

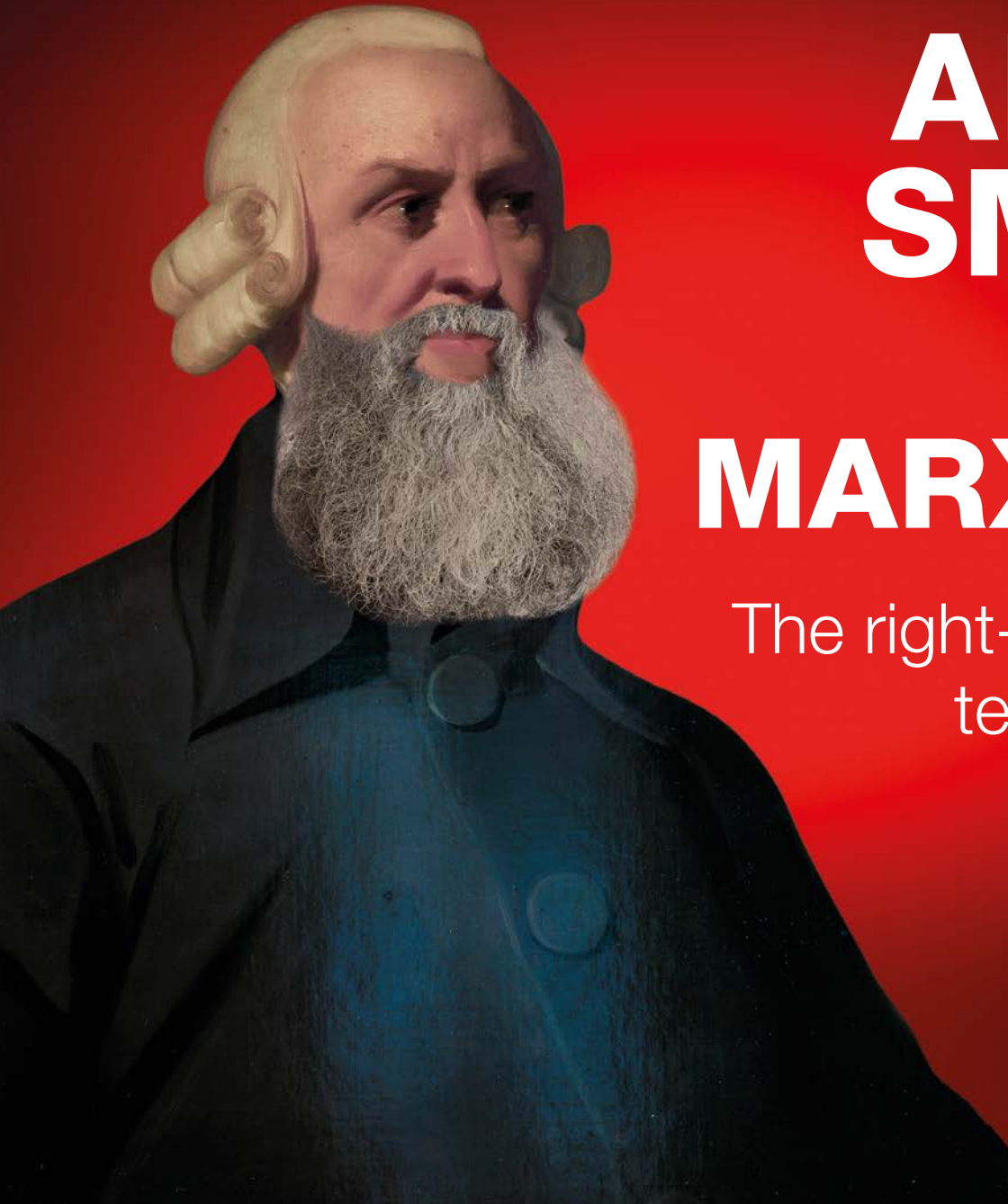
THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



ADAM SMITH THE MARXIST?

The right-wing icon's
terrible secret



Also: 'Wild Isles'
Adam Smith versus the
Adam Smith Institute
Adam Smith on the origin of profits

The dark religion of
bourgeois economics
Swearing
Human history as economic growth



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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’

Labour, Tory, Same Old Story

THE BRITISH regime which came to power on the back of Brexit is arguably one of the most corrupt, incompetent and invidious in recent British history. Since 2019 they, and the scam that was Brexit, have both failed abysmally to do anything except increase poverty and class division even more acutely. Brexit's purpose was simply to remove certain limits on rapacious exploitation. Increasingly reflecting the Victorian capitalist fantasy of the Tufton Street 'think tanks' and of the ERG, this government has also proved repeatedly incompetent, stirring vast discontent and fury amongst much of the population.

But what is 'His Majesty's Opposition' doing about this electoral own-goal scored by the Tories? The Labour Party also pursues nationalist populism, lowest common denominator politics, and is seeking power purely for the sake of power, regardless of which policies they have to adopt in order to attract ignorant and bigoted voters. They have long given up on engaging with what politics was about throughout most of modern history: persuading people to change their views, winning hearts and minds, engaging in genuine public debate about real ideas on how to run society.

This degeneration of the Labour Party

from Keir Hardie's radical, grass roots, pro-worker party of 1906 to Keir Starmer's slick band of hypocrites and liars, desperately aping the Tories to garner votes, without a vestige of vision or principle, was always an inevitable process, in which these major parties would become increasingly indistinguishable. The reason it was always highly predictable is that, at their core, they stand for the same thing, and always have done – including the Corbynite version of the Labour Party, the Lib-Dems and the Green Party too. What they all stand for is running the capitalist system of society (even if they have different hopes for how they would like to try to make it run).

What all of these parties fail to fully grasp is that the social system of capitalism, which exists throughout the world today, is unmanageable in any way other than by maximising the profits which are its life-blood. That profit is extracted from working people of all kinds, and makes its way to those who own and control the productive resources. Power and wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

It is unfashionable to talk in terms of a 'social system' operating hermetically throughout the world, but it is very clearly a fact. From the Arctic to the Antarctic,

human society functions in broadly the same (now outdated) way. All the key productive resources are owned and controlled by a tiny minority, who allow the production of useful products and services only on their terms: that to do so would add to their already vast wealth and power, through those products being sold on the market to realise a profit, a surplus beyond the actual costs. And the British Labour Party supports the retention of this irrational, exploitative and dangerous system whole-heartedly. So when Sir Keir Starmer recently publicly stated that Labour 'are the real conservatives' and promised to protect 'our way of life' it came as no surprise.

How contemptible it is for a so-called Opposition to watch this vicious and criminal regime spout the rhetoric of racism, crush the freedom to protest, and seek to reverse centuries of progress on democracy and trade unionism, but then to ask us to give them power instead... for them to do likewise! Labour, in effect, insists it will be at least as brutal in enforcing the warped priorities of capitalism as the Conservatives have been. Starmer fails signally to speak out properly against any of the miseries caused by the capitalist social system. A plague on both their houses!

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They shoot grouse, don't they?

SOMETIMES, WHEN you've had all you can take of class war and capitalist bullshit, it's great to escape to the great outdoors and walk around in the countryside. Although relatively small, the UK has a lot of large empty spaces, from rolling southern downs to immense glaciated northern landscapes, where there's hardly a soul or a sign of habitation. You can almost imagine you're in a different country, a different era, even a different social system. In places like that, the frantic pettifogging trivia of modern capitalist life look small indeed.

If you're doing it properly, like a seasoned all-weather pro, you'll get rigged out with the right boots, clothing, backpacks and accessories, and be willing to devote years to acquiring an impressive knowledge of local geography, geology, social history, botany and zoology.

But you can also cheat, using your smartphone to find your position and display a route, check the weather, find the nearest open pub, book a campsite, or phone for a helicopter rescue. Best of all, instead of saying 'Oh look, some interesting flora and fauna, I wonder what that is?', you can Shazam it.

Music fans will know Shazam, a free phone app that identifies that cool tune you're listening to in the boozier. You point your phone at the sound source, the app records it, and then matches it against its billion-song database in order to tell you what the song is and who it's by. Shazam has been around for years, but is still a living demonstration of that Arthur C Clarke remark about any sufficiently advanced technology being indistinguishable from magic.

Most people understand how to use search engines, but this is an example of a 'reverse search'. Instead of entering a song title to get the song, you 'enter' the song to get the title. You can do this with images too. On a desktop, to identify a picture, painting or whatever, you would drag it into Google Images, which will compare it to its own databank of uploaded images, and hopefully give you the title and artist.

Now, with phone apps like Google Lens, CamFind or Veracity, you can simply point the phone at an unknown plant or crawling insect, take a snap, and let the AI figure out what it is, and then point you to a dozen botanical websites or a Wikipedia page about it. The accuracy is somewhat variable, because not all plants and species are photographed and uploaded equally by users, so there is a built-in AI bias. But it's still pretty good, and of course there

are Shazam-like recognition apps for bird calls too.

All this modern AI technology is great fun for us ignorant townies discovering the wilds and learning titbits and vocabulary terms for the first time, while perhaps reflecting philosophically on that vast and ancient lore known to generations of our forebears and now forgotten by most of us.

The trouble is, you almost can't avoid diving a little too deep into the AI well of infinity, and discovering things you probably didn't want to know, that cast something of a black cloud over your fine day out.

For instance, the fact that you are hiking 'over mountains, moorland, heath, downland and common land, without having to stay on the paths' is not some de-facto given, as it would be in socialism, it's a legal concession that was only established in 2000, after extended legal battles dating from 1884 over the 'right to roam', which involved mass trespasses and mass arrests. Suddenly the world of private property rears its ugly head. Even when you can't see a single road or farm building, you know that somebody owns all this land, and once fought like hell to keep the likes of you off it (bit.ly/4526y77).

The fact that, in the UK, there is an unusual degree of freedom to roam is testament to generations of workers who simply refused to take no for an answer, facing off against landowners who gradually caved in under the pressure. It's not socialism but it is the way socialism will be won.

Then there's the vanishing bird problem. With capitalist profit as the goal, pesticide-rich intensive farming displaced traditional mixed farming, and in the process destroyed hedgerows and habitats, leading to a drop in bird populations of 38 million in the last 50 years. Meanwhile intensive battery farming has generated bird flu epidemics, most recently leading to 50,000 UK bird deaths since 2021 (bit.ly/3BzHvec).

But accidents like these are part

of the law of unintended capitalist consequences. It's even harder to take when you know it's deliberate.

Take grouse moors. Why do they shoot grouse? Because you can eat them, and because skylarks are small, fast and bloody hard to hit. Grouse are big, slow and lumbering birds which the idle fox-hunting rich love to massacre from every Glorious Twelfth of August. Know what else eats grouse? Raptors, like hen harriers and falcons. So, to protect the supply of fat grouse for the weekend Bertie Wooster set, the groundskeepers regularly shoot all the raptors out of the sky, even though all raptor species are 'protected'. Because this is illegal, they typically hide the evidence from investigators (bit.ly/3o99XQU).

Raptors have been persecuted for centuries, but capitalism adds its own extinction accelerator effect. The rarer the birds get, the more their eggs are worth to collectors, thus speeding them over the edge. 5 raptor species were wiped out this way, and all the rest are endangered or critically endangered.

All this just for the amusement of a few self-indulgent rich slobs on their weekends away from exploiting the rest of us. And to make matters worse, grouse moors are regularly burned of old growth, destroying ground-nesting fauna and degrading the underlying carbon-storing peat, to make way for new heather shoots which grouse prefer to eat. So, species depletion and carbon release in one glorious double whammy.

The upshot is, even in the wilds of nature, you can never really escape the class war and capitalist bullshit, because it's everywhere, in the air and water and land and inside your head, cascading like an invisible neutrino storm through all time and space. And it always will be until we collectively abolish it, and extend the 'right to roam' to the more general principle of global common ownership and democratic control, with no idle rich calling the shots.

PJS



Credit: Getty Images

'Wild Isles'

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH had, among his no doubt many friends, the Queen, so this and his advanced years, which cast him of another generation with all the expectations that brings, might excuse him from being too reactionary. I have to confess that he is, to me, the Bruce Forsyth of television nature programmes – a safe bet and someone the BBC can place before the viewing public in the knowledge that he is not going to 'say it as it is' and upset anyone.

I must also confess that I do not have a television and have not ever felt the need to own one; of course if you mention this people are quick to tell you how you are missing out on 'all the wonderful documentaries'... maybe, but I take the view that I like to do things myself all the time I am physically able and not sit back eating a pizza with a remote in one hand watching someone else even if it is to see a wildebeest getting ripped to bits by a lion with the commentator telling you that 'the wildebeest is getting ripped to bits by a lion'. It was, therefore, with some effort that I managed to find a friend who was happy for me to go over to his house and watch the 'controversial sixth episode' of the latest of David Attenborough's wildlife documentary series. Despite not having looked at the media or listened to the news for the last nine months it was physically impossible not to have heard of 'Wild Isles' – his latest series in which he looks at nature 'at home'. I suppose even the legendary Mr Attenborough can't carry on lying around among a harem of gorillas forever, particularly in his mid-nineties.

Episode 6 was not shown on mainstream television and the word had it that it was 'too controversial'. This, of course, fired up my interest; at last! Sir David was going to put things straight and he was going to catch me, King Charles and the BBC totally unprepared and whilst lying in some long grass in Epping Forest, hugging a badger, would say 'The capitalist system is both dangerous to wildlife and to people. The wealthy are becoming more wealthy and the only way we can ensure that wildlife on our planet will thrive is to end the profit system now and smash the capitalists.... Workers of the World Unite!'

This sadly was absolutely not the case. I sat down as my friend fiddled with i-Player and as the programme began I tensed up waiting for a purple-faced Attenborough railing against the system but on came the beautifully shot dolphins, flowers, eagles and ancient oak trees. The photography was, as always, absolutely stunning but no



Credit: BBC

even slightly 'edgy' comment. It was like a balloon that you find behind the sofa 10 months after the New Year's Eve party....

I am baffled as to why this episode was not shown... a little research suggested that the BBC had only ever intended five episodes, odd... then why make six? Others say that they could not be seen to show an episode linked to charities. Apparently the WWF, National Trust and Greenpeace were involved. Well, I suppose the National Trust do have some very revolutionary coffee cakes, perhaps that's why? While the viewer was entertained with wonderful camera work Sir David spoke in short simple statements: 'The Cairngorms are a wonderful place'.... (20 second dramatic pause)... 'Just enough of the natural world remains to recover'... (20 second pause)... 'It starts with us'.... (20 second pause)... 'Vast swathes of countryside are now silent'...(20 second pause). Rachel Carson was saying that over 60 years ago, I wanted to shout, and nothing's bloody changed...! And so it went on, tame, totally dumbed down – nothing that could be considered a rallying call or reason to do anything other than scoff the pizza and call for another lager.

I'd like to say more but what can you say . . . ? Okay, perhaps I should try... the programme left me feeling the same old way, once again here we are faced with a person who has nothing to lose (at his age) and who is in a prime position to get a message over, to really say some hard-hitting truths but instead, like so many people who really could exploit their privileged platform, squanders the chance with some meaningless platitudes.

Am I being unreasonable? Can capitalism really be made to work in the interests of nature and wildlife? Surely the answer is staring us in the face – everywhere I look, everything I hear, ALL the evidence points to the profit motive coming before the environment, so, clearly, no!

I have no doubt that Sir David cares for the life he has so deeply involved himself with over all those years but why is it that such an obvious answer to the plight of all the animals he has talked about and seen during his long life has not occurred to

him? Like so many others he believes that reforms are the answer.

I decided to look a bit deeper and see if he really had not considered how the system itself is the cause of the decline in wildlife. A quick search reveals that, indeed, he has expressed thoughts on the system and, indeed on capitalism itself, so here are a few:

- 'Human beings have overrun the world'
- 'Greed does not lead to joy'
- 'Our system is based on profit but capitalism is not dead'

Make of these what you will.

Furthermore, and in the series itself, he does, as is often the case in the media, resort to the 'guilt trip' approach. I have to admit that this is one of my pet hates and I have railed against it before; he says things like 'Do we really not care for nature' or 'Our blind assault' (on nature) or 'We have just enough nature (left) to save our wildlife' and 'Real success can only come if there is change in our societies (note the plural here – he is not saying society as a whole) and in our economics and in our politics'.

The latter says both all and nothing and still begs the question - well what do you want to replace it with? The former do the usual thing of turning the problem to the sort of abstract 'we' or 'our' as if we as individuals are personally responsible for albatrosses choking to death on plastic or ancient woodlands being cut down to shave 5 minutes off a train journey to Birmingham... Maybe Sir David really does want to explain the real problem but has his wings clipped... just as he is straightening his tie and the makeup artist dabs on the last of the greasepaint the producer says 'steady on with the socialist stuff Dave, we don't want a bloody revolution, just give them the cuddly take, and remember the series is running a hefty profit so stay off the red, eh?'

It really doesn't take a naturalist to tell us that nature is endangered but it will take socialism to put it right.

GLENN MORRIS

Greedflation?

'LONE VOICE on inflation grows louder' was the headline in the Times (8 May), 'A star economist says the key is not to raise interest rates but to target corporate greed'. The star in question is Isabella Weber who, according to the article, has made an 'important contribution to the study of how companies' pricing power is forcing up inflation, a phenomenon that has been dubbed "greedflation"'.
The article continues:

'Weber prefers to use the term "sellers' inflation" to describe how the shock of a global energy crisis and supply shortages during the pandemic led companies to pass on costs to consumers and make inflation a "generalised" feature of the economy. This in turn led to workers asking for more pay, she says'.

In other words, she is neatly turning the tables on those who blame workers for setting off a 'wages-prices spiral' and saying that, on the contrary, it is companies that set off a 'prices-wages' spiral by putting up prices to make more profit.

But this is not a new theory. It's been the standard left-wing theory of inflation since the 1950s, including by some Marxist

economists – Paul Mattick Jr, for instance. This is how he explained the rise in the general price level in the late 1970s:

'Businesses defended their bottom lines by raising prices; workers fought for higher wages to defend their standard of living, usually more slowly than the price increases to which they were reacting. Prices increased throughout the economy as different business sectors struggled to make others pay the costs of the debt: the dread stimulus-induced inflation' (tinyurl.com/2a927sd5).

Tempting as it is to blame capitalist businesses for causing a 'generalised' rise in prices, businesses are no more able to do this than workers are. Inflation, properly understood as a rise in the general price level, can only be caused by a depreciation of the currency due to too much money being issued. Individual prices can rise for other reasons (as recently due to the global energy price shock and supply chain shortages) but this is not the same as a rise in prices generally. Once monetary inflation has started, the price of what both businesses and workers sell will go up, creating the illusion that one (take your

pick) caused the other whereas they are both caused by a third factor.

It is not clear from the article whether Weber is arguing that 'greedflation' was the cause of past rising prices or just of what's happening currently, but the Socialist Standard dealt in October 1972 with the theory that inflation is due to greed. Referring to the abnormal rise in prices since 1939 we said:

'Most of the so-called explanations take the form of blaming some group or other for being "greedy"; bankers, or manufacturers, or retailers or trade unionists. It is an explanation that a glance at certain facts will show to be nonsense. Did the copper companies reduce their prices by 40 per cent in 1971 because they had suddenly become less greedy? Between 1948 and 1968 prices rose by 100 per cent in Britain, but only by half that amount in America and Switzerland: are the British twice as greedy?' (tinyurl.com/2a927sd5).

Business can't increase prices at will to increase profits. Sellers fix their price according to what they judge the market will bear. That's the limit of their 'pricing power'. Sometimes they are able to increase their price but they can't control the conditions that enable them to. Causing 'inflation' is a charge to which capitalist corporations can justifiably plead not guilty.

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Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me

1865: 'Instead of the conservative motto, A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wage system' (*Value, Price, and Profit*, Marx, tinyurl.com/34srm9b3).

1928: 'Earning a wage is a prison occupation' (*Wages*, DH Lawrence, tinyurl.com/3wh58kf5).

1965: Workers still '...don't realise that they can abolish the wages system' (*WHAT ARE YOUR WAGES?*, Socialist Standard, tinyurl.com/4b6j5snt).

1 APRIL 1999: Britain gets first legally binding minimum wage of £3 if 21 or under, £3.60 for those over.

1 APRIL 2023: 'Today's minimum wage rise by the UK Government will still leave thousands of Scots in poverty, say opposition parties' (*Daily Record*, tinyurl.com/ajapsnxh).

Rich stay rich poor stay poor



'For more than a dozen years now, Wall Street and corporate lobbyists have blocked both financial executive pay restrictions and a federal minimum wage increase. This speaks volumes about who has influence in Washington — and who does not' (*Common Dreams*, 1 April, tinyurl.com/2p93h5ws).

Sarah Anderson is being quoted here. She directs the Global Economy Project of the Institute for Policy Studies, is a co-editor of *Inequality.org*, and champions several measures including a ban on stock options at Wall Street banks. These measures can only be considered revolutionary in that they represent yet another spin on the reformist misery-go-round. As Eugene Debs said in 1913 'What the poor need is that the rich shall get off their backs' (*The Oppressed Need Justice, Not Charity*, tinyurl.com/ym6jhhk3).

None so blind



Helen Keller, one year earlier (1912) in an essay titled *How I Became a Socialist*, wrote of the hypocrisy of self-styled philanthropic elites who assailed working-class radicalism: 'I like newspapermen. I have known many, and two or three editors have been among my most intimate friends. Moreover, the newspapers have been of great assistance in the work which we have been trying to do for the blind. It costs them nothing to give their aid to work for the blind and to other superficial charities. But socialism — ah, that is a different matter ! That goes to the root of all poverty and all charity. The money power behind the newspapers is against socialism, and the editors, obedient to the hand that feeds them, will go to any length to put down socialism and undermine the influence of socialists' (tinyurl.com/mwzf5zww).

'Who was Karl Marx and What is Communism?...

Let's start with where it came from, because 'the roots' are always connected to 'the fruits'. Communism grew out of the haunted life of Karl Marx (1813-1881), a German philosopher whose life seemed to be shadowed by something dark. Several of his children died before reaching adulthood, he had extremely poor hygiene, he was often covered in painful boils and he could barely keep a job. Marx lived on the generosity of his friend Friedrich Engels. Ironically, Engels got his money from the same capitalist factories that Marx came to criticize. Marx was also known for his infatuation with the prince of darkness himself. In many of his writings he openly expressed admiration for Satan. People around him sensed he was troubled. Even his own father-in-law, worried that the "demon" that pestered Marx would kill his own daughter (*The Stream*, 1 April, tinyurl.com/4bzscvyd). This bad biographical sketch would have Marx spinning in his grave — two years before he died in 1883. And what follows is even worse! Our *A to Z of Marxism* (tinyurl.com/2vyf466t) is concise, fact-based and provides suggestions for further reading.

Pie in the sky



'Judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei earlier threatened to prosecute "without mercy" women who appear in public unveiled, Iranian media reported... Describing the veil as "one of the civilizational foundations of the Iranian nation" and "one of the practical principles of the Islamic Republic," an Interior Ministry statement on Thursday said there would be no "retreat or tolerance" on the issue' (*Raisi says hijab is the law in Iran as unveiled women face 'yoghurt attack'*, Yahoo, 1 April, tinyurl.com/bdrh8vva).

Religion is the badge of the mentally enslaved. It uses a cloak of mystification to reinforce its authority by promising a mythical afterlife as a reward for blind obedience and by making threats of eternal punishment, backed up by intimidation and persecution for those who do not submit. It has been a useful tool in the hands of the ruling classes to keep their subjects subservient.

Keller again:

'This great republic is a mockery of freedom as long as you are doomed to dig and sweat to earn a miserable living while the masters enjoy the fruit of your toil. What have you to fight for? National independence? That means the masters' independence. The laws that send you to jail when you demand better living conditions? The flag? Does it wave over a country where you are free and have a home, or does it rather symbolize a country that meets you with clenched fists when you strike for better wages and shorter hours? Will you fight for your masters' religion which teaches you to obey them even when they tell you to kill one another? Why don't you make a junk heap of your masters' religion, his civilization, his kings and his customs that tend to reduce a man to a brute and God to a monster? Let there go forth a clarion call for liberty. Let the workers form one great world-wide union, and let there be a globe-encircling revolt to gain for the workers true liberty and happiness' (*Menace of the Militarist Program*, 1915, tinyurl.com/33tstem).

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

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London regional branch. Meets last Sunday in month, 2.00pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

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Yorkshire Regional branch.

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The branch meets on the last Saturday of each month at 1pm in the The Rutland Arms, 86 Brown Street, Sheffield City Centre, S1 2BS (approx 10 minute walk from railway and bus station). All welcome. Anyone interested in attending should contact the above for confirmation of meeting.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Usually meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ or online.

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(meet.jit.si/spgbsouthwales3).

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Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun

Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624

Central Branch

Meets 2nd Sunday of the month, 10am

(UK time) on Zoom. For invite email: cbs@worldsocialism.org.

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Food: another banking failure

FIGURES FROM the British Retail Consortium show an increase in the cost of food which is impacting the standard of living on many; especially the low paid and those on fixed incomes. Aren't the majority of the British working class low paid these days?

'Food inflation accelerated to 15.7% in April, up from 15.0% in March. This is above the 3-month average rate of 15.1%, and is the highest inflation rate in the food category on record.

Fresh Food inflation accelerated in April, to 17.8%, up from 17.0% in March. This is above the 3-month average rate of 17.0% and is the highest inflation rate in the fresh food category on record.

Ambient Food inflation accelerated to 12.9% in April, up from 12.4% in March. This is above the 3-month average rate of 12.5% and is the fastest rate of increase in the ambient food category on record' (brc.org.uk/news/corporate-affairs/price-inflation-likely-to-have-peaked/).

Sticking plaster

How many food banks are there in the UK? How many people use food banks? How many food parcels are distributed? Do the statistics quoted below surprise you? Have you of necessity been, or are presently, a food bank user? Should those residing in a country with the wealth of the UK be forced to live with food poverty? What is the solution to permanently eradicating food poverty and poverty and inequality completely?

'In 2022, the Trussell Trust operated 1,400 food banks in the UK. It has been estimated that there are a further 1,172 independent food banks in the UK. This takes the number of food banks operating in the UK to around 2,500.

In March 2023, data from the Food Standard Agency's 'Consumer Insight Tracker' suggested that 13% of participants had used a food bank or food charity at least once in the last month. This was down slightly from the 15% figure of March 2022' (www.politics.co.uk/reference/food-banks/).

In its end of year report the Trussell Trust reports the following:

'Close to 3 million emergency food parcels were distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network in the past 12 months — the most parcels ever distributed by the network in a year. Food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw the highest ever levels of need, even more than during the peak of the pandemic, as more people found their incomes did not cover the cost of essentials like heating and

food. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the number of people that used a food bank for the first time was 760,000' (www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/).

December 2022 was the busiest month on record for food banks in the Trussell Trust network, with a food parcel being distributed every 8 seconds.

The Trussell Trust mission statement says: 'We know it takes more than food to end hunger. That's why we launched our five-year strategic plan. We know our goal to end the need for food banks is ambitious, but by working Together for Change, we believe it is achievable. We're calling on the UK government to ensure Universal Credit covers essential costs such as food, travel and household bills. By acting together with one voice, we are incredibly powerful. We are a movement of thousands of people who believe that no one should have to use a food bank. We need a long-term commitment that the social security system will always protect people from needing a food bank, which means ensuring people can afford the essentials we all need. Together we can call for a more just society where everyone has enough for the essentials.'

Whilst casting no aspersions on those involved with charities, formally or informally, it must be obvious that five year plans, good intentions and a desire to make things better are insufficient. Treating a major trauma injury with a sticking plaster doesn't work.

Charities, a growth industry

'There is one industry that continues to grow in Britain today — the Charity Industry. In 1991 there were 98,000 charities registered in Britain, today there are 153,000. The number of paid charity workers is now 569,000. Figures from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, quoted in the *Observer Magazine* (4 April [2004]). When one considers the legion of unpaid charity workers that pursue you from door-to-door to shopping centres it can be seen that this is truly a major industry. But if workers are supposed to be getting better off, why does capitalism need more charities?' (*Socialist Standard*, May 2004)

'There were approximately 168,850 registered charities in England and Wales as of 2023. Between 2000 and 2007 the number of charities increased by around 10,000, before the 2008 global recession culled the number of charities by the same

number in just two years. Since 2011, the number of charities in England and Wales has recovered to levels seen just prior to the financial crash' (www.statista.com/topics/3781/charities-in-the-uk/).

Volunteers

Gov.UK statistics for 2020/2021 (Community Life Survey) provide the following information:

'62% of respondents (approximately 28 million people in England) have volunteered in any way in the last 12 months, and 41% (approximately 19 million people in England) at least once a month.

63% (approximately 29 million people in England) of respondents said they had given to charitable causes in the last 4 weeks. This is a decrease from 2019/20 where it was measured at 75% and the lowest proportion recorded in the CLS.

Formal volunteering at least once a month in the past 12 months decreased in 2020/21 (17%) from 2019/20 (23%), the lowest that it has been recorded in the CLS.

Informal volunteering at least once a month in the past 12 months increased in 2020/21 (33%) from 2019/20 (28%), the highest that it has been recorded in the CLS' (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202021-volunteering-and-charitable-giving).

It is a long given argument against real socialism that removing the cash incentive from people would mean that nothing would get done. This has been disproved time and time again. Within capitalism, people not only do unpaid volunteer work, but also all other kinds of things, for no monetary reward, for all kinds of reasons. The human nature is inherently selfish argument is an erroneous one.

To return to the question posed at the beginning: should those residing in a country with the wealth of the UK be forced to live with food poverty? A resounding 'No' and it would, or should, be hard to find anyone who would argue with that.

What is the solution to permanently eradicating food poverty and poverty and inequality completely? It's what we in the Socialist Party have been putting forward for over a hundred years — the replacement of capitalism with a money-free, wage-free, class-free society where goods are produced for use, not profit. Abolish charity. Abolish capitalism. You owe it to yourselves.

DC

Turkey's ambivalent elections

TURKEY'S MODERN political history is one of genocides, state-sponsored political assassinations, demonstrators machine-gunned by unknown actors or tear-gassed by police and army, and the Left arrested, executed, imprisoned en masse, or forced to flee: all under the ever-present threat of army intervention, with its military intelligence heavily exposed to the CIA.

And elections, such as this one.

Turkish political dynamics express themselves through a multiplicity of parties which then form coalitions to fight elections, which are essentially bipolar. The names of the parties shift as they fracture or are suppressed by the state: compared to European politics there is a bewildering turnover. Since 1982 Turkish courts have suppressed 19 political parties, violating the ECHR's Convention on Human Rights in almost all cases it has reviewed, mainly for expressing Kurdish political interests. The two main reasons given are that the party is in conflict with 'the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation', or 'the principles of the democratic and secular republic'. This is a fair summary of the vague limits of Turkish political activity, though democracy gets shot on the court steps.

Deep state

Then there is the 'Deep state', a term which Turkey originated and Trump merely co-opted. This was exposed to the public in the Susurluk scandal, where a Turkish mafia assassin, his model girlfriend, the Istanbul chief of police, and a Turkish MP, were involved in a car crash (only the MP survived). But it was and presumably is a constant feature of Turkish political life: an unaccountable (except perhaps to the CIA) association of military intelligence, the criminal underworld, and enabling fascist political figures, originating as part of Operation Gladio but with its own autonomy. Its relative strength is demonstrated by its ability to slay those investigating them, including most probably a former prime minister, Turgut Özal, and avoid punishment. Its control of the Turkish heroin trade, worth more than the entire Turkish state budget at the time (\$50 billion to \$48 billion) accounted for much of their power, as well as their American allies in the shadows.

Closely linked with the military, and formed with its aid, are the ultra-right/fascist party, the MHP, and their youth/terror wing, the 'Grey Wolves'. Opposing them is a strong 'communist' and 'socialist' tradition, often fragmented,



Credit: Getty Images

often suppressed, often imprisoned. Their parties form new initials as quickly as the courts suppress the old ones. Not content to merely imprison them, in 2000-2001 the authorities forced them out of dormitory prison blocks, where they practised actually existing prison communism, into small three-person cells. There were mass protests, hunger strikes and deaths.

Always there is the issue of religion, though the matter is more complex than it appears: one is reminded of the fable of the Wind and the Sun. The state was aggressively secular, and aggressively against minorities, most of whose identity was in part religious. Politically speaking, expression of religious identity was and is thus in part a matter of cultural rather than religious fervour. Also, secularism is associated with wealth, the middle class, and the western cities of Turkey. As the poor agricultural workers of the Turkish heartland migrated to the cities, religion became a defining, comforting feature of their mutual character as they lived in the spaces left to them, in *gecekondu*s (shacks

built overnight) or other poor housing.

Then there are the Kurds, Alevi and Sunni. A genocide in the 1930s killed or displaced many Alevis from their home in Dersim, which was renamed, on maps at least, to Tunceli: the very name, 'Bronze Fist', of the genocide operation. And there is the ongoing war against Sunni Kurds in the South East. These remain politically relevant. There are many other nationalities in Turkey, but they were brutalised long ago.

Failed coup

Recent history, since the election of Erdoğan's AKP (Justice and Progress Party) in 2002, has seen several changes within this continuity. Corruption has moved to private industry, where new corporate players have emerged: especially in the construction industry, largely responsible for the Eastern earthquake calamity where their cheap and profitable buildings fell down. The army has been suppressed, with mass show trials in the Ergenekon scandal

and others, more so since the failed 2016 coup. From a situation where the Army had the standing power via the National Security Council to suppress civil politics, essentially a permanent coup option, now Erdoğan, their victim in the past and now rid of them, has adopted a similar bullying role as president in lieu of restoring civil society. Fethullah Gülen, master of a 'parallel state', a network of civil servants and army officers, once Erdoğan's ally in the shadow war for the deep state, is now an enemy of the state exiled in the US.

In 2017 Erdoğan strengthened the presidency in a constitutional referendum, granting him powers to appoint and sack ministers and issue executive decrees. And in 2018 the last election was carried out still under the 'state of emergency' declared 5 days after the coup attempt. All in the context of war at home and abroad, mainly against Kurdish aspirations but also seeking to gain from Syria's woes. Turkey has a seat at the table in NATO's proxy war in Ukraine, and its restive place in NATO is a matter for constant Western scrutiny and cajoling, especially over the Syrian war, and purchasing Russian arms. All in the context of economically bizarre policies that have seen inflation wipe out savings and drive the population to penury. But the most important recent event is the catastrophic earthquakes of February this year, killing 50,000 and leaving 1.5 million homeless. This last was thought to set the context for the election, making Erdoğan's general misrule an electoral focus in itself that might attract the disaffected/dispossessed right and harden support among the newly homeless in the South East.

Secular opposition

And so to 14 May 2023. There are three

main electoral alliances, two standing for the presidency as well, the candidates being Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AKP) and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP). The ruling right-wing 'People's Alliance' of the AKP and the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), versus the 'Nation Alliance' of the CHP (Republican People's Party) and five other parties, with support from most other parties from centre-right to ultra-left. There are tensions in both camps - the MHP for example is both virulently opposed to any compromise with the Kurds, such as the current peace process, and also its Turkic ultra-nationalism clashes with Erdoğan's Islamic dreams. As always though the right is far more cohesive than the centre and left, strange bedfellows united only in opposition: the CHP is the original party of the Turkish state, of Atatürk, and still professes the secularism, nationalism and capitalism that most of its bedfellows in some way disagree with.

The second and only other substantial party in their alliance, the İyi Parti (Good Party) is a splinter from the MHP, professing to be civic nationalists instead of Turkic nationalists, and good followers of Atatürk: their voter base consists largely of the right wing who are disillusioned with the existing right wing, in other words a classic populist party. This ability of a fragment of the MHP to thus realign leftwards gives some idea of the complexity of Turkish politics, even though most voters will have an imperative which eventually dictates their political choice. The third alliance is the Labour and Freedom Alliance, egalitarian progressives, but almost entirely composed of HDP (Democratic Party of the Peoples) candidates expecting the state closure of their party and so standing as Yeşil Sol

(Green Left) candidates. (In the aftermath of the failed 2016 coup more than 10,000 HDP members were imprisoned, including their leaders, on vague accusations of being supporters of terrorism). They are backing Kılıçdaroğlu for president rather than splitting the vote. But while wishing to see the back of the AKP and MHP, they have no reason to love or trust the CHP who when in power suppressed them just as savagely, and so are merely advising their supporters to vote for cholera instead of typhoid in the presidential election.

And the result? In parliamentary terms, Erdoğan's People's Alliance has a clear majority, of 322 seats against the Nation Alliance's 212 and the Labour and Freedom Alliance's 64. Presidentially also, it would seem that Erdoğan has survived. Neither candidate having 50 percent, the presidency goes to a second round: but with 49.51 percent of the vote to Kılıçdaroğlu's 44.88 percent in the first round, the presidency seems all but his to keep. (There was a third candidate, Oğan, with 5 percent, a former contender for the MHP leadership).

The last act will be bruising. Erdoğan used his post-election speech to label his opponents as terrorists, setting the tone. And the earthquake survivors? They have to vote from their registered homes. That means that in order to vote they will have to travel back once more to those ruins from wherever they are billeted in Turkey, at no mean expense of money or time. Exhaustion, as always, tends to work for the incumbent. Time and fate is on Erdoğan's side.

SJW



Adam Smith versus the Adam Smith Institute

IF ADAM SMITH has a bad reputation amongst socialists it is not his fault. Marx himself had a high regard for Smith and discussed his views in great detail. It's the fault of people like those who set up the Adam Smith Institute in 1977 to campaign for governments to give capitalist corporations a free hand to pursue profits as they think fit.

Writing in the middle of the 18th century — he was born in 300 years ago in 1723, published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, and died in 1790 — Smith was a witness to the beginnings of industrial capitalism in Britain. His book was written as a criticism of the policy (known as 'mercantilism'), pursued by governments in his day, of trying to encourage exports by subsidies and restrict imports by tariffs with a view to building up the amount of gold in the home country. He wanted such government intervention to be ended and advocated instead *laissez-faire*, with governments letting the market function freely, as the best way to increase a country's wealth.

Smith believed that he was discovering the natural laws of 'political economy' and adopted an objective, scientific approach to the subject. This was what Marx admired in him. He realised that Smith was genuinely trying to understand how capitalism worked, unlike the 'vulgar economists' of his own day who were merely ideological apologists for capitalism. His criticism was that Smith thought he was discovering natural laws whereas he was studying those only of one particular, transitory economic system. This was in fact Marx's criticism of the whole school of economic thought that Smith's book gave rise to, his 'critique of political economy' (the sub-title of *Capital*).

The Wealth of Nations famously begins with Smith's analysis of the division of labour and how this allows more wealth to be produced, using a pin-making factory as an example (incidentally, a sign of the low level of industrial development in his day). He goes on to examine the concept of 'value', distinguishing between 'value-in-use' and 'value-in-exchange'. It is the latter that interests him as a student of economic phenomena. His conclusion as to what measures the exchange-value, or price, of a commodity will come as a shock to some

of his modern-day admirers:

'The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities' (Book I, chapter V).

This was too much for the Adam Smith Institute and has led Eamonn Butler, the Institute's Director, in his *The Condensed Wealth of Nations* on their website, to virtually repudiate it:

'For many commentators, this looks uncomfortably like a crude labour theory of value, which focuses on production costs and overlooks demand. Some argue that it led Karl Marx into his appalling errors about labour. One could defend Smith as just trying to simplify things by talking about an age before land or capital ownership, where labour was the sole production cost, and temporarily ignoring other factors such as land and capital, and also ignoring demand, all of which he goes into later. At best his words are misleading, at worst they are mistaken: but then he was breaking new ground' (www.adamsmith.org/the-wealth-of-nations).

The 'defence' that Smith was writing of a time before there was 'land and capital ownership' does not stand up, as Smith explicitly stated that he was writing of a situation when 'stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons'. That the Adam Smith Institute should find Smith's ideas here 'uncomfortable' is easy to understand.

Smith can certainly be called an advocate of capitalism, though not of the corporate capitalism we know today and for which the Adam Smith Institute stands. In Smith's day, if you were a capitalist employer you risked everything should your business fail, as today's generalised limited liability did not exist. You were personally responsible for all your business debts, so that if your business failed disastrously you could end up in a debtor's prison. Capitalists take no such risk today; with limited liability, they are only liable for the amount they have invested.

Such companies did exist in Smith's day but they had to be set up by Royal Charter

or Act of Parliament, such as the East India Company. The irony is — at least for those who try to project Smith as a defender of capitalist corporations — that he didn't like these, for the same reason that the Adam Smith Institute and other free-marketeers don't like government-run industries: that the people in charge were managing other people's money and not their own and so wouldn't be so concerned about avoiding waste and inefficiency; the famous invisible hand would not necessarily move them to act in the general interest.

The only activities in which Smith accepted that 'a joint stock company' was justified were banking, insurance, canals and water supply. This is another sign of how undeveloped capitalism was in his day, as the limited liability company is now the predominant form of business enterprise and essential to modern capitalism. The amount of capital required to run a capitalist enterprise is now too large to be raised by a single person (just as canals were in Smith's day). Which shows that the era of individual capitalist ownership (where most ideological defenders of capitalism seem to be stuck) is a thing of the past, making the individual capitalist owner economically and socially redundant.

It shows that while in Smith's day individual, private enterprise was viable this has long since ceased to be the case. Today production is too big for that; it is already socialised from a technological point of view in the sense of involving a vast network of producers to produce something. The problem is that control of production is not. This contradiction between socialised production and non-social ownership and control is the cause of today's economic and social problems. The corporate ownership that has evolved to replace individual ownership is not the answer; in many ways it makes things worse. Nor is state ownership the answer. Both are still forms of sectional ownership. The contradiction can only be resolved by socialism where the means for producing wealth becomes the common property of society as a whole, under democratic control.

ADAM BUICK

Adam Smith on the origin of profits

THIS YEAR is the centenary of two of the pioneers in the study of what is now called the capitalist economy. Sir William Petty was born 400 years ago in May and Adam Smith 300 years ago this month. Smith is by far the better known but Petty deserves credit for succinctly expressing a key part of the Labour Theory of Value: 'labour is the Father and active principle of Wealth, as Lands are the Mother'. In other words, wealth is produced by humans exercising their physical and mental energies to transform materials that originally came from nature into useful things.

This was so obvious that Smith took it for granted, as in the opening lines of *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776:

'The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes...'

This is not yet a labour theory of 'value' (a theory of what lies behind the price of goods when they are produced for sale) but modern economics textbooks refuse to acknowledge that only 'labour' — humans working on materials from nature — creates new wealth. They want a role for 'entrepreneurs', as they call capitalists. What they are trying to do is to provide a justification for profits. They could do this, as in fact Smith does, without denying that wealth is only created by humans working on materials from nature, but they are not prepared to accept even this because of its possible anti-capitalist implications.

Smith does in fact go on to put forward a labour theory of value. But, even on the basis that only human work produces wealth, Smith can be shown as accepting that profits derive from what wage-workers produce.

He argues that, in an early stage of economic development, producers did receive the full product of their labour, but once a stock of wealth, in the form of instruments of production and means of subsistence, had come to be owned by individuals, the position changed. The producers had to cede a portion of what they produced to their employer:



'As soon as stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons, some of them will naturally employ it in setting to work industrious people, whom they will supply with materials and subsistence, in order to make a profit by the sale of their work, or by what their labour adds to the value of the materials. In exchanging the complete manufacture either for money, for labour, or for other goods, over and above what may be sufficient to pay the price of the materials, and the wages of the workmen, something must be given for the profits of the undertaker of the work who hazards his stock in this adventure. *The value which the workmen add to the materials, therefore, resolves itself in this case into two parts, of which the one pays their wages, the other the profits of their employer upon the whole stock of materials and wages which he advanced.* He could have no interest to employ them, unless he expected from the sale of their work something more than what was sufficient to replace his stock to him; and he could have no interest to employ a great stock rather than a small one, unless his profits were to bear some proportion to the extent of his stock' (p. 37, chapter VI of Book I, italics added).

This is Smith explicitly saying that profits come from the value added to capital by the work of those employed, even if he considers this justified by the risk taken by the employer.

He repeats this later when discussing

productive and unproductive labour (where he is using the word 'manufacturer' in its original and logical sense of someone who makes something with their hands, not its current distorted meaning of 'employer'):

'There is one sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed: there is another which has no such effect. The former, as it produces a value, may be called productive; the latter, unproductive labour. Thus *the labour of a manufacturer adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit.* The labour of a menial servant, on the contrary, adds to the value of nothing. *Though the manufacturer has his wages advanced to him by his master, he, in reality, costs him no expense, the value of those wages being generally restored, together with a profit, in the improved value of the subject upon which his labour is bestowed.* But the maintenance of a menial servant never is restored. A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers: he grows poor, by maintaining a multitude of menial servants' (p. 253-4, chapter III of Book II, italics added).

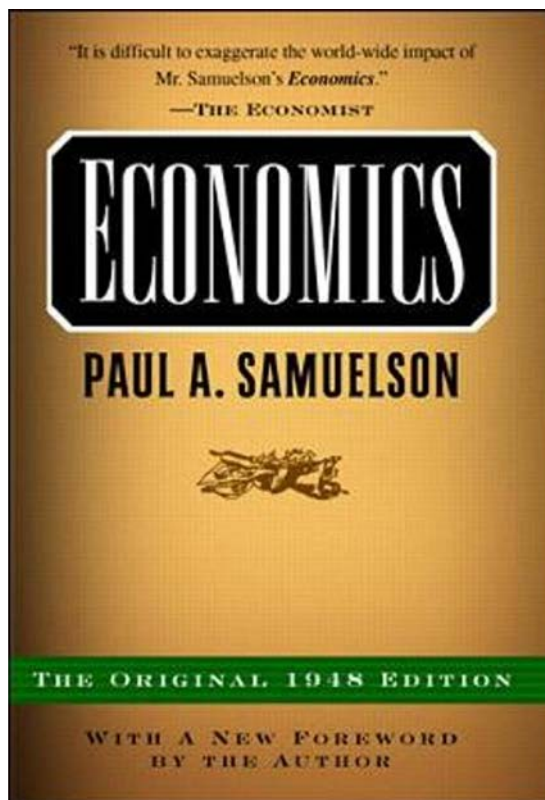
Smith was no socialist and he did advocate laissez-faire capitalism, but this doesn't detract from the fact that he accepted a theory of wealth which showed that profits derive from what wage-workers produce.

ALB

The dark religion of bourgeois economics

AFTER ACQUIRING political dominance in England during the revolutions of the 17th century in the name of the Jesus Myth, the capitalist class would come to nurture an even more malevolent ideology centred on an equally fictitious myth called 'the free market'. With the help of that luminary of the Enlightenment, Adam Smith, the economics of exploitation were elevated to a force of nature which rivalled Christianity in its malignancy and the suffering it would sanction. His infamous remark concerning 'the invisible hand' implied a kind of transcendental force that was superior to mere human judgement and that directly contradicted the Enlightenment project of subjecting all knowledge to human reason thus casting aside all such superstition. The Enlightenment would, in terms of science, help guide humanity out of the darkness of religion only to, in the hands of bourgeois economic propagandists, replace it with the cult of worshipping at the altar of the free market. Like Napoleon the English bourgeoisie were not interested in reason, science or logic but only in an ideology that would serve their never-ending hunger for wealth and power.

This mystical force is a manifestation of the bourgeois need for an ultimate source of authority. In the absence of a deity they substituted another non-human entity to reinforce the 'truth' of their ideology. In their defence of the capitalist system against any perceived threat from 'socialism' its defenders give the impression that their preferred economic mechanism was conceived and created with a meticulous precision that was motivated purely by the health of society. In fact, historically speaking, this ruling class had no idea of the shape and evolution of capitalism once they freed it from feudal shackles. Like a monstrous juggernaut its momentum was unstoppable as it covered the planet with pollution, war, economic depressions and shattered the lives of all those who were enslaved by its overwhelming need for profit. Those who worshipped at its altar explained the failures and disasters in terms of government betrayal of free market principles or the immoral activities



of renegade monopolists and financial pirates etc. Indeed, how could anyone criticise such a powerhouse of technical innovation and wealth creation?

But those who created the wealth were beginning to become sullen and bitter about their lack of a share of it all. The politically more astute among the bourgeois intelligentsia recognised that the system was unable to provide even the most basic necessities of life for workers and so decided to create an infrastructure and welfare system that would forestall any revolutionary inclinations among the masses. It was not only the fear of insurrection but also the need to maintain a healthy workforce together with a dread of the creation of monopolies, which might hold them all to ransom, in transport, raw materials and power etc that brought into being the nationalised or 'public' sector. This arrangement, in its turn, created further problems because, as it was financed by taxation, it was always strapped for cash due to that other commandment of capitalist religion: 'Thou shall not financially burden the wealthy'. Although this 'mixed economy' has been the model for most advanced capitalist

states ever since whenever things go wrong, as the inevitable instability of production for profit always does, the political and economic debate is invariably split between those who blame too much state interference (the Right) and those who claim that free market deregulation is at the heart of the problem (the Left). We still live with a stalemate produced by the failure of both.

Marx had proved that profit was nothing more than theft. The value of labour power as incarnated in its price (wages) is considerably less than the value it produces. Since the capitalist can sell the products of labour at their full value he could pocket the difference as 'profit'. This is the inevitable logic of the labour theory of value that was embraced by the 'classical economics' of Smith and others. This unpalatable moral and political truth did not fit the needs of the ideology, and bourgeois economists have desperately tried to disprove it ever since the publication of Marx's *Capital*. Almost the whole body of contemporary economics is an attempt to justify exploitation in various and ingenious ways and so discredit Marx's definitive theory. It is the height of irony to try and dismiss the Marxian model as an anachronistic Victorian economic theory when those who oppose it have nothing more to offer as an alternative than a version of 'laissez-faire' which predates Marx by a hundred years and more!

With the denial of Marx's discoveries it would seem that economics as a science has not progressed like the other disciplines dignified by that title. For all the power generated by the latest computer programs available to the City and other financial institutions the system continues to crash and burn periodically, and even when it does 'work' the exploitation of the many by the few produces endless industrial struggle and alienation. The programmers are still directed to search for ever better ways to increase profit margins and the shiny modern computer interfaces and endless economic double-talk cannot disguise the ancient inhuman God of greed that motivates it all and so disfigures our species.

WEZ

Swearing

7-ISH AM on 6 May. I awoke to a cascade of royal drivel gushing from my radio. At that moment one of the most beneficial technological innovations was the 'OFF' button (preceded by an appropriate invective).

Before my censorship of the impartial BBC there was a report that Canterbury had recanted. The Archbishop was no longer going to invite the goggling masses to do verbal homage to their newly anointed king by swearing allegiance before God and the TV.

The previous day, in an interview, a friend, confidant and biographer insisted the monarch had no wish for anyone to pay such formalised respects except, perhaps, as a joke. Not much of a stand-up routine in my opinion.

However, the nation need not be struck dumb when the moment in the coronation ceremony came as there would be an invitation by the Anglican head prelate for viewers to join in with the declaration, 'God save King Charles'. Who then would be dumb?

To voice such a sentiment is at least a tacit acceptance of inferiority, of subjection, of being a subject of the crown. The Lords will still be called upon to pay homage, binding them closer to the monarch than the vassals excluded from direct attendance.

This recognition of divine right to rule does not, of course, confer arbitrary powers upon the King. While he may well still consider himself answerable to a divinity, the engines of the state through which crown power is actually exercised are answerable, ultimately to capital.

The notion of inviting the nation to express its loyalty through swearing an oath of allegiance is an indication that a liberal bourgeois democracy is by no means a society of equals. Perhaps it would have been a too blatant expression of inequality which led to it being substantially toned down.

Whether Charles III was in favour of it or not is beside the point. It is a demonstration of the careful and meticulous management of public perception by which capitalism ultimately maintains its ideological hold.

There may well be further demonstrations by republicans, vexed at having an unelected head of state foisted upon the nation. While there is no pretence of democracy by having

a monarch chosen by birth not the ballot box, election does not substantially change the role of a head of state.

A president may be able to serve only a fixed term, but that merely means that the person in office changes regularly, not the office. Nor is there any compelling evidence that suffrage guarantees meritocratic excellence. The example of the USA shows financial clout not ability is the determining factor in selecting an incumbent for the White House.

Nor does America demonstrate any significant social egalitarianism for all its rejection of monarchy and formal aristocracy. Can there be any doubt that the nation is in thrall to the lords of capital even if they don't grant them such formal titles.

The swearing of allegiance, right hand earnestly pressed to the heart, is certainly a feature of American pomp and circumstance. The form of address may be Mr. President rather than your majesty, but the effect is the same.

The swearing of oaths has an honourable working class pedigree. In the early days of British industrial capitalism workers responded to their harsh conditions through trade union organisation. This was duly criminalised by the Combination Acts of 1799/1800.

Workers continued to organise, but as a response to illegality and a need for secrecy an oath of allegiance to the union and its fellow members was often required, a condition known as being twisted in.

Following the repeal, in the 1820s, of those pernicious acts workers began to further develop their organisations. However, the use of oaths of allegiance did not immediately disappear. Worker solidarity and the seriousness of their unions were on occasion emphasised through formal ceremony.

An initiation into membership could involve an individual being blindfolded and required to swear an oath of loyalty before a skeleton painting, a reminder of mortality and the seriousness of the undertaking.

It was for such a procedure the Tolpuddle Martyrs were convicted under the Unlawful Oaths Act, 1797, originally passed in reaction to naval mutinies at Spithead and Nore. The use of oaths obviously depends on who is swearing them and for what purpose.

The crown and its agents are not so



Credit: Getty Images

enamoured of oaths taken for the purpose of reinforcing working class solidarity.

Such, it seems, trespasses upon the royal prerogative designed to ensure everyone accepts society as it is organised and each person's relationship with the status quo.

Reflecting on the coronation there was a brief radio interview with a woman who'd been honoured for her charity work and was an invited guest at the Westminster service. Her reaction was along the lines that it was marvellous that someone like her, a commoner (her word), had been able to attend.

Actually being there might well have required her to join in repeating the oath of allegiance which essentially confirms her status. Indeed, all who did verbal homage affirmed the notion that one person is elevated over all others.

For socialists, attitudes such as this represent a serious obstacle to the pursuit of socialism. Those who were not fascinated by the carefully stage-managed spectacle are still influenced by it. Thankful for another bank holiday, as if there should be gratitude for the grace and favour of being granted a day off from work.

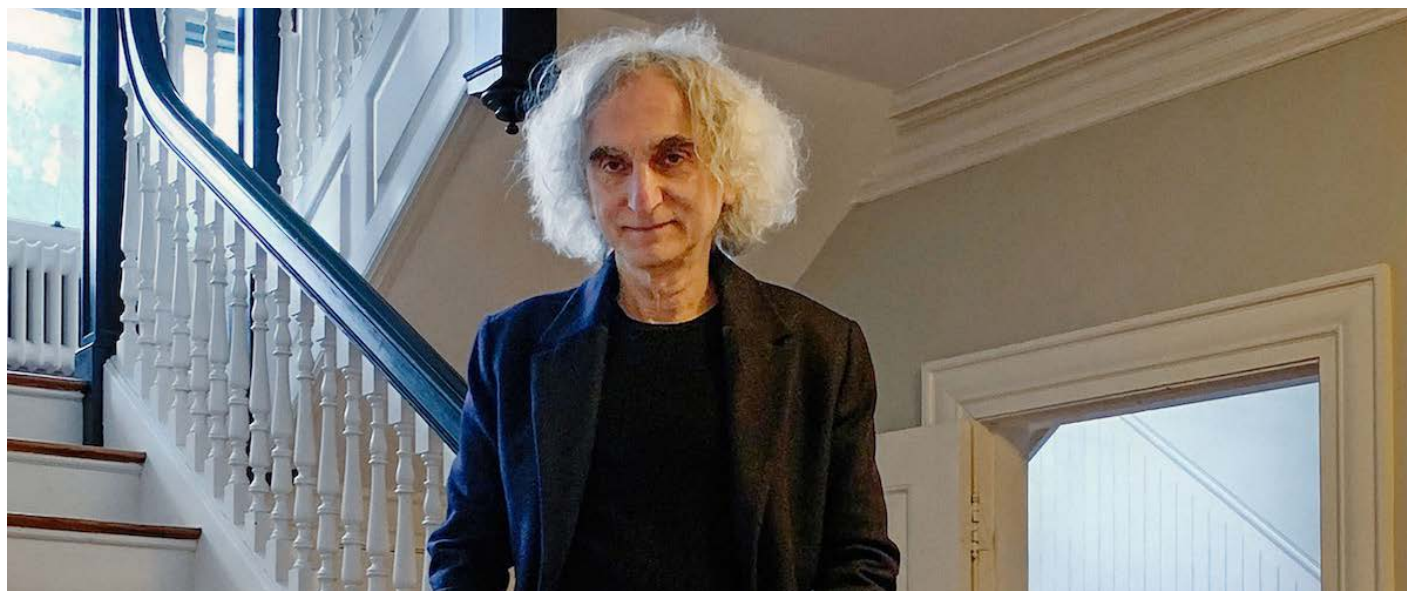
Even the ones who consciously opposed the coronation such as members of 'Republic' are focusing attention on the monarch or the possibility of an alternative essentially fulfilling the same role. Whereas pledging allegiance to a monarch or president doesn't address the basic issue.

That is, the achievement of a society free of social hierarchy and based instead on everyone contributing to society according to ability, thereby creating the conditions in which everybody's self-determined needs can be met.

This will only happen if and when the vast majority get up, actually or metaphorically, off their knees and stride towards their consciously created future – socialism.

DAVE ALTON

Human history as economic growth



SOMEONE HAS described Oded Galor's *The Journey of Humanity. The Origins of Wealth and Inequality* as 'a powerful mixture of fact, theory and interpretation'. And that's just about right. It's basically an attempt at an economic history of humankind, seeking to explain the complex forces behind economic development from when groups of modern human beings first began spreading from their original homeland of Africa to other parts of the planet. The author presents us with a multi-faceted narrative of 'long-term' history that seeks to explain why different social, technological and economic developments have taken place in different parts of the world at different times in the whole span of the 2-300,000 year 'journey' of homo sapiens. Much, he argues, can be explained by the environmental conditions prevailing in the earliest times whose influence on 'the fundamental forces that have swept humanity across its voyage' have been and remain seminal. This is the basis of the method of interpreting history he calls 'Unified Growth Theory'.

Industrial development

In attempting to identify and trace the forces that have governed the process of human economic development, he differentiates between what he calls 'the Malthusian epoch' (i.e., pre-industrial revolution) and the period since (ie,

the development of modern capitalist production). The distinction he makes is as follows. Before the nineteenth century the productive forces and hence the wealth of society and its ability to support more people were ever developing, but, as they did so, this progress was offset by increasing population growth, so confirming the argument of late 18th century economist Thomas Malthus in his 'Essay on the Principles of Population' (1798) that the human population will tend to grow more rapidly than the food supply causing poverty for the majority to remain inevitable. However, continues Galor, the industrial production of the last two centuries has allowed the human species to escape from the Malthusian 'poverty trap' by ushering in an ongoing era of sustained economic growth. In this era the growing need for and emphasis on what he calls 'human capital' (ie, education) has meant that human beings have increasingly developed the knowledge and consciousness necessary to put a relative brake on population growth and so not to fall back into a situation of increased production exceeded by the number of mouths to feed, creating, he tells us, 'a long-term rise in human prosperity'. It is this development of 'human capital' in the last 200 years and the fertility decline that has gone with it that the author sees as most 'revolutionary' in driving the overwhelming changes that have

taken place in the way human society has organised itself.

He then seeks to explain why these changes have taken root more or less quickly and profoundly in certain parts of the world than in others and to do this he uses his theory to examine early but in his view deep-rooted, almost 'ingrained' factors causing these differentiations. These are factors such as landscape fragmentation, soil types, population diversity, family size and cultural institutions, which, though they may at first glance seem minor or secondary, he sees as intrinsic and long acting. Emphasis on these factors may at first sight not seem to sit easily with the Marxist materialist view that it is the development of the forces of the production that drives the historical development of human societies. Yet there can nevertheless be perceived an implicit recognition that what underlies all this development are in fact the productive forces and that the other factors on which he lays emphasis are part of the superstructure which is perpetually interacting with those forces- as per materialist theory.

In other ways too Galor's narrative seems compatible with the materialist view of history, in particular in its account of the gradual and stuttering move from hunter-gatherer society to settled agriculture (the 'Agricultural Revolution'). This confirms that, though this change

enabled increases in production, population and goods available, it did so at the cost of subservience of the majority of populations to small ruling castes and probably shorter lives and lower living standards than before for that majority. The author synthesises it most effectively: 'As societies ... grew larger, it became essential for individuals to collaborate on a regional basis outside their kinship group. To facilitate wide-scale cooperation, these more complex societies were characterised by persistent and often hereditary political leadership, social stratification and centralised decision-making. With significant disparities in wealth, authority and status came class divisions and a ruling class, consisting of a hereditary nobility, whose interest lay in maintaining the social hierarchy and unequal distribution of wealth. The distinctions in status were reinforced and maintained by cultural norms, beliefs and practices, often religious in nature.'

But no class struggle

But if we can perceive a broadly materialist thrust to his Unified Growth Theory, Galor is to say the least equivocal towards the founder of the materialist conception of history, Karl Marx. Though referring to Marx at one stage as a 'great thinker', he writes off his key concept of the class struggle on the grounds that the idea that 'ever intensifying competition among capitalists could only result in a reduction in their profits, inducing them to deepen the exploitation of workers' has not come to pass. In fact, however, Marx never argued that intensifying competition would result in a reduction in profits, but rather that it would more likely lead to the ruin of the less competitive and to the concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands (which has in fact happened). Galor also rejects what he calls 'the central pillar of the Marxist thesis ... the unavoidable power struggle between capitalists and workers that would lead ultimately to a revolution and the shattering of the class-based society', on the grounds that 'the communist revolution Marx and Engels foresaw happened in 1917 in Russia of all places', ie, not in the industrialised nations they saw as fertile ground for revolution. It will of course be clear to anyone who has read Marx attentively that the Leninist revolution in Russia bore no relation, except in the label falsely attributed to it, to the kind of democratic revolution of a class-conscious majority of workers that Marx advocated and foresaw. So the author is, to say the least, mixed up about Marx, and his 'vulgar' Marxism is all the more surprising given

the exceptional scholarship and erudition which characterises this book as a whole. Perhaps it is instructive in this regard that nowhere does Marx's name appear in the book's extensive bibliography.

Nevertheless, the author's description of capitalism (though he never uses the word) as 'splendour and misery' is strikingly apt. His thrust is that developments of all kinds must be weighed in the balance and even the worst tragedies have 'limited long-term impact on the grand arc of human development'. So he owns that there have been massive humanitarian crises – wars, genocides, depressions, pandemics, atrocities, mass exoduses of refugees – in the last 200 years but at the same time points to continually increased prosperity or at least less poverty for billions and the hope that this will continue 'to create, promote equality of opportunity, reduce human misery and build a better world'. He also however mentions – if briefly- global warming and climate crisis and wonders whether this will be a 'short-lived' phenomenon resolvable via 'revolutionary technologies' or whether it will be 'the single historical event that

derails humanity from its journey thus far, bringing the most catastrophic long-lasting consequences of all'.

The author's intentions are clearly laudable. He states the need 'to decipher the Mystery of Inequality and foster global prosperity' and to address 'the misery and injustice that continue to affect a large portion of humanity'. He writes that 'education, tolerance and greater gender equality hold the keys to our species' flourishing in the decades and centuries to come'. But none of this contemplates or allows for the obvious way out of the strife and suffering he recognises or a solution to the very incomplete flourishing of human development that the profit system, with all its splendour and technology, has proved capable of offering. None of this contemplates either an end to that strife or the complete human flourishing that a leaderless, stateless, classless society of voluntary cooperation and free access can offer once the majority of the world's workers choose to establish it peacefully and democratically.

HKM

Letter

Dear Editors

Philosophical debate

THERE IS a world beyond the senses, SJW informs us (May Socialist Standard) (true!) but 'we are only ever speaking of our experience of it'. This is pure empiricism, the phenomenism of Kant, the logical positivists (Mach, Carnap) and the phenomenologists (Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida et al) Karl Marx was not a phenomenalist but a dialectical materialist who embraced a ratio-empiricist epistemology (a critical realism or science) that sought to understand the reality of the material world (including capitalism) by going beyond immediate experience of appearances (phenomena). Nobody has ever experienced a dinosaur, or photosynthesis.

Brian Morris, Lewes

PS. In my *Anthropology and Dialectical Naturalism* (Black Rose 2022) I defend philosophical materialism as a metaphysic against its current detractors, especially the postmodernists and phenomenologists like Latour.

SJW writes: Marx was a skeptic by

confession – his motto was 'Doubt everything'. He was 'no Marxist', but criticised the entire edifice of philosophy that defends the brutal experience of private property with bewildering flights of fancy. The 'Marxists' that followed bewailed the fact that Marx did not leave them a philosophy. Engels and Kautsky provided their thoughts as substitute, and the entire edifice of dialectical and other materialisms is based on their works and later the likes of Lukacs and Bukharin. It is my argument that dialectical materialism and other 'isms' sometimes mangle the position that Marx took. I don't claim to know Marx's mind, as Brian Morris does, or to install him in the pantheon of capitalist thinkers: only to think clearly, as a worker in capitalism, and come to similar conclusions to Marx in the present day. We should expect to do our own thinking, as workers, simple yet profoundly different from capitalist teachings, being more daring than complex.

Are nurses exploited?

Most of the recent and ongoing strikes are in the so-called 'public sector', by those working for the government at national or local level or for semi-state bodies such as the health service or schools and universities. The work they do is not sold but is a service provided by the state. They are not producing for profit; how then can they be said to be exploited?

If you work for a private (or state) enterprise producing something concrete that is sold, it is fairly easy to see that you are being exploited in the sense of being legally deprived of a part of what you produce.

But what about those employed by the state to do work that is not sold?

The first thing to note is that such employees are in the same basic position as any other worker. The means of production being monopolised by a tiny section only of the population, everybody else is driven by economic necessity to find an employer to get money to buy what they need to live. Workers get a living by working for wages, irrespective of who that employer is.

Wages are a price, the price of something that is being bought and sold. The textbooks say that this is 'labour', or

the work done for the employer. In fact, however, it is the employee's capacity to work, what Marx's translators called 'labour-power'. What it describes is the capacity a human has to use their physical and mental energy to perform a particular type of work.

Some people who work do sell their 'labour' in the sense of the product of their work — the self-employed; what their clients are paying for is the price of their work. But this is not the case with employees. They are selling their capacity to work and their employer is paying the price of this, not that of their work. This price — wages — depends on what it costs to produce it: the cost of the food, clothes, housing, travel, entertainment and training needed to keep them fit to work at their particular trade or profession; in short, on what is called 'the cost of living'. Wages reflect this cost and are not the same as the work done for an employer. In fact, the work done to produce what workers consume is less than the work they perform while working for an employer.

A part, therefore, of their 'labour' is not paid for. In the case of those producing

something for sale this is profits, realised when the product is sold. In the case of those working for the state or semi-state bodies this unpaid labour means that the service is being provided cheaper than otherwise. The state or semi-state employer seeks to provide its particular service as cheaply as possible; in other words, to maximise the amount of unpaid labour extracted from their employees. After all, the money they spend comes from taxes that ultimately fall on the profits of capitalist businesses and doing this reduces that.

If employees were being paid for their work — what they do in the course of their time at work — there would be nothing left for the employer's profit. In the case of state and semi-state employees they would have to be paid much more than they are, much more than they need to create their labour-power.

Workers in the 'public sector', like that of their fellow workers in the profit-seeking 'private sector', also perform unpaid labour for their employer even if it is not monetised as profit.

So, yes, nurses too are economically exploited as they perform unpaid as well as paid work for their employer.

The Socialist Party's Summer School 21 - 23 July 2023 Birmingham



Work, in all its forms, is what keeps society running. At best, our own work can be interesting and creative, if we're not stuck in an unfulfilling role. Capitalism turns work into employment, with our job roles shaped by how profitable or cost-effective they are likely to be, more than by how useful or manageable they are. Even so, countless important tasks rely on volunteers and other unpaid labour.

Poor conditions and pay have pushed an increased number of employees to go on strike. But how effective can industrial action be when workers don't own or control the places we work in? Alongside the impact of the state and the economy on how we work, technology has had a massive influence, from the most basic tools to the latest advances in computing.

In a socialist society, work would be freed from the constraints of money and the exploitation of employment, and would instead be driven directly by people's needs and wants. This would entail workplaces being owned in common and run democratically. But how could this happen in practice?

The Socialist Party's weekend of talks and discussion looks at different aspects of work, and what they tell us about the society we live in. The event also includes a table-top game night, exclusive publication, exhibition and bookstall.

Talks include:

- Work: Paid And Unpaid - Howard Moss
- The Mysteries Of The Pyramids - Bill Martin
- AI And The Future Of Work - Paddy Shannon
- The Need For Work And How To Avoid It - Richard Field

Our venue is Woodbrooke, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LJ. Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £200; the concessionary rate is £100.



For more information, visit www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/summer-school-2023/. Please email spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk to check if spaces are still available before making a booking.

Send in the Crowns

BOTH OF May's big events were marked by corny rituals, ridiculous costumes and celebrating a country's figurehead, with the hype cranked up high. While the Eurovision Song Contest comes around every year, there's a longer gap between coronations. Over the seven decades since the last one, the reach of the media has grown in ways which those who huddled round a small black-and-white screen in 1953 could scarcely have imagined. Then, as now, the TV coverage of the coronation shows us that its pomp and pageantry is a world away from the difficulties endured by the vast majority. Whether the coronation is seen as an affront or a temporary escape from rising prices and struggling public services depends on our individual point of view.

The point of view pushed by the mainstream media was that Charles' crowning should bolster a sense of pride not just in the monarchy but in the country's ability to 'put on a do' when so much else isn't running well. The latter also applies to Eurovision, and another similarity between the two events was the central role of the BBC. The corporation had the monopoly over footage filmed in Westminster Abbey during the coronation ceremony, with an agreement that they would be paid royalties (as it were) by other broadcasters using it. As reported by the *Guardian* on 5 May, this arrangement was made murkier by the coverage being produced by BBC Studios, a for-profit arm of the corporation, with ultimate say over what could be shown decreed by the royal household. On the day, this was communicated to broadcasters every five minutes, with some parts of the ritual vetoed beforehand, such as Charles being greased up with 'holy oil'. The National Union of Journalists, in particular, was concerned 'that a public event, paid for by the people and televised for them to be able to pay their respects should be censored in even a small way'. The BBC's coverage wouldn't have been much different without these restrictions, though, as it was overseen by Clare Popplewell, whose favour with *The Firm* was shown by her being appointed as a commander of the Royal Victorian Order following her work on televising 2022's platinum jubilee.

This explains why the BBC gave only the briefest mentions of the anti-royalist protests, whereas Sky News, for example, gave them more airtime in its own reports. Otherwise, Sky News' commentary aimed



Credit: Katie Chan

for the stateliness of the BBC's, throwing in predictably bland phrases such as that Charles is 'fulfilling his destiny' and that the ceremony is 'both ancient and modern'. Anyone tuning in to GB News would have had Nigel Farage and David Starkey for company, lapping up all the tradition. Later, on his *Tonight* programme, Mark Dolan hosted a 'coronation party' for a panel of pundits wide-eyed with enthusiasm for the royals. He talked about the spectacle in sycophantic superlatives, while against protester 'numpties' he said that 'our day' was an advert for 'modern Britain', adding that if the republicans win we would only get a faceless public servant as a figurehead, such as 'president Gary Lineker'. GB News' coverage had levels of tackiness you at least wouldn't get on the BBC.

Channel 4's coverage was less reverent, with a package of programmes on its website including documentaries reminding us about Diana's death and Prince Andrew's incriminating interview with Emily Maitlis, the latter to be the subject of an upcoming drama from Netflix. Sitcom *The Windsors'* coronation special saw the event relocated on the cheap to Slough's Holiday Lodge Express and Charles abdicating. For all its cheekiness, *The Windsors* ended up with the family reconciled on the Buckingham Palace balcony and the crowd below rejecting a 'fiscally responsible, slimmed down monarchy to suit these straitened times' for one that's 'full on'. Like all Channel 4's output, it wasn't as radical as it would have us believe.

ITV's coverage has the honour of the most complained about programme of the year so far, following actor Adjoa Andoh saying 'there is a bit of me that has gone

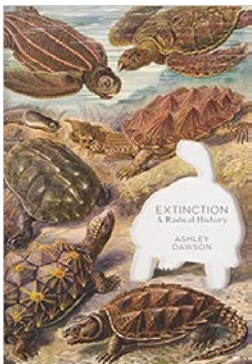
from the rich diversity of the Abbey to the terribly white balcony'. She was perhaps forgetting that in the real world, the nobility isn't going to be as diverse as that imagined in her show *Bridgerton*.

A short piece broadcast on Al Jazeera pointed out that jewels used in the ceremonial trinkets brought out for the coronation are a product of the state's colonial background, including the slave trade. 'Their king is a symbol of our bitter past which unfortunately translates into our very difficult present', according to Everisto Benyera of the University of South Africa. Otherwise, the commentary on Al Jazeera was drier and less involved, with historian Linda Porter saying that while the pageantry is something people 'can be pleased with', it may not have a wide impact on 'national pride'. There's a contradiction in trying to make people feel part of an institution which is outside them. This applies not just to the British monarchy, but to any monarchy, including that of Qatar, whose state funds Al Jazeera.

The various broadcasters' coronation coverage differed in tone according to their niche in the market, although they still relied on the 'money shot' footage from inside Westminster Abbey controlled and sold by the royals and the BBC. For all the mainstream media's efforts to present the coronation as something for everyone to rally around, within a day there were calls from leaders of commonwealth countries in the Caribbean to ditch the monarchy, and complaints that the police were too keen to use their new powers to arrest protesters. The coronation has exposed tensions in society as much as its glossy spectacle has been a distraction.

MIKE FOSTER

Radical Enough?



Extinction. A Radical History.
By Ashley Dawson. OR Books. 2022. 171pp.

‘In this expanded edition of a book first published in 2016, Ashley Dawson provides an excellent and accessible analysis of how human beings have tended to use and abuse the biosphere over the whole of their history and how in particular this has accelerated and come to a critical head in the last 200 years. He compellingly outlines to us how, in this most recent period, the capitalist system with its relentless drive for economic growth and profit has swiftly taken over the planet and increasingly devastated both its flora and fauna without thought of balanced development or survival of the natural world. The result, the author argues, is that the process of extinction has been speeded up to the point that it may be impossible to stop it happening. A prime example he cites is the catastrophic insect population crash in the economically advanced world over the last few decades which is having dire knock-on effects for animal survival as a whole and for the entire natural environment. Another is the halving of the number of wild animals in the world over the last 40 years, elimination of them now running at the rate of a hundred species a day. ‘Viewed in terms of sheer quantity’, as he puts it, ‘life on this planet is being liquidated at unprecedented rates’. He leaves us in no doubt about how capitalism’s quest for continuous growth is stripping ‘the world of its diversity and fecundity ...thereby threatening the planetary environment as a whole’.

The stark choice we face, according to the author, is what he calls ‘radical political transformation or deepening mass extinction’. But what does this transformation consist of? Not, he tells us, so-called ‘green capitalism’, whereby the current system seeks to reform itself via ‘conservation’ measures of one kind or another. Such measures, we are told ‘can never be more than a paltry bandage over a gaping wound’. In this he aligns with the trenchant argument against ‘deep green’ reforms to be found in the recently published *Bright Green Lies* which states: ‘Instead of a movement to save the planet, we have a movement to continue its destruction’ (reviewed in our January

issue- bit.ly/3KXoLdU). And since, he goes on, nothing in human nature prevents people cooperating to bring in a society based on ‘genuine social connection and engagement’, we can transform society so as to remove capitalism’s pressure on people (both workers and capitalists) to compete with one another, thereby exerting impossible pressure on the environment. He delves too into how the ceaseless race for accumulation and expansion as capitalists and their countries are set against one another in the drive to produce endless commodities not only leads to ruination of the environment but also brings never-ending military conflict and physical destruction and displacement of people (‘capital’s death-dealing reign’, as the author calls it).

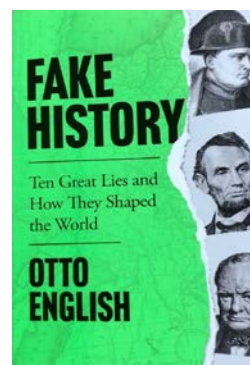
All fine and incontrovertible so far. But what must be called into question is the actual content of the ‘radical political transformation’ that is proposed. Having kicked out the idea of a conservation programme within capitalism to rescue the environment, the author calls for ‘a program of degrowth for the Global North’ with the aim of somehow benefitting workers in the poorer countries of the capitalist world (‘the Global South’). The unfortunate implication here is that workers in the advanced capitalist countries are already doing well enough. And there is also a prescription that ‘the rich in Global South countries must rein in their consumption’. But how all this is going to happen we are not told. Not, presumably, by a majority of the world’s workers taking democratic political action to transform the system of buying and selling, money and wages into a different system of voluntary cooperation for production and distribution and free access to all goods and services on a global level, something that is never mentioned. Instead the author recommends a ‘financial transactions tax of the type proposed by James Tobin’ (a ‘Robin Hood tax’), which we are told, would ‘generate billions of dollars to help people conserve hotspots of global diversity’. And, of course, there is that old chestnut of those advocating reform of capitalism – universal basic income (here called ‘universal guaranteed income’). These are all of course fine thoughts, but, coming after an all-out, fully justified and admirably argued attack on capitalism and its workings, what we have in effect is not a proposal to dispense with the system of buying and selling (which is what capitalism is), but ways of trying to make it work in a different, more benign way. And this after being assured that capitalism can’t be reformed, since its very nature is antithetical to human and environmental

wellbeing and must be got rid of.

Right at the end of this book, in musing on what kind of end we wish capitalism to have, the author states: ‘Capitalism is not eternal; it is a specific economic system grounded in a set of historically particular economic arrangements and social values’. This, as much else in this book, is undeniable, but if there is to be an end to capitalism, as we fervently hope there will be, it cannot be via reforms or rearrangements – no matter how well intended- of its details or its organisation. It really does need to be made extinct – 100 percent.

HKM

Fake History



Fake History: Ten Great Lies and How They Shaped the World.
By Otto English, Wellbeck, 2022

Anyone who has seen a big enough expanse of water will be able to see the curvature of the Earth on the horizon. The bizarre notion that pre-Columbian people thought the earth was flat was started by Washington Irving, author of *Sleepy Hollow*, the *Rip Van Winkle* stories and a biography of Columbus published in 1828. According to Irving, Columbus sailed west from Spain to prove that the Earth was spherical and ‘discovered’ America in the process. However, there is no evidence that Columbus had that intention and there were already, in 1492, some 60 million people living in America. The founding myth of America and many other states is that of ‘exceptionalism’, the belief that they are a special people and, by inference, that others are inferior.

Abraham Lincoln did not believe that all men were created equal. In 1861 Lincoln became the first Republican Party President. Shortly afterwards a Civil War began which killed an estimated 618,000 people (a greater number than British dead, military and civilian, in the Second World War). In his Gettysburg Address of 1863 Lincoln declared that the American nation was founded on the proposition that ‘all men are created equal’. What he meant was ‘all white men’. In a debate in 1858 Lincoln said that he was ‘not, nor have ever been, in favour of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races’. He was

opposed to 'mixed race' marriages but he was strongly in favour of 'repatriating' black people to Africa. He didn't believe black people should have the vote, though he did eventually agree to extending suffrage to black Americans who had served on the Union side in the Civil War. But not to other black Americans.

Queen Victoria married a German, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, in 1840. They continued with that family name, Saxe-Coburg Gotha, until the First World War with Germany, when overnight it became the House of Windsor. The insinuation has long been held that the royal family is German. This is rather like Donald Trump's accusation that Barack Obama couldn't be a 'real American' because he wasn't born in America and his father was born in Kenya. Barack was born in America and his father was born in Kenya, but that didn't matter to the racist meme. The arch-opponent of immigration Nigel Farage is the great-great grandson of German refugees in the 1860s. He may be a hypocrite, but it would be absurd to claim that he is really a German.

There was never a realistic prospect of Nazi Germany invading Britain during the Second World War. Although their air forces were more or less evenly matched, the Kriegsmarine was massively outgunned by the Royal Navy. That alone made invasion extremely unlikely. German General Alfred Jodl said that an invasion would be like 'sending troops into a mincing machine'. And Field Marshal von Rundstedt later claimed that Hitler never had a serious plan to invade. But that doesn't stop the relentless propaganda being pumped out that Britain could have lost the war if not for those who gave their lives in its defence.

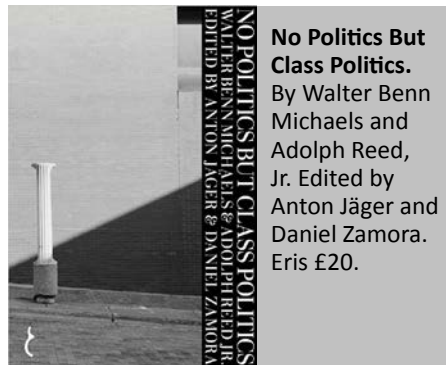
Many falsehoods have been told by and about Churchill, some of which have been repeated by his biographer and wannabe Churchillian PM, Andrew Boris de Pfeffel Johnson. Among the many things Churchill never actually said: 'If you're not a Liberal by 25 you don't have a heart' and that 'if you're not a Conservative by 35, you don't have a brain'. (He was a Conservative MP at 25 and a Liberal MP at 35.) Born into the ruling class, Churchill's reputation was forged when he became Prime Minister of the wartime coalition in 1940. Like Abraham Lincoln, he has acquired a cult status, seemingly beyond criticism. But his defence of Empire is less well known. For instance, writing in the 1930s of aborigines in Australia: 'I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly-wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place'. How much longer will his statue remain in Parliament Square? Upon hearing of a

suggestion to remove the statue, Boris Johnson said that he would 'fight with every breath in his body' to keep the statue up. A more likely scenario would be — taking a cue from his hero — that he would give the order for others to do the fighting.

And there's much more fake history exposed in this recommended book by Otto English. Some hostile reviewers have gleefully seized upon the fact that this name is fake. His real name is Andrew Scott, which is also the name of an actor. To avoid confusion, and possible legal consequences, he adopted a pen name. Nothing unusual about that for authors.

LEW

Missing Class



No Politics But Class Politics.
By Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed, Jr. Edited by Anton Jäger and Daniel Zamora. Eris £20.

This volume consists of a number of essays written individually by the two authors over the period from 1997 to 2020, together with a foreword by the editors and a conclusion by the authors. There are also four interviews of the authors, conducted by the editors.

The main argument presented is that focus on inequality in terms of 'race' distracts attention from the more general inequality that exists. As economic inequality in general increases, so (it seems) does the enthusiasm for addressing every non-economic kind of inequality. The US is less racist, sexist and homophobic than it was several decades ago, but it is also more unequal. Neoliberalism, the dominant capitalist ideology, is opposed to discrimination but perfectly happy with economic inequality. Equality of opportunity, while good for business, justifies inequality. Equality of race and gender is in no way contradictory to inequality of class.

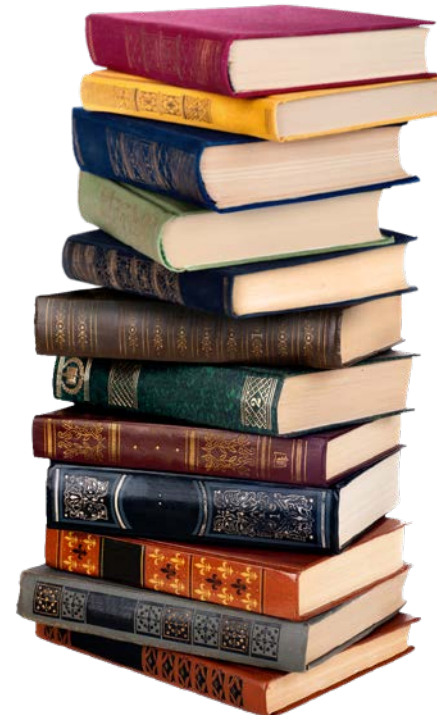
Most white people are badly off, with sixty million white Americans having basically no wealth at all. Would it really benefit black people if roughly one in eight of the top one per cent were black, in keeping with the proportion of black people in the whole population? Gains for a few do not help the many, but are part of a system that hurts the many. Universities have become more diverse as far as students are concerned, though Latinos

and Latinas are underrepresented, and poorer students struggle to get accepted. Professors are also more diversified, but increasingly teaching is being done by people who do not have full-time or 'permanent' contracts (adjunct faculty, as they are known). Adjunct staff are not so diversified, but the problem lies really in their low pay and poor working conditions.

The authors are of course not against resistance to discrimination in terms of 'race' or gender, and they give a good account of racism; rather, they see this as less fundamental than struggle against inequality and for a world where nobody lives below the poverty line. The problem with the book, however, is that not much at all is said about the class politics mentioned in the title, in terms of what the classes are or what its aim should be. There are a number of vague references to particular classes, such as 'the black professional-managerial class', an 'upper-class professor' and an 'upper middle class', and to the one percent. It is all very well saying that 'class matters more than race or sex' (in the context of personal care aides, who are very badly paid and are mostly women of colour), but more needs to be said in terms of how class is defined and what classes exist under capitalism. As is said, fighting exploitation is a way of fighting the effects of discrimination, but fighting discrimination is not a way of fighting exploitation: 'if nobody were the victim of racism or sexism, lots of people would still be poor'. A reference to Marx's solution of abolishing (private) property is not enough to show the kind of system the authors stand for.

So an interesting text, though it does not quite deliver what might be expected.

PB



Eysenck at LSE: Socialist defends free speech

ON TUESDAY 8 May Professor Eysenck, who holds certain controversial views about the intellectual abilities of American negroes, was forcibly prevented from expressing his views at the London School of Economics. Responsibility for this political censorship was claimed by a Maoist group. Our comrade Dom Zucconi, an LSE student expressed Socialist opposition to this suppression of free speech, as the following report from the Daily Telegraph of 11 May shows:

“Tuesday’s incident was last night described as a ‘disgrace and discredit to socialism and a brief for fascism’ by Mr. D. Zucconi, a student who described himself as a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain when he proposed the motion to apologise to Professor Eysenck.

‘How does one best deal with fascism? With the butt-end of a rifle or with ideas? The political process is a battle of ideas and, unless you can rebut these concepts, you are lost’, he said.

‘In preventing him from speaking, you are resorting to the same tactics you accused fascists of using’, he told the meeting

to loud cheers.”

For the record, the precise wording of the motion proposed by Comrade Zucconi and carried by a large majority at the LSE Union meeting was:

“This Union strongly deprecates the conduct of those present at Professor Eysenck’s meeting on Tuesday who appointed themselves to decide that nobody should be allowed to hear a point of view with which they disagreed. We place on record that only in the healthy atmosphere of free expression can ideas be debated, false ideas debunked and sound ideas developed. We therefore apologise to Professor Eysenck for the action of a minority in preventing him from being heard.”

The Socialist Party of course has always practised the principles expressed in this resolution. We have always been prepared to give opponents of Socialism a chance to express their views from our platform. This is because we are convinced that our views are right and that this will emerge from full and free debate—and if we are wrong we want to know, so that we can stop wasting our time.

Censorship, whether through the legalized violence of the capitalist State as enforced by the Courts or by the violence of self-appointed political guardians as displayed at the LSE, is anti-socialist and anti-working class and must be exposed whenever it rears its ugly head. (*Socialist Standard*, June 1973)

Obituary – John Lee

John Lee, an active member of the Party for many decades, died in April at the age of 92. He joined the old Tottenham branch in 1949 as a teenager and was involved in its various successor branches. He worked as a clerical officer in Customs and Excise, his only job and it was whilst working there that he heard our speakers at Tower Hill. He managed to avoid National Service about this time because of defective eyesight.

In the ‘60s he was active on our Executive and Publicity Committees. He was a very regular attendee at branch meetings, apart from during a period when he was in hospital for a detached retina operation, and later, in 1980, when he took himself off for a week’s touring holiday in Italy.

In the Party, after retirement, he picked up the basics of computer work, and for years he dealt with general enquiries and requests for the *Socialist Standard*, working at our Head Office on a weekly basis until a few years ago. He was always ready to leaflet demonstrations or help out at a branch street stall. A quiet but thoughtful man, he was well read. He admitted that he was somewhat terrified of getting up to address an audience, which he sometimes had to do when answering questions about a Committee report to Party Conference. Never a speaker nor a writer, he would only chip in on a discussion if he felt he had something relevant to contribute, and then typically only briefly. The Party has lost a long-serving and hard-working stalwart.

Obituary – Malcolm MacKay

Glasgow branch regret to have to communicate that comrade Malcolm MacKay has died at the age of 56. He had been ill recently. As a teenager in the 1980s he got involved with the youth section of the Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party and for a time was editor of their youth paper in Scotland. It didn’t take him long to see through the idea of a vanguard party leading the workers though, sometime later joining the Socialist Party. He was active in the branch locally as well as contributing the occasional article for publication.

Fitton for Purpose

MOST READERS will never have heard of Sam Fitton, but if you had lived in Oldham a century ago, or perhaps more recently than that, he would have been a well-known name. He was a cartoonist, poet and humorist, among other things, having originally been a mill worker. This year is the centenary of his death at the age of just 54, and he is remembered in an exhibition ‘Finding the Funny’ at Gallery Oldham, on till 17 June (for a review dealing with Oldham in the same period and mentioning him, see the January 2014 *Socialist Standard*).

Fitton’s poetry was written in the local dialect, part of a revival of interest in non-standard varieties of English, evidenced by the founding of the Lancashire Authors’ Association in Rochdale in 1909. His friend Ammon Wrigley is even commemorated by a statue in the Uppermill district of Saddleworth, now in the Borough of Oldham, but part of Yorkshire in Wrigley’s day. Fitton’s poem ‘My Owd Case Clock’ – about a grandfather clock – gives an idea of his wit, his use of language and his attention to social issues (available at allpoetry.com). Here are some lines:

When little Bill were born, th’ owd clock
Seemed fain to have one moor to th’ flock,
But while it smiled it little knew
His mother wouldna’ live it through;
It watched ‘em lay her in her shroud
An’ somehow didna’ tick so loud

His cartoons (for which see lancashirecottoncartoons.com) were often accompanied by poems. They covered a range of topics, from the tyranny of having to get up at five o’clock in the morning in order to be at work by six, to the custom of family members (often schoolchildren) bringing a hot meal to the workers at lunchtime. One dealt with how those who did not join any of the various unions could be cold-shouldered, whether in the crowd at a football match or in the pub. He depicted shuttle-kissing, whereby weavers (mostly women) used their mouths to pull thread through the eye of a shuttle. It was unpopular and was eventually shown to be responsible for the transmission of diseases such as tuberculosis, but it was not banned in Lancashire until 1952. Yet he seems not to have taken it too seriously, as one cartoon features a weaver called Matilda who turns down an advance from a fellow-worker by saying, ‘I’d rather kiss a shuttle than a face like thine!’

One cartoon from 1911 asks what would happen ‘if the peers had to work’. But, in an example with contemporary relevance, another from the same year unfortunately states ‘God save the king’, with reference to the coronation of George V.

The cotton industry in Oldham and more widely is long gone, with China and India between them now responsible for forty percent of the global production of cotton yarn and cloth. In 2015, though, a renovated mill in Dukinfield was used for spinning cotton, for the first time in the UK in over thirty years.

PB

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

Our general discussion meetings are now held on Zoom. To connect to a Zoom meeting, enter <https://zoom.us/j/7421974305> in your browser. Then follow instructions on screen and wait to be admitted to the meeting.

JUNE 2023 EVENTS

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) Discord • Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday 12 June 10.00 (GMT + 1) Zoom
Central Online Branch Meeting

Friday 2 June

No Friday evening Zoom meeting

Friday 9 June 19.30 (GMT + 1) Zoom

Did you see the News?

Discussion on recent subjects in the news

Host: Paddy Shannon

Friday 16 June 19.30 (GMT + 1) Zoom

Discussion opened by Steve Finch

Friday 23 June 19.30 (GMT + 1) Zoom

Conspiracy Theories Right, Left and Centre

Speaker: Stephen Harper

Friday 30 June 19.30 (GMT + 1) Zoom

Discussion on subject to be arranged

Socialist Party

Physical Meetings

LONDON • Sunday 25 June 3pm

Private property, how did it arise and how will it end

Preceded by street stall at noon and London branch meeting at 2pm (Note

change of day from last Saturday to last Sunday of the month). Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 UN (nearest tube: Clapham North)

GLASGOW • Friday 9 June 2023 12 noon

City Centre Leafletting. Followed by Social at Bavaria Brauhaus, 30 Bothwell Street, Glasgow. Call Paul on 07484 717893 for info.

Cardiff: Every Saturday 1pm-3pm (weather permitting) Street Stall, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street (Newport Road end).

Socialist weekend at Yealand Conyers in Cumbria

After unavoidable interruptions including a pandemic, Lancaster branch is once again organising a socialist residential weekend, from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 June, at the Yealand Quaker Centre in rural Cumbria. This is a sociable get-together for members and non-members in a nice hostel with dorm rooms and self-catering facilities, where we muck in together on the cooking and chores.

The last time we did this was in 2019 and it was a pretty enjoyable experience all round (see the report in the August 2019 *Socialist Standard*- bit.ly/3H9OzKY).

The branch will bear the hire cost but is happy to accept pay-what-you-can contributions.

You'll also have to fund your own travel arrangements. Spaces are limited to max 16 so if you'd like to take part please let us know at

spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org

Party News: Local election results

Folkestone Central. District Council ward: 81 votes. Town Council ward: 121.

Folkestone Harbour. District Council ward: 45 votes. Town Council ward: 61.



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.

Stray Cats and Gundog Rescue

EVERY MONTH at least half-a-dozen letters from animal charities come through my letter box. They're asking for donations in one form or another. It's my own fault. I'm tempted to throw them in the bin but usually end up sending a small amount of money or buying a book of their raffle tickets.

Save the animals

As an example, for a long time I've been paying a few pounds a year to 'adopt' a pony from the Bolenowe Animal Sanctuary in Cornwall. I receive a new 'Certificate of Adoption' from them every year. Then I make a small monthly direct debit payment to Cats' Protection and to the Donkey Sanctuary and I usually spend £10 buying a book of the raffle tickets I receive from other organisations such as the Dogs' Trust, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). In particular I give regularly to an organisation local to me called the Woodfield Animal Sanctuary. It was set up a number of years ago by a retired couple who put all their pension income into buying a piece of land on the Gower Peninsula to rescue and look after all types of stray animals – sheep, goats, cows, horses, dogs, cats and just about everything else. They're supported in what they do by a dedicated team of volunteers and struggle against massive odds to cope with weather, building upkeep and the sheer volume of animals needing to be looked after. Some of their reports are heart-rending, but also heart-warming, and at the moment their Facebook page tells us they're competing with dozens of other charities (Perthshire Gundog Rescue, Stray Cats Rescue Team West Midlands, Save Our Spaniels, Holly Edge Animal Sanctuary, Dogs4Rescue, etc) for a share in a £300,000 sum being dispensed by MyGivingCircle.org. The money is available to those charities that get the most votes from people as being



most worth supporting. So Woodfield are sending regular messages to their own supporters encouraging them to vote in their favour so that they'll get funding they're desperate for.

Can't pay, can't have

Of course, animal charities are just a tiny proportion of the countless others that try their best to raise money for their causes. A short time ago this column focused on homelessness and the work of Shelter, an organisation set up in the 1960s with the avowed aim of solving the UK's homeless problem within 10 years. In the event it's still going strong today and in fact exists now side by side with other similar concerns, and competing for funds with them. Homelessness has remained endemic and that will almost certainly continue for as long as we have a system (ie, capitalism) whose accepted norm is 'if you can't pay you can't have'. As everyone knows, for accommodation, as for other vital things, money is necessary or you go without. That is what is fundamental to the system we live under today, wherever in the world we happen to be.

And what is also fundamental is the need it throws up for charities seeking to mitigate the consequences of 'can't pay can't have'. While it's true that these charities can never do more than paper over the cracks produced at all levels by the inequality inherent in the buying and selling system, it's also true that they undoubtedly help a lot of people – and a lot of animals – to survive rather than just go under. In this sense we can say that charities are necessary in an uncharitable society, which, by its very nature, is what capitalism is. At the same time charities do not actually solve the problems they engage with – nor can they ever hope to.

The best cause

But this will not stop me from giving amounts of money I feel I can afford to particular 'good causes' or from supporting them in other ways. But I'll be doing so under no illusion that the problem they exist for can be solved by them. And I'll also be doing it in the knowledge that the very best 'cause', the most worthwhile one, is the socialist cause. What I mean by this is that, only when the cause of establishing a cooperative world society of voluntary work and free access, without buying and selling and without money and wages, becomes the first priority of workers everywhere, will we see the only lasting solution to the manifold and never-ending problems that the current system throws up.

So while the humanity, dedication and sheer well-meaningness of the volunteers of the Woodfield Animal Sanctuary, Shelter and many other charities is to be applauded and respected, their efforts can never achieve a remedy to the problems they exist to address. That's because a social and economic system dedicated to producing profit for the tiny minority is simply not designed to cater for the needs of the majority, let alone for the most deprived members of that majority or for the welfare of animals. Think of the difference it would make if only a small part of all the time, energy and resources people throw into charitable work to try and make a small difference within this system were directed into achieving a society where charity was no longer necessary. How much closer that would bring us to establishing such a society.

HOWARD MOSS

