

socialist standard

June 2019
Vol.115 No.1378
£1.50

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

FULLY AUTOMATED LUXURY COMMUNISM?



also:
*The Profit Paradigm
Defending Capitalism?
The Mogg/Corbyn Oxymoron*



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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'

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A World of Abundance

There is a lot of chatter about artificial intelligence and robots replacing workers in the workplace. Not everyone shares the anxiety about the potential threat of massive job losses. Some see this as an opportunity to bring about a different society where robots can perform all the menial jobs leaving humans free to pursue their hobbies and interests and lead a more fulfilling life. They are advocates of what is known as Fully Automated Luxury Communism (FALC).

Their argument is that developments in technology have created the possibility of a 'post-scarcity' society, where there will be abundance for all. They understand that present day capitalist society cannot deliver this, as production is limited by what can be sold profitably, and that a fundamental change in society is required. One that provides for human needs rather than the profits for the few

However, we are not in agreement with everything they say. In a *Guardian* article (18 May 2015) Aaron Bastani, a prominent advocate of FALC, calls for 'a 10- or 12-hour working week' and 'a guaranteed social wage', which implies that work will still be defined by employment and a monetary system would continue to exist.

In socialism, however, work would be freed from the restrictions of wage labour and everyone would have free access to what they need and money would be redundant. It is only under capitalism where we are compelled to make profits for an employer that work becomes drudgery.

It is not just in the last few years that technological developments have made possible a society of abundance. This potential was achieved sometime in the early years of the twentieth century when the world market was established.

The FALC advocates also seem to confuse abundance with luxury. Bastani calls for 'Cartier for everyone, MontBlanc for the masses and Chloe for all'. ('Britain Doesn't Need More Austerity, It Needs Luxury Communism', 12 June 2015, www.vice.com). For us, abundance is where everyone can live a fulfilling life free from poverty, not that they will necessary own a Cartier watch. Under capitalism, people who can afford it acquire these luxury items so as to flaunt their superior status. In a society of genuine social equality, this will make no sense.

In the 1970s there were similar fears that the introduction of the microchip

would create mass unemployment. In fact this did not happen as the new computer technology brought forth new skills. Computer programmers were required to write the computer software and engineers were needed to maintain the hardware. Likewise, the new robots will need skilled workers to program and maintain them, though the extent of this is still debated along with the net effect on unemployment and part-time employment. Increases in unemployment so far have mainly been due to market conditions, rather than the application of new technology.

Bastani, who claims to be influenced by Marx, should know that capitalism cannot replace all human labour with machines. Robots and computers cannot create surplus value, from which profit is derived. Only human labour can.

It is encouraging that, after all the years when it has been accepted that there is no alternative to free market capitalism, groups and individuals are discussing possible alternatives, and in the process have rescued the terms communism and socialism from their toxic association with the state capitalist dictatorships.

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PATHFINDERS

Fully automated luxury... capitalism

THIS ISSUE looks at some models of post-capitalist society that might sound futuristic – until you realise how fast capitalism is already moving. From extraction to manufacturing, distribution and retail, changes are taking place at a startling rate as industry, sensor technology and artificial intelligence converge in a process that's become known as the fourth industrial revolution, or Industry 4.0.

Let's start at the outlets, where people shop. That's probably where you'll have noticed a difference. If you're still adjusting to the novelty of contactless card payments, you might not be quite ready for Asda's new 'Scan and Go' hand scanners. You use these to scan barcodes yourself as you go along, automatically totting up your basket items and your spend and saving you time at the check-out queue. This is part of a huge global trend towards cashless and cashierless retail, but hand scanners are just the clunky overture to the main performance. Walmart and Microsoft are working on 'Grab and Go' stores similar to Amazon Go 'Just walk out' stores where you just pick up stuff and leave, the whole transaction worked out invisibly by a combination of tech that might include smartphone, QR codes, RFID tags, or (in China anyway) face recognition. One company is developing a 'nanostore', which is a container-sized walk-in 24/7 retail pod which unlocks when you flash your phone, uses shelf sensors to register what groceries you pick up, and automatically debits your account before locking up on exit, no doubt having invited you by name to have a nice evening and to call again soon.

Smart retail is still at an early stage, but the cost and time savings to business owners hardly need to be laboured. Amazon Go have plans to open 3,000 stores in the next few years, and sector investment has tripled since 2017. The convenience to consumers, however, is more nuanced. 24/7 accessibility sounds impressive, but not many people are likely to want to buy bread, socks or rawl-plugs at 4am. Meanwhile people who enjoy some human interaction in their day and don't like to be railroaded won't necessarily appreciate cashierless retail, which is essentially about speed of throughput. Perhaps the appeal is more psychological. Smart retail emulates the socialist obliteration of the money

transaction. It feels like it's free, even though you know it isn't. Perhaps in turn that helps you feel like you're free, even though you know you aren't. With a feel-good rush of dopamine and no price labels in sight, you'll be keen to keep spending. You'll be what capitalism wants you to be – a consumer junkie.

So what's happening at the back-end, to supply the junkies with their junk? To begin with, the traditionally capital and labour-intensive extractive industries are getting an AI makeover. Seismic surveying using delicate sensor equipment allows firms to zero in on likely deposits in a fraction of the time, cost and labour of older methods, while computerised drilling operations keep accuracy and efficiency optimal while increasing yield and reducing health and safety risks. Advances in robotics and autonomous 'intelligent' machines are widely expected



to develop extraction methodology to planet-plundering perfection.

Meanwhile the factory production line is being refitted for 5G as sensors are placed on every physical component to report on its condition and failure potential. The aggregation of this mass of data creates a 'digital twin' of the entire plant so that a human, or perhaps an AI, can oversee the entire production flow and anticipate weaknesses or failures before they even occur, maintaining throughput and cutting expensive down-time and service interventions. It can also run virtual tests and experiments on alternative process configurations without incurring real costs or risking damage. Where spare parts are needed they can often be 3D-printed on site or close by, further reducing costs. Smart manufacturing also involves engineering flexibility into the productive system to achieve 'mass customisation', i.e. goods personalised for the customer but at mass-production standards of cost and reliability.

At the same time, distribution is being revolutionised by autonomous road transport vehicles and also by 'last-mile

delivery' technology which includes delivery robots, drones and even smart front doors, which open a panel to accept packages.

It goes without saying that none of this matters if you don't have money to spend and you don't constitute 'effective demand'. But it does show how capitalism is using technology to engineer the inefficiencies (including the people) out of the productive process. It is fully automated luxury capitalism – driven by profit, of course, but entirely amenable to full-scale socialist adoption.

Meanwhile, what happens to the workers displaced by machines? According to the World Economic Forum 50 percent of workplace jobs will be done by machines by 2025, up from 29 percent today. All the low-end, low-skilled jobs are disappearing, and future employability is likely to involve running faster and faster just to stand still. The WEF says that workers will on average need 101 days of retraining by 2022 (<https://bit.ly/2MNz57a>). Workers know which way the wind is blowing, and are desperate to get this training, even if it means paying for it themselves. A 2016 survey of 19,000 young workers across 25 countries showed that 95 percent would be willing to pay for their own up-skilling (<https://bit.ly/2JtUVPD>). This must be music to the ears of bosses, of course.

To make money, capitalism panders to the needs and desires of the paying customer, ignoring as far as inhumanly possible various externalities including the needs and desires of the working employee. The paradox is that customer and employee are frequently the same person. Thus the peculiar dualistic experience of modern workers, pampered at the weekend and punished in the week. The more stressed and desperate we become, the more we need our booze and bling and big TVs. We are locked in a cycle of abuse and excess, addicted to our luxury fixes and paying for them with poverty and slavery.

Technology is just a tool. We can let capitalism use it against us and in total disregard for the environment, or we can take it away from its elite owners and start using it democratically and sustainably across the world. We don't have to fully automate socialism if we don't want to, because too much leisure might become stultifying, but it's good to know we have technological options.

PJS

The Socialist Party stood a list in the South East Region in last month's elections to the European Parliament. Our list obtained 3,505 votes. Here is the address of one of our candidates, Mike Foster, to a hustings in Banbury.

Our viewpoint is different to those of other parties, in that we're neutral on the issue of Britain staying in or leaving the European Union. This is because either option doesn't work in the best interests of the vast majority of people. Whether laws are made in Westminster or Brussels, they're still made to try and manage a social system which is inherently divisive and wasteful. And whether it's easier or harder for companies in Britain to trade with those in Europe, that trade will still push most wealth towards the elite. So, a vote for the Socialist Party is a vote to say that you've had enough not only of the Brexit debate, but also the system as a whole.

The overwhelming majority of us – well over 90 percent – don't own much in the big scheme of things and can only get what we can afford through our wages, savings or state subsidies. If we're able to find employment, we get our money by selling our time and our abilities to an employer. But collectively, we don't get back out all that we put in. According to Oxfam, 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1 percent of the global population, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth. The elite who own the world's organisations cream off a profit or a surplus for themselves by exploiting the rest of us. So, many of us end up in unfulfilling jobs for organisations which we have little real input into how they're run.

The elite's economic power is backed up by political power. States, and blocs such as the European Union, exist to try and manage the status quo. This doesn't mean that they have control over the economy, though. Market forces fluctuate between growth and slump regardless of what politicians and corporate strategists of any nationality or political stance want. Instead, they're more likely to be playing catch-up and trying to keep things financially viable in a shaky economy. This applies whether we're in or out of Europe, or whether the company we work for is British, German, Japanese or based wherever.

We in the Socialist Party don't think that this system can be changed to work in the interests of most of us, because its structured to put the majority at a disadvantage. Reforms or increased public spending may help some people in the short-term. But these measures, however well-intentioned, only last as long as they're financially viable or politically acceptable. The needs and wishes of the majority of people, or the environment, aren't as important as the economy.

Leaving the EU won't solve problems such as poverty or climate change, nor would they have been solved if we'd voted to remain. In fact, the whole Brexit debate is a distraction from society's more fundamental problems, and along the way has stirred up divisions such as xenophobia and racism. The Socialist Party says that these issues have to be addressed at their source. This means changing from a social system with the means to produce and distribute wealth owned by a minority, to one where those resources and facilities are owned and managed by everyone in common. Then, goods would be produced and services would be run directly for anyone who wants them, without the dictates of the economic market. This doesn't mean that resources would be squandered. Our present society is much more wasteful, not only in its exploitation of the environment, but also in the effort and energy used up by the bureaucracy of pushing money around. The new world we advocate would be able to manage our natural resources in a sustainable way, as the waste and short-term profitability which lead to

environmental damage wouldn't be there.

The only legitimate and practical way this could be achieved is by the vast majority organising together, democratically. This would mean a much broader and more inclusive style of democracy than we're used to today. Different democratic organisations or procedures would apply in different circumstances, rather than having leaders or groups with more authority than others. It would be a society based on voluntary, co-operative work, with decisions and responsibilities agreed through everyone involved having an equal say.

So, the Socialist Party says that we should aim for a different kind of society, rather than trying to patch up this one, in or out of the EU. We're not advocating ways of navigating the withdrawal deal, nor saying that we should have remained. A vote for the Socialist Party is a vote to say that you're fed up with the divisive system we're living under, and want a free and equal world instead.



The result in the local elections we contested in Folkestone was :
District Council (Harbour ward)(2 seats): Keen (Lab) 402, Field (Lab) 395, Lawes (ex-UKIP) 384, McConell (Green) 334, Wallace (Con) 286, Gurung (Con) 259, Anson (LD) 253, Thomas (Soc) 59.
Town Council (Harbour ward)(3 seats): Field (Lab) 559, Keen (Lab) 552, Lawes (ex-UKIP) 475, Le Fanu (Lab) 442, Wallace (Con) 327, Gurung (Con) 301, Wallace (Con) 271, Thomas (Soc) 131.

Dear Theresa

At last you have a clear timetable for your exit! You'll soon be off through the revolving door to pastures new, where your distinguished service to the capitalist class will no doubt be generously rewarded. But apart from a few lucrative board appointments what else? May be a memoir? Although I would wait a while in order to exploit the public's short memory. Some of your predecessors have secured lucrative speaking engagements, but I wouldn't get your hopes up. After all, what would you talk about? I'm not sure Brexit will pull in the punters.

Another important matter to consider is your valedictory speech. I hope the fiction that you unfolded outside the doors of Number 10 on 24 May was just a prelude to something more realistic. Perhaps in the main event to come you could dispense with such Alice in Wonderland utterances of: *'having striven for a country that works not just for the privileged few but for everyone'* and introduce a little honesty. [Check Wikipedia if you are not sure of the meaning of this word]. Anyway I thought I would provide you with a little help in this difficult endeavour by highlighting a few of your main achievements. You could add your own points to mine and turn it into a quiz, ranking them in order of how strongly they correlated with the upward movement of hubby's investment fund.

You have been an incredible champion of austerity; a sleight of hand characterised by multi-billion pound cuts in wages and social provision for the poor and even bigger giveaways to the rich; at the last count resulting in 120,000 deaths which have been termed 'economic murder'. You have privatised large swathes of public services to enrich your corporate cronies at the expense of working-class people who are left with a rump of degraded social provision. In partnership with the US regime you have continued the imperialist rampage of war, torture and assorted violence against largely defenceless countries; the onslaught on Yemen being a perfect example which, amongst other dire consequences, has caused the death of 85,000 children through starvation. You have played a key role in hastening the planet's spiral into a death spin by systematically dismantling the modest protections put in place by the Climate Change Act 2008, whilst disingenuously crowing about the UK as the world leader on climate protection. You have rendered the notion of personal privacy meaningless by massively expanding surveillance. You have trampled over justice; epitomised recently by the ignominious exit of Julian Assange from the Ecuadorean Embassy and his incarceration in Belmarsh maximum security prison. You have built mega-prisons for UK citizens and concentration camps for refugees, or else deported them back to the countries from which they have fled persecution. On the party political front you have had staggering success in rehabilitating the reputation of David Cameron. It is no longer tenable for anyone to claim that he has been the worst Prime Minister in 200 years. And you will soon hand the baton to your bosom buddy Boris to lead a strong and stable Tory government. Enjoy your quiz!

P.S. I've enclosed a couple of packs of tissues as I thought you might be running low.

P.P.S. I think this is an opportune moment for us to make a clean break and cease this turgid correspondence. Less depressing for both of us!

Sincerely, Tim Hart



The Libertarian myth

There is a school of thought, calling itself 'Libertarian', that asserts that individuals have a right to the whole money income earned by their labour and that taxation is therefore 'the government staking a claim to the income the individual has worked to secure' and that this undermines 'the right of private individuals to their property, i.e. their wealth.'

This is the defence of private property put forward by John Locke in the seventeenth century (in opposition to the then dominant Christian doctrine that God had given the Earth to everyone to enjoy in common). He argued that what a person mixed their labour with was by right theirs, their private property that could be exchanged for money. This assumes a society and an economic system made up of independent, self-employed artisans and farmers each producing a particular commodity for sale on a market, i.e. for exchange, via money, for the products of other independent producers. Such an economic system has never existed. It

certainly didn't in the England of Locke's day.

Such a system implies that there are no hired labourers, no wage workers; but there were. Far from saying that *they* were entitled to the product of *their* labour, Locke explicitly argued that employers were entitled to the product of the labour of their employees ('the turfs my servant has cut... become my property' (*Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ch. 5). This was a fatal flaw in his defence of private ownership, which became even more glaring as the capitalist mode of production for profit developed, expanding the number of wage workers (many from the ranks of the self-employed artisans and farmers), so that today the income of most people who work is derived from a wage paid by an employer.

At the same time, employers have ceased to be private individuals with servants and have become 'limited companies' as government-created fictitious individuals with employees. Today, we are living in a society made up of companies, large and small, employing wage workers to produce wealth and aiming to make a profit by selling what these employees produce. It makes nonsense of the theory Libertarians have taken over from Locke.

It is still the case today, as Libertarians argue, that as governments produce nothing, whatever they spend must first have been taken from those with wealth. But the property-owners of today are no longer those of Locke's theory. They are the fictitious individuals that companies are, whose wealth is derived from the labour of those they employ. Those whose actual labour has produced wealth have already been deprived of a part of it by their employer, as profit. In fact, as far as they are concerned, there is not much the government can take from them, as to recreate their ability to work they need to maintain a given standard of living. If taxes, whether direct or indirect, increase the cost of this, then this increase will tend to be passed on to their employers as higher money wages.

There is another implication of Locke's theory. In the changed conditions since his day, it makes a case for socialism. Given that production today is the collective effort of all those who work, if work is the entitlement to wealth, then the entire workforce is collectively entitled to what it produces. If that happened, there would be no question of money incomes. The socialist principle of 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs' comes into its own.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

Can you be a socialist and anti-Marxist?

IT IS SOMETIMES claimed that it is possible to be a socialist without being a Marxist; in an attempt to answer this we might begin by reversing the assertion and ask is it possible to be a Marxist without being a socialist? Any variety of 'ism' is capable of various interpretations but they all depend on at least one principle – that an individual identifies with others in terms of a perceived shared political perspective. This perspective is in turn dependent on the social, historical and moral cultural context. The individual is more or less theoretically free to identify with any of the pre-existing (and evolving) political perspectives that he or she is born into. The level of rational coherence will differ according to the needs of the individual and the ambitions of the political group that is embraced. As a member of this group the individual will then set about to convince others of the political efficacy of his cause so that the desired social change can be attempted. As with all such groups there will be an internal dynamic that causes it to change through time. For socialism one such occasion was the activity of one of its advocates: Karl Marx.

Although a member of the Communist League and then the International Workingmen's Association Marx became primarily a theoretician and journalist rather than a party activist in his political maturity. His main gifts to socialism were his theories of economics and historical development. These ideas embraced and then eclipsed in importance the moral outrage at the manifest injustices of capitalism that had characterised the motivation for socialism formally. Many have declared that his work transformed socialism from idealism into a form of science. Certainly a thorough understanding of surplus value and historical materialism would define a profound difference between Marxism and the Left who would still cling to moral outrage as their primary 'call to arms'. The political consequences of Marxism would also demand a thoroughly democratic mass movement which was anathema to both the elitist paternalism of socialist idealism and later to bureaucratic Bolshevism. Today we still have people who insist that they are socialists whilst declaring Marx's main theoretical discoveries invalid. Their reasoning for this usually consists of aligning Marxism with the failed Bolshevism of Soviet Russia - but given the complete lack of political and historical evidence for this conclusion it is

more likely that a mixture of ignorance of Marxism together with a bourgeois belief that others need to be led politically is what really underlies their objections.

Another objection to Marxism by the 'moderate social democrats' is its association with violent revolution as

labelled themselves as Marxist at that time without any specific reference to – or understanding of – Marx's work. These movements were, almost without exception, inspired by Lenin's Bolshevism that politically contradicted most of what Marx believed. Indeed the association of revolution with an armed insurrection derives entirely from the bourgeois revolutions of Holland, England, America and France where one minority class (the aristocracy) was replaced by another (the bourgeoisie). Ironically the downfall of the Russian state capitalist empire and its replacement by a conventional capitalist system more closely resembles the relatively peaceful revolution that Marxists anticipate when the majority loses faith in the political structure whatever form of capitalism it represents.

Another irony of Marxism is its representation in academia – not just in terms of politics but the study of history, culture, economics, philosophy, the performing arts etc., all include a Marxian school which is considered, even within bourgeois culture, as intellectually respectable. It seems that once let out of the bottle the Marxian genie cannot easily be put back in. Some of these intellectuals, although they make use of Marxian dialectical analysis, make no claims to be Marxist socialists. Intellectual elitism might well make this impossible for some of them but it does seem to prove that it is possible to be a Marxist within some disciplines and not be a socialist. So what of the claim that you can be a socialist without being a Marxist?

Some have said that to be a socialist without reference to Marx is like claiming to be a physicist without reference to quantum mechanics or a biologist without reference to Darwin's theory of evolution. Even outside of the 'hard sciences' no historian, philosopher, economist or anthropologist can escape a mention of Marx, even if it is just an attempt to refute his conclusions. How much more ridiculous is it for a 'socialist' to refute Marx without even attempting to understand his work. For those who claim to have understood his work and still reject the theories of surplus value and historical materialism whilst simultaneously claiming to be socialists we can only point to 100 years of failed leftist dictatorships or reform programmes to emphasise just how tragically mistaken they are.

WEZ



portrayed in the many images of beret-wearing and AK47-wielding leftist radicals all through the latter part of the twentieth century. Many 'liberation movements'

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com

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

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

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

NORTH

North East Regional branch. Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

Lancaster branch. Meets 2nd Sun (Jan 3rd Sun), 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.

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South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR. Contact: Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Rd, Poole, BH12 1BQ. 01202 257556 or 07929627689.

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Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.

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Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

South Wales Branch (Swansea)

Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping

Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff. Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. botterillr@gmail.com

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MATERIAL WORLD

OUT OF AFRICA

EMIGRATION FROM Africa has increased dramatically in the last three decades, going from just 1 percent in the 1990s to 31 percent by the 2000s. Migration by people has been a fact of life throughout their evolution. At this point in history we should look at the reasons for such numbers of migrants and the attempts to stop them by the destination countries. Tougher regulations, increasing the number of detention camps and prosecuting the people-traffickers are not solutions. Political 'courage' means having the will to dismantle the policies currently being applied against individuals desperate to re-locate. Socialism is a vision of a world shared among us all, a world of common ownership with free movement for all. The majority of Africans who emigrate remain within Africa, yet as former Liberian president and 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner Ellen Johnson Sirleaf notes, it is time to call for an end to the perception of migration as a 'crisis'. Migration policies are often based on misperceptions, she says. Africans make

up only 14 percent of global migration flows and the vast majority stay within the African continent. About 65 percent of the world's migrants come from Europe and Asia. African migrants are mostly young and educated and almost half are women. The decline in fertility rates combined with increased life expectancy in most parts of the world means not only a slowing of population growth but also an older population. Many in the developed world have difficulty in understanding that the current state of welfare in numerous countries is unsustainable. They require young productive workers. Between now and 2050, Africa will double its population. This will generate a much bigger flow of young Africans looking for opportunities in an ageing Europe and elsewhere. Africa is rich but its people have never enjoyed its wealth. Native and foreign exploiters have

subjected its people to abject poverty and endemic misery for generation upon generation. Unchecked exploitation of the continent's natural resources by global corporations has forced desperate choices upon the people. Your chance of having better economic prospects than your parents has been relatively low in Africa. If your father is a peasant farmer, and your grandfather was too, what are the chances that you'll make something different of your life? Because of human misery, because of despair, people have

Most of us are members of the world working class and have a common interest in working together to establish a world without frontiers in which the resources of the globe will have become the common heritage of all the people of the world and used for the benefit of all.

Innocent men women and children, making impossible choices with few alternatives, are not the villains in this ongoing human tragedy, they are the victims. Migration has been an essential mechanism for survival for as long as

people have lived. Today, more of the poor and disadvantaged can now see with their own eyes the wide disparity between their level of living and that of the more advantaged people in the world. They want to share in the wealth. To feed oneself, to provide for one's family, men and women will always seek other lands, and as long as the grass appears greener on the other side then men and women will endeavour to reach it. The fortunate few may strike it lucky. But for most it is only a temporary respite before the new conditions and the new exploitation begin to wear them

down once again. In capitalism there is no real escape. Only when it is possible to maintain an adequate living standard at home will our fellow-workers wish to stay put. That is something capitalism will never be able to offer many people throughout Africa.

ALJO



*Land of the Diaspora
by Francis Tondeur*

little option but to move even if conditions awaiting them are just as difficult as those they fled. African migration is predominately within the continent, particularly between neighbouring countries. In 2013, 65 percent of the 20 million sub-Saharan African migrants who had left their countries were still living in the region. However, Africa's loss of skilled and educated people remains a major negative consequence of migration. 'Brain drain is particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa,' says the World Economic Outlook (October 2016). While all refugees are migrants, not all migrants are refugees. Whether or not they meet the official definition of a refugee, many desperate people are escaping dire conditions that pose a threat to their survival and already we have a growing number of climate change 'refugees'.

Capitalism, For and Against

We look at some arguments that might be presented in defence of capitalism, and provide answers to them.

* Capitalism has had an overwhelmingly positive influence on the world. Three hundred years ago, before the development of capitalism, most people lived lives of unremitting toil, in near-destitution. They suffered poor health and had far shorter lifespans than today. They enjoyed none of the conveniences of modern times, hardly travelled to other places and had little by way of entertainment or relaxation. Capitalism is not perfect, but it has undoubtedly transformed people's lives massively for the better.

- There is no denying capitalism's impact on people and the world we inhabit, but this needs to be put into context. The development of capitalism involved wars and genocide, as colonialism led to the conquest of most of the world and rival states fought each other. Slavery and the slave trade caused untold misery, and were an integral part of the rise of capitalism. There has been huge environmental damage, and the conditions of famine and starvation that affect hundreds of millions now are human-made, not natural. Even in developed countries there is widespread poverty, as shown by the increase in food banks. Moreover, pre-capitalist societies were by no means as dreadful as claimed, with hunter-gatherer economies having been described as 'the original affluent society', since they could satisfy their material wants through a few hours' labour each day.

* Capitalism emphasises personal responsibility, and ensures that rewards depend on a person's own contributions. Lazy people who take no responsibility for their actions and lifestyle do not deserve to do well.

- Capitalism absolutely does not mean that people are rewarded on the basis of their own efforts. For one thing, capitalism stops many from working, as they cannot be employed in such a way as to create profits for an employer. For another, plenty of people work hard throughout their lives and end up with next to nothing. Lastly, those who really benefit, in terms of both wealth and power, do not do so on the basis of their own work but by exploiting others. Nobody becomes a billionaire by working ten thousand times harder than the average worker.

* Capitalism offers equality of opportunity. Everyone has the same chance to make a success of their life. It is not a rigid society ruled by an aristocratic elite that nobody else can join.

- There is simply no equality of opportunity under capitalism. Some people inherit fortunes and benefit from expensive educations, while others are born in poverty and suffer from their youngest days from ill health and dreadful living conditions, and racism and sexism also prevent many from realising their potential. A very few people start out poor and become extremely rich, but that does not alter the fact that capitalism is in no way a 'level playing field', and that it necessarily involves massive inequalities of outcome.

* All attempts to replace capitalism with an alternative have ended in disaster. Look at Russia after 1917 and China after 1949: vicious dictatorships with reigns of terror that led to millions of deaths.

- Despite the rhetoric surrounding them, these were not in fact alternatives to capitalism at all. In Russia and China, far more people were forced to become wage workers, and the system of commodities, where goods and services are produced for sale, was greatly expanded. The state owned the main means of production (land, factories, offices, etc) and the minority who controlled the state effectively became the capitalist class. This was a system of state capitalism, which differed in some ways from private capitalism, but still retained the main features of all varieties of capitalism.

* Some impractical dreamers do talk about a world without capitalism and the wages system, where there would supposedly be free access to what has been produced. But this would never function in the way envisaged, as most people would simply not perform any work and would just leave that to a few keen types, while doing nothing themselves.

- Even under capitalism, there are many many examples of people doing voluntary work, from charities and sports clubs to lifeboats and mountain rescue. They perform this work because they know it is useful and for the companionship it offers. Moreover, it has been shown that volunteering is good for volunteers, in terms of their health and their social contacts. In a society without wages and employment, steps would be taken to make work as enjoyable and rewarding as possible, including shorter working hours.

* In any case, there is simply no prospect of a system like that ever coming into existence. While they grumble and want small changes here and there, the vast majority of people are – quite rightly – content with capitalism and do not wish to see it replaced.

- But ideas do change over time. No one believes any longer in the divine right of kings; nobody in a developed capitalist country nowadays would argue that women should not have the vote; cremation was once looked on as completely unacceptable; ideas relating to gay and lesbian relationships have changed enormously over the last half-century or so; racist views, while still influential, are far less prevalent than they were a couple of generations ago; religion no longer plays the central role in almost everyone's life that it once did; awareness of environmental issues has increased enormously in recent years. Ideas and opinions do alter, if not always as quickly as some of us would like. Currently most people are indeed content with capitalism, but people's ideas are not set in stone, and the examples above and the shift away from allegiance to traditional parties show that they can certainly change.

PAUL BENNETT



SEEING VISIONS

What comes to mind when you think of the word 'revolution'? A spinning vinyl disc, a marketing cliché, heroic Bolsheviks clambering over iron railings, or queues of innocents being lined up for the firing squad?

The reason why more people don't consider revolution as a serious political option is because their thoughts are instantly derailed by the mental pictures that this conjures up. Either revolution is meaningless because everything nowadays is a 'revolution' of some sort or other, or it is a blood-soaked Armageddon where nobody wants to go, no matter how desperate things get.

Arguably the lack of a mainstreamed, coherent vision of revolution, or of the society made possible by it, is what holds people back more than anything else. People already know that capitalism is a miserable system that's rigged by and for the rich, and they don't need to be told over and over again. But who's offering a clear, understandable alternative, with a roadmap for how to get there?

The Socialist Party has, over the years, attempted to fill in this blank, however we've always been reluctant to speculate too wildly, for several reasons. First, technology changes almost by the day, and what's possible changes along with it. If we'd cared to describe our vision of a future socialist society, when we started out back in 1904, we would no doubt have been thrilling at talk of gas lamps in every street and a telephone in every town hall. Second, taste is a very time and culture-specific thing. What appeals to you might be off-putting to someone else, and there's no point deterring people from building a free society simply because of idle speculation about what some of the furniture might look like. Third, and most importantly, it's not up to us anyway, it's up to the people who will establish socialism, which is you and people like you. If you want to live in bucolic forested idylls, as William Morris supposed back in the industrial 1890s, then doubtless you'll make the arrangements. If you hanker for futuristic circular cities and gadgets galore, as Jacques Fresco and Zeitgeist imagined ten or so years back, then you'll do what's necessary to make it so. Or perhaps you'll do both.

Not everyone shares our reservations about building castles in the air. In this issue we consider two other images or 'models' of non-market socialism, which come at the subject from very different perspectives. First there is the notion of fully automated luxury communism (FALC) devised by Aaron Bastani and James Butler of the alternative news outlet Novara Media. The idea of this is simple: machines are going to do all the work so we can just kick back and relax – once we've relieved the capitalist class of global control, that is.

Without rehearsing any of the criticisms that follow, or rehashing earlier ones (see *Pathfinders*, May 2015), it's worth asking 'is this the right strategic vision to put to workers'? FALC is a very clever approach in that it challenges head-on the idea of inevitable scarcity which is drilled into us today as part of capitalism's manufactured artificial reality, and thus informs people's too-ready assumptions about revolution as a time of misery, shortages, hard work and self-denial. Moreover it imparts an appealing tongue-in-cheek humour to a subject more often plastered with a po-faced puritan frown. It feels young, and fresh, and new, and now, in a way no Marxist tract ever seems to. Trouble is, it might be going too far to the other extreme and risk looking like a Pollyanna paradise that's got drunk on its own optimism. Workers might be seduced by a vision of luxury communism that makes it all sound easy and fun, but on the other hand, they may recall that if a thing sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Are they going to gamble everything on an idea of revolution that doesn't seem

to have considered all the externalities?

Externalities are also a problem in the second view, the model of 'Walmart-socialism'. This is the idea that if a huge global company with hundreds of thousands of staff can operate perfectly well without its own internal market, then so could the entire planet, and that large global companies are in fact leading the way towards this new social reality. Leaving aside the whole question of central planning which we look at elsewhere, one or two obvious differences between a capitalist megacorp and socialist society present themselves. In the first place capitalist companies are not democratic but autocratic, even if some limited decision-making is distributed through the system. 'Citizens' (ie workers) are not free *not* to do as they're told, or free to do something else, or free to change their mind or walk off the job. No matter how managers like to pretend otherwise, a coercive element runs through capitalist companies like Brighton through a stick of rock. This is in stark contrast to socialist society which is predicated on the idea of nobody being anybody's boss. Secondly, companies like Walmart are not obliged to factor in their wider impact on society, people, or the environment, when devising their future growth strategies. The only thing that really counts in a capitalist business is money, and how much they are going to make over their overheads. What this means is that people, society and the environment are inevitably pushed down the list of priorities, and they suffer accordingly. That's why we have global warming, and the 'bottom billion', and famines and wars. In this sense using a capitalist enterprise as a model of a kind of proto-socialism seems more than bizarre, it's a travesty.

All in all though, it's good that people are discussing visions of the future, even if they can't always agree on the details. Despite the risks inherent in such speculations, workers arguably have to see the goal before they can kick the ball in that direction. Hopefully this discussion will help to focus minds, without moving the goalposts too often.

PJS



Monument in Memory of those Murdered during the Paris Commune, Belleville Cemetery, Paris

THE CONQUEST OF SCARCITY

Aaron Bastani, co-founder and senior editor at the alternative media organisation Novara Media, argues in his book *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (published by Verso this month) that current technological advances are on the way towards overcoming scarcity and making 'luxury communism' – a society of abundance for all – possible for the first time. What Marx foresaw as the hypothetical result of further development of the productive forces is now rapidly turning into reality. On this basic point the author is in full agreement with the World Socialist Movement, although there is scope for debate over exactly when a society of abundance became or will become possible.

In Section I of the book Bastani provides an overview of social development, with an emphasis on three great turning points or 'disruptions' – the first associated with the birth of agriculture, the second with the emergence of machine industry, and the third with the new information-based technologies whose inherent tendency (because 'information wants to be free') is to give rise to 'fully automated luxury communism', or FALC.

Section II is by far the best argued and most valuable part of the book. Its five chapters are devoted to each of the spheres of technology that are playing major roles in the 'third disruption':

automation – not only of manual labor but also of many intellectual activities;

renewable energy (mainly solar);

'mining the sky' – that is, extracting resources from heavenly bodies (initially, the moon and near-earth asteroids);

genetic engineering to 'edit' disease-related segments out of the human genome;

genetic engineering of organic tissues to brew 'food without animals' (substitutes for meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, etc).

Developments in these spheres are set to create 'extreme supply' and thereby banish scarcity in labour, energy, resources, healthcare and nutrition, respectively. At the same time, they point the way towards improving the environment, mitigating global warming, coping with demographic trends like an ageing population and ending cruelty to animals.

More attention might have been given to the potential risks as well as benefits of the new technologies. One wonders about plans to pull a passing mineral-rich asteroid into earth orbit for ease of access, and whether a miscalculation might send it hurtling down and crashing into the Earth. One wonders about proposals to remove disease-related segments from the human genome, and whether the 'editors' might inadvertently remove genetic material that performs essential functions for the organism.

Bastani acknowledges that emergence of the technological preconditions for communism will not be enough in itself to bring the new society into existence. The political preconditions are just as essential. In the absence of a vast popular movement for communism, some at least of the new technologies are indeed likely to widen social inequalities. For

instance, automation could well generate mass unemployment on a scale hitherto unknown, while benefits to health and longevity from human genetic engineering will accrue mostly to the wealthy.

Thus Section III of the book focuses on how to build up a popular movement for FALC. Like most left-wing writers, the author aims to achieve revolutionary change by promoting reforms rather than by directly spreading revolutionary ideas, his unspoken expectation being that ordinary people will not be receptive to such ideas. However, some of his reform proposals do have the merit of prefiguring the new society. In particular, he is critical of the demand for a Universal Basic Income, preferring to campaign instead for the expansion of Universal Basic Services – that is, freely available public services like healthcare, transport, education and information.

Especially from the point of view of readers in other countries, the singular focus on British politics is unfortunate. It is unclear whether he fully appreciates the need to organise for communism at the global level – a need dictated by the global nature of capitalism itself.

Perhaps the author's concept of communism is a little simplistic. The new society will not necessarily be *fully* automated. Even if near-complete automation is technically possible, people may well prefer not to implement it. They may choose to automate only work that is boring and unpleasant while preserving human activities that are – or can be made to be – interesting and satisfying. Partial automation (PALC not FALC) may be accompanied by a revival of handicrafts, assisted as convenient by high-tech gadgets.

There are also reasons to be less sanguine than Bastani concerning the impact of climate chaos and the prospects for rapidly restoring the planet's ecosphere. No doubt the falling price of solar energy facilitates the transition away from fossil fuels, but the oil, gas and coal bosses are still able to hold back this process by various means, such as using their political clout to block or eliminate state subsidies for renewables while maximising state subsidies for fossil fuel companies. And how much more damage will terrestrial mining do to our environment by the time mining is moved off-planet? Even when we do achieve communism the 'paradise' promised in the title of Section III may not be within reach any time soon.

STEFAN



CAN WALMART TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT SOCIALISM?

Internationally, there is a resurgence in discussing socialism, not just in the American sense of faintly looking at a welfare state, but credibly and seriously taking on the idea of a co-operative democratic abolition of market allocation of goods and resources. Books like *Four futures: life after capitalism* by Peter Frase have already lead the way, including among the options a world of abundance without money (although reading the text, it seems the author's preferred or most likely future was some sort of regulated market in a post-ecological-collapse world). That book sprang from *Jacobin* magazine, and it seems that other contributors to that magazine are beginning to produce other useful examinations of the way towards a market-free world.

The latest example is Philips and Rozworski's *The People's Republic of Walmart: how late-stage capitalism gives way to early-stage fully automated luxury communism*. This book puts forward the simple case that firms like Walmart are in effect massive planned economies, close to the size and scale of the Soviet Union in terms of the number of products and processes they have to employ to run their enterprise. They also note how 3rd party firms that trade with them are effectively locked into their productive ecosystem.

Much of this is achieved algorithmically, with resources being poured into tracking stock through the system, knowing where it is at all times, and using vast storage capacity. The algorithms calculate what resources are available nearest to the point at which they are required, and how to get them there quickly. The authors give the counter example of Sears, which imploded after implementing an internal market and competition within its firm (under libertarian ideological commitment from its directors).

Of course, Walmart and Amazon are planning to exploit, and get the most out of, their workers and advantages over commercial rivals. It is not so much an example to be emulated, but a living demonstration that wide-scale economic allocation via planned structures works. Further evidence is found in a nuanced description of the history of the NHS, noting how it has gone from an ad hoc replication of existing structures, without conscious planning to serve community needs, to being carved up by an internal market. The authors note that it has always existed as a hybrid between the firms of GPs and the hospitals and the pharmaceutical industry, and that attempts to implement society-wide input and control were stymied at Westminster.

Democracy is seen as an inherent good and a necessity for wide-scale planning in an economy, if it is to serve people's needs. Phillips and Rozworski note that a significant part of the failure of the Soviet Union's planned economy was because of dictatorial intervention preventing the free flow of information between productive units, and removing their capacity to respond. The other living example they cite is Project Cybersyne in Chile.

British cyberneticist Stafford Beer was called in to help the Allende government implement a planned economy. Given the state of the country at the time, he had to improvise a system of telex and phone lines. His systems were credited with enabling the government to defeat a crippling lorry drivers' strike, by routing key resources around disruptions and allocating available lorries. The principles behind Beer's cybernetics were thus not all about enslaving people to the machine, but allowing distributed horizontal decision-making between relatively autonomous units with oversight and

regulation to achieve common ends.

If all of this sounds remarkably familiar, it is because this is what we have been saying in our slightly less fashionable way since we were formed. Indeed, our pamphlet *Socialism as a Practical Alternative*, largely written by the late Pieter Lawrence, based a description of socialism on using the regulated stock control models already developed by the likes of Walmart, coupled with information clearing houses to allow communities and groups to work to enable production for needs.

It's clear, though, that while technology has advanced, along with the experience of wide-scale economic organisation, this is not a prerequisite for socialism. Pencil and paper-based systems could have handled the work (and probably still could), but the fact that machines and computers allow us to do it faster, and are increasingly presenting the possibility of co-ordinated democratic production in people's minds, is making the topic more popular.

Philips and Rozworski cite the work of Scottish academic Paul Cockshott with his demonstration that an economy-wide plan is computable (especially if we exclude millions of null combinations of goods, arguably Walmart does not compute all the possible combinations of goods, but works with what it has and approximates efficient allocation-adjusting over time). Cockshott is not alone in academia, and he and collaborators have made impressive inroads into the possibilities of computational planning through vertical integration of sub-systems. It would be well to think what would be the result of the combined efforts of the best and brightest computational minds being directed towards co-operative economics and the satisfaction of needs, rather than algorithmic stock trading.

We have discussed in these pages before the types of innovations in thought and process that will enable us to make socialism work on a worldwide scale: Leonid Kantorovich's linear programming; Gale and Shaply's stable matching algorithm; Brams and Taylor's envy-free cake-cutting algorithm, etc. The intellectual progress for the machinery of co-ordinating activity is improving, even if the political co-ordination to pick it up and use it is not yet as developed. It is good that these obscure and complex lines of enquiry are beginning to get serious popular attention.

Some commentators have begun to compare capitalism (and/or corporations) to a vast out-of-control Artificial Intelligence, programmed to maximise profit. This is potentially a powerful way of depicting capitalism: but the risk is, in coming up with algorithms and procedures to create a planned economy, that we would end up replacing capitalism with simply a rival AI, rather than returning to a human-centred system.

Demonstrating that we can plan and rationalise resources in the way that capitalism can and does is not a clincher for socialism: it could be argued that in an ends-based economy, using labour inefficiently could well become a goal (as William Morris pictured in his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*). The most powerful message we can send is that there is not one way to run an economy, and the only real limit is the power of our imaginations.

The tag-line of 'fully automated luxury communism' that is gaining some popularity may help raise the profile of consciously planning the economy co-operatively.

PIK SMEET

When Profit Is All

Urban-Rural Imbalance?

Current global facts and figures on the urban-rural divide reveal disturbing numbers of people in both urban and rural locations living in desperate situations. The capitalist agenda is to profit from whatever scheme is dreamed up and implemented without regard for the externalities which, in this case, are people. There are plans being implemented around the world to remove millions of individuals from millions of acres of productive farm land, to empty the land of people in favour of huge agribusiness projects which can reap significant profits for corporations from mono-crops using vastly reduced labour numbers and, therefore, costs.

The typical plan is to move those uprooted into, or more often to the edge of, ever-expanding towns and cities as cheap labour. The plan may work well for the owners, the companies and their shareholders, but what of the disenfranchised, the millions uprooted and forced into unknown environments where they have no useful skills, how well does it work for them? They are being forced there ostensibly to work in construction, manufacturing and the service sector but it has become obvious that there is a huge insufficiency of employment available for the massive numbers and consequently millions of those displaced live in abject poverty.

This is exactly what the World Bank had directed India to do in 1996. It wanted India to move 400 million people from rural to urban areas by 2015. These are 'agricultural refugees' swarming into the cities looking for menial jobs. It is primarily through this decision that over the years, in addition to more or less static farm incomes, public sector investments in agriculture were also kept low, hovering between 0.3 to 0.5 percent of GDP during the period 2011 to 2017. Total investments, both public and private, have also been declining steadily – from 3.1 percent of GDP in 2011-12 to 2.2 percent in 2016-17. Compare this with the tax concessions being given to industry, which are in the region of 5 percent of GDP. Agriculture, which employs 50 percent of the country's population, has simply been starved of public sector investments in order to achieve the desired results.

The Indian Congress has now admitted that direct income support is urgently required to lift the poorest of the poor from abject poverty, these poorest being a large proportion of small and marginal farmers. The Economic Survey 2016 revealed that the average income of farming families in 17 states of India, approximately half the country, is about £220 per annum, less than £20 per month (for perspective this is similar to the amount granted to defence service employees and also to officers of the Supreme Court as their laundry allowance). For some international comparison, average domestic support per farmer, country by country: US \$60,586, Canada \$16,562, Japan \$10,149, EU \$6,762, China \$863, Brazil \$345, India \$227.

With regard to India as one example, a quote from a British colonial administrator, Lord Metcalfe, in 1830, is illustrative: 'Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down but the village community remains the same. It is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence'. His idea was that to control India the British would need to undermine this independence of the rural majority – which they did. And following independence India's subsequent leaders continued on this path of control and subservience through several generations to the present. The current Prime Minister Modi has announced that India is one of the most 'business friendly' countries in the world (India is now in compliance with World Bank directives

on 'Ease of Doing Business' and 'Enabling the Business of Agriculture'). When we see terms like these we are looking at capitalist-framed initiatives and minimal research shows that both of these directives promote environment-destroying policies, have little regard for local populations, and are based on global free market principles.

Many environmentalists from around the world will be aware of the horrifying numbers of farmers' deaths in India from suicide, something in the region of 400,000 over the recent 20 years – 20,000 every year. The most significant reason being overwhelming debt. And, in fact, the government declined to publish the number of deaths for the last two years.

In addition to the numbers of farmers being displaced, in April of this year international environmental organisations appealed to India's Supreme Court and UN organisations to prevent forced evictions of millions of Indian's forest dwellers from their traditional, ancestral lands.

Health or Wealth?

Farming worldwide has, especially in the last four decades, become more and more of a burden for individual farmers around the globe, who are always under pressure for reasons out of their control. Studies on the harm done to the environment and the contamination of water, earth and consequently food – are these to be ignored too because profit comes first?

As new studies continue to point to a direct link between the widely-used glyphosate herbicide and various forms of cancer, the agribusiness lobby fights relentlessly to ignore or discredit evidence of damage to humans and other entities. Bayer AG, which now owns Monsanto, is currently facing something in the order of 11,000 cases in US courts brought by individuals claiming serious health effects from exposure to the chemical glyphosate found in the herbicide Roundup. Several recent cases have found in favour of the plaintiffs who have been awarded millions and even billions of dollars in compensation.

"The jury saw for themselves internal company documents demonstrating that, from day one, Monsanto has never had any interest in finding out whether Roundup is safe," an attorney for the couple, R. Brent Wisner, said in a statement sent to CBS News. "Instead of investing in sound science, they invested millions in attacking science that threatened their business agenda." Source: CBS News

In a long-term animal study several years ago by a French team headed by Eric Seralini it was demonstrated that even ultra-low levels of glyphosate herbicides cause non-alcoholic liver disease. The levels rats were exposed to, per kg of body weight, were far lower than what is allowed in the US food supply. According to the Mayo Clinic currently, after four decades or more of pervasive use of glyphosate, 100 million – one in three Americans – now have liver disease. These diagnoses are in some individuals as young as 8 years old. ¹

While most attention is understandably drawn to the human effects of exposure to glyphosate, the most widely-used agricultural chemical in the world today, independent scientists are beginning to look at another alarming impact – that of its effect on essential soil nutrients. In a study of the health of soils in the EU, the online journal Politico.eu found that the effects of spraying glyphosate on the major crops in European agriculture is having disastrous consequences on soil health.

Scientists at Austria's University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna showed that casting activity of earthworms had nearly disappeared from the surface

of farmland within three weeks of glyphosate application. Casting, being the process of worms pushing fertile soils to the surface as they burrow, is vital for healthy soil and plant nutrition. A study at Holland's Wageningen University of topsoil samples from more than 300 soil sites across the EU found that 83 percent of the soils contained one or more pesticide residues. Evidence of soil experts is increasingly revealing clear links between the use of pesticides such as glyphosate and dramatic drops in soil fertility and the collapse of microbe systems essential to healthy soil. Worms are one of the most essential. It's well-established that earthworms play a vital role in healthy soil nutrients. Soils lacking these are soils that deprive us of the essentials we need for healthy diets. This is a pandemic problem of soil depletion emerging globally over the past four decades, notably the same time frame that use of pesticides and herbicides has exploded worldwide. Earthworms are beneficial as they enhance soil nutrient cycling and enhance other beneficial soil microorganisms, and the concentration of large quantities of nutrients easily assimilated by plants. In addition to its effects on earthworms it has also been established that glyphosate can kill specific fungi and bacteria that plants need to suck up nutrients.

While average yields of major grains such as rice, wheat and maize have more than doubled since 1960, the use of glyphosate-based herbicides has risen 15-20 fold. Glyphosate is the base chemical component for some 750 different brands of herbicide worldwide in addition to Monsanto-Bayer's Roundup. Glyphosate residues have been found in tap water, orange juice, children's urine, breast milk, snacks, beer, wine, cereals, eggs, oatmeal, wheat products, and most conventional foods tested. Since the Monsanto Roundup patent expired it is clear that regulatory bodies in the US, EU and China (which now produces more glyphosate than Monsanto) among others, are ignoring the various dangers which have been proved.

Capitalism's Miseries

In January the Oakland Institute sounded the alarm on the latest attack by the World Bank on poor and indigenous people around the world. The World Bank's Scheme to Privatize the Commons details how the Bank's prescribed reforms, via a new land indicator in the Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) project, promotes large-scale land acquisitions and the expansion of agribusinesses in the developing world. This new indicator is now a key element of the larger EBA project, which dictates pro-business reforms that governments should conduct in the agricultural sector. Initiated as a pilot in 38 countries in 2017, the land indicator is expected to be expanded to 80 countries in 2019. The project is funded by the US and UK governments and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The EBA's main recommendations to governments include formalising private property rights, easing the sale and lease of land for commercial use, systematising the sale of public land by auction to the highest bidder, and improving procedures for expropriation. Countries are scored on how well they implement the Bank's policy advice. The scores then help determine the volume of aid money and foreign investment they receive.

Amidst flaws detailed in the report is the Bank's prescription to developing countries' governments, particularly in Africa, to transfer public lands with 'potential economic value' to private, commercial use, so that the land can be put to its supposed 'best use'. Claiming that low-income countries do not manage public land in an effective manner, the Bank pushes for the privatization of public land as the way forward. This ignores the fact that millions of rural poor

live and work on these lands, which are essential for their livelihoods while representing ancestral assets with deep social and cultural significance. It also ignores the basic fact that these small farmers have more than fulfilled the needs of the population for generations and it is the principles of capitalism that is being upset by them.

French think tank Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) has shown that agro-ecological farming alone has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Europe by 47 per cent and thereby keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees. Another important factor revealed shows that a transition from intensive farming to agro-ecological farming will bring down pesticides consumption by 380,000 tonnes per year in Europe alone. What could that figure be globally?

Most climate mitigation studies point to more crop intensification which means a hyper-intensive farming system leading to more toxic soils, more water mining resulting in more empty aquifers, and more contamination of the food chain. This methodology was behind the launch of the 'New Vision for Agriculture' at the World Economic Forum 2009 aiming at increasing food production by 20 percent, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, and reducing rural poverty by 20 percent every decade. The list of companies ready to initiate the 'New Vision for Agriculture' clearly shows that this 'new vision' is simply another version of the 'old vision' - capitalist necessity for profit. Included in the list are Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), BASF, Bunge Limited, Cargill, Coca-Cola, DuPont, General Mills, Kraft Foods, Metro AG, Monsanto, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Syngenta, Unilever, Wal-Mart, and Yara International.



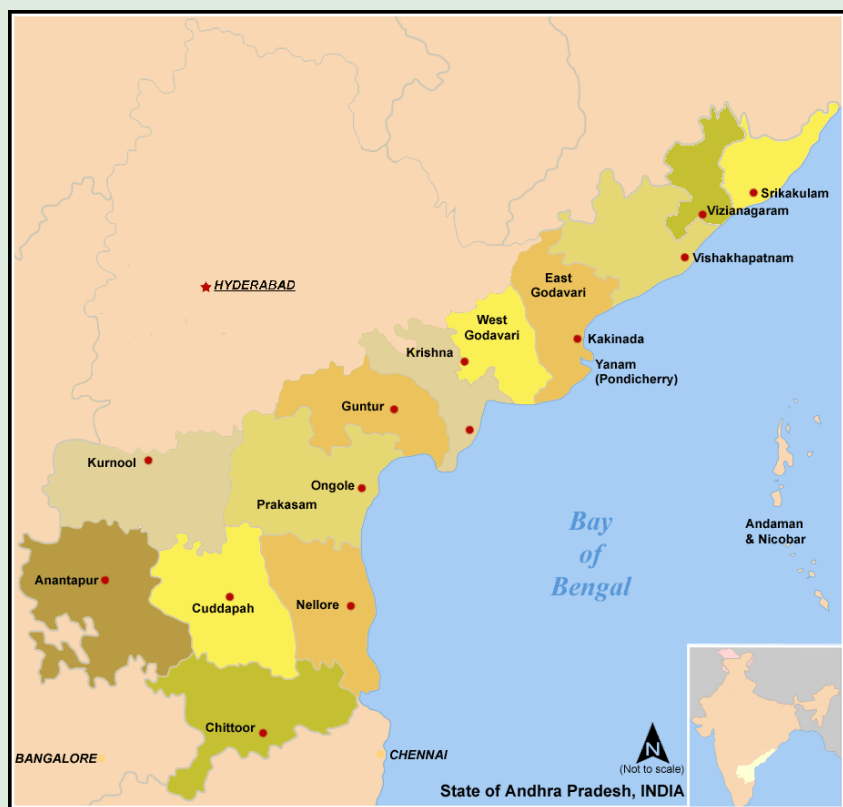
Chemical or Ecological?

The UN-sponsored TEEB initiative – The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity – for agriculture and food, has in its latest study warned of a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions emanating from farming practices, from cutting down forests to make land available for cultivation to food waste dumped in landfills, accounting for between 47 to 51 percent of global gas emissions. Contrary to the 'New Vision for Agriculture' the IDDRI study mentioned above addresses these problems with the aim of eliminating them.

Returning to India new studies investigating the relationship between intensive agriculture and organic farming with regard to climate change and crop yield have revealed some interesting truths, contrary to many earlier claims by transnational corporations. A major initiative was launched when village elders in Punnukula village in Khamam district of Andhra Pradesh came together more than 15 years ago to stop the use of chemical pesticides. This local initiative

led to the introduction of Non-Pesticides Management (NPM) under the Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture

(CMSA) expanding to 3.6 million acres without the use of pesticides.



Following local enthusiasm and acceptance by the state, Andhra Pradesh launched Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) aiming to bring non-chemical agriculture to its nearly 6 million farmers by the end of the year 2024. Just one year after the introduction of Zero Budget Natural Farming a study by Azim Premji University showed that crop yields in fact had gone up from 11 to 79 percent – 11 percent in rice and the highest, 79 percent, in aubergine.

The challenges both facing and threatening the vast majority of the global population stem from the totally encompassing capitalist system. The questions to be asked are crucial for the well-being of the planet, from plankton to human. How shall we approach the challenges of global warming? Should populations be forced to move from their homes? Can we accept being poisoned by what we eat and drink? These and other issues all require answers. We have a single answer to them all – the solution is socialism.

JANET SURMAN

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Jacob Rees-Mogg: Why do you call Jeremy Corbyn a Marxist?



Jacob Rees-Mogg has called Jeremy Corbyn a 'Marxist' on more than one occasion. Is this delusion or cynicism? This 'known Marxist' is a politician who campaigned to remain in a capitalist trade bloc, their current political stance to nit-pick over the EU Customs Union.

The election of a 'left-wing' candidate as Party Leader has laid Labour bare as equal managers of capitalism in Britain. The fundamental belief held within the Labour Party is that what is good for business is good for workers.

It is the absence of Marxist economic theory and the approach associated with this which renders Corbyn and his followers intrinsically incapable of challenging capitalist and reformist politicians in the Labour Party. By the same logic, it has also left Corbyn's Labour unable to differentiate their position from the classic arguments for nationalisation and increased funding for the NHS.

This should not come as a surprise. Corbyn and his kind have consistently been far more interested in foreign policy debates than in Marxist political economy. For as long as state capitalist regimes and religious conflicts remain a priority to the British left, false titles such as Marxist will remain easily attributable to these politicians. This of course also applies to minor 'Socialist' parties who seek to influence Labour from the outside, unwilling to even stand candidates against a party which wouldn't have them as members.

Instead of debating foreign policy, the welfare state and customs unions, a 'known' Marxist would be putting forward a class-based approach to contemporary capitalism. Known Marxists would argue that the exploitation of human labour is inherent in the capitalist system and that the interests of capital and labour are fundamentally opposed. In short, a known Marxist would argue for a new, socialist system of society. They would not argue for reforms to capitalism or state control of a capitalist economy.

The likes of Jacob Rees-Mogg will always scaremonger with regards to social democracy, reformism and state capitalism. Despite rhetoric of a return to a fabled decent society of years gone by, their intention by this is to drum up contemporary support for further liberalised capitalism.

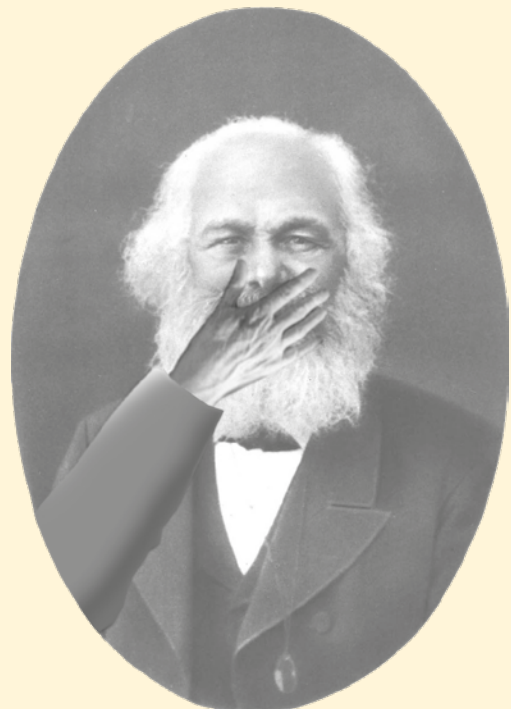
Regardless of their ideological posturing, many capitalist politicians appear well aware of the polarised interests of capital and labour and the exclusive role that the exploitation of the working class plays in generating profits. Evidently, the

same cannot be said of the Labour Party. This can come as no surprise, as reformism is a capitalist ideology. Whether this is conscious, or derives from ignorance, is of course a question similar to this article's premise.

Rhetoric continues to hide the real nature of the capitalist political debate. What level of working class compensation best facilitates the reproduction of the capitalist system? Should capitalists pursue profits without state interference or should the state apply restraint to protect capitalism's interests as a whole? Social democracy or conservatism? Free markets or protectionism?

The only way out of these reformist binaries is socialism. Socialism is a world without wages, money and profit; in short, it is a world without economic exploitation which by nature cannot exist under the current system. In this respect it is nonsensical to call Corbyn a socialist, and it is even more absurd to call him a Marxist. However, socialists should be aware of the right-wing cynicism behind these absurd statements.

JAMES CLARK



WE WANT THE BAKERY

Our approach to the European elections was the same as our approach to national elections, which is that we would take our seats if elected, but we would use it as a platform or tribune to advocate solely for socialism.

The limited freedom of movement that the EU has afforded some workers is one of the few benefits of EU membership for ordinary people; but let's also remember that the EU is preventing freedom of movement elsewhere, effectively drowning refugees in the Mediterranean. The question of who 'we' (i.e. capitalists) will find to exploit if EU workers are not here is not our concern as socialists representing the working class. We want a world without *any* exploitation.

What exists today is a limited political democracy (although elections are massively subverted by donations and vested interests). But there's no economic democracy: we must all work for an employer who will exploit us, or



we will starve. And no democracy in distribution – 8 men have as much wealth as half the world's population. So we need a truly democratic society where ordinary people control production and distribution. We are a party with a fully democratic structure that reflects the kind of society we want – no leader, run by members, no personality cult.

We have no intention of trying to reform capitalism, an approach that cannot work.

We don't advocate a mere 'reorganisation

of poverty'. We live right now in a society of potential abundance. Therefore we don't need a system of rationing, which is all that a money system is. We need to unlock the wealth that is being kept from us and use it to transform society. *We don't want crumbs, we want the bakery.*



Cash mountains

On the basis of figures released by the Office for National Statistics, the *Times* (9 April) reported:

'Private companies, excluding financial institutions, have tucked away £173 billion since March 2016, the last full quarter before the referendum, and are sitting on £747 billion of cash, a level not seen before. At 35.3 percent of GDP, the size of their pile of cash as a proportion of national output is at a historic high (...) In 2017, before the financial crisis, cash balances as a share of GDP were only 25 percent. In 2000 they had been 20 percent. They started to climb in 2012.'

This brings out how capitalist firms operate. A firm is an independent unit of capital seeking, through the actions of its top managers, to expand itself by making a profit and re-investing this in more productive capacity and production.

Cash mountains arise when the money profit acquired from selling the product is not immediately re-invested. This happens when the market for the product becomes saturated through overproduction, so that it is no longer profitable to produce it. In the particular case highlighted by the ONS figures, however, the reason seems to have been different.

Since the referendum, which went the wrong way as far as most of them are concerned, firms have been waiting to see what the post-Brexit profit-making conditions are likely to be. But the Brexit negotiations have dragged on and on. Profits are still being made from maintaining production at current levels but, in view of the uncertainty, they are not being re-invested in expanding production. Firms seem to have been marking time and as a result have accumulated profits as cash.

The *Times* described this as 'cash hoarding' but this is not an entirely accurate description. It is not as if the cash is being stored in some safe. It is used to bring in an income as interest through buying stocks and shares and

government bills and bonds, in effect by being lent.

Some critics of the present economic system describe it as a 'debt-based economy'. This suggests that capitalism is driven by the pursuit of interest. Some have even absurdly suggested that capitalism has been kept going by loans to workers to buy things. Actually, capitalism is based on the pursuit of profits, of which interest is a sub-division. Some firms borrow money to invest in production for profit and, when they make a profit, share a part of this with the banks or other financial institutions that put up the money. Those who talk of a 'debt-based economy' tend to think that banks create the money they lend by a few keyboard strokes. In fact they can only lend what they have. The present 'cash mountain' is a reminder of where some of the what-banks-lend comes from – those who have lent them money either directly, or indirectly via the money market, including from firms that for one reason or another have built up cash mountains from uninvested profit.

PROPER GANDER WITH KID GLOVES

FOR CHILDREN, all being well, the world is there to be explored with open-minded enthusiasm. By the time we reach adulthood, much of life has sadly lost its sheen and turned into a series of routines and/or things to be stressed out by. Growing up means learning what society's expectations are, and how to try and deal with them. As shown by the ITV documentary series *Planet Child*, an important time is between the ages of four and seven, when children are finding their own personalities and boundaries. In the programme, twin doctors Chris and Xand van Tulleken look into what attitudes and values children have, and what they are capable of doing without their parents around. Through experiments disguised as fun activities, it's revealed how youngsters react and behave in various situations. The kids taking part are a lively, happy bunch from different families around the UK.

Planet Child's three episodes each focus on children's autonomy, moral sense and gender identities. In the first episode, how independent the children are is gauged by the van Tullekens asking them to navigate across a city park, buy a souvenir and get a bus to the London Eye all by themselves (apart from the undercover chaperones, cameras, in-on-it shopkeepers and fake bus). All the groups make it to their destination ok, but the footage of them running around London without adults looks strange and even a bit worrying. These days, we're not used to seeing children out alone as much as before. In Britain, the area in which kids roam away from home has shrunk 90 percent on average compared with the late 1960s, and 97 percent of primary-school-aged children are taken to school, a figure which has increased over recent decades. People now have a heightened awareness of risks, whether from paedophiles or car accidents, and while common sense should be used, this reflects a more wary, paranoid society.

In the second episode, the children's sense of 'right' and 'wrong' is investigated. The groups are left alone in a shop with cameras hidden among its tempting rows of jelly sweets and plates of chocolate-dipped marshmallows. 'Don't let anyone touch or eat my sweets' says the show's

pretend shopkeeper as she leaves. The four- and five-year olds last a lengthy twenty minutes before they start guzzling like the proverbial kids in a sweet shop. The six- and seven-year olds stick it out for longer, until an in-on-it adult comes in and helps himself, giving them an excuse to start tucking in. Later, the younger children are quick to own up, probably because they haven't thought enough about the possibility of reprimands, whereas the older group come up with an elaborate fib that a robber 'wearing a black woolly hat with no bobble on' made them eat the chocolate. The question of



whether grown-ups would abstain for as long in the same test was left unanswered. The issue here isn't so much about the requirement to pay for sweets (or anything) before having them, it's more about doing what you're told. In many circumstances, there's a sound reason for kids to do what we tell them, but they like to push boundaries, and some are worth pushing.

The last episode looks at children's awareness of gender roles. Research affirms that boys prefer to play with toy fire trucks and girls prefer to play with

dolls, and that blue is a 'boys' colour' and pink is 'for girls'. But gender roles are now less rigid than these stereotypes suggest. Studies from around the turn of the millennium found that boys defined themselves according to actions and abilities while girls defined themselves more according to close relationships and appearance. When the kids taking part in the programme talk about themselves, the girls speak more about what they do and want to be than their earlier counterparts might have done. There are still differences in expectations, including over intellect. Asked to draw a picture

of a clever doctor, nearly all the children draw a man. There's a tendency for boys to overestimate their abilities and for girls to underestimate theirs, reminding us that inequalities persist from a young age.

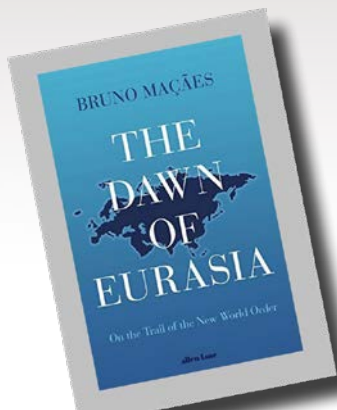
Unfortunately, *Planet Child* doesn't consider enough how these attitudes and viewpoints are acquired. Children learn how we're supposed to behave within society's accepted values. These evolve over time; parenting in Britain seems to place more emphasis on risk awareness and challenging some stereotypes compared with the past. And of course, the norms children learn to accept differ between cultures. The show also features a tribe in Namibia, where traditional gender roles are defined sharply and children walk miles across the desert away from their village to look for wood. In a Japanese school, good behaviour is taught through encouraging a kind of top-down co-operation and shared responsibility for the surroundings, which means they have committees to report on

leftover milk, for example. The values which our behaviour is shaped by reflect how our culture aims to get things done. All societies need their own boundaries and norms, but it's a shame that as we learn capitalism's rules and expectations, we also tend to lose that wide-eyed energy kids have. Maybe we shouldn't teach children what to think as much as how to think.

MIKE FOSTER

REVIEWS

Half the World



Bruno Maçães: **The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order.** Penguin £9.99.

The boundary between Europe and Asia is not clearly marked, unlike those between other continents, so it is hardly surprising that people have long referred to a 'supercontinent' termed Eurasia. Nor is it surprising that a region which contains Japan, China, India, Russia and the European Union is likely to play a crucial strategic and economic role in future years. So the general point of this book, written by a former Portuguese politician, is not very original, but it does contain some interesting specific discussions, partly based on a six-month journey that Maçães took around parts of Eurasia in 2015–16.

Events in Ukraine have increased tensions between Russia and the West, leading Russia to closer ties with China, as an export market and a source of investment. Russia will supply natural gas to China for a period of thirty years, and the construction of the pipeline has begun. Rather than war being the continuation of politics, as Clausewitz claimed, now 'Pipelines are the continuation of war by other means'.

China's Belt and Road Initiative naturally receives a lot of attention here, but there are also references to potential problems. So India's participation is in doubt, on the grounds of unsustainable debt burdens being created. Things have become more problematic recently, with India not attending the project's summit meeting held this April, and many calling for less reliance on coal and less emphasis on China as the sole mover behind the Belt and Road. Yet it is also intended to expand the project, with plans in Russia and China for an 'Ice Silk Road' across the Arctic, which would give China an alternative sea

route to Western Europe and the Atlantic.

Russia is the moving force behind the Eurasian Economic Union, formed in 2015, aimed at free trade and compatible regulations. Its other members are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia (which, under Russian pressure, abandoned any intentions to join the European Union). As for India, it could become a considerable naval power, helping to defend massive infrastructure undertakings along the Indian Ocean coastline to facilitate trade between India and China.

On his trip round parts of Eurasia, Maçães visited Yiwu, a city two hours by train south from Shanghai. Traders come there from Pakistan, the Middle East and Africa to purchase Chinese goods. It is a big market for toys, among other things, with around 100,000 stalls in total, and has a direct train connection to Madrid. He talked to a Chinese woman and her Indian husband, who met at the market and now sell glass hardware; their daughter is 'a product of Indian and Chinese collaboration'.

PB

England's Dreaming



Mike Wayne: **England's Discontents: Political Cultures and National Identities.** Pluto Press. 2018.

This is an attempt to make sense of political cultures and national identities with a particular focus on England in the light of both Brexit and moves towards Scottish independence. It is influenced heavily by the Italian quasi-Marxist Antonio Gramsci and his concept of hegemony. As such, much of the book is concerned with the formation of political cultures and identities – and how these inform national identity and political movements.

It is full of phrases like 'highly multi-accultural' and 'counter-hegemonic organic intellectuals' and so if you have an aversion to this sort of academic 'discourse' the book is not for you. Nevertheless, there are some good points within it and it is generally worth persevering. Much of it is concerned with the identification of ideologies and their key characteristics, mainly conservatism, economic liberalism, social liberalism and social democracy. Wayne explains the differences that characterise them and the relationships between them, including how they have often interlinked to form dominant 'hegemonic blocs' in various periods of modern British history. The most recent and notable has been the alliance between conservatism and economic liberalism, an alliance which is now facing various challenges as well as internal contradictions.

These inherent tensions between conservatism and economic liberalism are brought out well and mean that economic liberalism periodically finds common cause with social liberalism instead (as under Blair). This is because conservatism finds expression in three important strands of identity that the market economy of capitalism tends to undermine or contradict as a matter of course – ethnic/religious identity, national identity and 'deep-history' identifications (ie, tradition, routines and rituals, etc). As Wayne explains rather neatly:

'Together these three strands attempt to create a moral framework for an economic system that does not have one, a point of national identification for a mode of production whose expansionary logic cannot be contained within the nation-state and a slowing down of historical change for a revolutionary change-obsessed mode of production' (p.69).

These are the types of tensions he sees as having helped (among other things) fuel populism in recent years and it's difficult to disagree. Sadly, as a counter-balance Wayne seems to be a calling for the recreation of the historic bloc that was based, in his terms, on the alliance of social liberalism and social democracy that dominated the post-war period in the UK until it started to break down in the 1970s and was rolled back in the 80s. He sees leftist Scottish nationalism as a potential vehicle for rekindling this and seriously underplays the negative role that nationalism plays in countries like Scotland where it is not as overtly right-wing and conservative as it typically is in places like England. But it is interesting too, that much polling evidence shows that

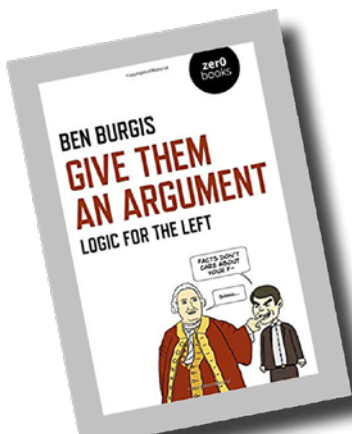
REVIEWS

the ideological make-up of the Scottish population is actually rather less different than is often supposed to that of England and Wales, especially on major left/right issues – and this goes unmentioned.

Also unmentioned is any real sense of what socialism might mean. It is a word used occasionally in historic contexts but it is never really made apparent what this is or how it might relate to (or seek to oppose) the other ideologies – or, for that matter, the tendencies some of them have helped foster that Wayne finds abhorrent in modern English political culture.

DAP

Logical conclusions



Give Them an Argument: Logic for the Left, by Ben Burgis, Zero Books 2019

Socialist Party pamphlets used to carry the slogan 'Inconvertible Facts and Logical Argument'. As far as humanly possible, we still use these essential tools in making the case for socialism. However, these days much political argument takes place via the Internet where SHOUTING and fake news often take the place of facts and logic. Ben Burgis exposes the logical fallacies used in contemporary political debate (mainly in the USA) and provides examples of well-formed arguments, such as:

Premise One: Either social democratic reforms will be sufficient to solve the problems of capitalism or those problems can only be solved by expropriating the means of production.

Premise Two: Social democratic reforms will not be sufficient to solve the problems of capitalism.

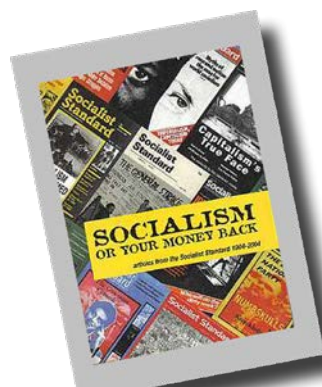
Conclusion: Those problems can only be solved by expropriating the means of

production.

Burgis describes himself as a Marxist, but there is a curious reluctance to follow his arguments through to their logical conclusion. He argues that businesses which move from country to country in the search for lower wages is something enabled by 'particular policy choices'. 'Different choices,' Burgis claims, 'would lead to different outcomes'. But the particular policy choices here are the logical consequence of a global system of production for profit. And then there's the antagonism between wages and profits – that (other things being equal) higher profits are the result of lower wages and, vice versa, higher wages eat into profits. Burgis says that 'in a different economic system' technological advances could mean that workers could vote themselves shorter shifts or working fewer hours 'for the same paycheck'. Not if it interferes with profit-making, they won't.

Burgis is clear that socialism is the movement for the working-class majority of the population to take charge of society. Winning socialism means '(a) convincing a huge mass of people who don't currently think that anything but capitalism is possible that there even *can* be a different kind of world and that they should fight for one, and then (b) going through an immensely complicated process, full of pitfalls and problems, in which that enormous group of people figures out together how it can all work'. This is fine as far as it goes. The trouble is it is missing conclusion (c): that in any post-capitalist society worthy of the name, wage labour and capital have been abolished.

LEW



Socialism or Your Money Back
The Socialist Party of Great Britain
£4.00

When the Socialist Party was formed, over a hundred years ago, there was widespread agreement as to what

socialism meant, despite disagreements as to how to get there. Unfortunately, as a result of the failure in the intervening period of both gradualist reformism and Leninist dictatorship this is no longer the case. Reformists, who believed that capitalism could be gradually transformed through a series of social reform measures into a better society, themselves ended up being transformed into routine managers of the capitalist system. The Bolsheviks, who seized power as a minority under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia in 1917, ended up developing capitalism there in the form of a state-run capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different - and unattractive - meaning: state ownership and control, even state dictatorship, which is what, as the *Socialist Standard* was pointing out even before both policies were tried, is more properly called state capitalism.

This has been represented as the 'failure of socialism'. But socialism in its original sense has never been tried. If those who are committed to the interest of the majority class of wage and salary earners and who want a better society to replace capitalism are not to make the same mistakes of reformism and minority revolution that dominated radical thinking and action in the twentieth century, they need to return to the original idea of socialism and to the understanding that the quickest way to get there is to campaign for socialism directly and as a matter of urgency. This book is aimed at contributing to that understanding.

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

This book will be of interest to those wanting to study the political, economic and social history of the twentieth century, as well as to those committed to the interests of the majority class of wage and salary workers and who want a different society to replace the profit-wages-money system that is capitalism.

To order a copy, send cheque for £4 to Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN or by Paypal to spgb@worldsocialism.org.uk

50 Years Ago

Opt for Socialism

May Day this year saw what the press claimed was 'Britain's largest and most sporadic political strike since 1926'. The Communist Party congratulated 'the hundreds of thousands of workers' who were downing tools and *Socialist Worker* (IS) was so confident that 'this May Day's political strike confirms a willingness to struggle' that they wanted it to 'mark the start of the fight for workers' power'. But the Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation didn't think it was as simple as that; first we had to decide whether we were witnessing *merely* 'a massive rise of Trade Union consciousness' or was there instead 'some glimmer of systematic revolutionary politics emerging from the militancy'.

Reading this sort of comment you could have been forgiven for not noticing, at a time when trade unions and the right to strike are being openly threatened by the Labour government, less than one per cent of the labour force was prepared to stop work for a single day. Even in those areas where a relatively high proportion of workers turned out (Sheffield, for example, with 10,000 or 4 per cent of the work force on strike) the marches and demonstrations were poorly attended. In Sheffield 500 men and women gathered at the City Hall to listen to Labour MP Norman Atkinson calling for different policies from the government; in Manchester perhaps a similar number marched to the Labour Party's headquarters; in Hull (with 3,000 dockers out) about 20 made the effort to demonstrate.

The facts, then, argue quite plainly that — such is the lack of even trade union consciousness among the vast majority of

workers — they will accept some form of Industrial Relations Bill. In fact, Labour and Tories both recognise anti-strike legislation as a vote winner with the working class and vie with each other in portraying strikers as bloody-minded wreckers intent on sabotaging industrial output. (Editorial, *Socialist Standard*, June 1969)



Harold Wilson, Prime Minister in 1969

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

Meetings:

JUNE 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

(weather permitting)

Literature street stall

Queen Street (Newport Road end)

LONDON

Saturday 15 June, 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

Literature Street Stall

Nag's Head Shopping Centre, 402

Holloway Road, London N7 6PZ

Saturday 15 June, 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Sound recording of what Labour promised in 1929

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel

Playfair Avenue, London W6 9JY.

Nearest tubes: Hammersmith, Ravenscourt Park.

MANCHESTER

Saturday 15 June, 2.00 p.m.

"Rereading Engels"

Venue: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount

Street, Manchester, M20 5NS

JULY 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday 1pm to 3pm (weather

permitting)

Literature street stall

Queen Street (Newport Road end)

LONDON

Saturday 20 July 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Marxism and Feminism

Speaker: Darrell Whitehead

Venue: Quaker Meeting House,

20 Nigel Playfair Avenue,

Hammersmith, London W6 9JY



Joining the Socialist Party

Anyone who agrees with the object and principles of the Socialist Party can apply for membership. Applicants are asked to complete a questionnaire to satisfy themselves and the Socialist Party that they are in agreement with our ideas. Here are the questions:

What are the basic economic features of capitalism?

Explain what you understand by the terms 'capitalist class' and 'working class'.

Do you consider that the working class is exploited? If so, then briefly explain how this takes place

What do you understand by the word 'socialism'?

Why do socialists say that there will be no trade or money in a socialist society? On what basis will wealth be distributed?

Has socialism been established in any part of the world?

Why do socialists say that socialism cannot exist in one country alone?

Why do socialists maintain that democratic methods such as parliamentary elections, must be used to capture political power for the achievement of socialism?

Why do socialists not take sides or willingly take part in wars?

What is your attitude to other political parties? Do any of them stand for socialism?

Why does the Socialist Party not campaign for reforms?

What are your views on religion and its relation to the Party's case for socialism?

To apply go to: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/membership-application

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.

They won, you lost

Ahead of the election in South Africa last month, a BBC report (1 May) confirmed that this country ‘..has the highest level of inequality in the world.’ Just over a year ago, another outlet put this fact in starker terms adding ‘...most of the nation’s wealth remains in the hands of a small elite’ (NPR, 2 April 2018). Writing before the result of this election is known, socialists can state with a mixture of confidence and sadness that multi-millionaire Cyril Ramaphosa’s class won, we lost. ‘The opposition *Democratic Alliance* leader, Mmusi Maimane, says the gap between “economic insiders and outsiders” has grown. “There is no indication of it closing. We are a country split in two”’ (bbc.com, 1 May). But neither the ‘market-friendly’ *DA*, nor the state-capitalist *Economic Freedom Fighters* offer an escape route as they are two sides of the same coin.

No amnesty

Shenilla Mohamed, executive director of Amnesty International South Africa, told *Deutsche Welle* (26 April): ‘Mandela had a very romantic dream, to some extent, of having a nation where everyone is equal, where people are able to access their basic human rights, economic, social, cultural rights. But South Africa is a country where the quality of life has not improved for the majority of the population in 25 years. Issues such as racism are still in the foreground because people feel they have been disappointed by a system which began in 1994, when independence promised that everything was possible.’ Compare this candid comment with that of Stefan Simanowitz, European media manager for Amnesty International, who, seemingly reminiscing through a rose-tinted fog, states: ‘Just after Mandela was sworn in came a moment that still gives me goosebumps. Three jets flew low over the crowd followed by four

helicopters, each towing the new flag. Instinctively we flinched. But then it dawned: The military — and the state — were no longer enemies of the people: they now belonged to the people’ (mg.co.za, 28 April).

UnFreedom

Members of *Abahlali baseMjondolo*, the shack-dwellers’ movement in South Africa, are well acquainted with the state as a coercive machine of class oppression. *AbM* are credited with starting *UnFreedom Day*, an unofficial annual event that is planned to coincide with the official South African holiday called *Freedom Day*, the orthodox annual celebration of the country’s first non-racial democratic elections of 1994. Ten years ago South African police initially tried to ban the *UnFreedom Day*, made some arrests and monitored the demonstration with a low-flying helicopter but later retreated. An altogether more blatant display of state power took place on 16 August 2012, With 17 workers killed and

78 wounded by the police, the *Marikana Miners’ Massacre* was the most lethal use of force by South African security forces against other workers since 1976. Commissioner Phiyega said that the police had acted well within their legislative mandate as outlined in Section 205 of the Constitution. Ramaphosa and King Zuma share responsibility for this mass murder and have yet to stand trial...

Learning from the past

‘A democratic state . . . industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well being of the people . . . the land redivided amongst those who work it. . . The police force and army. . . shall be the helpers and protectors of the people. . . a national minimum wage . . . the right to be decently housed. . . free medical care . . . Slums shall be demolished . . .’ (The Freedom Charter adopted by the ANC in 1955). Nelson Mandela: ‘The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change . . . nor has it. . . ever condemned capitalist society!’ In the August 1988 edition of this journal we stated: ‘If the ANC come to power they will have to take on the task of controlling and disciplining the majority when it becomes clear that capitalism run by blacks is little different to the white-dominated variety. They will have to ensure “calm labour relations”, which will bring them into inevitable conflict with “All who work shall be free . . . to make wage agreements with their employers” (Freedom Charter).’ ‘Already in 1948 apartheid was an anachronism, even from a capitalist point of view..The end of apartheid will not mean the end of working class problems. At most it will result in the creation of the best conditions under which the working class can struggle to protect its interests within capitalism and, more importantly, can struggle alongside the workers of the rest of the world for the non-class as well as non-racial society that socialism will be’ (After apartheid, what? March 1990).



FREE LUNCH

