July 2019
Vol.115 No.1379
£1.50

socialist standard

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

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socialist standard

Contents July 2019

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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'

Editorial

Chairing UK plc

By the end of this month Britain will have a new Prime Minister – either Boris Johnson or Jeremy Hunt – but does it matter?

In Britain the Prime Minister is the head of the government, the executive arm of the state. The state, we are told, represents the people. In reality, however, as Marx and Engels identified, 'the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. In other words, the state and its executive, the government, do not represent the interest of everyone but only of the few who own and control the means of production. The Prime Minister is the chair of the executive committee charged with this.

The person who fills this role does not have to be a capitalist. In fact this has rarely been the case. In the nineteenth century the capitalists were content to let aristocrats fill this and the other posts on their executive committee. Nowadays, both the chair and the other members are filled by people, many from the working class, who have chosen to make a career out of being a politician.

In the end it doesn't matter who the members of the 'committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie' are. What matters is that they have to manage these common affairs and that this involves, besides arbitrating between sectional interests, putting conditions for profit-making before everything else.

There is a political constraint too. In Britain the government has to command a majority in the House of Commons for its policy. Where this is not the case, as now over UK plc's membership of the EU, there is a problem.

Until the introduction of the 2011 Fixed Term Parliament Act, the Prime Minister was able to call a general election. Now this rests in the hands of MPs and, at the moment, there are not many Tory MPs who want one for fear of being tossed off the greasy pole. They are disguising this as a fear that an election today could result in a 'Marxist' becoming Prime Minister.

The depiction of Corbyn as a Marxist is absurd – he's mainly just an old-fashioned Labour reformist – but, even if he were one, this would make no difference. As chair of a committee charged with managing the common affairs of the capitalist class, he would be constrained by economic circumstances to give priority to profit-making, despite this not being his intention. But he would at least have a better understanding of his predicament: elected on a promise to improve things for the many he would eventually have to put the profits of the few first.

So, no, it does not matter who is the Prime Minister as it is not governments who control how capitalism operates but the operation of the capitalist economy which limits what governments can do, obliging them to put profits first. Whoever chairs the committee managing the common affairs of the capitalist class merely presides over the meetings at which the formal decisions to do this are taken. Why should we get worked up over who it is?

PATHFINDERS

The Parthian Torpedo

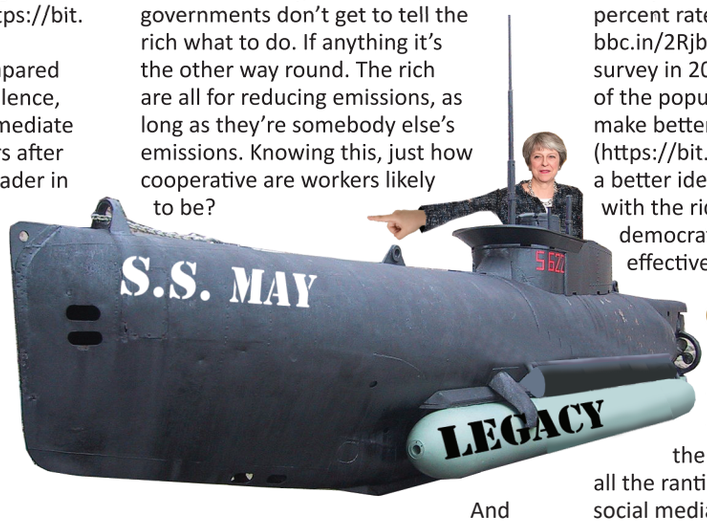
'I'VE NEVER seen a politician that didn't look better looking back,' as Lee Marvin might have sung, and thus with the benefit of distance posterity may come to view former PM Theresa May more kindly than people do at present, especially if she is replaced by the unspeakable Boorish Johnson. May spent her last days in office frantically legacy-building, living up to her old Cabinet nickname of 'the submarine' by launching a few ticking torpedoes before retiring to dry dock in the back benches. One of these was a £27 billion cash boost for the education budget, which her successor will have to pay or else look bad by wriggling out of (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 June - https://bit.ly/2WMtuCS).

But £27 billion is nothing compared with her Parthian shot par excellence, which will stuff not only her immediate successor, but several successors after that, as well as every political leader in virtually every country in the world for the next 30 years.

In short, she decided to adopt the desperately-ambitious recommendations of the UK Climate Change Committee and formally commit the UK to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Pause a moment to consider with amused schadenfreude the behind-the-scenes panic and pandemonium this announcement must have caused. The mandarins of the British state have no idea how to enforce this commitment, but they do know there is no chance whatever of doing so without resorting to extreme and probably unpopular measures. Somehow, for a start, they have to get the rich employers on side and persuade them to bear the extra costs of reducing industrial and commercial emissions to net zero, while still managing to remain competitive with players on the international market who are facing no such costs. Then there is the problem of upgrading the aged and inefficient housing stock with insulation and heat exchangers when neither state nor most private householders can afford it, while also telling the population to turn down their thermostats and wear extra jumpers in winter. The new runway at Heathrow will surely have to be cancelled, and people persuaded against foreign holidays in favour of camping or caravanning at home. Then there's your filthy fossil car, your fat-making sugar and meat diet, your cheap fashionista clothes shipped over in containers from fire traps in Bangladesh – you name it, you'll probably be told to stop doing it.

Good, you might be thinking. We can't beat climate change without making a few personal sacrifices. But here's the thing – who's going to make the Duke of Westminster turn *his* damn thermostat down? Who's going to legislate the rich into painful personal sacrifices equivalent to those being forced on workers? Who's going to take their private golf courses off them, or cancel their champagne and truffle banquets or stop their Lear jet flights to exclusive private resorts? Nobody, that's who, because governments don't get to tell the rich what to do. If anything it's the other way round. The rich are all for reducing emissions, as long as they're somebody else's emissions. Knowing this, just how cooperative are workers likely to be?



And personal privations aside, what is the likelihood of all the competing ruling elites of the world forming a grand environmental alliance and sharing the eye-watering costs of a shift to net-zero, without sooner or later one or more of them succumbing to the lure of the fast buck and reneging on the deal? Capitalism is about making money and the rich are more devoted to that objective than they ever are to cooperating with each other, even for the sake of the common good.

The brilliance of Theresa's coup is that, unlike David Cameron, she gets to look heroic as she dumps this monumental task on the table and then runs off through a cornfield. Whoever succeeds her, even the Bullingdon Bozo, will probably not want to go down in history as the one who 'did a Trump' and backed out of the most ambitious climate commitment made anywhere to date. More likely now is that the other world leaders will be eyeing each other nervously, wondering who is going to be next to try to carve their name into the history books. Now the precedent has been set. Call it the Thunberg factor, but populations will be in riotous mood should politicians not be seen to answer the net-zero call, even if those same populations are not necessarily clear about the personal implications.

The only realistic way out for May's successors, and for capitalism, is to sign up to the draconian commitment in principle and ignore it in practice. But will they keep getting away with that? People already don't believe anything politicians say. A recent survey suggests that only 6 percent of the population believe that politicians understand their concerns (*Guardian*, 16 June - https://bit.ly/2RgyzlV). Back in 2010 a similar poll found that only 7 percent rated politicians' honesty as high and 58 percent rated it low or very low (https://bbc.in/2Rjb1fW), while a more recent survey in 2016 suggested that 25 percent of the population thought robots would make better politicians than humans (https://bit.ly/2WHmuHz). Socialists have a better idea. Abolish politicians along with the rich and manage the world democratically. Then you'd see an effective climate policy.

Change My View

Somebody who should lift your spirits a little is Kal Turnbull, the young man from the Scottish Highlands who at the age of 17 set out to combat all the ranting hate and abuse of polarised social media with one simple and ingenious idea. Aware of his own parochial background and limited knowledge, he set up a Reddit channel called Change My View, where users post genuinely-held ideas or beliefs on any subject and then invite other people to come forward with rational arguments for changing this view. What's needed, he thinks, is to 'reframe our relationship to being wrong. It's not necessarily a negative thing. It doesn't have to be a humiliating thing. It's a chance to lose some ignorance, and perhaps gain some insight' (https://bbc.in/2MR7sPB).

Don't you just love this guy? If only the rest of us workers had this kind of unprepossessing honesty and intellectual integrity, we'd sort out the world's toxic obsession with capitalism in short order. Of course it's slightly disappointing to learn that he's now trying to monetise the whole idea, but hey ho, that's capitalism for you.

PJS

Freedom of movement: Can wage workers ever truly have it?

The freedom of movement for workers is one of the European Union's 'four economic freedoms'. Freedom of movement is one of the key elements of membership and is championed by Liberal and Social Democratic parties. How then, do socialists engage with and redirect support for this concept, to support for socialism?

Genuine socialists seek to abolish class, and with it the money, wages and nation states which facilitate its reproduction. As such, one could say that the freedom of labour will become as irrelevant in socialist society as the freedom of capital. However, socialists accept that work of some form – in contrast to wage labour – will continue to exist in a democratic society. It follows then that there will still be 'workers' who would benefit from an enhanced and genuine freedom of movement. In a border-free world, workers will be able to reside where best suits their abilities and needs, without the constraints of economic and social mobility.

The socialist response to this is to categorise freedom of movement in the EU as freedom of movement of *wage labour*. This, of course, is oxymoronic. Under a wage labour system, freedom of movement is utilised to facilitate economic and political regression. Freedom of movement undoubtedly generates national and 'racial' divisions between workers in a context of false scarcity. It is also, in reality, a contradictory concept to say the least. At its southern frontiers, workers from outside the EU are often presented with a grave fate quite polarised from that of freedom.

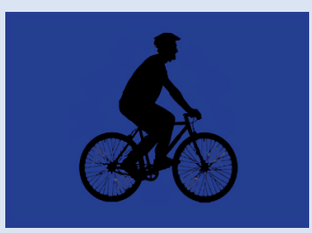
Economic migration is seen as undermining wage rates, and placing a strain on welfare resources. To many in deprived areas, these arguments against immigration have become intrinsically logical and deeply engrained. Despite its considerable merits in comparison to a system of economic migration such as 'hukou' in China, Liberals and Social Democrats obnoxiously replicate and encourage support for right-wing populism by acting as dogmatic apologists for the EU.

Unfortunately, recent political developments have provided increasingly fertile ground for smug liberal apologism in certain circles as well as right-wing populism in deprived economic regions. As this binary divide deepens, it increasingly becomes perceived as a question of good and evil. Going by results in the recent EU elections, potential socialist sympathisers seem to have been unable to not prioritise supporting the supposed 'good' option.

As socialists, we are right not to take sides in capitalist debates such as Leave or Remain, but we must be forthright in our economic critique. In other words, we must challenge, engage with and supersede capitalist debates and binaries. It is up to us to present the objective and inherent forces of capitalism as being to blame for economic deprivation, monotony, strife and the working class's distance from any influence over their communities and society in general. It is only the socialist critique of capitalism that can reconcile the interests of workers. Only socialism can rebuild a sense of empathy between deprived workers inside relatively desirable borders, and those who are desperately trying to reach them. Ultimately, all workers are driven by a sense of fear regarding our own ongoing economic security – it is socialism's job to bring those in the same economic class together politically.

It is vitally important that socialists provide a critique of EU freedom of movement, if we don't, right-wing nationalists and vacuous liberals will continue to be able to frame a capitalist binary divide and prevent socialism from taking root in the working class.

JAMES CLARK



Snorts of derision

Last month the papers had a field day with Michael Gove's scandalous confession (forced by a new tell-all book) that he had done multiple lines of coke while as a journalist writing an article demanding tougher laws to stop the cocaine trade. The sheer Class A hypocrisy of this got right up everybody's nose, as you would expect, so it seemed like poetic justice that he should be hoist on his own petard. It is truly a shocking thing to discover that politicians say one thing and do another. Who would have guessed?

But soon it emerged that virtually all of the Tory leadership frontrunners had indulged in one or more illicit drugs. Bojo snorted coke, but said he thought it might be icing sugar (imagine having a Prime Minister with his hands on nuclear codes who can't even tell cocaine from icing sugar). Matt Hancock, Esther McVey, Andrea Leadsom and Dominic Raab all smoked weed although presumably not all at the same orgy. Jeremy Hunt had a cannabis lassi (jeez, what Indian restaurant does he go to and how can we book?). Not to be outdone on the exotic stakes, Rory Stewart smoked opium at an Iranian wedding. Most people would have settled for a slice of cake, Rory.

The fact that to date eight out of ten Tory leadership candidates had done illicit drugs tells you everything you need to know about how the 'war on drugs' is really progressing. Nobody, not the press, not the police, not even the Tory bigwigs who have imposed it on the rest of us, takes it seriously anymore.

Of course they all swore they hated the experience and that it was a terrible mistake. But this is surely wrong. Taking a drug is just a lifestyle choice. Taking a drug and then turning into Boris Johnson, now *that's* a mistake. But then again, just look at the politicians who (claim they) haven't taken drugs. Mark Harper anyone? Who he, you ask? Exactly. Sajid Javid? Well, the mesmerizingly handsome Home Secretary will only admit to the odd cigarette, but nobody could be that urbane, charming and charismatic and not be on something. Nigel Farage? He's enough to make *you* take drugs.

When rapper Professor Green went to the House of Commons for a BBC documentary and asked former LibDem leader Nick Clegg why politicians never wanted to discuss drugs and legalisation, Clegg responded that the matter wasn't deemed important enough (https://bit.ly/2IvbxUg). Doubtless the LibDems didn't think it was important either but, desperate for any stray votes, Clegg happily spoke in favour of legalisation. Now that they've had something of a renaissance in the Euroelections owing to being the worst major political party in the UK apart from all the others, they might decide to roll back on that particular commitment.

Nowadays you can hardly walk through any inner-city street in the UK and not smell weed blowing in the wind. This will be all the young people trying to get high and forget how their future is being wrecked before their very eyes. Or else it's young people doing what it takes to be the next local Tory candidate. Skin up, anyone?

PJS

For the few not the many

In an article headed 'Why is the City falling for Comrade McDonnell? (*Times,* 11 May) Sky News Economics Editor Ed Conway made a shrewd point:

'Despite promising to govern for the many not the few, some senior Labour insiders have had an epiphany: unless they get the few on board they may struggle to govern at all.'

The Labour Party, under long-time left-wingers Corbyn and McDonnell, may employ the rhetoric of the many against the few, but it has no intention of abolishing the few. In fact, in the event of a Labour government, the few would continue to own and control the means of production in the form of profit-seeking private enterprises. There is not even any intention to turn them from shareholders into government bondholders by a state take-over of 'the commanding heights of the economy', as Labour left-wingers used to advocate. These will remain in private capitalist hands.

So, a future Labour government would be governing in the context of a capitalist economy dominated by private enterprises. This was Conway's point. It means these can't be ignored. They will continue to be those who decide what is produced, when and where. And their decisions will be motivated by the consideration of what is profitable or not.

Corbyn and McDonnell will have to take this into account. They will have to allow them to continue to make profits and avoid doing anything that might interfere too much with this. If they don't avoid this, they will provoke an economic downturn as the private owners stage an investment strike, refusing to produce what can't be sold profitably. That will provoke dissatisfaction amongst the electorate who will kick the government out, at least unless it changes its economic strategy and accepts that profit-making has to come first.

This has happened so often with Labour and similar left-wing governments in other countries that it can almost be said to be one of the economic laws of capitalism: that any government which disrupts profit-making will provoke an economic downturn. Unless Corbyn and McDonnell do what Neil Kinnock once cynically called getting their betrayal in first – by declaring that they won't harm the profit-making of the few (which is what 'Comrade McDonnell' might be doing on his visits to the City) – this will be their fate. In government, it will just be a matter of time before they come to accept this or get booted out.

But this is to jump the gun. In the present state of politics, while Labour might emerge from an election as the largest party in the House of Commons, a Labour majority there seems much less likely. There is more chance of a Labour minority government propped up by the Liberals and/or the Scots Nats. This would mean that any pretence of adopting anti-capitalist measures will be dropped. The SNP want an independent Scottish capitalist state while Vince Cable, the outgoing leader of the Lib Dems, has made his support for capitalism explicit:

'Capitalism is being questioned in Britain more intensely than for decades. Some want to destroy it. Others believe that it is the only economic system which works, but want to reform it. I am in the latter camp' (*City AM*, 14 May).

Corbyn and McDonnell are too, even if they don't admit it. Reforming capitalism to make it work for the many always fails for the simple reason that, as a profit-making system, it can only work for the few.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

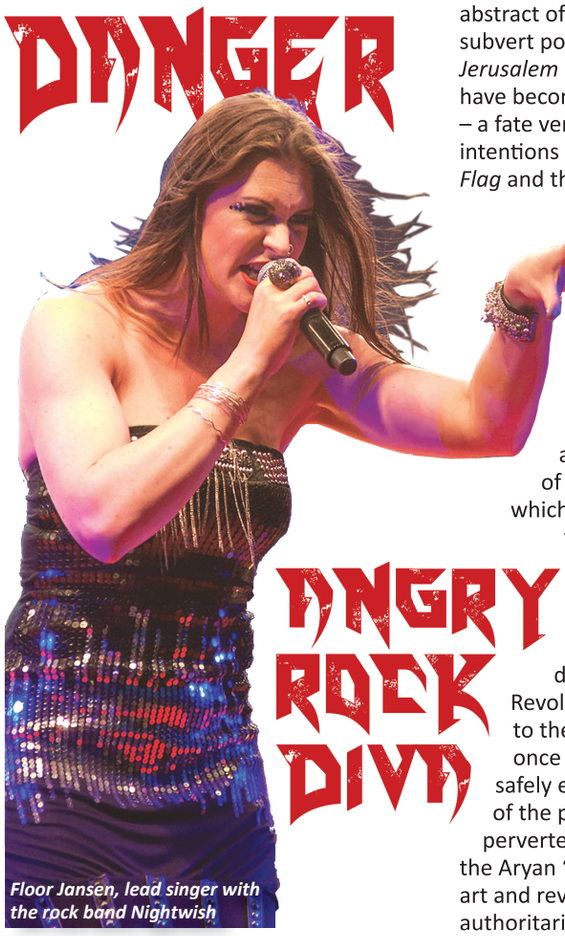
Political Aesthetics

IT IS RELATIVELY easy to comprehend the politics involved in cultural aesthetic sensibilities. In this issue you can read about the colonial background that still informs India's conception of female beauty. There exists no universal or cross-cultural consensus as to what constitutes beauty, good taste or even art itself. This is not to say that aesthetics are purely subjective since we can trace these values as they evolve through history; the politics involved within this process are revealed by an understanding of class, power and cultural dialectics. But can politics itself possess an aesthetic dimension? Would it be appropriate, or even possible, to speak of a socialist aesthetic?

Since it is the case that even mathematics is considered by some of its more esoteric practitioners to be an art rather than – as you might think – merely the absolute manifestation of cold logic, it would seem that no human activity is totally free of aesthetics. Perhaps this is partly what 'humanises' any discipline. To find pleasure in work (all labour, not just the so-called creative arts) and its results in terms of form, rhythm, pattern, catharsis and insight etc. is for most of us a high point of existence. For this to become available to everyone we must, of course, eliminate wage slavery and its alienation. Perhaps this understanding of freedom is the foremost socialist aesthetic. If we can find no pleasure in work then the revolution is pointless.

This conception of aesthetics is, unsurprisingly, contrasted with that found within contemporary bourgeois ideology which focuses on icons of escapism, individualism and power. We are informed that it is possible to enjoy the music of Wagner, the films of John Ford, the philosophy of Nietzsche and the poetry of T. S. Eliot purely aesthetically without reference to their reactionary politics. Perhaps so, but without an awareness of the underlying messages of racism, violence, misanthropy and despair it would be politically naïve to embrace their work uncritically. Aesthetics can be used in the service of both reaction and progression – loving someone doesn't make them a good person.

Perhaps because music is the most abstract of the arts it is the easiest to subvert politically. William Blake's poem *Jerusalem* and Edward Elgar's *Nimrod* have become icons of English nationalism – a fate very different from the original intentions of the composers. Even the *Red Flag* and the *Internationale* have been corrupted by their association with the Leftist dictatorships of China and Russia. In a final horrible irony the British Labour Party sing both *Jerusalem* and *The Red Flag* at the conclusion of their annual conference; a synthesis implying a kind of 'national socialist' agenda which emphasises the danger of the mixture of idealism and romantic patriotism.



Floor Jansen, lead singer with the rock band Nightwish

It is also informative that the avant-garde futurists were aesthetically at the forefront during the making of the Russian Revolution but succumbed quickly to the obscenity of 'socialist realism' once the Bolshevik bureaucracy was safely established. The personification of the perfect 'Soviet man' in this perverted propaganda exactly parallels the Aryan 'superman' of German fascist art and reveals their common bourgeois authoritarian historical origins.

Political philosophy also has its aesthetic dimension. The German tradition of dialectical analysis was subverted and then bequeathed by Karl Marx to the service of socialism. To its practitioners there is no greater theoretical pleasure than reconstructing the sectarian deconstruction of knowledge produced by the ideologues of capitalism. One of its great post-Marx enthusiasts was a philosopher called Theodore Adorno. As a member of the 'Frankfurt School' he wrote many interesting dialectical tracts that can be appreciated purely in terms of the use of language and their structure and rhythm – especially his aphoristic essays.

Paradoxically in his distress at the commodification of the arts in the hands of the bourgeoisie, what he called the 'culture industry', he can justifiably be described as something of an intellectual elitist. Traditionally the 'high arts' were defined by an established cultural elite who looked down upon the 'naïve folk art' of the lower classes. Although the bourgeoisie aspired to artistic pretention this was always subservient to profit. Initially resisted, the music of black American culture was unstoppable both in its popularity and so in its profitability. Undoubtedly this kind of commercialisation contributed to a democratisation of the arts (including, of course, cinema, sports, theatre and literature) but it has also led to an aesthetic dilution courtesy of consumerism.

Because socialism is not 'ideological' (being fully aware of historical class context and therefore it needs no religion, intellectual dogma or prejudice to mask the underlying political reality) its call for liberation is a *cri de coeur* for all humanity. Any profound rejection of capitalism will incorporate, however unconsciously, a level of the socialist aesthetic. If you doubt this just listen to the song *Weak Fantasy* by the rock band 'Nightwish' (https://bit.ly/2R0Bq1Z). Although the band is associated with the promulgation of the ideas of Richard Dawkins and environmentalism no socialist could demur from the song's angry denunciation of the escapism, consumerism and lying propaganda of our present culture. Given the band's synthesis of symphonic opera and heavy metal rock perhaps even Adorno might have had to rethink his disdain for popular culture.

WEZ

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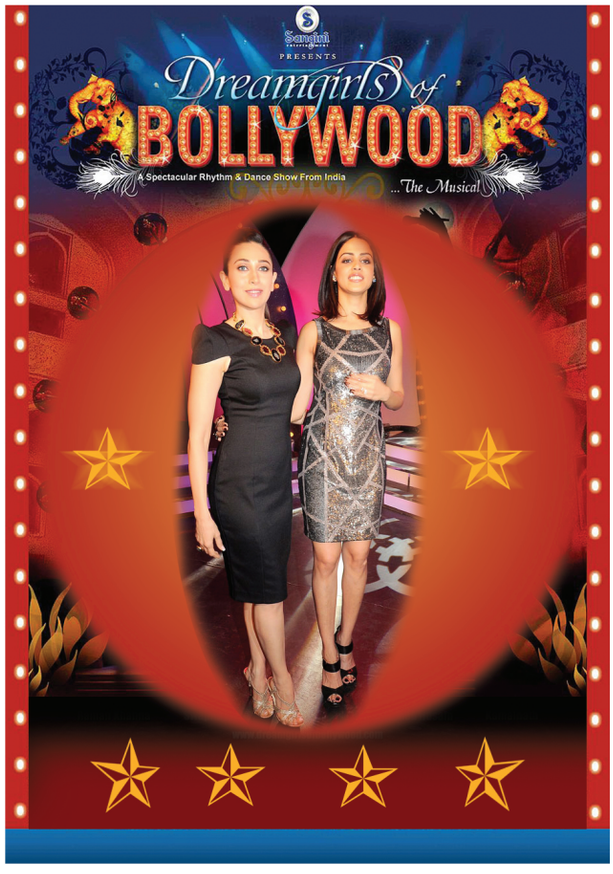
MATERIAL WORLD

Colour prejudice

THE DESCRIPTION of the aristocracy as blue-bloods was very much based on class where fair skin highlighted a person's blue veins which showed that they did not toil in the outdoors in the fields like the peasants. Today the problem is confused by the idea of race which human beings impose on themselves, an issue for the working class which we must overcome in our progress to a sane, humane society. Recently, the BBC reported that some children were lightening their dark skin to avoid bullying. Coincidentally, there was also a news story on the Miss India beauty pageant and its contestants' fair-skinned complexions. For generations, Indian women have been raised with the belief that fairness is beauty and a sign of high birth. Advertisements featuring Bollywood stars suggest that lighter skin tones will help them improve their marriage prospects and get a better job. Cynthia Sims, of Southern Illinois University, found a gap in career opportunities between dark and light-skinned women in India. While a Seattle University study by Sonora Jha and Mara Adelman found that the chances for a dark-skinned Indian woman dating online were 'nonexistent'. This has built a vast and ever-growing skin-whitening industry. The market for such products is expected to reach 50bn rupees (£566m) by 2023. The bias has even spilled over into religion. Just as depictions of Jesus show a very Western-looking white man, ad-maker Bharadwaj Sundar explains that similarly images of the popular gods and goddesses all show them to be light-skinned despite Hindu scripture describing many as dark-skinned. Nor is this desire for lighter skin restricted to India. Decades of cultural messaging to all people of colour present darker skin tones as unacceptable, and what they should be aspiring to is a 'superior' white skin. The World Health Organisation a few years ago found that 77 percent of Nigerian women use bleaching cosmetics, followed by Togo with 59 percent, South Africa with 35 percent and Mali at 25 percent. They are flooded with messages — and not even subliminal ones — that tell them that white is beautiful. The numbers of males bleaching is also rising rapidly.

The 'why' goes back centuries, and many see this as a consequence of colonisation. When the Europeans colonised Africa and Asia, they brought with them a belief that they were racially superior, and established a class structure that still exists today, years after countries gained their independence. In many countries, at the top of that class structure, sat white expats and Western diplomats. Next in the hierarchy were the mixed-race people when the European colonists mated with locals and produced offspring, who were then deemed to be superior class. South Africa's apartheid system went so far as to legally enshrine mixed-race people as 'coloureds.'



In many countries, the word 'mulatto' does not have a negative connotation. The view that the lighter your skin, the 'better' you are did not leave with the Europeans, and eventually, science caught up, as skin-lightening products became available throughout the continent. Many African women who use creams that affect the tone of their complexion routinely mention 'chocolate' as the shade they are aiming for. Many have seen that the 'mulattos' are given precedence.

Studies have consistently shown that in the competitive market for jobs and marriage, lighter skin has advantages. In 2015, another study found that white interviewers regarded light-skinned black and Hispanic job applicants as more intelligent than darker-skinned interviewees with the same qualifications. A US study in 2011 found that light-skinned black women receive shorter prison sentences than dark-skinned black women.

And nor are all the skin-lightening products safe to use. In 2011, a study by the World Health Organisation exposed the dangers of bleaching with these cosmetics, many of which contain mercury, a substance that can cause kidney damage, suppress immunity, induce anxiety and depression, and even permanently destroy the nerves in the limbs and skin. Cosmetologists are making a lot of money off the bleachers even though the risks of contracting skin cancer in the long run is high. Products contain hydroquinone, an ingredient that disrupts the synthesis and production of melanin that can protect skin in the intense sunshine, and corticosteroids, which in the UK are prescription-only products, are still to be found on the shelves. Experts say there could be a sharp uptick in skin cancer because these products attack the skin's natural protective melanin. When you bleach, it takes off the outer layers of your skin and in this part of the world, the sun is always on. So there's more skin cancer.

Humanity is one race, so claims of skin tones reflecting 'superiority' only reveal ignorance. Fair skin won't solve your problems. Until we can begin to discuss the class-based realities of the racism of skin colour, we will continue to be subjected to fruitless and destructive 'quick-fixes' to inequality.

ALJO

Homelessness: another reform that doesn't work.

By the time the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018, it had become the most prolonged and costly Private Member's Bill to be implemented. As far as legislation goes, it seems to be a decent enough idea – it aims to reduce homelessness by placing a duty on local authorities to try and prevent people losing their home, whereas previously councils only had to assist when some people actually became homeless. The Act pledged £72.7million to be paid out by central government to local councils in England over three years. However, since it's been enacted, councils have been swamped by applications, and two-thirds of them believe this funding isn't enough, rising to 86 percent of London boroughs (New Local Government Network, 4 April).

Good intentions aren't enough to counter the economic reasons behind homelessness, nor the bureaucracy of getting council assistance. People approaching a council are assessed according to the five tests of homelessness, which as well as determining whether or not they are at risk of or have already lost their home, also confirm their eligibility for assistance, 'priority need', 'intentionality' and 'local connection'.

Bureaucratic

Legislation such as the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Housing Act 1996 dictates how council staff work, and who they can assist. Whether someone will get help from the council depends largely on what documents they have as evidence of their situation. Proving homelessness or the threat of it isn't always straightforward. While a valid eviction notice or even a letter from friends or family someone is staying with temporarily will usually be sufficient, most rough sleepers won't have such paperwork proving why they left their last settled address, even if they could trace this back. A sleeping bag in a shop doorway isn't proof of homelessness, for a council.

As well as proving their housing situation, applicants have to confirm their identity, and it has to be the 'right' identity. British citizens and refugees are eligible for assistance, and asylum seekers are housed temporarily by other branches of the state, but it can be confusingly complicated to determine which other people can be helped. Those with 'no recourse to public funds' are not able to get assistance from a council's housing department, and include failed asylum seekers and some people from Europe who aren't employed. Then, the length of time they have worked and the reason they left their last job are looked into, and proof is needed to see if they meet the criteria. Europeans who left their last job voluntarily would not retain what's called their 'worker status' and would not ordinarily qualify for state assistance.

For example, a Spanish woman who resigned from her job and then became homeless after fleeing domestic violence would get no help from the housing department. Nor would she be eligible for benefits, meaning that she can't pay for a space in a refuge, or any other accommodation. Being ineligible almost makes her an un-person, which she will remain until she finds employment, near-impossible given that she's homeless and at risk. It's perfectly acceptable for councils to discriminate against people lacking employment and not having the 'right' nationality. While in many ways, prejudice against some groups, such as gay people, is being eroded, discrimination according to where someone happened to have been born is enforced by the state.

If a council housing worker deliberately or mistakenly provides assistance beyond general advice to someone who isn't eligible, then they are likely to get censured by management. Only if someone with no recourse to public funds has very severe health issues or their household includes children would social services instead have a duty to assist, including emergency housing.

Eviction

Eligible people who aren't yet homeless, but are likely to be within the next 56 days are now able to get more assistance from the council than before. Many households threatened with homelessness are those who have received 'Section 21' eviction notices from a private landlord. A 'Section 21' notice allows landlords to evict tenants almost on a whim, by only having to give a reason such as that they want to renovate the property. A 'Section 8' notice is used less often, to evict tenants who have broken the terms of the tenancy, usually by getting into rent arrears. The whole eviction procedure can take many months before tenants finally have to leave, usually having been charged several hundred pounds for court costs. In theory, this allows them time to find other housing.

People threatened with homelessness who approach a council go into the 'prevention' stage of a homeless application, meaning that they can receive advice and support with trying to avoid becoming homeless. This could include clarifying if the eviction is legal or help with maintaining or finding other accommodation, including grants to pay arrears or deposits and rent in advance for a new tenancy. Staff are likely to have to dispel clients' hopes of getting a council or housing association owned property, and instead point them towards private sector housing, which comes with its own difficulties.

If an eviction can't be prevented and the household becomes homeless, or if they are already homeless when they approach the council, then they go into the 'relief' stage of their homeless application. Whether or not the council provides emergency temporary accommodation depends on if it is decided they are in 'priority need', or more vulnerable than an 'ordinary' person. Households which include dependent children, teenagers leaving the 'care system', people fleeing domestic violence and some people with serious health issues would be in 'priority need'. The council would then place them in temporary or 'interim' accommodation, which could be a room in a hotel, bed-and-breakfast, hostel or even a self-contained flat or house. These self-contained properties tend to be owned by private landlords who charge more in rent to the council to use them as temporary housing than they would if the properties were rented with longer-term tenancies.

The Homelessness Reduction Act was intended to save money by lowering the number of households going in to temporary accommodation. The reasoning was that if more evictions could be prevented, then there would be fewer households becoming homeless. However, nearly two-thirds of councils reported that the number of people housed in temporary accommodation had increased, and they were staying there for longer (www.localgov.co.uk, 25/3/19). In 2018, 82,310 households were living in temporary accommodation (*Big Issue*, 17 April), a 71 percent increase since 2010.

Temporary accommodation is often of poor quality, especially B&Bs, where vulnerable people with complex needs are housed with insufficient support. B&B staff, untrained and unregulated, have to manage as best they can. Most single people or childless couples would not meet the 'priority need' threshold to be granted temporary accommodation. Instead, they would have to try and find a hostel or private sector shared house if they can't stay with friends or family. If nothing is available, then they will have to sleep rough.

Triage

If long-term housing hasn't been found 56 days after someone has been confirmed as homeless by the council, then their application will be reassessed. Then, the reasons why they became homeless are looked at closer to see if they are 'intentionally homeless'. No-one wants to lose their home, but someone would be judged to have made themselves homeless if their actions or inactions led to their situation. If, for example, someone was evicted for rent arrears, then they are likely to be deemed 'intentionally homeless' if they could afford their rent. Or, if they lost their home after being sent to prison, the crime they committed would be seen as the intentional act which led to them being homeless.

The applicant's 'local connection' would also be clarified. A 'local connection' to a council area is determined by factors like how long someone has lived there or whether they are employed there. Someone without a 'local connection' may get referred to the council of an area where they do have links, whether they like it or not. If they are judged intentionally homeless, not in priority need or without a local connection, the council will end their assistance, including emergency accommodation.

The decision made on a homeless application determines what priority the applicant has on waiting lists for council and housing association properties. Households who have passed the five tests – who are homeless, eligible, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and with a local connection will go to the top of the list. But there could still be a long wait for long-term housing. Larger households face the most difficulties in being rehoused, as there are even fewer three- and four-bedroom properties than there are smaller ones. And when they finally find a suitably-sized house it may not be affordable if they are subject to the 'benefit cap', which limits how much is paid as benefits. So, they may be stuck in temporary accommodation for years waiting for a property. The cost of this to local councils for one family could run into hundreds of thousands of pounds, more than the cost of buying an appropriately-sized house.

If and when a household finds long-term housing, whether from a council, housing association or private landlord, then their case will be closed, as a success. 'Long-term' here can mean housing likely to remain available for only as little as six months. If the applicant refuses their one offer of suitable housing without an acceptable reason, then the council will end its assistance and they will have to make their own arrangements, somehow.

Loads of cases

Council staff track the progress of each homeless application on their caseload, and many local authorities use the 'Jigsaw' database to maintain client records. According to the firm which produces it, 'Housing Jigsaw is not simply an IT product, it is a housing options solution based on an IT platform' (www.housingjigsaw.co.uk/what-is-housing-jigsaw/). In reality, maintaining the Jigsaw database (along with all the other spreadsheets and logs) dominates the working day, leaving little time for staff to help their clients find secure housing.

Staff are likely to have many dozens of people on their ever-growing caseloads, so won't be able to spend much time on each. The Jigsaw client records count down to the expected date of homelessness or when the relief period ends, and if the records aren't updated on time, then alerts flag up on reports. Rather than this being a helpful reminder, it's more likely to lead to pressure from management. As with any capitalist organisation, bureaucracy becomes more prominent, or even more important than helping people.

Even if staff had more time available to directly support their clients with finding somewhere to live, there aren't enough homes within reach of many people. In a survey by the Local Government Association published on 25 March, 90 percent of councils who responded were 'seriously concerned' that they couldn't access enough housing for those in need. Shelter is calling for 3.1 million more housing association or council homes to be built over the next two decades (Shelter, 31 January), but it's not going to happen.

Housing market

The housing market isn't led by need, but by whatever practices are likely to be most profitable for landlords and property developers. Cheaper, basic housing brings in less money than building swanky flats and townhouses, so more expensive and more profitable housing tends to get built. This prices many people, especially those reliant on benefits, out of much private rented housing, and also means that qualifying for a mortgage isn't a realistic option. In fact, the housing shortage benefits private landlords. When demand outstrips supply, landlords can be choosier about who they rent to, and can charge rent at the highest that someone will pay for it.

The term 'affordable housing', usually to denote properties owned by housing associations or councils, tacitly admits that other housing isn't affordable to most people. The root cause of homelessness is in how property is owned in capitalist society. When someone else owns where you live, your rights to the property only last for as long as you can afford to live there or until the landlord changes their mind. We're alienated from something as personal as our own home, if we have one.

Any good intentions behind the Homelessness Reduction Act or the efforts of council staff can't resolve the housing shortage. And nor can this reform – or any other – address the economic reasons behind it. Councils, like any other organisation, are limited to what they can do within their circumstances. And which people get assistance is decided by putting them into categories – eligible, in priority need, intentionally homeless – and rationing support accordingly. The notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor are at play here, with the dividing line often being just what bits of paper people have. While staff will try to find some leeway, it's a cold, alienating way of dealing with other people. Whether or not someone qualifies for assistance is more important than their genuine need of somewhere to live.

CLIVE HENDRY

Huawei: is it really just cybersecurity?

Competition for markets, sources of raw materials and the control of strategic routes is the lifeblood of capitalism. This competition inevitably translates into rivalry between nation states, which serve the capitalist interests within their borders. Trade wars ensue with all the skulduggery that governments can muster and can lead to bloody conflict. We have seen this in the twentieth century, where rivalry between an expansionary Germany and the established powers, Britain, France and Russia gave rise to two world wars.

After the Second World War, the United States and Russia emerged as the dominant powers and both competed to control global markets. This 'cold war' continued until the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the nineteen-nineties. As nature abhors a vacuum, so it is with capitalism which cannot survive for long without some kind of international rivalry taking place. We have recently witnessed a resurgent Russia challenging the Western capitalist powers. China is also emerging as a global economic player in world markets. The response of the American state has been to slap increased tariffs on Chinese imports and China has retaliated in kind. Huawei, China's leading technology company, has become a focal point of this trade dispute.

Founded in 1987, Huawei supplies telecommunication equipment and sells electronic gadgets including smartphones, tablets and laptops. It employs about 188,000 staff worldwide and operates in more than 170 countries. It is a leading provider of 5th generation (5G) technology. This is the next generation of wireless technology which will deliver much faster download speeds for mobile phones, and promises greater connectivity between devices allowing for the emergence of driverless cars, 'smart' homes and driverless drones. The company has helped to build IT systems and infrastructure in Africa, Russia and other countries. It claims to be a private company owned by its employees.

However, many, including the United States government, dispute this and insist that the company is controlled by the Chinese government, and that its products contain 'backdoors' to allow the Chinese state to carry out surveillance and cyber attacks. That the founder, Ren Zhengfei, was a member of the People's Liberation Army at the time of the company's foundation and has links to the Chinese Communist Party is held as proof of this. Others point to the 2017 National Intelligence Law which requires Chinese companies to assist the state in their intelligence investigations and that every Chinese company is required to have a Communist Party Committee. Huawei played down these links and insisted that it is an independent company dedicated to serving the needs of its customers. In January 2018, allegations emerged that, over a period of five years, data was being transferred from the computer systems of the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to servers based in Shanghai. Huawei was the main supplier of their information and communication technology systems. The company denied any culpability. It is also accused of intellectual property theft from other tech companies, including Nortel, Cisco Systems and T-Mobile. In the latter case, a Huawei employee allegedly stole a robotic arm used for stress testing smartphones.

Whatever the truth of these allegations, they were the pretext that the US state need to have Huawei in their crosshairs. On 1 December last year, Meng Wanzhou, the company's Chief Finance Officer and daughter of the founder, was arrested in Canada in Vancouver at the behest of the US authorities and is facing extradition to the US on charges of defrauding banks and using a subsidiary to break sanctions against Iran. On 15 May Donald Trump signed an executive order barring US companies from employing foreign telecommunication equipment that is deemed to pose national security risks and the US government added Huawei to the list of companies that require a licence to trade with US companies. Google responded by suspending dealings with Huawei, so their smartphones will not be able to receive updates to Google's Android operating system. The US government has urged other nations not to use Huawei products. In a sense they should be worried, as Edward Snowden has revealed, that both the US and UK states have used internet technology to spy on other countries.

However, this is more than about protecting vital IT infrastructure. John Naughton noted (*Guardian*, 2 June) that targeting Huawei's smartphone and laptop businesses has little to do with IT network security. Technology

AWEI

is the key to global commercial success, and the US capitalist class are jealous of safeguarding their dominance in this field. They don't wish to see their technology corporations such as Microsoft Apple and Google being overtaken by Chinese companies such as Huawei. What the US state also fears is that Huawei's and other Chinese companies' successes in the global marketplace will pave the way for Chinese domination of the global capitalist economy. The fact that Donald Trump appears to be using the fates of Meng Wanzhou and Huawei as pawns in trade negotiations with China appear to bear this out.

This dispute is generally seen as the work of Donald Trump playing the tough guy and is trying to impress his electoral base. But the American ruling class have been worried for some time about the rise of Chinese capitalism. It is not just the Republicans, but many Democrats support taking a strong stance against China. However, things are not as straightforward as they seem. US companies that trade with Huawei will be adversely affected. Many US technology companies, such as Apple, have their products, such as their iPhones, assembled in China (so much for their concern for cyber security).

The stance of British capitalism is more ambiguous. Although the British state shares the worries about security issues and are wary about the rise of Chinese capitalism, nevertheless they are interested in developing closer economic ties with the latter. This will be particularly important if the UK leaves the EU. The government is also keen to build its 5G infrastructure as soon as possible, so as not to fall behind British capitalism's competitors, which could have a negative economic impact. As Huawei has the expertise and can do the job efficiently and relatively cheaply, the UK government is considering engaging it in its 5G infrastructure project. However, not all government members are happy at such co-operation with Huawei, as the recent leaking of a National Security meeting showed. The US government has threatened to withhold sharing intelligence should the UK government go ahead with these proposals. The Chinese government has threatened to pull out some of its UK investments if the UK caves in to US pressure and not approve the deal with Huawei.

As always, workers will be called on to take sides. Patriotism will be invoked on both sides, and in the West this dispute will be portrayed as a struggle between democracy and an authoritarian state. This is nothing of the kind, it is just a squabble between rival groups of capitalists. The working class, both in China and the West, have no interest in this trade war. Their real interest is to establish a global socialist society of common ownership where there will be no nation states and everyone will have free access to the world resources.

On a final note, the Chinese government describes itself as 'communist' and 'Marxist'. It goes without saying that we do not agree with this description. China is a capitalist power like all the others. It is encouraging that nobody apart from the Chinese government suggests otherwise these days.

OLIVER BOND

Happier Times Past for US & China Trade Relations

Make them (and us) Redundant

If you cast your mind back, at Christmas the Queen sat in her golden chair, in a gold encrusted room, in front of her golden piano, and had the gall to suggest that the 100th anniversary of an air force which has bombed countless civilians, as well as fellow workers in uniform (they were mostly compelled to wear) was something worth celebrating. This was while prattling on about 'faith and charity', yet how many of us were left wondering just how many lives had been lost due to her governments' vicious welfare cuts and austerity measures?

And speaking of faith and charity, every time the multi-millionaire 'Saint Bono of Ireland' snaps his fingers another child dies of hunger or starvation in Africa. This is while the church he follows drowns itself in riches – and the Pope sits on his throne in his palatial residence in the Vatican city state, with his golden sceptres and crowns piously praying for the poor, while desperately trying to deal with the fall out of, oh so many, paedophile priests, and the Vatican Bank rakes in the pennies, pounds, euros, pesos, plus any number of other currencies dumped on collection plates globally by the deluded poor, in the vain hope of 'the meek' inheriting anything, let alone the world! While at the same time they are told to: work all day, live on hay, and you'll get pie in the sky when you die.

That's not to say that any of the other countless organised religions and churches of the world fare any better in the truth, justice, humility or humanity stakes.

We apologise for discomforting the discombobulated – but this is no time for mealy mouthed platitudes – not while the poor, dispossessed, and downtrodden are demonised by the maniacal, mass media machine as workshy layabouts and scroungers, and hurried off this mortal coil, by either enduring a shortened lifetime of poverty and illness, wondering where the money for next week's rent, or tomorrow's dinner is coming from. Or by being subjected to being bombed in the name of democracy by the world's regional superpowers or their despotic allies, in search of oil, new raw materials and markets or the simple lust for ever greater power, and or, territory.

We were also informed recently, by the UN, that we have 12 years to stop escalating global warming or face ever-increasing, ever-hastening, environmental degradation. There is much debate as to exactly how bad this catastrophe is or will get, but not much is likely to change given climate change deniers, capitalism's past record on effectively solving the problem, national state rivalries and competition, and the recent climate change conference in Poland being sponsored by coal boards and its halls and rooms, being warmed by coal, of all things (COP24 – the 24th such conference!). It seems the best we can expect is continued rising sea levels, more stormy weather, more forest fires, more droughts, and more desertification, which seem certain to disrupt the lives of millions.

At first sight, to the casual observer, it may seem that these things are unconnected and unfixable, but do not fall into easy despair, and throw up your hands in apparent helplessness, at all this needless death, and wanton destruction.

The simple fact of the matter is, there is one reason, and cause behind all of it, and it can be fixed – but only with your conscious understanding – and participatory help.

We are taught from birth that 'our country' and its people are superior to all other nations and their inhabitants, and that if only we all stopped being negative and hyper-critical, and worked together for 'the common good' then 'our country' can become great again and a new fairer dawn will be just around the corner. Funny how it never materialises, and we're still left in the dark and fed a constant diet of ideological bullshit!

That simple reason and cause is our masters' rapacious greed and lust for power, i.e. capitalism. Whether that be the naked private capitalism of the UK, USA, and Western nations, or the cloaked and hidden state capitalism of China, Cuba, Venezuela, the former Soviet Union etc (those countries which demonstrably falsely call and called themselves communist/socialist).

Capitalism today is *the* global politico-economic system. Nothing is produced under capitalism unless it realises a profit. The bottom line is all. The capitalist mode of production breaks all human relationships, alienates us from ourselves, the environment we are embedded within, and require for our survival – capitalism has only one requirement – all other considerations are moot. It seeks only to create more capital, whatever the cost, to reproduce itself without limit, or end, no matter the real social costs to humanity, or the planet.

The simple solution to this problem is a truly democratic society – a society of production for human (environmental and planetary) need not profit and greed, a leaderless, classless, stateless, society of equals, consciously working together in harmony as one people, Homo sapiens sapiens (forgetting the lies of 'race' and religious strife and division etc we were indoctrinated with at school, and are exposed to daily by the mass media machine).

A participatory democracy of economic and political equals where no-one holds power over any other, by force, or by economic compulsion.

We don't demand 'jobs for all' or a minimum, or even maximum wage – the continuation of a gilded sparkly wage-slavery, with incremental steps towards a brighter future that will never arrive. We have no such paucity of vision or ambition.

Instead, we demand the end of wage slavery and redundancy for all!

Make the bread-heads and greed-heads, the '1 percenters' who own and unjustifiably control the vast majority of the world's wealth and resources, for their personal gratification, a phenomenon from the past too (the true vampiric scroungers who live by exploiting the planet and its people).

Do not support capitalist parties, with their false rhetoric, false promises, and demonstrably false agendas for 'a brighter better tomorrow' and help make them redundant.

Support no capitalist institution or ideology. Instead support yourself and your right to do useful pleasing work, of real social, and personal value.

Help us make the need for a socialist party redundant and fight for a real future for ourselves. For the environment we are embedded within. For a revolutionary system change, with no false promises, or hidden agendas.

IMM

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Fircroft College

SOCIALISM & PLANNING

The impossibility of 'One Big Plan'

In any kind of society, people need to plan. Even in the most gung-ho, ruggedly individualist *laissez faire* society imaginable, there would be plenty of planning. Entrepreneurs would have to plan what and how much to produce, along with the requisite quantities of material and labour inputs needed, in the face of market uncertainty. No large-scale system of organised production can function without planning.

Obviously, this would be true also of a future socialist society though, according to some commentators, what distinguishes socialism from capitalism is not the need to plan but, rather, the number of plans needed. In short, the sheer scale of planning.

In capitalism, literally millions of plans are implemented every day. Most obviously, this is because there are literally millions of separate competing enterprises operating in a capitalist economy – from some giant corporation like Walmart to your local self-employed plumber. Thus, capitalism is a 'polycentric' system – meaning it has multiple planning centres or bodies. Those millions of plans are said to mutually adjust to, and mesh with, each other in a quite spontaneous, or unplanned, fashion via the market mechanism and in a way that purportedly benefits everyone in accordance with Adam Smith's quasi-theological concept of the Market's 'Invisible Hand'.

'Socialism', argue these commentators, would be very different. Instead of millions of bodies each striving to implement their own plans, there would be just one single planning body and one single vast plan encompassing the totality of production. Meaning there would be conscious, society-wide, 'central planning' in the classical sense of this term.

This, it is argued, is because the entire apparatus of wealth production would be socially owned. There would be just one 'owner'– society itself. However, society-wide planning is not a necessary corollary of social ownership. Even within a large capitalist corporation today, though it is owned by those who hold equity in it (and who thus exert 'ultimate' control over it), there are numerous gradations of control below this level of 'ultimate control'. Different departments or branches of the same corporation often exercise a considerable degree of initiative in planning their activities. Even within each department or branch we see gradations of control in the form of a managerial hierarchy.

Of course, the workers filling the various positions in this hierarchy don't own the corporation they work for. They don't exert 'ultimate control' over the corporation which is what real *de facto* 'ownership' boils down to – having the final say over the disposal of the corporation's assets. But they do exercise some control, albeit within certain limits.

The point is that the numerous operational decisions affecting the corporation's performance don't all emanate from a single source. Of necessity, a great deal of decision-making is devolved down the managerial hierarchy. Only the most important decisions get to be made at the top.

If a single entity like a corporation today is obliged to implement a 'polycentric' model of decision-making, then how much more true would this be of a future socialist society embracing all humanity? Of course, this is not to suggest the organisational structure of a future socialist society would be modelled on that of a hierarchical capitalist corporation.

Lenin once famously depicted a post-capitalist world in *The State and Revolution* (1917) as one in which, 'The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and pay' (he soon enough abandoned the idea of 'equal pay' on taking office). No doubt the dictatorial principle of 'one-man management' ruthlessly imposed by the Bolsheviks on Russian workplaces would similarly apply in Lenin's imaginary post-capitalist world. Socialists see nothing appealing about this top-down version of what a socialist society is supposed to look like.

From our standpoint, it is entirely possible to envisage the world's productive resources being owned in common by the global community yet subject to a complex system of polycentric democratic planning – with multiple plans being implemented at different spatial levels of organisation: global, regional and local – (depending on the nature of the 'resource' in question). While under capitalism, 'planning' likewise takes a polycentric form, minority class ownership of the means of wealth production invests it with a thoroughly authoritarian character. This is where any comparison with socialism ends.

Common ownership of the means of wealth production eliminates the very possibility of one individual or group exercising economic leverage over another, compelling the latter to comply against its will. In fact, socialism is the only conceivable basis upon which a truly free society can flourish.

Society-wide planning

Nevertheless, the idea still persists in certain circles that socialism would be a system based on society-wide central planning. Let's examine this claim more closely to see why this cannot be so.

There are literally millions of different kinds of goods produced in a modern economy. Some of these ('consumption goods'), in order to be produced in sufficient quantities to

meet the demand for them, depend on the availability of other goods ('production goods') that likewise need to be produced in sufficient quantities to ensure enough of the former are produced. To produce production goods requires yet other production goods to be produced. Sometimes, the number of inputs needed can be truly mind-boggling. For instance, a single Boeing 747 plane is reckoned to have approximately 6 million component parts, supplied by hundreds of suppliers scattered right across the globe.

In an idealised system of society-wide planning, the requisite quantities of all these millions of consumption and production goods that society needs will have to be calculated in advance by the single planning centre and expressed as 'production targets' for each and every good within some vast Leontief-style 'input–output' matrix or table. Calculating these production targets does not simply involve finding out the aggregate demand for each good; one would also have to take into account the 'technical ratios' involved in producing them – something that, in theory, can be done through a method called 'linear programming' which we will look at later.

So, if a particular good – A – consists of two components, X and Y, and if it takes 2 units of X and 5 units of Y to produce 1 unit of A, then you will obviously need 20 units of X and 50 units of Y if you want to produce 10 units of A. This could change if your method of producing A changes. Let us say due to some technological innovation it now takes 3 units of X and 4 units of Y to produce 1 unit of A. If you stuck with your original production targets for X and Y – namely 20 and 50 units respectively – you won't have enough units of X to produce 10 units of A while, at the same time, you would end up with a wasteful surplus of units of Y.

Incompatible with socialism

Looking at this simple example, we can begin to see why this concept of 'society-wide' planning is completely incompatible with socialism.

Firstly, it is pretty obviously impractical for any kind of large scale system of production, let alone socialism. To successfully implement this society-wide plan would require the production targets for each of the millions of consumption and production goods to be precisely calibrated and then exactly fulfilled right across the board. Any deviation from any one target would have knock-on repercussions that would jeopardise society's ability to meet all those countless other targets because of the interdependent nature of modern day production.

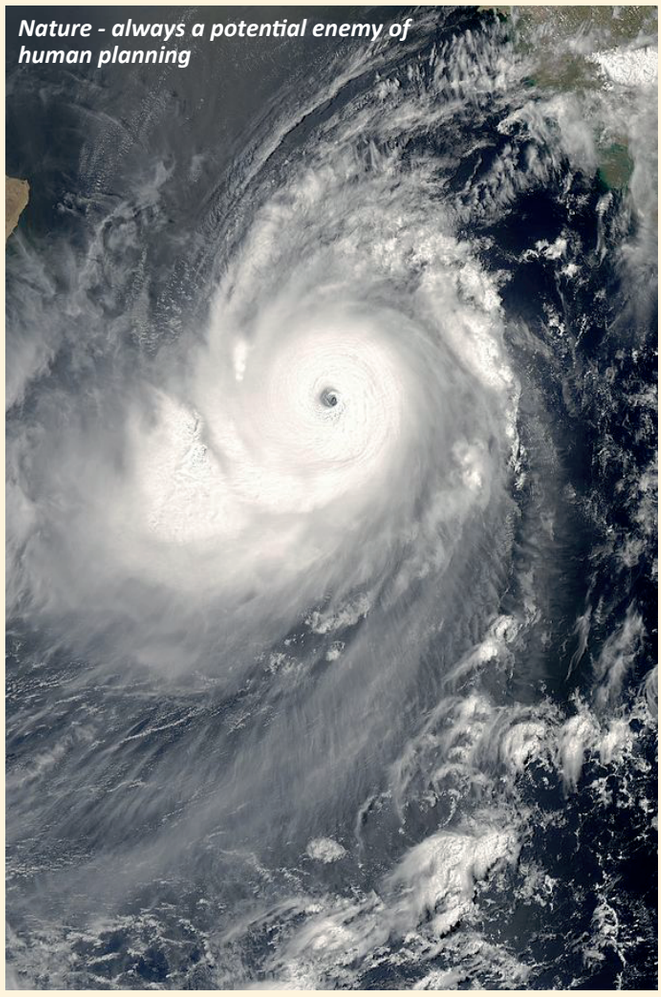
Even something as simple as a typhoon in Indonesia or a crop blight in the American Mid-West could seriously disrupt supply chains, resulting in shortages of some goods and surpluses of others. The plan would then have to be completely redrawn and, in the real world, since changes happen all the time, what this means is that the plan would never get off the drawing board. It would need to be constantly revised by the planners.

Moreover, for the plan to be successfully implemented, this would require a moratorium on any kind of technical innovation. This is because technological innovation, as we saw, tends to alter the aforementioned 'technical ratios' involved in the production of goods, thereby altering the production targets of the inputs needed.

Some enthusiasts for central planning argue that the exponential increase in computing power in recent years now makes the concept quite feasible. However, this is to misunderstand what the problem is about. It is not the lack of sufficient computing power that makes the concept impractical but, rather, the attempt to apply it to the real world when the latter is constantly changing. Saying that 'the plan' can be rapidly adjusted to accommodate any change in the real world means simply that it loses its quality of being a 'plan' – something that is supposed to guide production in an *a priori* sense. The application of such computing power then becomes simply the means of tracking, rather than initiating, changes in the real world. This is a very useful faculty to have but it does not technically amount to 'planning'.

Secondly, and more importantly, the very nature of socialism itself rules out the concept of society-wide planning. The two outstanding features of a socialist society that are relevant here and spring directly from the very fact of common ownership of the productive resources of society are, firstly, that individuals will have free and unfettered access to society's stock of goods and services and, secondly, that they will freely and voluntarily cooperate to produce these things.

Society-wide planning flies in the face of both these core social practices. To take the demand side of the equation first, how can one possibly ascertain in advance what people want if their appropriation of goods is self-determined? It is not logistically feasible to carry out a global survey of over 7 billion people and then compile a list of production targets for the considerable array of consumer goods they might want. It would also be completely pointless given that what individuals want can change from day to day. This is to say nothing of the fact that the global population can expand or contract.



Nature - always a potential enemy of human planning

Instead of free access, what a centrally planned economy would have to institute is some form of universal rationing. People will need to be told what they can consume even if they had earlier been able to vote on the matter. Very likely, this would lead to an asymmetrical distribution of power in favour of a bureaucratic elite tasked with devising and implementing this system of top-down rationing and ensuring compliance.

Creeping corruption and re-emergence of some kind of class-based society would be the probable outcome.

Then there is the supply side of the equation – specifically, the labour inputs needed to produce what society wanted. To ensure that, the planners would have to impose some form of compulsion requiring workers each to perform a certain quantum of labour (in order to meet the Plan's multiple targets) as a condition for gaining access to the goods and services they needed. Not only that, these workers would also have to be subjected to a compulsory division of labour to ensure the proportionate application of labour inputs required to meet all those production targets specified in the Plan: you couldn't just choose what work you wanted to do, or when.


Leon Trotsky

As the Bolshevik, Leon Trotsky, revealingly noted in 1920:

'If we seriously speak of a planned economy, which is to acquire its unity of purpose from the centre, when labour forces are assigned in accordance with the economic plan at the given stage of development, the working masses cannot be left wandering all over Russia. They must be thrown here and there, appointed, commanded, just like soldiers ... Deserters from labour ought to be formed into punitive battalions or put into concentration camps.'

Exactly. What socialist could possibly endorse this capitalist apology for a workhouse system? As one commentator has noted, Trotsky's recommendations are reminiscent of the Poor Laws enacted in Elizabethan England to combat the problem of vagabonds and beggars, as the rising bourgeoisie saw it, driven off the land by the Enclosure Acts and deprived of a means of living ('Capitalism and Planning', *Libcom*)

The voluntary nature of work carried out by the freely associated citizens of a socialist society would thus have been utterly obliterated. In short, we would have regressed back to something very much like a system of waged slavery that is the hallmark of capitalism.

(Next month the need for feedback).

ROBIN COX

Monbiot sees the light

Writing in the *Guardian* (25 April, also on his blog www.monbiot.com), George Monbiot revealed that he had come to realise that 'the problem is capitalism':

'For most of my adult life, I've railed against "corporate capitalism", "consumer capitalism" and "crony capitalism". It took me a long time to see that the problem is not the adjective, but the noun.'

This puts him way ahead, in terms of understanding, of the many left-wingers who rail only against neo-liberalism or Trumpism as they used to against Thatcherism and who want a more state-directed capitalism. It puts him ahead, too, of the Greens who want a return to a smaller-scale capitalism. It is, as he has come to recognise, capitalism, as a system of production for profit and the accumulation of more and more capital out of profits, that is the problem.

He indicts capitalism on two counts. First, that it is premised on 'perpetual growth':

'Economic growth is the aggregate effect of the quest to accumulate capital and extract profit. Capitalism collapses without growth, yet perpetual growth on a finite planet leads inexorably to environmental calamity.'

This is true. Capitalism could not function without growth. Its economic imperative to give priority to making and accumulating profits is not only a threat to the environment (Monbiot's main concern). It means that production to meet people's needs also takes second place. It's capital accumulation before butter.

Monbiot's second indictment of capitalism is 'the bizarre assumption that a person is entitled to as great a share of the world's natural wealth as their money can buy.'

This is true too, and it applies not just to natural resources but equally to the wealth that is fashioned from them. 'Have Money, Can Buy' applies to this too. The other side of this coin is 'Can't Pay, Can't Have', which explains not just world poverty and malnutrition but why, even in the developed capitalist parts of the world, people's needs are not adequately met, whereas they could be if the waste and profit priority of capitalism did not exist. There is no need for any man, woman or child in any part of the world to go without adequate food, shelter, clothing, health care or education.

Monbiot has more or less correctly identified the problem with capitalism. That's the first step. The next is to see what might be the alternative and how to bring it about. He says he doesn't have a complete answer (and doesn't think any one person has), but he does see a 'rough framework emerging'. He mentions various ecological thinkers and goes on:

'Part of the answer lies in the notion of "private sufficiency, public luxury". Another part arises from the creation of a new conception of justice, based on this simple principle: every generation, everywhere shall have an equal right to the enjoyment of natural wealth.'

Both of these would require that the Earth's resources, industrial and not just natural, should have become the common heritage of all humanity, and could not be implemented gradually or piecemeal within the framework of capitalism.

PROPER GANDER

‘An Urgent Referral Still Takes Quite a Long Time’

IF YOU HAVE a medical problem and don’t mind your trip to the doctor being broadcast on the gogglebox, you’ve got a choice of where to go. If you’ve caught something gruesome or unusual, then the doctors on *Embarrassing Bodies* (Channel 4) will share your diagnosis with any voyeuristic viewers. Or you could register at one of the surgeries featured on Channel 5’s fly-on-the-consulting-room-wall documentary *GPs Behind Closed Doors*. The series isn’t cluttered up by narration or backstories (i.e. it’s fairly cheap to make), and instead just lets us watch what happens when people see their GP.

General Practitioners learn a lot about what makes us tick in their five years of training after spending up to six years in medical school. Those filmed for *GPs Behind Closed Doors* are all impressively knowledgeable and need to be, given the range of ailments people come in with. Patients are introduced with on-screen captions like ‘Pauline: Blistered Lips’ and ‘Regan: Nail Biting’. Other issues discussed include abdominal pains, memory loss, backache, weight gain and skin complaints. Some patients in the waiting room have completely fuzzed out faces, a presumably serious condition which we sadly don’t see the doctors address.

The GPs deal with their patients calmly and professionally, with empathy and kindness. But what’s really going on behind closed doors in NHS surgeries is a system in crisis. The UK’s population has grown by over two million in the last five years, with an increasing proportion of older people with complex health issues. The number of GPs and the resources of the health service as a whole haven’t grown to match, leading to ever-rising pressures on primary care services.

Many GPs have working weeks of around 50 hours, longer than is reasonable for anyone, but still not long enough to see every patient or get all their admin done. More than eight out of ten GPs believe their current workload is excessive or unmanageable, meaning they can’t be as thorough as they should (BMA Survey of GPs in England, November 2016). The constant slog to keep up means that 39 per cent of doctors report their morale as being low or very low (BMA Quarterly survey, quarter1, 2019).

GPs work long, stressful hours because there aren’t enough of them to meet demand. And there aren’t enough of them because the long, stressful hours put people off joining the profession. In 2017, over a quarter of Scotland’s GP practices had at least one vacancy, most of which had been unfilled for at least six months (BMA, June 2017). The number of GPs per 100,000 people has fallen from almost 65 in 2014 to 60 in 2018, according to a May 2019 study by the Nuffield Trust. The chair of the Royal College of General Practice, Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, describes the situation as ‘gravely concerning’, adding ‘All GPs are overworked, many are stressed, and some are making themselves seriously ill working hours that are simply unsafe, for both themselves and their patients – it is making them want to leave the profession… This is having a serious impact on many of our patients, who are waiting longer and longer to secure a GP appointment. But it also means we don’t have the time we need with patients’.

Changes in demand should logically be met by increasing or reallocating resources to meet that demand. In capitalism, though, people’s needs are only met to the extent that it is affordable to do so. GPs are expensive: starting wages are over £57,000 a year, and the overall cost to the NHS for General Practice service providers was over £9,050 million in 2017/18. General practice accounts for just over 7 percent of NHS funding, with the proportion declining over recent years (www.pulsetoday.co.uk, Feb 2018). The lack of sufficient funding is largely down to how GP services don’t directly make a profit. General Practice is one of those institutions, like council housing, which the capitalist class would see as a financial burden, even though it helps knit society together. It benefits capitalism because it helps workers stay fit and healthy enough to be productive elsewhere, but as with everything else, costs have to be kept as low as possible so more money can end up with the elite.

Of particular interest to the capitalist class is how there is a lot of money to be made by producing the pills and potions we are prescribed. GlaxoSmithKline, Britain’s largest pharmaceutical company, makes profits of around £25 billion each year. Ill health can be lucrative, and one growth industry is mental health problems, which are discussed in around 40 percent of GP appointments. The number of prescriptions for antidepressants in England almost doubled over the past decade, from 36 million in 2008 to 70.9 million in 2018, according to NHS Digital. When a GP only has a few minutes with each patient, there may not be time to do much else than write out a prescription.

The pressures on General Practice, along with the rest of the NHS, mean that doctors just have to manage the best they can. It’s a credit to those we see on *GPs Behind Closed Doors* that they cope as well as they do.

MIKE FOSTER

REVIEWS

Radical politics

The Socialist Manifesto. The Case for Radical Politics in an Era of Extreme Inequality. By Bhaskar Sunkara. Verso, 2019.

Sunkara is the founder of *Jacobin*, the US left-wing magazine, and a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, an offshoot founded by Michael Harrington of the old Socialist Party of America that, when this broke up in 1973, decided to work within the US Democratic Party. His book sets out to explain what he sees as socialism to American readers who up till recently regarded it as a dirty word.

He describes himself as a 'democratic socialist' as opposed to a 'social democrat', the difference in his mind being that the latter seek to introduce reforms from above while the former want to see them introduced as a result of mass popular pressure. But this is a distinction without a difference. He is, then, a left-wing social democrat. His rather confusing conception of socialism is an economy of worker-run firms producing for the market with a free health service and a basic income scheme.

Despite this, his book makes a good criticism of capitalism and provides a useful history of those who, in the last century, called themselves socialists, the chapter on the German SPD in particular. It could serve as a basic introduction to the background to the debates about the meaning and best way to achieve socialism that we ourselves engage in.

Of course his point of view is not ours, but that of a social democrat who regards himself as a Marxist. He could be worse. He could have been a Trotskyist or some other member of the Russian Revolution re-enactment society. In fact he recognises that it is not possible to establish socialism unless the conditions for it exist, which they didn't in Russia, China or the other economically backward countries governed at one time by people claiming to be Marxist:

'The Third World's experience with socialism vindicates Marx. He argued that a successful socialist economy requires already developed productive forces and that a robust socialist democracy requires a self-organized working class.'

He is aware of the criticism we have always made of the Labour Party and its Social Democratic equivalents abroad as, in discussing the failure of the 1929-31 MacDonald Labour government, he quotes both what we said before ('No matter how able, how sincere, and how sympathetic the Labour men and women may be who undertake to administer capitalism, capitalism will bring their undertaking to disaster') and after ('it is not possible for the Labour Party or any other party to administer capitalism in such a way that the workers' problems can be solved within the framework of the existing system').

He seems to take this on board as he writes later on that 'administering a capitalist state requires maintaining business confidence and corporate profits' and that 'Social democracy's dilemma is impossible to resolve: even when nominally anti-capitalist, it is reliant on the continued profitability of private capitalist firms.' And in his verdict on European Social Democracy:

'Even with the more modest ambition of just humanizing capitalism, no national left government in Europe has been able to carry out its program in at least forty years.'

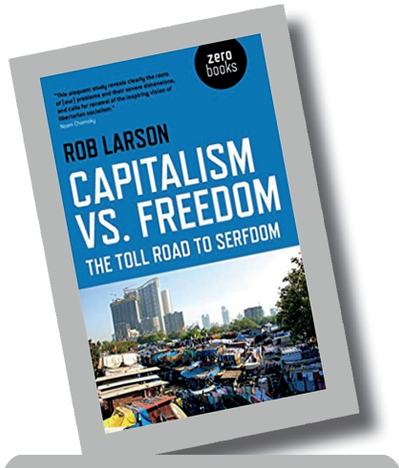
The one example of success, albeit temporary, he gives is Sweden until the 1970s, where the government and the trade unions reached an agreement with the private capitalists, leaving them to pursue profits in return for them handing over a part of these to be used for welfare and other reforms. With the end of the post-war boom in the 1970s, however, this collapsed.

He still thinks the best way to replace capitalism is via the election of a Social Democrat government, backed by a mass movement which, when the government comes up against the economic constraints of the profit system, can pressure it not to retreat (as all such governments have done) but to go on to break with capitalism. As he puts it, 'we will probably only be driven down the path to socialism by practical necessity, by the day-to-day struggles to preserve and expand reforms.' This is the old, discredited theory that socialist consciousness will emerge from the pursuit of reforms.

Sunkara quotes Michael Harrington (who wrote a passable book on *Socialism* himself) as saying that socialists had to 'walk a perilous tightrope' between being 'true to the socialist vision of a new society' and 'bringing 'that vision into contact with the actual movement fighting not to transform the system, but to gain some little increment of dignity or even just a piece of bread'. True, socialists are on such a tightrope and cannot be indifferent to the sufferings of workers under capitalism. However, history, specifically that of the political perspective Sunkara wants to revive, shows that to pursue reforms leads to falling off into the bog of reformism and forgetting all about socialism.

ALB

Negative for Freedom



Rob Larson: **Capitalism vs. Freedom.** Zero Books £14.99.

There is a standard distinction between two kinds of freedom. Negative freedom ('freedom from') involves a person being able to act without others having the power to coerce them, while positive freedom ('freedom to') is about what a person is actually free to do. Here, confronting supporters of capitalism (especially Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek) who see free-market capitalism as the best guarantee of freedom, in particular the negative type, Rob Larson claims that capitalism cannot deliver either kind of freedom. His arguments and examples apply particularly to the US,

but have wider validity. His previous book *Bleakonomics* was reviewed in the March 2013 *Socialist Standard*.

He begins by considering freedom to buy and to work, with people supposedly free to choose what job to do and which goods and services to purchase. But this is really very limited, since in practice concentration of power makes markets gradually less competitive over time. The US has two main 'merchant monopolists', Amazon and Wal-Mart. Amazon, for instance, extracted better terms from publishers by not recommending their books and so cutting their sales. Technology giants conspired to keep down the wages of software engineers. The class division of capitalism is an impediment to real freedom, as the employing class have far more power and freedom than the workers.

Larson then moves on to looking at freedom of information, where he has little difficulty in showing that powerful oligopolies dominate the media, and that advertising is a form of brainwashing that has enormous influence on people's behaviour. With regard to political freedom, he notes how wealthy most of those who framed the US constitution were, and how dependent political campaigning is on big donations, from such as the Koch brothers.

A more interesting chapter examines 'power over future generations', how a terrible legacy is being left: species extinction, global warming, massive pollution. Later generations may lack access to many things taken for granted today, such as adequate fresh air and water, and the benefits of biodiversity. The ability to enjoy nature is a clear example of a positive freedom that may be drastically restricted in future. By the end of this century, for instance, it may well be impossible to live outdoors in summer in much of the Middle East.

In his final chapter, Larson observes correctly that many political parties that call themselves 'socialist' simply stand for mild reforms of capitalism. He criticises Lenin for his authoritarianism, and admiringly quotes Anton Pannekoek in support of economic democracy. But his own ideas for a future society are not very clearly explained. He advocates 'workforce control over production and investment', with production units interacting by means of 'free association'. He does not mention the abolition of wage labour, so it can be assumed that there would still be wages and prices in this supposed 'participatory socialism'.

PB

Video review

Labour's plans for capitalism

For the 2019 local elections, the Labour Party released a video claiming 'It's just common sense.' The video was entitled 'Five people verses a billionaire' (see: https://bit.ly/2HXuM9U). Shares on social media proclaimed the video to be a better education in economics than most university classes.

The video depicts the difference between 'giving' money to ordinary people, via a pay-rise, a pension, disability benefits or a small business loan with giving the equivalent amount to a billionaire in the form of a tax cut.

The video then depicts all the five people spending their extra money, generating more business, economic growth and higher tax returns in their area: essentially, making the argument for a multiplier effect, whereby increasing consumer resources generates more wealth than would be spent in pay pensions and benefits.

The video asks the billionaire what they did with their money, and tellingly, he airily declares he forgot about it, but will probably send it to the Cayman Islands with the rest.

There are many problems with this short video. Firstly, the idea that economic growth is driven simply by having more commodity exchanges on the market. Circulating the wealth faster and faster does not create new wealth. Stimulating 'demand' by making more money available only generates growth if more wealth is produced to increase supply. Capitalist firms could just raise prices to capture more of this new demand, rather than increase production.

It neglects that the money to pay pay-rises, pensions and benefits has to come from somewhere. Of course, many Corbynistas argue for Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) which says that money can just be created out of thin air (much like the old social credit fantasists of the 1930s). Money not backed by real wealth, though, is just tokens. Government must lay a claim to a share of the wealth that has already been produced in order to have tax money to spend.

A government can theoretically tax any existing wealth: all it needs to do is identify the source of wealth and apply force to claim control of it. The only limit to expropriation is the need for political support to be maintained for the government and the operational efficiency of the laws and bureaucracy of the nation.

Expropriation of wealth and monetising it can increase the value realised in an economy, in the form of windfall profits. A modern government could raid hidden pots of wealth, but this would take money out of the capital cycle which would disrupt the economy, and, at the least, be unpopular (if not actively counter-productive). Governments in a capitalist economy can only tax new wealth, to take a share of the profits generated, if they want to be sustainable. That is, they can only tax within the limits of profitability.

If the tax rates are too high, then investors will be deterred from turning their wealth into capital, and an economic crisis would ensue. The threat of a capital strike is an effective tool for the masters in the class war, and one that is largely hidden as a 'natural' fact, rather than a social act of self-interest. Labour's video fails to expose this, instead simply conveying that billionaires naturally hoard wealth, rather than dutifully spending it.

Any spending done with tax will return less in new profits than the sum extracted from profits through taxation (because any of that spending will have to give a share to wages or paying for capital invested already in goods and services).

The government could instead borrow money from the wealthy, this, however, acts in much the same way as taxation, directing wealth away from the capital investment cycle, and reducing the production of new output. It further adds to the capitalists' control over the economy, since the state is now committed to paying them back, and it can only carry out policies that will securely honour its debts.

In the specific instance of where the capitalist (the billionaire) would prefer to export their wealth rather than spend it in the country, taking this money and spending it would increase the sum of domestic demand. However, the reason the billionaire would be declining to invest and instead export their wealth is because there isn't enough profit in the market to induce them to invest in new production. Taxing the profits of the billionaire reduces rather than increases their incentive to invest.

This is just a return to the Keynesian fantasy that the economy can be 'pump-primed' by taking idle wealth that is uninvested, and turning it into consumer demand. Even worse, it is the mirror image of the Tory line that a 'well-managed economy is vital to the delivery of public services' (i.e. that stringent government restraint to allow firms to grow leads to tax revenue and money to spend on services).

(review continues on page 22)

50 Years Ago

Scotch Mist

In Scotland today it's true that there is a struggle – as there is in England, Wales Ireland, or the rest of the world for that matter. But the struggle in Scotland is not, as the Scottish National Party would have us believe, the struggle for home rule, self-government, self-determination, or self anything. The struggle in Scotland, as in the rest of the world, is a class struggle: the struggle between the working class and the capitalist or owning class.

The SNP tell us, the workers, that independence from England and the control of our own purse strings will cure all our problems. What they do not seem to realise is that the problems they are going to try to solve are an integral part of the capitalist system, and history has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that within this system there is no satisfactory solution to these problems apart from Socialism.

The SNP talk about Scottish culture and the Scottish way of life. But in what way is the life of a Scottish wage slave basically different from that of an English, an American, or for that matter a Russian wage slave? There is no basic difference in the way of life of the world's working class because we all suffer from the same problems such as poverty and insecurity. Independence from England will not cure the poverty and insecurity of the Scottish workers, because there will still be the wage labour and capital relationship.

There is no truly independent country in the world, because international capitalism has made sure of this, and our own experience here in Britain, especially since 1964, should have brought it home to us. The past few years should have shown us just how independent Britain is, when foreign 'bankers' tell the British government how it must spend money, and how it must not spend money, in order to keep the international capitalist class happy.

(Socialist Standard, July 1969)

(continued from page 21)

In both cases, human need is subsumed to the need to successfully exchange commodities in a market place. They both rely on a systemic logic that puts the owners of commodities in first place within the economy, and makes everyone else dependent upon fulfilling their interests. Put another way, for all the radicals proclaiming Labour finally coming out in favour of the 'multiplier effect', this video radically disarms the electorate, and the working class.

The knowledge that wealth is produced by our labour, and the interests of the property owners hinder it being put to the service of our needs leads to a very different set of conclusions: that we need to take ownership of the productive wealth for ourselves, and bypass the market entirely.

The propaganda of the Labour Party under Corbyn is as much a barrier to spreading the message needed for working class self-emancipation as it ever was under Blair. The Labour Party, far from progressing the interests of the working class, is about trying to use state power to make the market work in favour of people, and that is like trying to put a mad bear to work in a shop.

PIK SMEET

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

Meetings:

JULY 2019

CARDIFF
Every Saturday 1pm to 3pm (weather permitting)
Literature Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end)

MANCHESTER
Saturday 6 July
Branch Hike to Ashurst's Beacon via a six mile circular route from Appley Bridge. Meet at Appley Bridge station at 12.15 p.m.

CANTERBURY
Saturday 20 July, 12.00 Noon
Literature Street Stall
The Parade, Canterbury, CT1 2JL

LONDON
Saturday 20 July, 2.00 p.m.
"Marxism and Feminism"
Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London, W6 9JY

TOLPUDDLE
Saturday 20/Sunday 21 July from 11.00 a.m. both days
Tolpuddle Festival
Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Tolpuddle, Dorset, DT2 7EH
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

AUGUST 2019

BIRMINGHAM
Friday 2 August, 5.00 p.m. – Sunday 4 August, 2.00 p.m.
Summer School
"Living the Dream: Being a Socialist in a Capitalist World."
Venue: Fircroft College of Adult Education, 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LH

CARDIFF
Every Saturday 1pm to 3pm (weather permitting)
Literature Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end)

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.

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

REAR VIEW

Principled hostility

Socialists are opposed to capitalism and its parties, Left, Right or in between. From our Declaration of Principles: '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.' We have as a Party, since our inception in 1904, been maligned, misunderstood, occasionally praised but more often than not just ignored. The conservative news site www.bizpakreview.com recently drew attention to our Twitter feed in an article titled 'Stephen King and writer of HBO series get 'Chernobyl'd' by Dan Bongino when they make the show about Trump' (31 May). Such attention is very rare, however. Ironically, it is often those praising 'socialism' who do just as much damage as its opponents: Andre Vltchek, author of 'Europe in irreversible decay, UE [sic] elections are proof of it!' (informationclearinghouse.info, 1 June) is just one example.

Tweeting for socialism or the status quo

@OfficialSPGB takes @dbongino to task for tweeting 'Why do Hollywood elitists continue to publicly humiliate themselves on Twitter? Chernobyl was a failure of socialism (where the govt controls the means of production), the exact opposite of the Trump deregulation and tax cut agenda.' We replied 'You persist in trying to keep the lie going that socialism is "where the govt controls the means of production". The truth (not that you're interested in that, obviously) is that socialism is where THE PEOPLE own and control the means of production. The USSR had state capitalism.' Tom Tillison, author of the BPR piece in question, is incredulous. Yes, the Bolshevik coup d'etat of November 1917 hastened the development of capitalism there, not socialism. Lenin admitted such, and we made our position clear as early as August 1918 in 'The Revolution in Russia – Where It Fails.' Reading the BPR article could leave one with the impression that the 'West' has no record of nuclear accidents! There are currently 454 operable civil nuclear reactors around the world, with a further 54 under construction. Given worldwide capitalism's concern for profits over people, further 'accidents' are inevitable.

Workers have no country

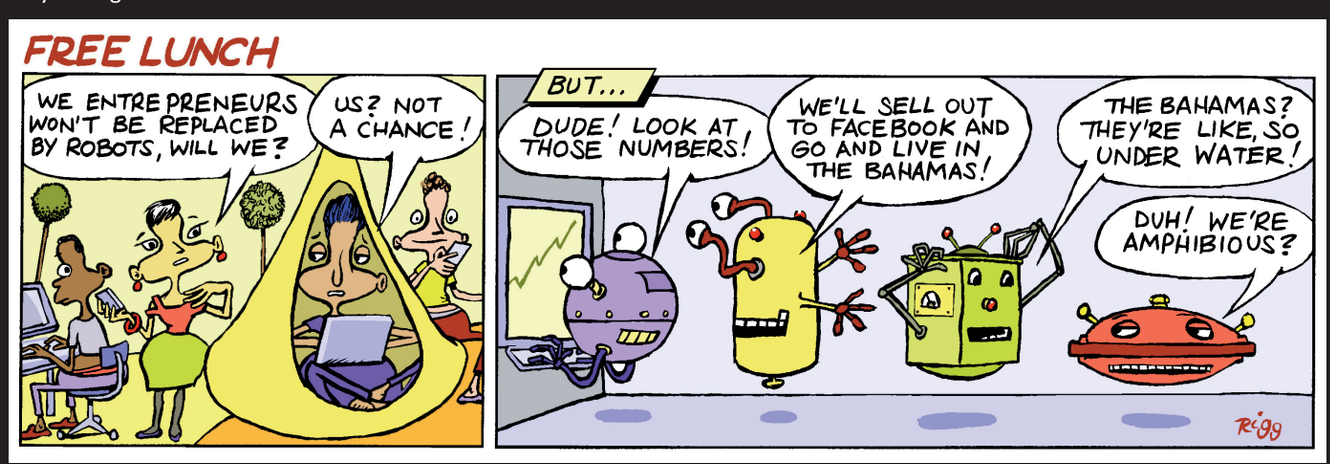
Vltchek, who recently toured seven EU countries, described as 'decaying..even collapsing,' and met some of the people there, adds: 'What I did not witness, was hope, or enthusiasm. There was no optimism. No healthy and productive exchange of ideas, or profound debate; something I am so used to in China, Russia or Venezuela, just confusion, apathy and decay everywhere. And hate for those countries that are better, more human, more advanced, and full of socialist enthusiasm.' At one point even North Korea gets a favourable mention: ' On both sides of the Atlantic, the establishment is in panic. Their world is in crises, and the 'crises' arrived mainly because several great countries, including China, Russia, Iran, but also South Africa, Turkey, Venezuela, DPRK and the Philippines, are openly refusing to play in accordance with the script drawn in Washington, London and Paris.' And his remedy: ' Let us [put] the people of Russia first ... China first! And, Asia, Africa, Latin America first!'


SOCIALIST STANDARD

THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA.

Unite for socialism

Lenin wrote tellingly of Russia in 1918: 'reality says that state capitalism would be a step forward for us; if we were able to bring about state capitalism in a short time it would be a victory for us' (*The Chief Task of Our Time*). In his Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927), Mao admitted that the coming revolution would not be socialist: 'To overthrow these feudal forces is the real objective of the revolution'. Iran is a theocratic dictatorship - Hell on Earth for scientific materialists! - and North Korea a family-run cult cum kleptocracy. 'Maduro recognizes Venezuela is still a capitalist-based economy...' (*Popular Resistance* newsletter, 27 May, 2018). Capitalist hallmarks, such as class society, commodity production, profit motive, exploitation of wage labour, markets, etc., are found worldwide. If you are of the Left, Right or in between and do not believe the capitalist stooge Vltchek, any of his anti-working class heroes, or us consider Thatcher: 'there is only one economic system in the world, and that is capitalism. The difference lies in whether the capital is in the hands of the state or whether the greater part of it is in the hands of people outside of state control' (House of Commons speech, 24 November, 1976).



ISSN 0037 8259 Published by the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN **Tel**: 0207 622 3811
Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org **Website**: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb **Blog**: http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/