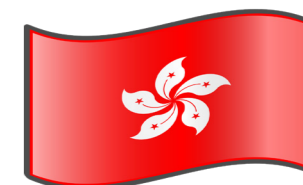
- Capitalism and Other Kid's Stuff: £5.75
- Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up: £5.75

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:  
**The Socialist Party, Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_





In late September the climate crisis was in the spotlight. Friday 20 September was the first Global Climate Strike, with four million taking to the streets in 185 countries (reported figures vary). Protests continued over the weekend. On Sunday afternoon our comrades in the World Socialist Party of India held a rally on College Square, Kolkata under the rousing slogan 'Save the Planet, Share the Earth.' Then on Monday 23 September the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York opened with the eloquent appeal of 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, followed by speeches of so-called 'world leaders' ('national leaders' would be more accurate), including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. More 'world leaders' spoke the next day at the 74<sup>th</sup> debate of the UN General Assembly.

The 'world leaders' proved that Greta was not far off the mark when she told them: 'All you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth.' Reporting from 'inside the messy, desperate chaos of the UN Climate Summit,' Jeff Dembicki complains that their speeches were 'blandly inoffensive' (vice.com, 24 September). None dared name or confront the 'elephants in the room' – the corporations (Exxon, Chevron, Shell, etc) that since 2018 have invested \$50 billion in new fossil fuel expansion projects or the Koch brothers and other tycoons who fund propaganda ridiculing climate science and calling global warming a hoax. None so much as mentioned the urgent need to complete the transition to renewable energy and leave remaining deposits of fossil fuel in the ground.

Dimitri Lascaris of The Real News had the following to say about the speeches delivered on September 24:

'I was in the UN General Assembly yesterday. I must have seen fifteen world leaders come up to the podium. And every single one of them without exception talked about their credentials as champions in the climate fight without mentioning any of the things that they're doing to undermine the battle. The last person to speak, Greek Prime Minister

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, was crowing about the fact that in 2028, a decade from now, they're going to stop producing energy from lignite [brown coal] in Greece. What he didn't say ... and what the mainstream media are not talking about is that the Greek government is actively promoting offshore drilling in the Aegean Basin in the Eastern Mediterranean... Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also spoke... He was crowing about the number of trees they planted in Turkey, but he has deployed his navy near Cyprus in order to secure control over offshore oil deposits and begin drilling there... These leaders are talking out of both sides of their mouths (video, 25 September) .'

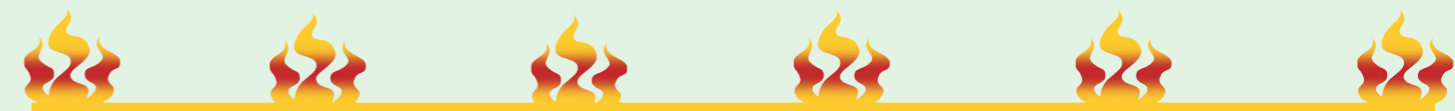
Talking out of both sides of the mouth – or 'speaking with forked tongue' – is an essential skill for the capitalist politician. You can hardly expect them to talk in the same way to the general public and to the capitalists whose interests they serve.

### Painfully slow progress

Actual progress in the transition away from fossil fuels is painfully slow. With the aid of a good microscope you can detect it, but only if you focus on relative quantities. The proportion of the global power mix constituted by renewables (solar, wind, hydro) is about one quarter and inching upward, rising in 2018 by 0.8 of a percentage point to almost 26 percent. In Europe, the most advanced region, the proportion is 36 percent, in India, Japan, and the United States only 18 percent (all figures from the Global Energy Statistical Yearbook 2019, <https://yearbook.enerdata.net>).

In absolute terms, however, world output of all three fossil fuels is still rising. This is true even of coal: output seemed to peak in 2014, but is now again growing at the 'modest' annual rate of 1.3 percent, due in large part to expansion of production capacity in India and Indonesia.

As for oil and gas, a boom is currently in progress, led by the United States. US gas output 'surged' in 2018 by 11 percent, while world output rose by 5.2 percent, twice the historical



trend. The boom is made possible by horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing – the notorious 'fracking' that if we live nearby destabilises our subsoil, poisons our drinking water, and shoots methane flames from our faucets. The filthy tar sands of Alberta, Canada are still being extracted, transported, and processed. And drilling for new deposits continues unabated at numerous locations throughout the world, from the Gulf of Mexico to the South China Sea.

### Not just the fossil fuel corporations

It is right to emphasise the need to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to renewables. And yet this is by no means the only front in the struggle for human survival, nor are the fossil fuel corporations its only enemies.

Consider, for instance, the fires now burning through the forests that serve as our planet's lungs – in Amazonia but also in other parts of Brazil and in Indonesia. These are not 'wildfires': there is good reason to suppose that they are set deliberately in order to clear the land for commercial activities. In Amazonia arson opens up land for the cultivation of soybeans, for cattle ranching, in certain places for mining. In the tourist area around Pinheira in southern Brazil a state park has been set aflame with a view to residential development on what is viewed as prime real estate (The Real News, 25 September). In Indonesia most forest fires are set in order to clear land for palm oil plantations. So capitalists in at least five distinct non-energy fields of profit-making enterprise are involved in laying waste these precious forests.

Or consider the melting of the Arctic ice cap. If we are to restore the planet's climate system to a stable and livable equilibrium, then we must find ways to halt and reverse this process. Here again, however, capitalists in diverse fields of enterprise are salivating over the profit-making opportunities created by the melting of the ice – above all, shorter routes for shipping between Europe and Asia and extraction of many kinds of natural resources. In Greenland the retreat of the ice sheet has triggered a hunt for yet more coal, oil, and gas as well as for iron ore, nickel, aluminum, lead, zinc, molybdenum, niobium, tantalite, rare earth elements, gold, platinum, diamonds, other precious stones, and uranium (though the country's parliament did block a uranium mining project near the capital of Nuuk).

Other forces standing in the way of effective action on climate are the military and the military-industrial complex. Neta Crawford, who teaches at Boston University, has analysed emissions of greenhouse gases by the US armed forces over the period 2001-2017. She found that the Pentagon is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions greater than those of many countries, including Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. Weapons and military equipment use up enormous amounts of fuel. Aircraft are especially 'thirsty,' typically consuming 4-5 gallons per mile (*not*, be it noted, miles per gallon!).

Speaking of aircraft, even civilian air travel may have to be reduced, for the sake of the climate. That may not be welcome news to the capitalists who own airlines and aircraft manufacturing plants.

### Up against the 'growth machine'

These examples should suffice to show how broad a range of capitalist interests the struggle for human survival will have to confront and overcome. This is not to imply that effective climate action is against the profit-making interests of the *whole* of the capitalist class. Makers of solar panels and wind turbines obviously stand to benefit. And climate activists have had some success in winning managers of insurance companies over to their side.

It does not really matter to the executives of capitalist firms what they make, provided that they can sell it at a good profit. On the whole, however, they prefer to stick to the line of business to which they are accustomed and avoid incurring the costs of shifting to a new line. This is especially so in industries with vast amounts of sunk capital – that is, equipment that can only be used in the industry concerned. Coal, oil, and gas all fall into this category.

In fighting for our survival as a species, we are ultimately up against the mindless and heartless 'growth machine' that has come to dominate our world. Socialists call this machine *capital*. Endless expansion is intrinsic to capital, which Marx defined as 'self-expanding value.' Capital is an inhuman and anti-human machine, even though it is human action that originally set it in motion, keeps it running, and will soon – let's hope – bring it screeching to a halt.

STEFAN



# NUCLEAR THREAT: BACK TO THE 1980s



covering a radius stretching north to Cambridge and south to Brighton; of which around 6 million would be killed instantly and a further 6 million would suffer substantial injuries. The model helpfully clarifies that such casualties do not include the effects of radiation which are apparently too difficult to estimate. In such circumstances advising children to shelter under their school desks is not really going to cut the mustard as a strategy for survival.

Yet this kind of asinine propaganda is on the march again today. The madmen in charge of the asylum are busy overlaying a new, and even madder doctrine, on the traditional one of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). The original MAD approach is grounded in the less than reassuring logic that no country would launch a nuclear attack on another nuclear state because the retaliatory response would be assured and would lead to its own annihilation. This tenuous logic is still the basis of 'nuclear strategy' and is predicated on the rational behaviour of those world leaders with their finger on the nuclear button. When one considers the current cohort of world leaders such an assumption would seem to have a rather flimsy foundation. But now the nuclear powers want to have their cake and eat it too. Whilst their main posture towards each other is still MAD, they are now promulgating a secondary and seemingly contradictory approach. Led by the United States,

the assertion is that a nuclear war is not only 'survivable,' but also 'winnable'; amidst talk of tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons and smart nukes in space.

## Sounding the alarm bells

A mechanism for alerting the public to the nuclear threat was conceived in 1945 by the Chicago group of scientists – Compton, Oppenheimer and others, who were part of the Manhattan Project – and who, ironically, created the atomic bomb in the first place.

Every year since 1945 the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has set the hands of the Doomsday Clock to represent the imminence of Nuclear Apocalypse according to conditions prevailing at the time. In recent years the clock has been calibrated to take into account the other existential threat to the world; that of climate breakdown/ecological collapse. Currently the hands of the Doomsday Clock are at two minutes to midnight, indicating that the world is on the brink of self-immolation; the closest it has been since 1952 when the first hydrogen bombs were tested.

At the peak of the MAD doctrine it was estimated that there were 40,000 nuclear weapons in the world; mainly held by the United States and Russia, but also by Israel, France, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, China, North Korea and the NATO 'nuclear-sharing states' of Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands and Turkey; these latter countries holding them under the auspices of the US.

The 'peace dividend' at the end of the Cold War in 1991 – which led to the decommissioning of thousands of nuclear weapons – was short lived, although the actual numbers are still down from the peak. Today it is estimated that there are around 14,500. 13,000 of these are held by the US and Russia, with clusters dotted around the other nuclear powers, including the UK in the form of the Trident deterrent; soon to be upgraded at a cost estimated to be as high as £200 billion over the lifetime of the project.

Apart from the developing sophistication of nuclear weapons and their increased killing capacity, the posture towards them is also changing in the direction of becoming

more trigger-happy. The US has always maintained its right to launch a first strike, in addition to its 'launch on warning' policy. With the continuing deterioration in relations between the nuclear powers the others are upping the ante as well. China has recently responded to heightened tensions with the US by putting its nuclear arsenal on high alert by combining its missiles and warheads, which were previously kept separate. Russia who, in common with the US, already has several thousands of its nuclear weapons on a hair trigger has resurrected a new version of its 'Dead Hand' system which was believed to have been disabled at the end of the Cold War. Dead Hand involves an automatic and massive launch of Russia's nuclear weapons in the event of sensors picking up seismic vibrations indicative of an incoming nuclear attack. Some pundits have heralded this system as making the world safer by increasing the 'deterrent effect'. Presumably they are unaware of the event in 1983 when the electronic monitors being watched by Stanislav Petrov, a Soviet officer, detected incoming nuclear missiles launched from the United States. This was at a time of high tension between the two nuclear powers following the shooting down of a South Korean airliner which had strayed into Soviet air space. Petrov decided to contravene orders by not reporting the incident to his superiors which, had he done so, would probably have prompted a retaliatory strike by the Soviet Union, leading to all out nuclear war. It turned out it was a false alarm caused by an unusual alignment of sunlight filtering through high altitude clouds over North Dakota.

A first strike posture is contrary to various aspects of international law, including: the Nuremberg Principles, the Geneva Conventions, The Hague Conventions, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But such legal niceties provide no brake on the bellicose rhetoric of the leaders of the nuclear powers. In 2016 Prime Minister Theresa May assured parliament that she was ready to press the nuclear button, taunting the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn for dithering over the issue. Trump regularly spews inane utterances on Twitter, such as those aimed at the 'Little Rocket Man' of North Korea saying that: 'my nuclear button is much bigger than Kim's and my button works!'. He also threatened Iran, a country of 83 million people, with 'obliteration' if it ever crossed America. Trump articulated his overall stance on nuclear weapons during his presidential campaign as: 'You want to be unpredictable.' Now in office he is presiding over an unprecedented programme of renewal and expansion of nuclear weaponry under his Nuclear Posture Review; including the creation of the sixth arm of the US military, in the form of Space Command, to take warfare into the new frontier of space. The other nuclear states are embarked on tit-for-tat expansion and modernisation of their nuclear arsenals.

But all these cunning developments in nuclear warfare will amount to nothing if the Nuclear Winter thesis, postulated by a group of climate scientists, proves to be valid. They assert that a relatively small number of nuclear explosions will create a massive firestorm which would suck up a dust cloud into the stratosphere, blotting out the sun's rays for years to come and thus ending all life on Earth.

## The end of the era of nuclear warfare restraint

In August 2019 the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF) expired which, since 1987, has banned the stationing of short and intermediate nuclear missiles – such as Cruise and Pershing – in Europe. In October 2018 the US signalled its intention to withdraw from the treaty and Russia quickly followed suit; each side accusing the other of breaches. This amounts to the final unravelling of over a dozen treaties that

have limited the expansion of nuclear arsenals over the past half century.

The United States has led the way in the shredding of the treaty infrastructure, beginning with its withdrawal from the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and, more recently, its abandonment of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; the multilateral agreement that imposed constraints on Iran's nuclear programme. The only treaty of any significance remaining is the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which currently places limits on certain categories of nuclear weapons held by Russia and the United States. This expires in 2021 and has little prospect of being renewed. President Putin has repeatedly expressed a wish to renew START, but President Trump has described it as a: 'one sided deal' and a: 'bad deal' and the two leaders have no plans to engage in negotiations.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), established in 1968, is still extant but of questionable value given that the new nuclear states, such as Israel, India and Pakistan, refuse to participate in the treaty and North Korea simply withdrew from it in order to embark on its nuclear weapons programme.

It will be the first time since the 1980s that the world will be in an unregulated nuclear weapons environment. Add to all of these regressive trends the array of other factors creating instability in the geo-political situation and it is surprising that the Doomsday Clock is set as far away as two minutes to midnight.

## What prospects for peace?

There are many conciliatory parties urging the nuclear powers to resume negotiations in order to set limits on their nuclear arsenals but, in the current febrile atmosphere, the prospect of them being listened to is slim. In any case the treaty approach of containment did little to reduce the risk of the world's annihilation by nuclear warfare given the huge scale and destructive power that remained, even after such limitations were imposed. The treaties were at best a sticking plaster and at worst created a soporific effect and a normalisation of the nuclear threat.

Nuclear War represents the pinnacle of violent warfare but it is one of degree, rather than difference in kind. From its inception in 1904 the Socialist Party has opposed all wars as a matter of principle. Confronted with the call to war – and flying in the face of almost every other party calling itself 'socialist' – the Socialist Party has never capitulated to the jingoistic rhetoric of nationalism. We have always stated our unambiguous opposition to war. We regard war as the manifestation of conflict between competing factions of the capitalist class, fighting over the spoils of territory, resources, markets and trade routes; the cost of such conflict being suffered by the working class in the form of death, misery and privation. War is an inherent characteristic of the capitalist system and will only be eradicated when the death cult of capitalism is ended.

Socialism would comprise a world-wide community where there would be no nation-states. There would be no ownership of either property, territory, or natural resources. There would be no markets and no need to compete for resources to sustain life because these would be freely provided according to need. In such a society war would be redundant.

The only war that socialists are interested in fighting is the class war; with the aim of bringing it to a swift end by non-violent means through the ballot box, thus relegating the concept of war to the history books.

TIM HART

## Back to St. Monday?

The Labour Party announced at its annual conference in September that if it were to form a government, it would introduce a 32-hour week for workers within the next decade, a reform that many businesses are prepared to accept, a quarter of business owners having said they would consider introducing a 4-day week.

A recent study by Henley Business School saw 250 firms participate in a four-day week, and nearly two thirds of these businesses saw productivity increase. The firms' ability to attract and retain staff had improved, too. Collectively, these firms now save £92bn each year.

Before the arrival of capitalism and its factory system rural workers were accustomed to sunrise and sunset hours, to the seasons and the vagaries of weather, along with the needs of the crop and animals. Men and women worked in direct relationship to nature. It was an irregular and informal working week. In medieval feudalism there were over a hundred holy days a year on which no work could be done, in addition, to numerous trading fairs. Those who worked enjoyed much more free time than they do today. As the dark satanic mills spread, holy days disappeared. It was the factory which brought in clocking in and clocking out. But peasants driven from their small plots of land by the Enclosures had to be broken of their independent spirit and disciplined into wage-slavery.

The new labour regime did not go uncontested.

'Keeping St. Monday' meant observing Monday as a holiday. Many a Tuesday was also observed as a 'Saints' day. A rhyme printed in 1639 gives a satirical version of the working week:

*'You know that Munday is Sundayes brother;*

*Tuesday is such another;*

*Wednesday you must go to Church and pray;*

*Thursday is half-holiday;*

*On Friday it is too late to begin to spin;*

*The Saturday is half-holiday agen.'*

Payday was typically Saturday, and therefore workers often had spare money on Monday. They declared Monday a public holiday of sorts (often to recover from the binge drinking that was commonplace on Sunday, the day of rest). Piece work was often the norm, with workers adapting their skills to operate on flexible working periods. If they missed Monday they could make it up by working extra hard at the end of the week in order to have more free time. In London 'St. Monday' was commonly observed and the working week in London during the 1750s was clearly shorter than five days, but as capitalism grew in ascendancy it led to an increase in annual working hours from 2,288 to 3,666.

The worship of St Monday had troubled a factory inspector called Edward White who reported in 1864:

'In Birmingham an enormous amount of time is lost, not only by want of punctuality in coming to work in the morning and beginning again after meals, but still more by the general observance of 'Saint Monday', which is shown in the late attendance or entire absence of large numbers on that day. One employer has on Monday only about 40 or 50 out of 300 or 400, and the day is recognised by many masters as an hour shorter than others at each end...'

Of course, all this made efficient scheduling of work almost impossible.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the USA, said: 'I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty... Repeal that [welfare] law, and you will soon see a change in their manners. St. Monday and St. Tuesday, will soon cease to be holidays. Six days shalt thou labor, though one of the old commandments long treated as out of date, will again be looked upon as a respectable precept;

industry will increase...'

There was a financial incentive to maximise the return on expensive machinery by having long hours. Machinery does not stand 'idle' nor would the workers attending them be permitted to stand idle either. Working life was becoming increasingly regulated, and the working week was reorganised. Longer hours and unnatural shift working were implemented.

One of capitalism's myths is that it has reduced human toil yet Kalahari Bushmen work two-and-a-half days per week and on average the working day was less than five hours. The use of the term St Monday may have faded but the custom has not entirely died off. Pulling a sickie is still common practice. With the Labour Party promise, workers are simply recovering what they had four or five centuries ago and subsequently lost.

In line with Karl Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, socialists support the right to be lazy. So let's drink to the health of St. Monday and in the words of Billy Bragg:

*I'm a hard worker,*

*But I ain't working on a Monday.*

*I'm a hard worker,*

*But I ain't working on a Monday.*

*A hard working fellow*

*I ain't working on a Monday,*

*St. Monday's still the weekend to me.*

**ALJO**

**13th century - Adult male peasant, U.K.: 1620 hours**  
Calculated from Gregory Clark's estimate of 150 days per family, assumes 12 hours per day, 135 days per year for adult male ("Impatience, Poverty, and Open Field Agriculture", mimeo, 1986).

**14th century - Casual labourer, U.K.: 1440 hours**  
Calculated from Nora Ritchie's estimate of 120 days per year. Assumes 12-hour day. ("Labour conditions in Essex in the reign of Richard II", in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., Essays in Economic History, vol. II, London: Edward Arnold, 1962).

**Middle ages - English worker: 2309 hours**  
Juliet Schor's estimate of average mediaeval labourer working two-thirds of the year at 9.5 hours per day.

**1400-1600 - Farmer-miner, adult male, U.K.: 1980 hours**  
Calculated from Ian Blanchard's estimate of 180 days per year. Assumes 11-hour day ("Labour productivity and work psychology in the English mining industry, 1400-1600", Economic History Review 31, 23 (1978).

**1840 - Average worker, U.K.: 3105-3588 hours**  
Based on 69-hour week; hours from W.S. Woytinsky, "Hours of labor," in Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vol. III (New York: Macmillan, 1935). Low estimate assumes 45 week year, high one assumes 52 week year.

**1850 - Average worker, U.S.: 3150-3650 hours**  
Based on 70-hour week; hours from Joseph Zeisel, "The workweek in American industry, 1850-1956", Monthly Labor Review 81, 23-29 (1958). Low estimate assumes 45 week year, high one assumes 52 week year.

**1987 - Average worker, U.S.: 1949 hours**  
From The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure, by Juliet B. Schor, Table 2.4.

**1988 - Manufacturing workers, U.K.: 1856 hours**  
Calculated from Bureau of Labor Statistics data, Office of Productivity and Technology.  
Taken from: groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/worktime/hours\_workweek.html

Article that originally appeared on Extinction Rebellion's blog in March from a socialist dissatisfied with XR's understanding of capitalism

UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, 'we are in trouble. We are in deep trouble with climate change,' and that, 'It is hard to overstate the urgency of our situation... we are still not doing

enough, nor moving fast enough, to prevent irreversible and catastrophic climate disruption.' This statement came alongside the news that emissions had risen to a new high in 2018 after 30 years of supposedly attempting to cut them.

Can we adapt to the inevitable effects of 'catastrophic climate disruption' under the capitalist system? Or, is it a barrier to a sustainable future fit for the good of all?

We need three basic elements to sustain life: food, water and shelter. When our species emerged around 300,000 years ago we maintained ourselves as hunter-gatherers. This period lasted for 90 percent of human history. Co-operation was crucial for our survival.

Chattel slavery and the concept of private property emerged before written history with basic agriculture and the production of surpluses. People became property, and the state evolved to defend property rights through the use of coercion. Between the ninth and fifteenth century in mediaeval Europe, the shackles of slavery gave way to feudal society and the legalised bondage of serfdom wherein the three basics for life were exchanged for service and labour on the land.

Capitalism arguably dates from the sixteenth century and flourished at the expense of feudalism's inability to adapt. The central characteristics of capitalism are: private ownership of the means of production, profit, waged labour, the accumulation of capital, prices, and competitive markets.

As elites arose in slavery and feudalism, so too did the unequal division of food, water, and shelter for the vast majority of its people. Capitalism has mirrored that, as Oxfam reports that the 'World's 26 richest people own as much as the poorest 50 percent'. Whereas, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation revealed that the food system fails to properly nourish billions of people: 'More than 820 million people went hungry last year, while a third of all people did not get enough vitamins. Approximately 9 million people die of hunger globally each year'.

And water? 'At least 2 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces... Nearly two million children a year die for want of clean water and proper sanitation... The UN Development Programme argues that 1.1 billion people do not have safe water and 2.6 billion suffer from inadequate sewerage. This is not because of water scarcity but poverty, inequality and government failure.'

And shelter? Globally, 'one in eight people live in slums. In total, around a billion people live in slum conditions today'. In 2005, the last time a global survey was attempted by the UN, 'an estimated 100 million people were homeless worldwide. As many as 1.6 billion people lacked adequate housing'.

These are symptoms of a cancer called poverty. A sickness intrinsic to capitalism. The question to ask yourself here is: are these people likely to be joined by millions more



given what we know, at present, about the effects of 'catastrophic climate disruption' under capitalism?

Politicians, the media, and entrepreneurs scabble around for quick fixes. All of them involve market solutions. But the logic of the capitalist market is to make money. Thus, catastrophe can also be seen as an opportunity to turn a profit.

Bloomberg reports that, 'A top JP Morgan Asset Management strategist advised clients that sea-level rise was so inevitable that there was likely a lot of opportunity for investing in sea-wall construction'. And speculating on insurance policies, Barney Schauble, of Nephila Advisors LLC believes that, 'the broader public's failure to appreciate the risks of climate change is part of what makes it such a good area for investing'. Moreover, 'there is evidence that many players in the corporate-military-security industrial nexus are already seeing climate change not just as a threat but an opportunity... climate change promises another financial boon to add to the ongoing War on Terror.'

Technology we are told will eventually provide solutions to climate change. This is a crude phantasm of an ideology that seeks to forego any alternative thinking and to 'kick the can down the road.'

The 'green new deal' appears in several shades of grey. Whether the so-called, 'war-time mobilisation' some people call for could be realised in one country is debatable. But globally? That would take cooperation on a scale inconceivable given that in the twentieth century The League of Nations, and later the UN, were implemented to maintain peace. Nevertheless, countless millions were slaughtered in capitalism's wars.

And now? Consider the debacle that is Brexit. And the farce of climate change conferences.

Co-operatives and similar types of enterprises are argued for as solutions. But as long as markets exist they too have to conform to their iron laws. Co-operatives will have to compete with each other to buy raw materials and inputs, and then sell their commodities on the market with every other seller of an equal product. Thus, if a cooperative produces goods to sell on the market, to obtain money, to pay wages via profit, then it has to conform to all of the economic laws of capitalism.

Profit is capitalism's raison d'être, and growth its imperative.

The quote, 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism,' becomes credible with the knowledge that, 'just 100 companies are responsible for 71 percent of global emissions,' many of which are state entities and the residue potent friends of state actors. Likewise, 'the U.S. Military is the World's Biggest Polluter.' All powerful adversaries of anyone who wants to oppose the status quo.

But those who think this barrier can be overcome have one great advantage. Imagination. The ability to envision a different world. One that's fit for the good of all. To imagine it, clarify it, and start to build it. And those that believe the barrier could be breached should begin by inscribing on their banners the dictum - 'Toward One World.'

**ANDY MATTHEWS**





Thirty years ago this month the Berlin Wall came down marking the end of the Russian State-capitalist Empire. We recall that, right from the start, we realised that Russia was not heading for socialism.

Of all the groups which arose during the Russian Revolution, those who came nearest to getting it right were arguably some of the 'Mensheviks.'

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party had split, before the Bolshevik coup, into Bolshevik (majority), and Menshevik (minority).

The Bolsheviks followed Lenin and their belief, amid the turmoil following the Tsar's abdication (the Revolution had been underway since March 1917), was that the working class was too weak to make a socialist revolution. This was true, and the Mensheviks agreed. The two factions disagreed over the following.

The Mensheviks said that capitalism must be developed in Russia and industry and technology built up to the level of western Europe. Then, and only then, would the working class grow and achieve the strength in numbers and the awareness to carry out a socialist revolution. Socialism must be global and achieved by the workers themselves. In the meantime, they said, it is important for all to have freedom of press and assembly, and an open parliament, so that the free circulation of ideas can accompany social development. Russia, said the

Mensheviks, could not jump over capitalism, but this had to be gone through. Parliamentary democracy was therefore the best option.

The Bolsheviks didn't want to wait. They said (like the Leninist parties today) that the workers will never become aware of the need for socialism, and must therefore be led to it by a vanguard of intellectuals (meaning the Bolsheviks themselves)

So, in November 1917 (October by the old Orthodox calendar), Lenin, Trotsky, and a handful of Bolsheviks plotted and carried out a minority coup d'etat against the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky, and got workers to support them with the slogans 'Bread!' and 'Stop the war!' In the countryside, Bolsheviks put forward the slogan 'Bread and Land!' as well as 'Stop the war!'

The Bolsheviks' campaign to stop the war reached the West, and in 1915 they had attempted to have their anti-war declaration published. Every paper in Britain refused except the *Socialist Standard*, which published the Russian Bolshevik declaration on its front page, proclaiming solidarity with all workers wanting the war stopped.

Lenin and Trotsky, after seizing power in November 1917, kept their promise to stop the war, winning massive support. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed with Germany, taking Russia out of the war.

Almost immediately, the Western Allies blockaded Moscow and shut out all information concerning Russian events. British and US armies were dispatched to Russia's north-west; in the south and east, Tsarist armies terrorised the countryside, while in Moscow and Petrograd (St. Petersburg) Lenin and Trotsky gave into hysteria similar to that of the revolutionaries in Paris in 1793.

In Ukraine, Makhno's Anarchist cossacks defeated the Tsarist army there and made an alliance with Lenin and Trotsky, which the Bolsheviks reneged on later.

Responding to the conditions of the military blockade, the Bolsheviks cracked down with their own terror, abolishing freedom of the press and arresting and executing political dissidents. In the naval port of Kronstadt, the sailors mutinied, demanding the socialism the Bolsheviks had promised, and bread for the workers at least. Trotsky sent raw young frightened Red Army recruits against the sailors and many were killed. Finally the Red Army overran Kronstadt and those sailors who were not killed escaped to Finland.

Fleeing for their lives, many Mensheviks escaped to Georgia and held out briefly there against the Bolshevik government forces. Trotsky then turned his attention to destroying the Ukrainian anarchists as Lenin's government became more secure.

Having seized control of the Russian state, Lenin found himself faced with the enormous task of transforming a vast peasant economy in ruins into a capitalist nation-state. Just as the Mensheviks had told him, Russia wasn't ready for socialism and had to build a capitalist economy. To carry out this task he closed parliament, outlawed all parties besides his

own and established a dictatorship based on tyranny over the working class.

He thus elaborated an ideology which would permit the ruthless development of capitalism under a one-party state and still keep a 'Marxist' vocabulary.

He renamed the Bolshevik RSDLP the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, redefined socialism as state-capitalism, and said that this 'socialism' must be an immensely long 'transition period' before communism (real socialism) can become a reality. A transition period which, naturally, would be ruled over by the CPSU.

By 1918, it was obvious to us that what had occurred in Russia was not a socialist revolution, but a coup d'etat by a group of opportunists, paving the way for a semi-feudal economy to be transformed into a modern capitalist state. However it took nearly 70 years before Russia finally dropped the pretence of being socialist and did away with its pseudo-Marxist terminology and emerged as the openly capitalist power it is today.

A.W.



## COOKING THE BOOKS

### Lenders and borrowers

'Peer-to-peer lenders given last warning' was the headline in the *Times* (20 September) referring to a circular from the Financial Conduct Authority. Apparently, some of them have been pursuing 'risky practices'. According to an earlier report in the *Times* (17 September), the regulator 'believes this is being driven by pressure on many to reach profitability, resulting in them taking 'additional opportunistic risks' in areas beyond their expertise.' Two, with the unoriginal names of 'Lendy' and 'Collateral', have failed.

But what are they? The *Times* explains: 'Peer-to-peer platforms are websites which link retail and institutional investors with consumers, small businesses and property developers who want credit'. ('Retail' investors are individuals with money to lend).

A business or individual seeking money for some project applies to a P2P platform for a loan; the platform, after checking their credit-worthiness, contacts potential lenders who, individually or as group, put up the money at an agreed rate of interest. P2P platforms make money from fees for putting the borrowers and lenders

in touch and for checking the borrower's credit-worthiness. The more loans they arrange, the more their income; hence the temptation to take on 'risky' borrowers that the FCA criticised. They are relatively new financial institutions, the first one in Britain being established only in 2005.

P2P platforms are, then, financial intermediaries which put those with money to lend and those who want to borrow money in touch with each other. To call them 'lenders' is, strictly speaking, incorrect as they don't actually lend money themselves. Even so, both for lenders and borrowers they are an alternative to banks and, at one point, were encouraged by the government precisely because of this, with the government lending to small businesses via some of them. They do directly compete with banks for the custom of those with money to lend.

Banks in fact are not all that different from P2P platforms. They, too, are financial intermediaries between lenders and borrowers. When someone or some institution deposits money in a bank, what they are doing is lending to the bank, even if they are more usually called 'depositors' or 'savers'. What, basically, the bank does with such loans to it is

to pool the money and then use most of it to make loans out of this pool to borrowers. Although there is no direct link between particular lenders and particular borrowers, banks still channel funds from lenders to borrowers. It's their economic role within capitalism. Their income derives from the difference between the rate of interest they pay those who lend them money and the higher rate they charge those who borrow money from them.

Because of the way P2P platforms operate no one dares claim that the money for the loans they arrange has been conjured up out of thin air; it clearly has to already exist. Many people mistakenly think that banks can simply 'create' the money they lend. But this is an illusion or, in the case of currency cranks, a delusion. Banks can't do this any more than P2P platforms can. It is just that, in their case, this is not so transparent. However, on closer examination, this can be seen to be the case. If nobody lent them money they wouldn't be able to lend any. Banks, like P2P platforms, are financial intermediaries, not money or credit creators.

Hardly a day goes by without hearing about someone being stabbed or shot in the UK. More often than not it will be a young person, usually a teenager. According to government sources, in the year ending March 2019, there were 43,516 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, in comparison with 40,215 in the previous year. 32 percent of this violent crime has taken place in the London area ('Knife crime in England and Wales rises 8 percent over year', *Guardian*, 18 July). Although there has been a drop in gun crime during this period, it is still high in comparison to previous years. What is going on here? Why is there so much bloodletting on the streets of Britain?

There is no shortage of explanations. Street gangs that peddle drugs and the ensuing turf wars between rival gangs. Online squabbles on social media that blow up into deadly disputes. The prestige of handling a weapon. Police claim that young people think it is 'trendy' to carry a weapon (Yahoo News UK, 13 April, 2017). Fewer police officers on the beat and the decline in the use of stop and search. The fact that a disproportionate number of workers from an ethnic minority are affected has led some to focus on so-called 'black on black' crime.

Others cite cuts in youth services, the closure of Sure Start centres, reduced funding for youth clubs as a consequence of the government's 'austerity' drive, that is in its attempts over the past few years to restore the profitability of British

capitalism and improve the latter's competitiveness in world markets in the wake of the economic downturn of 2008/2009 by reducing the cost of running the state machine.

What all these explanations miss is the root cause. Capitalism is based on minority ownership of the means of living and production for profit. Wealth is accumulated in the hands of the few and the majority is left in various degrees of relative or absolute poverty. In the poorer areas with high levels of social deprivation, young workers face a bleak future with low paid insecure work and high unemployment. As an escape from this drudgery, the allure of gang life is tempting. For these young people, the lucrative drug trade promises the lifestyles that capitalism encourages workers to aspire to, but at the same time denies them. Gangs are seen to provide protection and a sense of belonging in a tough and alienating environment. Some young people feel that the possession of a weapon provides some sort of protection in a threatening world. Poverty is the fertile ground on which crime flourishes.

There is no doubt that the increase in poverty and deprivation in the aftermath of the 2008/2009 economic downturn, exacerbated by cuts in public services, has fuelled higher levels of violent crime. However, knife and gun crime is a problem that predates the 2008/2009 economic crisis. The years of 2006/2008 witnessed a large spate of shootings and stabbings, which included the high-profile murder of Ben Kinsella in an unprovoked knife attack in Islington in June 2008.

There have been calls for more police patrols and the government has authorised an increase in the use of stop and search. There is little evidence that these measures will

reduce crime in any meaningful way, and have, in many instances, only served to sow distrust of the authorities and have heightened tensions between young workers and the police. In addition, longer prison sentences, another demand, do not act as deterrents. On the contrary, they are more likely to turn out hardened and more savvy criminals.

In August, the Home Office launched its anti-knife scheme, in which thousands of takeaway boxes are supplied to chicken shops with stories written on them about young people who have given up knives and have gone on to pursue successful careers in sport and music. This is supposed to dissuade young people from carrying knives. As well as being ridiculous, it is racist in that it assumes that knife crime is a black people's issue and that young black people spend a lot of time visiting chicken shops. As has been shown, crime is a social issue involving poverty and dispossession, not a racial one.

Restoring public expenditure on youth services may ameliorate the problem, but it cannot eradicate it. Expanding the powers of the state over the working class and initiating silly gimmicks will not solve the problem of knife and gun crime either. Only the working class can do this by organising consciously and politically to get rid of capitalism, a social system that generates human poverty and misery, and establish socialism, where the production for the profit for the few gives way to producing for the needs of the many and crime, in all its forms, can become a thing of the past.

**OLIVER BOND**



# Knife Crime and why it flourishes

# PROPER GANDER

## CASH AND THE CASTAWAYS

ONE FAMILIAR trope of reality TV is to plonk its participants somewhere remote and see how long they can live off the land. Gluttons for punishment not well-exposed enough for *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here* could sign up for the likes of *Survivor* or *The Island With Bear Grylls*. The latter has for its sixth series morphed into *Treasure Island With Bear Grylls* (Channel 4), with an added twist which interestingly highlights how money shapes our relationships and outlook.

Twelve volunteers are left on a smallish Pacific island with some fishing equipment, enough to eat and drink for just a few days and, of course, cameras. They have to make their own shelter, find food and a fresh water supply and learn to survive without things they usually take for granted, like supermarkets, electricity and bathrooms. One important feature of everyday life, though, has been (literally) thrown into the mix, as also dropped off on the island are parcels containing bundles of cash. £100,000 in total is chucked out of a helicopter, with the parcels and their parachutes usually ending up hanging from trees out of reach. The contestants have to find the parcels, and when they do, decide whether to share the money with the rest of the group or keep it for themselves.

Those taking part are largely a likeable bunch, with the enviable enthusiasm to take themselves out of their comfort zones and put themselves to the test. There's a property manager who unfortunately learns the hard way why you shouldn't drink seawater, a plumber who gets into the kill-your-own-dinner mindset with gusto, and the star of the show is 75-year-old Irene, who helps knit the group together. The contestants have nothing else to rely on apart from themselves and what the island can provide. So, co-operation and practicalities should be at the front of their

minds. How much does the push to get dosh get in the way of what should be more important?

The group set up a ramshackle camp, using branches for benches and making use of the rubbish washed up on the beach. When survival guru Bear Grylls sees their efforts at the end of their stay, he isn't too impressed, and the group realise that they would have built a better home for themselves if they hadn't been preoccupied with finding the prize money. For food, they get used to a diet of winkles, the occasional iguana and rare treats such as goat, stingray and pineapple. Expeditions for fresh water and anything edible turn into hunts for the money parcels, with the group usually returning empty-handed and with empty stomachs.

As well as the money distracting the group from its practical priorities, it sours how they get on with each other. Some of the group want to pool any money finds, while the two contestants with closest links to the Establishment turn out to be the most selfish. Lord Ivar Mountbatten and an ex-Royal Marine Commando called Marco establish their supposed 'alpha male' status early on, encouraged by the

rest of the group, disappointingly. The others' loyalty isn't rewarded, though, when the duo finds a couple of parcels and keeps the dough inside to themselves. However, the ex-Marine soon loses his crown after getting the group lost in the jungle and, following his hoarded money finds being revealed, barely seems to interact with the others. Mountbatten is of the view that those who are less able deserve less, which is easy to say when you're born into one of the wealthiest families on the planet.

Wondering who has found money and kept quiet about it makes the contestants become secretive and suspicious. Those who find and prepare the food resent sharing it with those who are hoarding money. Those who are hoarding money resent those who expect an equal share of it for providing the food. Some feel that they need the money more than others, and so should get more, while some feel that it should all be shared out equally. Being stuck on a desert island is a situation where co-operation and collaboration are even more important than in our everyday lives. So it's a shame that the money ends up creating divisions and ill-feeling, but that's what it inevitably

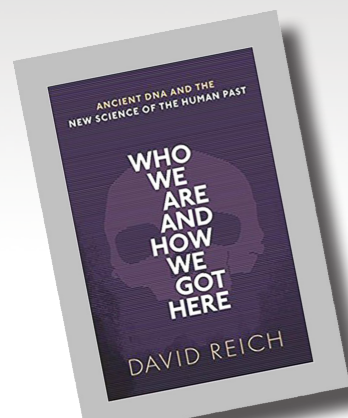
does. Co-operation wins out, though, and as days turn into weeks, the group learns that it's best to work together and share future finds. However, when the time comes to leave the island, Mountbatten and the ex-Marine have still pocketed the largest amounts.

So, how money affects the group on *Treasure Island With Bear Grylls* isn't much different from how it affects us all in real life. We spend our time chasing after cash while it gets in the way of life's practicalities. And we become distanced from those we have to compete with to get enough in the bank, with the most wealth usually ending up with those who are the most ruthless.

**MIKE FOSTER**



## Down the Millennia



David Reich: **Who We Are and How We Got Here**. Oxford University Press. £10.99.

The first ancient human genomes, involving analysis of DNA, were only published in 2010. But since then ancient DNA has had a revolutionary impact on the study of the past, revealing many surprises in what is known about human evolution. Here David Reich, who has played a leading role in such research, describes the state of the art. We cannot summarise the book's contents here, just focus on some of the main points made.

An important issue which arises is the extent of large-scale migration over the millennia and the consequent mixing of peoples: 'Most of today's populations are not exclusive descendants of the populations that lived in the same locations ten thousand years ago.' Most DNA among Japanese people is inherited from farmers who migrated from the East Asian mainland and mixed with local hunter-gatherers. Everyone in India today is a mix, in varying proportions, of West Eurasian ancestry on the one hand, and East and South Asian ancestry on the other. Mixture often involved men who exercised power and women from a subordinate population; thus Thomas Jefferson, third president of the US, had six children with his slave Sally Hemmings. For biological reasons, men can have far more offspring than women, and one man at the time of the Mongol Empire (maybe Genghis Khan himself) had millions of direct male-line descendants. European men made a far greater contribution to the genetic make-up of African Americans than European women. These are examples of 'sex-asymmetric population mixture'.

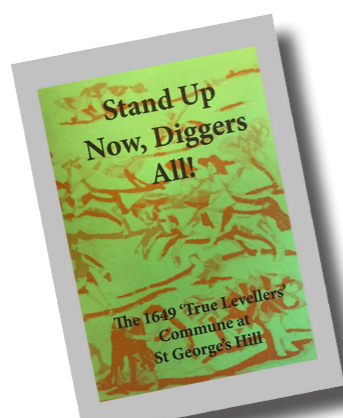
The study of ancient DNA has even

more to say about inequality. Around five thousand years ago, the Yamnaya culture spread from the eastern European steppe over northern Europe and central Asia. With wheeled vehicles, domesticated animals to pull them and the use of bronze, they were able to displace local people, and the powerful males among them could gain access to large numbers of women and so pass on their Y chromosomes to many subsequent generations. This did not apply to all men, only to a limited number, which implies a lot of social stratification.

Reich also confronts the question of race, and to what extent notions of ancestry overlap with race. Some people have objected to research along the lines sketched above, on the grounds that it just reinforces supposed racial ideas and categories. He is emphatic that race and ancestry are not the same, yet accepts 'the possibility of substantial average differences in biological traits across populations', which would include skin colour, height and the ability to breathe easily at high altitudes. It is hard to see how anyone could object to statements such as this, but claims that some genetic variations are more common in people with more years of education need a great deal more support in order to ascertain the role of other possibly relevant factors.

But all in all, a fascinating and informative, but fairly challenging read. PB

## True Levellers



**Stand Up Now, Diggers All! The 1649 'True Levellers' Commune at St George's Hill**. Past Tense publishers, London, 2019.

One simplistic vision of the English civil war has been that it was an early version of the proletarian struggle against

the bourgeoisie. It's an idea that has been especially popular with Leninists. Romantic as it may seem, and intensely brave and admirable as many of those were who opposed that 'man of blood' Charles I, it is, unfortunately perhaps, not the case.

Levellers did not want to level, to make everyone equal. As stated in the Leveller document *An Agreement of the People* (1649): 'We therefore agree and declare, That it shall not be in the power of any Representative ... to render up ... nor level mens Estates, destroy Propriety, or make all things Common.'

In the same way that, for example, a term for an Irish outlaw – Tory – was applied to the group that became the British Conservative Party, the Levellers were given that title by their enemies. William Walwyn, considered to be one of the more radical of the Levellers, nevertheless advocated free trade to the Committee for Trade and Common Affairs, opposing monopolies such as the Levant Company (naturally, the government sided with the Company at the expense of small enterprises). This is not to say that their motivation had no class interests, but there was a strong interest of the 'freeborn', that is, men (only men) with some property; their platform included a property qualification to have the franchise.

But it was different with the True Levellers, or Diggers. Parts of their manifesto, *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced*, ring clear to socialists across three and a half centuries. Once the earth returns to being a common treasury, 'Then this Enmity in all Lands will cease, for none shall dare to seek a Dominion over others, neither shall any dare to kill another, nor desire more of the Earth than another.'

This Past Tense pamphlet takes in the events of 1649-1650, principally around the attempts to cultivate the common land at St George's Hill. It starts with the first attempts to dig there on 1 April 1649 and finishes the following April with the death threats and final burnings of the dwellings and crops there and in the neighbouring Cobham Heath commune. It details the events between, and includes not only the threats, legal judgements and violence perpetrated against them, but also some extraordinary published critiques. For example, from the royalist publication *Mercurius Pragmaticus* quoted in the pamphlet:

'What this fanatical insurrection may grow into cannot be conceived for Mahomet had as small and despicable

a beginning whose damnable infections have spread themselves many hundreds years since over the face of half the Universe.'

In the end, the attempt at holding property in common was defeated.

The pamphlet is interesting and informative. One criticism is that, although it mentions the religious dimension of the Diggers, it does not reflect how central their religion was to them. These were people in a time when many thought that Christ's second coming was imminent.

It would also have been interesting to have looked at, in particular, Winstanley's subsequent writings. The Wigan-born cloth merchant Gerrard Winstanley, one of the movement's main writers, wrote a piece in 1652, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform*, addressed to Cromwell, containing ideas not unfamiliar to socialists:

'Shall we have no Lawyers? There is no need of them, for there is to be no buying and selling; neither any need to expound Laws.'

'If any say, This will bring poverty; surely they mistake: for there will be plenty of all Earthly Commodities, with less labor and trouble then now it is under Monarchy. There will be no want, for every man may keep as plentiful a house as he will, and never run into debt, for common stock pays for all.'

'If you say, Some will live idle; I answer, No: It will make idle persons to become workers... There shall be neither beggar nor idle person.'

'True Freedom lies in the free enjoyment of the Earth.'

A historic twist: St George's Hill, just outside Weybridge, is now a gated community. The place where the True Levellers planted their crops is now where a local estate agent can proudly announce:

'From music legend to sporting royalty, St George's Hill has an impressive list of celebrity residents such as: John Lennon, Tom Jones, Elton John, Cliff Richard, Ringo Starr, Jenson Button, Sue Baker, John Terry' and applaud the high prices of the properties therein.

Notwithstanding the zeal of the estate agent, the pamphlet begins with the first line of the song *The World Turned Upside Down* by Leon Rosselson: "In 1649... at St George's Hill". The existence of the Socialist Party demonstrates the truth of another line from the song "They were dispersed, but still the vision lingers on": an egalitarian society of common ownership.

V.J.

## Where are we now?

We, the working class, have no choice but to sell our acquired skills, knowledge and abilities to whoever is offering the highest wages as an employer, whether a private capitalist firm or some public body, in order to survive. All well and good, you might think, when times are productive and the capitalists are investing in their quest for a profit, and wages might be regarded as fairly good. You may even feel like you're getting by reasonably well. This however is fairly rare in the grand scheme of things. Speaking for myself, I recall a period way back in the 1980s when working in the printing industry and before the onset of digital technology. I had a half-decent income. Housing was affordable, package holidays were all the rage, a car was quite cheap to run and heating your home was never much of an issue. Even putting decent, healthy food on the table was also relatively cheap.

Then came the 90s and things soon changed with the advance of media and other technologies. In the dog-eat-dog competitive world of the free market economy, companies started to go bust left, right and centre as they tried to keep up with each other for their share of the market. It was however a classic case of survival of the fittest, or more accurately survival of the cheapest. Workers were made redundant, incomes dried up as capitalist investment stalled and the harsh reality of many debt-ridden workers began to kick in as homes were repossessed; homelessness hit record highs.

John Major had taken over from the Wicked Witch of Westminster who had proclaimed that there was no such thing as society and who had thought nothing of ordering the boys in blue in to beat the shit out of striking miners who were trying in vain to protect their jobs under the misguided leadership of Arthur Scargill. Major tried every dirty trick in the book in an attempt to convince the voting public that he would be the great saviour of the country, trying to convince us that black was white and white was black. Only then to take on a peculiarly grey shade of skin tone of his own, which was satirised at the time by the television series *Spitting Image*.

Following his downfall, the next great hope of the people was Tony Blair and his New Labour bandwagon that rolled into town with his team of

slippery, slimy city slickers kissing their way around just about every capitalist arse in town. Indeed, one of his head honchos Peter Mandelson – now Lord Mandelson – introduced us to the great new political technique known as 'spin', a particularly fine art of saying one thing while meaning another. This being still used by many politicians to this day.

Of course, what has been described is not something peculiar or exclusive to the periods of the 1980s or 90s. The boom and bust cycle has been a feature of modern history since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around 1790 right through until around the end of the nineteenth century. By then the modern-day capitalist system we currently recognise became dominant. It has to be acknowledged that it has brought some positive benefits. But also many, many more negative results to humanity, the animal kingdom and the environment in general. One only has to turn on the TV, listen to the radio or read a newspaper in order to see at first hand the impact of capitalism's destructive forces on nature as well as on people to begin to understand that something drastic needs to be done to fix the problems and challenges that the majority of people on this planet have to face on a daily basis.

Under capitalism, we are exposed to seeing a never-ending series of wars, conflict and a whole host of other atrocities that are an inevitable consequence of the ruthless nature of the beast that can only survive on a diet of profits for capitalists, whose only concern is for themselves and their search for ever more profits – no chance or likelihood of a profit, no chance or likelihood of investment or production. In other words, whether or not there happens to be a need for a particular product, if that product or commodity is unlikely to yield a profit, there ain't no sensible capitalist ever going to put their hand in their wallet. And that rule applies to all manner of goods and items. From the basic essentials in life, including the food and water that we need to survive, to the clothes that we wear and the homes that we live in. From the cars that we drive or the leisure activities that we might pursue, or the potentially life-saving medication that we might need in order to keep us healthy, it's the same old story – no profit, no production.

(continues on page 22)

# 50 Years Ago

## The Red capitalist class

Any thoughtful person must have realised that opposition to Mao in China over recent years has not been confined to the proverbial 'handful of top people in authority taking the capitalist road'. A recent issue of the weekly journal of the Union of Soviet Writers carried a letter from a schoolboy in Peking who wrote that '... the eyes of a majority of the youth are open. Many no longer believe in Mao Tse-tung. But there are still quite a number who do believe in him and who do not understand that he is the cause of all the difficulties of China.' This sort of comment comes as no surprise to socialists. Even in the current world situation where the vast majority of people (in China as elsewhere) look upon capitalism as the only practicable method of running society, it is inevitable that sizeable groups of working men and women should come into conflict



with the capitalist class in every country. (...)

In China the Maoist representatives of the capitalist class long been engaged in spurious polemics with their rivals in the Soviet Union and other countries such as Yugoslavia, emphasising that these cannot be socialist since a 'privileged bourgeois stratum' exists there. It is hardly surprising, then, that numbers of workers in China who have been fed a staple diet of these sorts of comments in the editorials of the *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* should quite naturally apply a similar analysis to China itself and decide that 'a red capitalist class' is in power rather than the official myth that it is the workers themselves who rule.

(*Socialist Standard*, November 1969)

(continued from page 21)

It simply isn't possible to try to somehow tweak or reform capitalism so that it might somehow work for everyone. That's been tried before in the likes of Russia, China and South America and we all know what a shambles that turned out to be. In short, the basic rules of capitalism dictate that for it to be successful for the capitalist, profit has to take priority over people.

The way out can only be what we in the Socialist Party understand by socialism. A new world order that will see everyone fulfil their potential, contributing to society what they can, and taking from society what they need to lead a fulfilling and satisfying quality of life. Worldwide cooperation will replace worldwide competition as the overarching source of production, with smaller pockets of local productive forces taking place in local communities in order to meet local needs.

Life within socialism will be a whole new ball game, very different to that under capitalism. The transition or revolution from capitalism to socialism can and will only happen when the majority of the working class throughout the world has developed a clear understanding and consciousness of the need for it.

PAUL EDWARDS



## OBITUARY

### Norman Deutz

We regret to have to report the death of our comrade Norman Deutz at the end of August at the age of 83. Norman joined the old West Ham branch of the Socialist Party in 1954, shortly after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At the time men of that age were liable to be conscripted into the armed forces for 'national service'. Norman refused and spent a short while in prison. He worked as a small shopkeeper in London's East End and later a pet shop in Redbridge. After his retirement he moved to Billericay in Essex and was a member of East Anglia regional branch. Latterly he was a familiar figure at Head Office, providing much appreciated catering at conferences and other meetings there. Our condolences go to his wife, our comrade Pat Deutz, and their family.

### General Election

**When and if there is a general election, the Socialist Party will be contesting two seats: Cardiff Central and Folkestone & Hythe. Details and offers of help, email [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)**

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

## Meetings:

### NOVEMBER 2019

#### CARDIFF

Every Saturday (weather permitting), 1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.  
Street Stall

**Venue: Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff CF10 2HQ**

#### LONDON

Saturday 9 November, 11.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

"Our World or No World"

A day of talks on the environment and climate change

**Venue: MayDay Rooms, 88 Fleet Street, EC4Y 1DH.**

Speakers:

Bill Martin: 'Flat Earthers against global warming: how, when and why to debate climate change.'

Paddy Shannon: 'Reuse, Recycle, Revolt –

why tokenism is not a class act.'

Stephen Harper: 'Hot Planet, Cool Media: Environmental Discourse in the Digital Age.'

Glenn Morris: 'A Utopian Vision.'  
Nearest tube: Blackfriars.

Saturday 23 November. 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Where Are We Now?

Speaker: Vincent Jones.

**Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, Hammersmith, W6 9JY**

#### CANTERBURY

Thursday 14 November, 5.00 p.m.

'Socialism: a world of common ownership and free access'

**Venue: Making Politics Matter, Lecture Theatre Og32 – Old Sessions House (main reception on campus), Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury CT1 1QU**

Speaker: Andy Thomas.

#### LIVERPOOL

Saturday 23 November, 11.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Merseyside Marxist Book Fair

**Venue: The Casa, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BQ**

The Socialist Party will have a stall and give a presentation at this event

### DECEMBER 2019

#### CARDIFF

Every Saturday (weather permitting), 1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Street Stall

**Venue: Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff CF10 2HQ**



## 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.





## Can't pay, can't have

The [US] "Ending Homelessness Act"... would give an additional \$13.27 billion over five years to create an estimated 400,000 affordable housing units. The funds would go to supportive housing, including homeless shelters and transitional housing, as well as housing vouchers for low-income families and local outreach services to homeless residents' (huffpost.com, 3 October). Socialists have been saying for the past 115 years that there will never be a solution to the 'problem' of homelessness under capitalism. The mountain of evidence supporting our position is ever-growing. 'Almost all two-bedroom homes available for rent across England, Scotland and Wales are too expensive for families on housing benefit... We contacted almost 200 landlords across the country. Half of them told us flat out that they would not let to anyone on benefits. Of the rest, most of them wanted further conditions fulfilled, including six months' rent in advance, or a guarantor – conditions many of those facing homelessness would find it impossible to meet' (huffingtonpost, 4 October). There is no legislative solution, brutal or otherwise: 'Officials in Bakersfield just announced that they will be solving their homeless problem by throwing people in jail. Under the plan, homeless people would be rounded up under the ostensible charges of misdemeanor drug offenses or potential trespassing and thrown in a cage' (activistpost, 4 October).

## War & want

The official poverty measure is a very poor indicator of economic hardship in this country. In 2018, the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four in the mainland United States was \$25,100 – abysmally low standard of living. The problem of people living with poverty and struggling to make ends meet is far more widespread than

the official poverty rate – measured with a 50-year old yardstick – would indicate... The truth is, millions more low-income people – defined in many official programs as those living at between one and two times the official poverty level – still hover at the edges of poverty, just one illness or divorce or job loss away from disaster' (thehill.com, 19 September). The article in question is titled *Millions of us are living in poverty – we need investments to raise the standard of living*, but one endemic feature of capitalism will not be ended by diverting some funds, as the author suggests, from another – the mighty US war machine. Capitalism cannot be reformed so as to work in the interests of the class of wage and salary

Warren Buffett



earners. It is a class system that can only work for those who own the means of production. As Warren Buffett said: 'there's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.' He is correct: the top 0.1 percent of American households hold the same amount of wealth as the bottom 90 percent and every 38 seconds a U.S. citizen dies of poverty and poverty-related social conditions.

## Making a killing

This summer, a pair of Syrian brothers journeyed across Europe. Their story did not begin with a rubber dinghy afloat on the Aegean and a scramble for safety on to a Greek island: a well-worn route for many Syrian refugees fleeing a conflict that has lasted eight years and taken an estimated half a million lives. Instead, these brothers landed in Cannes; their transportation, a plane, then a pair of Ferraris;... Mohammad and Ali are the sons of Syria's richest man, Rami Makhoul, who also happens to be the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's cousin and childhood playmate. "There is a new class of wealthy war traders," said Mazen, an Aleppo businessman from an old industrial family... These individuals have made fortunes picking clean the carcass of the country's economy... Their dramatic rise to fortune has also helped the regime to survive by keeping trade going, oil flowing and helping to fund pro-regime militias, even as the country lies in ruins around them' (ft.com, 3 October). We have to take from the capitalist class the means of producing wealth in the use of which they no longer take part, and use it as common property for the satisfaction of the needs of society. Until we do that, all our struggles will be in vain. In the meantime one section of the capitalist class, the section which is primarily interested in exploiting us, asks us to defend its wealth

against another section, act in accordance with the interests of our class, and let them fight their own battles. Join the struggle for socialism against them and their apologists and defenders.



## FREE LUNCH

