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socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Marketing the Mind

The war for intellectual property rights



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Six Million



Let 2005 rest then, as a monument. A gravestone for the 6 million children the Food and Agriculture Organisations estimates died in the hideous torture of starvation and starvation related disease that year. The FAO report, released on 22 November, also informs us that malnourishment also contributes to holding back educational attainment and brings about a cycle of poverty and death. This in a world where we are embarrassed by riches of food and farmers are paid to let fields fall fallow.

The figure 6 million is highly evocative - the same number as the usual estimate of Jews that were murdered in The Holocaust - possibly the most heinous act of mass murder in history as these millions were gunned down in pits or gassed in specially built camps for the

extermination of a whole people. A crime of such infamy that its like has never been known and to this day in many parts of the world - as renowned liar David Irving is finding to his cost in Austria - it is considered a crime to deny that it happened.

What historians can and do dispute, though, is the extent to which The Holocaust was planned out in advance - whether Hitler always intended for the mass murder of Jews or whether slaughter grew out of local pragmatic responses to dealing with local populations in conquered territories. The so-called Intentionalist versus Functionalist accounts of The Holocaust.

The debate is complex - and probably irresolvable now. What is,

perhaps, clear, is that the Functionalist case is somehow more horrifying. It would be comforting to human minds to know that a handful of monsters dreamed up and guided the mass-murder from their bunker - but it is more dreadful to conceive of low-level local officials going about their business : Item 5 - Merits of Gas over Bullets for extermination. Literally getting rid of some inconvenient people.

Perhaps, though, in future years, people will look back on the functionalist holocaust of our times - sit agog as they hear of committees sitting down to make policies knowing they will lead to millions of preventable human deaths because they can't, won't, daren't raise the lives of these people above holy private property, the sovereignty of nation states or even God.

The autogenicide of the human race is why 6 million must die each year and why 850 million must live undernourished.

We will be as equally deserving of opprobrium as those who stood by and let the Holocaust happen if we do not act as soon as we may to end this preventable waste. If we lend our voices or our votes to political parties that put trade, business, capital and property before the rational good of distribution according to needs, we are contributing as culpably as the lowliest corporal genocide.

We urgently need to build a worldwide movement to bring a speedy halt to the carnage. The easy thing - the functionalist thing - is to go on supporting parties that offer small, possiblism solutions within the current system. But the right thing to do, the necessary thing, is to demand the impossible and turn the whole system over. Let's make 2006 the monument to the beginning of the end of a murderous system.

Introducing the Socialist Party

Who We Are

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal.

We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

What We Do

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and

demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The Next Step

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.



The Tomorrow People

Future society will be populated by very special people. Within their ageless bodies will exist rejuvenated organs cloned from versions of their cells that have been made younger; youthful hearts and youthful lungs that will beat and breathe forever. Beneath their skin will scamper nanobots: blood-cell sized robots which, like highway maintenance vehicles, will rove their bloodstreams destroying pathogens, removing waste, correcting errors in DNA and reversing the ageing process. The same tiny machines will also enable brain-to-brain communication - telepathy of sorts - via the internet and ensure a vast expansion in human intelligence.

Arguably, those special people may become less human as their bodies merge with a technology so advanced that it gradually begins to exceed and replace mere flesh and blood. At least, that's the prediction of Ray Kurzweil, a Massachusetts-based inventor and writer, in his article 'Human 2.0' (*New Scientist*, Sept 24, 2005). As is all too common with techie gurus, he has only the vaguest concept of political realities, so it doesn't occur to him to question whether the future in question will be capitalist or socialist. If Kurzweil even grasped the difference, he probably still wouldn't understand why the question was relevant. He observes certain antiprogressive tendencies in modern society, and ascribes them to some anomalous general human behaviour, rather than class, specifically capitalist class, behaviour. Consequently he proffers dire warnings about what we ought to do with our collective human knowledge, without ever addressing why we, the vast majority, are not in a position to control or determine what is done with that knowledge. Those of us who take an interest in the scientific adventure feel frequently piqued at the tendency of 'futurologists' like Kurzweil, Toffler et al to overlook the fundamental political issues arising from

PATENT ABSURDITY

Patent and copyright laws exist to 'protect' their authors and to provide a profit incentive to develop new ideas and technologies, according to the lobby which advocates strengthening patent law. But this lobby generally consists of large companies who have zealously bought up libraries of patents in order to lock out competitors, while the opponents of patent restrictions tend to be small companies unable to get a foot in the door, and who argue that such restrictions hold back development.

Human Genome Sciences of Maryland are well known for patenting much of the human genome, and once tried to patent one of the bacteria that causes meningitis, while Incyte Pharmaceuticals of Palo Alto, California own the patent on *Staphylococcus aureus*, a species whose study is crucial because it is known to evolve resistance to antibiotics (*New Scientist*, May 16, 1998). An independent commission on intellectual property rights reported in 2002 that the World Trade Organisation were strong-arming developing countries into signing intellectual property rights (IPR) agreements which

the fact that human society is class-based. Scientists can be very far-sighted but at the same time have only a very narrow field of view, like a blinkered racehorse. Still, given our interest in the implications of science for a future socialist society, his predictions are interesting nonetheless and could be seen as relevant to it.

Ray Kurzweil is a pioneer in the fields of optical character recognition (OCR), text-to-speech synthesis, speech recognition technology, and electronic musical keyboards. He is the author of several books on health, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and technological singularity. He is also an enthusiastic advocate of using technology to achieve immortality. He predicts that 'we won't experience 100 years of progress in the 21st century-it will be more like 20,000 years of progress' due to exponential rather than linear technological change which will result in the Singularity, 'technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history' (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The concept of a singularity, a new technological 'big bang', is an exciting one, and Kurzweil is clearly very taken with it. It is fairly obvious that science does not progress in linear fashion, like a train along a railway, but in geometric fashion, doubling and doubling again. Revolutions in science are almost a weekly event these days, and it is therefore not hard to imagine a 'super-revolution', a point where the whole of human society has to change very suddenly. In a way, a socialist political revolution is almost implicit in such an event, as the fetters and restrictions of outmoded social practices are blown to pieces in a matter of days or weeks by the devastating power of the singularity.

Of course, he could be wrong. There may be no singularity, despite all the indications. Alternatively, the powers that be might be able to prevent or limit it. You don't get rich by giving things away for free. There is every reason to suppose, for example, that nanotechnology, one very likely factor in causing the singularity, will be strictly controlled and limited, a bomb kept in a concrete box.

Tellingly, Kurzweil comments that 'to proscribe such technologies will not only deprive human society of profound benefits, but will drive these technologies underground, which would make the dangers worse' (*New Scientist*, Sept 24, 2005).

It's not difficult to see how the proscriptive tendency of capitalism, governed by the rule of production for profit not need, could put a dampener on Kurzweil's technology-enriched version of humanity. If such technology does come onto the market, to whom will it be available? All of humanity without exception, as Kurzweil perhaps hopes, or only those wealthy enough to afford it? After all, it is likely to be expensive treatment, making its beneficiaries not only economically superior, but genetically superior also. Yet another proscriptive tendency is intellectual property right (see *Patent Absurdity*, and also *Intellectual Property: a further restriction on personal freedom* on page 6 for a fuller discussion of this subject).

Kurzweil likes to define humans as 'the species that seeks - and succeeds - in going beyond our limitations'. But we will really start making some progress when the scientific community succeeds in going beyond its own limitations, and recognising the political dimension of the human project. Many scientists individually seem to understand the restrictive and anti-progressive nature of current practices, but somehow assume that explicit political positions are outside their remit, or even beneath them. In fact, all humans take a political position, whether they admit it or not. Science does not sit in a rarefied world above politics, it is part and parcel of it, and scientists who care about the world's future ought to have the courage and honesty to declare themselves, and stop worrying about peer-group pressure. It's not the professional suicide it once was. If you oppose the restrictive practices of capitalism, then you oppose capitalism. It doesn't take an Einstein or even a Kurzweil to work out what that means.



Kurzweil

were of no benefit to them, because they had very little to patent, but instead force up prices and inhibit technology transfer. The report concluded that IPRs effectively rip off poor countries (*New Scientist*, Sept 21, 2002).

The issue of patents is always going to be thorny, because both arguments are correct - in capitalism. Ownership of intellectual property has to be protected in a property owning society, as anyone who has had their house burgled, their car stolen or their idea robbed will tend to agree, but there is no denying that intellectual property rights do indeed stifle innovation

in every field, because of the tendency of patents to concentrate into the hands of the intellectual property rich. The scientific community is divided on the question, between those who believe in knowledge for its own sake and therefore wish to pool ideas, and those who wish to profit personally from their research by denying others access. Since this is precisely the same debate as between socialists and those who support capitalism, one might describe scientists who wish to abolish patent and copyright restrictions as closet socialists.

Kenya Referendum farce

The 21 November referendum conducted by the Electoral Commission of Kenya to vote for or against the proposed new constitution was just a waste of money.

The clamour for a new constitution commenced in earnest with the advent of multi-party politics in the early 90s. Since then it has reached crescendo. Lives have been lost, limbs broken and some of those who have been at the top relegated to the lower levels of society.

During the regime of former president Daniel Arap Moi, short-term political reforms were introduced to keep at bay those clamouring for a new constitution. Mr. Moi succeeded in that he was able to rule for long but, at his departure, left the issue of the constitution unresolved.

With the coming to power of President Mwai Kibaki and his national Rainbow Coalition (NARC), constitution reform was one of the promises given to Kenyans in the 2002 general election campaign. In 2003 a constitutional assembly was instituted at the Bomas of Kenya venue which deliberated on the views collected from Kenyans about the constitution by the Kenya Review Commission in early 2002. The assembly sat for one year.

Its final submissions in early 2004 formed part of what has been argued about. The so-called Bomas draft was viewed as flawed as well as having good contents for the country. Or so those who took part in the deliberations said.

Since the draft which came out of Bomas wasn't agreeable to all, Kenyan MPs met to discuss the contentious issues (on power sharing, devolution and so-called



Above: President Mwai Kibaki former. Below: president Daniel Arap Moi



religious courts). It was from their deliberations that a new draft emerged (the so-called Wako draft). The government gave deadlines for the passage of the draft, the final of which was the referendum of 21 November.

Kenyans overwhelmingly rejected the draft, by voting 60 percent against the passage while those for the passage only managed to garner 40 percent of the vote. It's back to the drawing board.

A new constitution or not isn't the panacea for what ails Kenya. The country has only two tribes: the rich and the pathetically poor (though there are 42 ethnic tribes). The rich own factories and employ the labour of the poor, who they exploit to the last sweat. The poor are in the majority but their thinking, lives and even their way of going are controlled by the other tribe.

The new constitution even if it's coated with sweet words will never solve the imbalance in society. It will never make the poor rich. The rich tribe want to use the constitution to perpetuate their hold on the lives of the poor tribe. They have no intention of making any tangible changes in the lives of the other tribe.

And that's why I never support or participate in any activity designed to make a new constitution. I'll only participate in a meaningful activity which is intended to bring a system which has no frontiers, a society in which production is for use not profit, where there are no leaders and where money isn't worshipped.

Only when such a society is established can we say that we've arrived. And arrive we will. ■

PATRICK NDEGE, Nairobi.

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Intellectual Property: a further restriction on personal freedom



Professor Noam Chomsky of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's contribution is based on a Q&A session held on 22 April last year at Washington State University. Tristan Miller provides a commentary from a socialist perspective.

Guaranteeing corporate profits

The relation of intellectual property to personal freedom and its place in public and academic settings is an interesting topic with an interesting history.

The Uruguay Round that set up the World Trade Organization imposed what is called a free trade agreement, but which is, in fact, a highly protectionist agreement (the US and business leaders being strongly opposed to free trade and market economies, except in highly specific ways beneficial to them). A crucial part of this agreement was the establishment of very strong "intellectual property rights". What this actually means is rights that guarantee monopoly pricing power to private tyrannies.

For example, consider a drug corporation. Most of their serious research and development - the hard part of it - is funded by the public. In fact, much of the dynamism of the world's economy comes out of public expenditures through the state system, which is the source of most innovation and development. There is some research and development in the corporate system, but it's mostly at the marketing end. And this is true of the drug industry. Once the corporations gain the benefit of the public paying the costs and taking the risks, they want to monopolize the profit and the intellectual property rights. These rights are not for small inventors. In fact, the people doing the work in the corporations don't get much out of them; at best, they would receive a small bonus if they invent something. It's the corporate tyrannies that are making the profits and they want to guarantee them.

The World Trade Organization proposed new, enhanced intellectual property rights - patent rights - far beyond anything that existed in the past. In fact, they are not only designed to maximize monopoly pricing and profit, but also to prevent development. For instance, the World Trade Organization rules introduced the concept of product patents. It used to be you could patent a process, but not the product, so if some smart guy could figure out a better way of producing something, he could do it. The WTO wants to block this. It's important to block development and progress in order to ensure monopoly rights, so they now have product patents.

Consider US history: suppose the colonies, after independence, had been forced to accept this patent regime. What would we Americans be doing now? First of all, there would be very few of us at all, but those of us who would be here would be pursuing our comparative advantage in exporting fish and fur. That's what economists tell you is right - pursue your

comparative advantage. That was our comparative advantage. We certainly wouldn't have had a textile industry. The British textiles were far cheaper and better. Actually, British textiles were cheaper and better because Britain had crushed Irish and Indian superior textile manufacturers and stolen their techniques. They therefore became the pre-eminent textile manufacturer, by force of course. In actuality, the US does have a textile industry which grew up around Massachusetts. But the only way it could develop was by extremely high tariffs which protected unviable US industries. Our textile industry developed and later had spin-offs into other industries. And so it continues.

We would never have had a steel industry either, for the same reason: British steel was far superior. One of the reasons is because they were stealing Indian techniques. British engineers were going to India to learn about steel-making well into the 19th century. They ran the country by force so they could take what the Indians knew and develop a steel industry. In order to develop its own steel industry, the US used massive government involvement through extremely high tariffs and the military system, as usual.

This system continues right up to the present, and furthermore it's true of every single developed society. It's one of the best-known truths of economic history that the only countries that developed are the ones that pursued these techniques. There were countries that were forced to adopt free trade and "liberalization" - the colonies - and they got destroyed. The sharp divide between the first and the third worlds has really taken shape since the 18th century. And maintaining this divide is what intellectual property rights are for. In fact, there's a name for it in economic history: Friedrich List, the famous German political economist in the 19th century,

who borrowed his major protectionist doctrines from Andrew Hamilton, called it "kicking away the ladder". First you use state power and violence to develop, then you kick away those procedures so that other people can't do it.

Intellectual property rights have very little to do with individual initiative. Einstein didn't have any intellectual property rights on relativity theory. Science and innovation is carried out by people who are interested in it; that's the way science works. However, there's been an effort in very recent years to commercialize it, much the same way everything else has been commercialized. So you don't do science because it's exciting and challenging, because you want to find out something new, and because you want the world to benefit from it; you do it because maybe you can make some money out of it. You can make your own judgment about the moral value. Personally, I think it's extremely cheapening, but also destructive of initiative and development.

It's important to note that the profits from patents commonly don't go back to the individual inventors. This is a very well-studied topic. Take, for example, the well-studied case of computer-controlled machine tools, which are now a fundamental component of the economy. There's a very good study of this by David Noble, a leading political economist. What he discovered is that these techniques were invented by some small guy working in his garage somewhere in, I think, Michigan. After the MIT mechanical engineering department learned about it, they picked up these techniques and developed them and extended them and so on, and the corporations came and picked them up from MIT, and finally it became a core part of US industry. Well, what happened to the guy who invented it? He's still probably working in his garage in Michigan or wherever it is. And that's very typical.

I just don't think intellectual property has much to do with innovation or independence. It has to do with protecting major concentrations of power which mostly got their power as a public gift, and making sure that they can maintain and expand their power. And these highly protectionist devices really have to be rammed down the public's throat. They don't make any economic sense or any other sense.

Neither do I think that intellectual property should play any role in academic and public institutions. In 1980 the Bayh-Dole Act gave universities the right to patent inventions that came out of their own research. But nothing comes strictly out of a university's own research; it comes out of public funding. That's how the university can function; that's how their research projects work. The whole system is set up to socialize cost and risk to the general public, and then within that context, things can be invented. But I don't think universities should patent them. They should be working for the public good, and that means the fruits of their research should be available to the public.

Noam Chomsky

No amount of legislation can change the basics

To most people today, the notion that ideas or information can be owned seems as natural as owning a house or a bicycle. We are brought up to believe that when someone writes a book or piece of music, or develops plans for a new invention, they become that work's sole owner. This means that they alone have the right to determine whether and how that work is used by other people, or the right to transfer ownership of the work to another person or a company. Only the owner is allowed to make and sell copies of the work, to incorporate it into a collection of other works, or to produce a new work based on the original, such as a new edition or a sequel. These "rights", as they are called, are encoded not just in our laws, but increasingly, as we shall see, in our social norms and our technology.

However, the world did not always work this way. To people in the Ancient world and in Mediaeval times, the thought that anyone could claim ownership and control of something intangible like a poem or an idea would have seemed ludicrous. Philosophers and mathematicians regularly borrowed, critiqued, and expanded upon the works of their colleagues; historians compiled and summarized descriptions of events recorded by others; and musicians performed existing songs while adding their own embellishments. Written works were copied freely (albeit laboriously) by trained scribes, and technological improvements diffused gradually among artisans through word of mouth.

To someone from the past, then, today's intellectual property regime would seem terribly restrictive. Had Shakespeare been told he could not copy and rework material from other playwrights, he would have seen this as a tyrannical imposition on his personal freedom as an artist. What's more, we would have been robbed of many of his greatest works, including *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, both of which were adaptations of other authors' plays. What was it that changed, then, between Shakespeare's time and ours, to allow us to think of information and ideas in the same terms as physical property? And more importantly, is our society more or less free as a result?

The answer to the first question is relatively simple when we look at things in their historical context. In the century preceding Shakespeare, two great developments began sweeping across Europe, one technological, the other socio-economical. The first of these was mechanized printing, introduced by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s. Books and pamphlets suddenly became easy and cheap to reproduce, and with their abundance literacy and authorship increased. The second development was the capitalist mode of production, which was by fits and starts beginning to replace the old feudal system. Trained scribes who

used their own inexpensive tools for copying manuscripts were replaced by relatively unskilled workers who operated a costly printing press owned by their employer. Few authors could afford a press to print their own books, and the wealthy publishers who owned the presses depended on a steady supply of new literature to drive their sales. Therefore, authors and publishers entered into an agreement whereby the publisher supported the author financially in exchange for printing their book and retaining the profits from its sale.

Though a few popular authors became quite wealthy through this arrangement, the vast majority were not significantly better off than the rest of the labouring class. As with any employment relationship, it was not in the publisher's interest to pay authors any more than required for their upkeep, thus forcing them to either continue writing or seek other employment. To prevent authors from securing payment from more than one publisher simultaneously and to prevent rival publishers from cutting into their profits, publishers in the 17th and 18th centuries pressured governments to enact laws recognizing a publisher's exclusive ownership and control ("copyright") of a literary work. (Initially this ownership rested with the author, though as it was useless to anyone without a press, he invariably assigned it to a publisher.) Similar laws were enacted granting monopolies on "any manner of new manufactures" - that is, patents - which again were beneficial primarily to those who already had the capital to exploit and defend them.

For professional writers, artists, and inventors, then, copyrights and patents - collectively referred to as "intellectual property" - are simply a specialized legal formalization of the wage-labour exchange other workers are forced to make with their employers. Just as manual labourers, lacking the means to produce and distribute their own products, must sell their labour power to a factory owner for an hourly wage, writers, lacking a printing press and bookstore, sell the copyright on their writing to a publishing house for a lump sum or nominal royalty. And just as manual labourers selling their labour power must waive ownership of the goods they have produced and the freedom to use them as they see fit, so too do writers selling their copyright lose the freedom to use their writing as they wish. If a writer wishes to adapt or incorporate elements of another book - even one that they themselves originally wrote - into a new work, they must first secure (and often pay for) permission from the publisher who owns the copyright. Given that the free and fruitful exchange of ideas and information was commonplace before intellectual property, it is difficult to argue that these laws have done anything other than rob artists and scientists of their personal freedom to learn from and interact with each other.

And what of the rest of us, those of us who do not make our livings writing, performing, or inventing? Has the intellectual property regime affected us in any way? Until relatively recently, the answer was not much, or at least, not



Out-pirated by capitalism?

personally. Intellectual property was simply a legal fiction allowing corporations to stake their various claims to "properties" in the information market. How the capitalists decided amongst themselves who had the right to produce what had little bearing on the individual freedom

of the average worker, who owned neither presses to print books nor factories to mass-produce new machines. Technically it was illegal for a worker to make a copy of a book, but since it would take them weeks or months to do so by hand, the publishers' profits were not threatened and no injunction was sought.

With the advent of home computers and the Internet, however, the entire working class suddenly found itself in possession of the same sorts of instruments of production and distribution that had previously been exclusive to wealthy publishing houses. Once a book or piece of music had been put into digital form, anyone could instantly produce unlimited copies with the click of a button and instantly send them anywhere in the world. Alarmed at the threat to their monopolies

and their profits, publishers began to take notice. Criminal and civil lawsuits were brought against individuals who downloaded music from the Internet or copied software for their friends. Publishers launched wide-scale public "education" campaigns to convince people that unauthorized copying was akin to theft or even to piracy on the high seas. The full force of the law and corporate propaganda apparatus was applied to preventing workers from exercising their new-found ability to produce and distribute intellectual property on a massive scale.

At this point, one could well argue that people technically had not lost any of their personal freedoms, since by law they were never free to copy information in the first place. This changed, as Noam Chomsky notes, with the passing of increasingly restrictive laws in the late 20th century. Now it is a crime not just to copy a digital work, but also to use it in any way not authorized by the publisher. Many of the freedoms people enjoyed with printed books and analogue audio and video recordings no longer apply to their digital counterparts. A publisher can arbitrarily decide that a particular e-book can be read only a certain number of times, or only up to a certain date, or only on a certain device, making transfer to a friend or donation to a library impossible. These restrictions are hard-coded into the device or software which reads the e-book, and modifying the software or inventing a new device to circumvent these restrictions is a criminal offence.

In conclusion, Prof. Chomsky is correct in his identification of today's intellectual property system as a way of granting legal monopolies to corporations. And I applaud him for speaking out against the worst excesses of companies exploiting the patent system in the name of maximizing profits. But by focussing on and attacking only recent intellectual property law reforms, it is easy to fall into the trap of suggesting that the system could be "fixed" simply by repealing these reforms or otherwise tweaking the laws. As I hope I have shown here, from their very beginnings copyrights and patents have existed to benefit only that small minority of people who owned the presses, warehouses, and stores through which books and other media are reproduced and distributed. Any benefit to the inventors and authors who actually produce inventions and artistic works is incidental, and furthermore comes at the cost of stifling cross-pollination of ideas and the progress it entails. No amount of legislation can ever change the fundamental relationship in production between the workers, who produce almost all of the world's artistic and scientific wealth, and the rich minority who control the means of disseminating this wealth. Therefore workers have no stake in the intellectual property regime and should work only for the abolition of the entire system that supports it. ■

Tristan Miller



Cooking the Books (1)

Value added, but who by?

Sir Digby Jones, director-general of the employers' organisation, the CBI, has his own economic theory.

Interviewed in the *Times* law section (22 November) he expounded his view that British capitalism could no longer rely on just producing "commodity" goods which "sell only on price" (by which he seems to have meant basic material goods), but should switch to "value-added" services. Britain, he argued, cannot compete with countries such as India and China in producing cheap "commodity goods", but should let these countries make money from doing this which they could then spend on buying "value-added" services from Britain.

But what does he mean by "value-added"? In Marxian economics it would mean the new value added by labour in the process of production to the previously existing value of the raw and other materials. And which is divided into wages (the replacement value of the workers' mental and physical energies used up in production) and surplus value (which goes to the capitalist employer and is the source of profit).

In a talk to businesspeople in Birmingham last April, he did make a little clearer what he meant. There were "fewer and fewer widget makers in the region", he said, "but we are creating more and more work in the higher value, quality, branded sector". And he gave an

example. We should not be worried, he said,

"if we went into Tesco to buy a Harry Potter toy for £10 to discover it had been Made in China. Because of that £10 just £1 ends up in China. The rest stays in Britain via the likes of licensing and intellectual property rights, advertising, copywriting and marketing" (*Birmingham Post*, 27 April).

But neither advertising, nor copywriting, nor marketing add any value since there are concerned with selling not producing goods, while licensing and intellectual property rights are claims on profits, i.e. on value produced elsewhere.

So where does the £9, which Digby Jones calls value-added and which is the source of the income of the advertising agencies, etc. come from?

The workers in China who made the toy (and the transport workers who transported it to Britain) added a value of between £9 and £10 to the value of the materials from which the toys were made, out of which they received well under £1 (since the cost of the materials and the profits of their employers also had to come out of the £1 that ended up in China). The Chinese capitalists who exploited them had to pay licensing and intellectual property right fees to firms in Britain, which swallowed up a part of the surplus value they had extracted from their workers.

If they had had the facilities to

advertise and market the toys they could have done this themselves and kept more of the surplus value. But, not being in this position, they had to sell the toys below their value - well below their value, it seems - to a whole series of go-betweens (advertisers, marketing consultants and the like) who each took a share of the added value, the last one (Tesco) selling it at its full value of £10 to the final consumer.

So, what Sir Digby calls "value-added" is rather "value-realised". It is not the capitalists with money invested in advertising, marketing and other activities to do with selling who add new value to the goods made in China or India. It was added by the workers there, but sold below its value by their immediate employer to selling capitalists in Britain.

In capitalist terms, Sir Digby's strategy for British capitalism could make sense: within a global division of labour, China, India and others produce the material goods and Britain and others sell them. But, if his figures for the Chinese toys are right, what a condemnation of capitalism: nine-tenths of the selling price of a good made up of non-productive on-costs to do with selling and only one-tenth with actual production! If that's the figure for all goods, socialism - where goods would not need to be sold but would be free for people to take - would have no problem producing enough for everybody, in China and India as well as in Europe and North America.



Sir Digby Jones

Why Socialists aren't part of the Left

When someone comes across the Socialist Party for the first time, a common reaction is to consider us as just another left-wing political organisation. From one point of view this is not surprising, as the left use similar terminology to us, talking of Socialism, class struggle, exploitation, etc, and invoking Karl Marx. But digging a little deeper will show that our political position is very different from that of the left. By 'the left' we mean the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Labour Party, all the groups with a name that's a variation on Communist Party, Militant (dishonestly using the name 'Socialist Party'), and the Scottish Socialist Party, among others. All quotations in this article are taken from the websites of the organisations referred to.

The first difference is that of our aims, the kind of society we wish to see established. Socialists are quite clear and uncompromising on this - our aim is a society without wages, money, countries or governments, based on common ownership of the means of production (land, factories, offices, etc.). Production would be for use, not profit, and there would be free access to what had been produced. The result is quite simple: no poverty, no homelessness, no starvation, no war. Such a society would be fully democratic, with no ruling class or vested interests.

Do the left stand for this kind of society? The simple answer is No. Militant, for instance, say they wish to 'take into public ownership the top 150 companies, banks and building societies that dominate the economy, under democratic working-class control and management.' Forget the rhetoric about democratic control - this is a recipe for state-run capitalism. Socialism, as a moneyless society, will have no need for banks or building societies. In general, in fact, the left stand for a version of capitalism where the state is the main employer. This makes no difference to members of the working class, who still have to work for wages, but will now be exploited by the state and those who run it rather than by private capitalists. The left are admirers of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, which ushered in over 70 years of state capitalism and a police state. They differ on when and why they think things 'went wrong' in Russia, but they all support the regime established in 1917.

It's true that there are minor variations on the theme of state-run capitalism. The SSP, for instance, advocates 'the break-up of the British state and the creation of a free Scottish socialist republic.' But a single Socialist country in a hostile capitalist world is just impossible, and this quote just reveals that the SSP aim

is state capitalism - Scottish state capitalism. Many of the left are in fact nationalistic in one way or another.

It is also true that some left-wing organisations pay lip service to the idea of a moneyless society. The CPGB, for example, refers to 'communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations.' But, like the rest of the left, this is for them a paper aim that bears no relation to their everyday activity or the ideas set out in their publications. They make no effort to explain how Socialist/Communist society would work, and no effort to convince workers of the advantages of such a way of organising things. Instead they combine



Scottish Socialist Party



a set of immediate demands with the aim of a so-called proletarian dictatorship, which in reality means state-run capitalism.

This takes us on to a further point. In spite of all their revolutionary posturing and calls for a fundamental change in society, the left actually devote their time to chasing reforms of capitalism. If you look at the programmes or manifestos of left-wing parties, you will find them full of reforms of a wide variety of types. A random list of examples: 'Right to retirement from age 60 for all workers' (CPGB); 'a Scottish Service Tax - a fair alternative to the council tax that will make the rich pay their share' (SSP); 'An immediate 50% increase in the pension as a step towards a living pension for all pensioners' (Militant); 'Renationalise the railways' (WRP).

The left generally draw a distinction between 'immediate demands' such as those just listed and longer-term goals. We've already seen that the longer-term goals in any case involve a continuation of capitalism, but they are usually given second place to the short-term demands. The justification normally provided is that fighting on the immediate demands will win workers over to the longer-term ideas of the organisation. 'The struggle for

reforms can tip over into revolution. Battles for reforms are vital preparation for social revolution' (SWP). But no evidence is offered for such a position, and the task of revolutionaries is not to jump on the bandwagon of reforms but to expose their inadequacies, to show that reforms cannot solve working-class problems. Indeed, some left-wing groups deliberately and dishonestly go for short-term aims that they know cannot be met under capitalism, as a way of fuelling working-class discontent. In other words, they deliberately lie to workers as a way of getting them into their party!

Lastly, Socialists differ from the left in our attitude to leadership and democracy. Socialism will be democratic, with all having an equal say in how things are run; it follows that the movement for Socialism must be democratic too. The Socialist Party has no leaders and is run by its membership. We have an executive committee, elected each year by ballot of the members; their role is not to make policy but to administer the Party in accordance with decisions made by members.

The left, however, adopt a Leninist view and support leadership: they see themselves as leaders of the working class, and are organised internally with a division between an inner circle of leaders and 'ordinary' members. For instance, they see the need for 'authoritative and influential leaders who have been steeled over a long period of time' (CPGB). Most left-wing groups do not operate as cults (see the November *Socialist Standard*), but they still have a distinction between rank-and-file members and the leadership. They are often rather coy about their role as would-be leaders, but as Leninists they all support the idea of a vanguard. A leadership-based organisation is not going to be any use in establishing an egalitarian society without leaders. But, as we've said, that's not what the left aim for anyway.

The left, then, stand for state-run capitalism rather than Socialism; they advocate reforms rather than revolution; they are in favour of leadership rather than democracy. The Socialist Party, in contrast, does not aim at reforming capitalism but at replacing it by a new democratic way of organising the world, Socialism, brought about by a revolution, and we do not see ourselves as leaders. It should be clear that the Socialist Party is quite unlike the left wing, and that we are definitely and for good reason not part of the left. ■

Paul Bennett

Catholicism in Disgrace



In Canada, the United States, Australia and elsewhere, but especially in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church stands in disgrace, following the plethora of revelations about the activities of paedophiles and other types of abusers among its clergy. Obviously the structure of the Church and the often uncanny power its priests and bishops have over a subservient laity must make it a target for paedophiles and sadists. But the real and utterly appalling shame of the Church was its subsequent treatment of the abused and its frenetic efforts to cover up by lies and other deceits the contemptible behaviour of its servants.

Was it purely coincidence that the greatest abuse outside Ireland took place in Canada, the US and Australia, in mainly Irish Catholic areas and under the tutelage of the Irish Christian Brothers and Irish priests? Here we look at the historic role of Catholic priests and of Catholic institutions in Ireland over the centuries and for the source of the awesome power and the cavalier attitude of a now-disgraced Church.

The Roman Catholic Church (and, to a lesser extent, its Christian derivatives) arrogated onto itself the role of arbiter in things appertaining not only to matters of what it called 'morality' but to all forms of human behaviour and even juridical practice. Canon Law was the ultimate determinant superior to all other legal forms.

As feudalism yielded to capitalism in Europe and modern nation states were freed from the political hegemony of the so-called Holy Roman Empire, the Popes and their cardinals were forced to concede to widening democratic forms which were historically anathema to Rome. Still, even in countries where Roman Catholicism had been politically and morally overshadowed by various forms of Protestantism, different Popes cautioned against democratic concessions to the people.

According to Pope Leo XIII (Encyclical, *Immortale Dei* 'On the Christian Constitution of States', November 1885) canon law is effectively superior to the civil law, having derived from Jesus Christ through Peter and the apostles to the Church:

"In very truth, Jesus Christ gave his apostles unrestrained authority in sacred matters together with the genuine and most true power of making laws, as also with the duplex right of judging and punishing which flow from that power."

By then, of course, such nonsense was a fatuous Popish aspiration which was in conflict with the material conditions of life in most of Europe. The power to make and enforce laws and the right and the power to punish in pursuit of such laws was now in

the possession of the bourgeoisie and its god was profit.

Ireland

Ireland nestled on the western flank of Europe, its natural development frustrated by its proximity to its powerful neighbour, England. According to legend, Ireland had been Christianised by St Patrick in the fifth century AD but, as in many other places, the Christian proselytizer appeared to have fashioned the new faith to suit the territory, or the native Celtic tribes adjusted it to suit their customs. Druidic Ireland might have accepted the Christian God but it did not give up its Druidic ways nor did it submit to the authority of Rome.

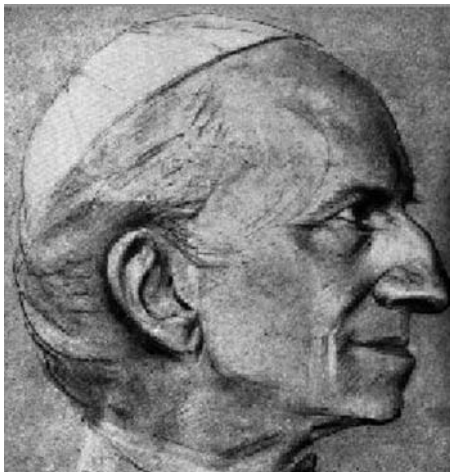
Effectively, the Celtic Christian Church was set within the organisational norms of the clan system. Each clan elected its own bishops and priests, which meant that there were a great number of clan-nominated bishops whose episcopal authority was the writ and the power of the clan.

Eventually in the 12th century Pope Adrian IV in a bull *Laudabiliter* gave authority to King Henry II of England to invade Ireland and "enlarge the bounds of the Christian faith to the ignorant and rude and to extirpate the roots of vice from the field of the Lord". In the "Lord's Field", as perceived by Rome, the easy moral attitudes and forms of social organisation enjoyed by the Irish were proscribed and as the historian P. Beresford Ellis points out, "The Irish clergy had embraced feudalism (the social system underpinning Roman Catholicism) a system repugnant to the ordinary Irishman long before it was

enforced in Ireland". Whatever the wishes of the Church, the de facto imposition of feudalism in Ireland would take another five torturous centuries.

Outside that area of Leinster, known as "The Pale", on the eastern side of Ireland, the native Irish clans resisted the incursion of English authority. Initially, within the Pale bishops and abbots, in accordance with the feudal system, became barons under the crown but later Anglo-Norman clerics were rewarded with appointments to Irish livings - inevitably to the chagrin of the native clergy.

In the centuries that followed ownership of land and other forms of property were increasingly denied to the native Irish. But England was still a Catholic country and thus priests and bishops in Ireland, while being denied the more influential positions within the



Above: Pope Leo XIII. Right: The Pale

Church, did not suffer any other forms of proscription from the government. Outside the Pale the power of the priest and the Church within the atrophying world of the clans prospered, especially within the province of education.

The war of the two kings

It is argued that it was this 'prospering', the strength of the Church and its priests in Ireland, that withstood the force of the Reformation when England became Protestant. Certainly, after the Reformation, and especially after the defeat of the English Catholic Stuart, King James II, in 1691, the Catholic Church and its priests were to suffer legal proscription and vicious persecution. Ironically, James's defeat in Ireland was at the hands of the Central European powers organised under the terms of the Treaty of Augsburg, and the commander of the victorious forces was William, Prince of Orange, James's Protestant son-in-law - the famous King Billy, who, despite the subsequent persecution of Presbyterians as well as Catholics by his government is immortalised in the folk memory of Ulster loyalists.

This persecution of Irish

Protestantism's largest denomination as well as Catholics 'and other dissenters' was the result of the Establishment of the Episcopalian Church, which made the practice of other religions illegal and subject to severe penalties, including confiscation of property. Later, in 1719 Parliament

passed an Act of Toleration granting relief from the Penal Laws to Presbyterians but the Act made no concessions to Catholics. In the years following the formalisation of laws against the Catholic Church and its members some 5,000 Catholics became Anglicans, but the overwhelming majority of the native Irish were mere 'tenants-at-will' on smallholdings without either security of tenure or fixity of rents; in fact they were outlaws in the land of their birth.

It was in such conditions that the Catholic Church and its priests, not always speaking with the one voice, gained overwhelming influence over the minds of the people. All forms of agrarian unrest, inevitable under persecution, were roundly condemned by the Church. But the priests were close to the people, their only articulate ally and, almost in spite of the contempt of the hierarchy for the peasantry, their influence over the minds of the people became more telling. The English government was a brutal foreign power visibly persecuting priest and people. Inevitably the Church, in the form of its priests, became the powerful institutional stabilising factor in the bitter lives of an inarticulate, harassed and brutalised people.

Excommunicated IRA members

The Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829 gave formal legal recognition to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland; by then the power of the Church and its religious fraternities was awesome. It wasn't only in matters of birth, marriage and death that the power of the church was evident; almost every sort of activity, business, political or sporting had the ubiquitous priest and in the



structure and content of education the power of the Church was paramount.

As the Church-supported Irish National Party fell into decay before the burgeoning power of Sinn Fein after 1905, clerical influence was transferred to the latter party though the official organ of Irish Catholicism condemned the Republican Rising of 1916 as 'an act of brigandage' and supported the British execution of the rebel leadership. Similarly, during the subsequent guerrilla war (1919-22) the Church condemned the IRA and excommunicated its members, but in the main the old priestly stalwarts were there to lend support and comfort - and, perhaps, save the Church from its own error of judgement.

The guerrilla war ended with a British government-enforced partitioning of Ireland

into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. For the zealots and bigots of Catholicism and Protestantism it seemed a red-letter day, for it lent to each in their respective areas virtually untrammelled political and social influence.

In the north the political agents of the linen lords and the industrial capitalists declared that they had a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people, while the Protestant churches cosied up to a system of sectarian discrimination designed to hurt workers who were Catholics and fool workers who were Protestants into believing that their slums and their miserable life styles made them superior to their even more miserable class brethren.

Surrender

In the south, all the political parties surrendered to the arrogance and deceptions of the Catholic Church and its institutions. The minds of the young were given over to priests, nuns and Christian Brothers for an 'education' unquestionably based on a morbid, insular Catholicism. As if that was not bad enough, as we now know, in many of the institutions run by Catholic religious orders children were being physically and sexually abused and the Church was tolerating this abuse.

The scandal of the Magdalene laundries, which was highlighted by BBC, ITV and to its credit RTE, demonstrated the quite remarkable power the priests had over an acutely educationally deprived people. The laundries were operated by the Sisters of Mercy (sic!) who brutally exploited slave labour to carry out their function. The slaves were young women who had been abandoned in pregnancy, or who showed promise of behaviour alien to the views of their families. In many cases a priest requested or persuaded a child's parents to abandon their child to these institutes of brutality and slavery for 'the good of the child's soul'. One old woman who had only been released in the late sixties from this dreadful servitude told a television audience how the priest had approached her parents when she was young and advised them that their daughter's good looks could "present an occasion for sin".

When a young doctor who in his practice had experienced the ravages of tuberculosis became Minister of Health in the Coalition government of 1948 he promulgated a Bill to give free medical care to expectant mothers and children under the age of five. The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin wrote to the then Taoiseach complaining that such state interference could not be tolerated in a Catholic country. In France, Italy or any other Catholic country such absurd temerity would have been laughed at; in Catholic Ireland both the Bill and its political sponsor were dropped.

But the bishops could not control the airwaves nor could they control Irish capitalism's demand for widening of the education curriculum. Irish Television still placates the bishops with a silence for the Angelus; it is an acknowledged embarrassment but as in all other countries the value-system and vulgarities of global capitalism's unitary culture overshadows the morbid doctrines of the Church and sometimes even exposes its institutions for the moral cesspits they are. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

Richard Hamilton's pop art critique of contemporary consumer society "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?"



isn't true in that it assumes that the economy responds to consumer demand, whereas in fact it responds to changes in the rate of profit, while most people's "demand" is limited by the size of their wage packet or salary cheque.

That capitalism is not the most efficient way of providing for people's material needs - and that socialism as a system of common ownership, democratic control and production just for use would do this much better - is the traditional socialist case against capitalism. And it retains all its validity. But, after the last World War, in the 50s and 60s capitalism in North America and Western Europe appeared to live up to its promise of material prosperity for most people through the emergence of the so-called "consumer society". But then another, different criticism of capitalism appeared: that while it might have solved more or less adequately the problem of "bread", of dire material want, for most people in these parts of the world, it had still not created a satisfactory society.

Books began to appear in America with such titles as *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Organization Man*, *The Hidden Persuaders*, *The Waste Makers*, *One-Dimensional Man*, all critical of various aspects of the "consumer society" as a society in which people were encouraged to regard the acquisition of more and more consumer goods as the main aim in life. In Europe, such criticism took on a more explicitly anti-capitalist form. In France the critical books bore such titles as *A Critique of Everyday Life* and the *Society of the Spectacle*. The argument was that in the "consumer society" (called instead, more accurately in fact, "commodity society") the logic of buying something to passively consume had spread from the purchase of material goods to other aspects of everyday life - to how people spent their leisure time and to how they related to each other.

This type of criticism added another dimension to the socialist case against capitalism: that it not only failed to organise the satisfaction of material needs properly but that it also degraded - dehumanised - the "quality of life".

It's not clear to whom the credit for developing this "cultural criticism" of capitalism should go. The Frankfurt School of Marxism (Fromm, Marcuse and others), the Situationists, even radical journalists in America like Vance Packard, would be among the candidates. In any event they were all working on the basis of the observable fact of the degrading effect capitalism was having on the *quality* of everyday life by spreading commercial values more and more widely.

It's a powerful criticism of capitalism. Perhaps even these days, in this part of the world, a more powerful criticism than the traditional socialist one that capitalism brings material poverty to most people. Certainly, on a world scale, there are hundreds of millions in dire material poverty. And there are few millions in this country - around 15 percent of the population - who are materially deprived. But we can't say this of the majority of the population here. Most people in Britain don't have a problem about getting three meals a day, decent clothes, heating, don't

Capitalism and the quality of life

Capitalism is a society where nearly all the things that humans need or want are articles of commerce, things made to be bought and sold. This is not a complete definition since under capitalism one thing in particular becomes a commodity - the human ability to work and to create things, what Marx called "labour power" - and this is in fact the defining feature of capitalism. It's a commodity society in which labour-power is a commodity.

This has two consequences. The first is that there is not simply production for sale but production for profit. And secondly, most things that humans need or want tend to become commodities, i.e. have to be bought. It is not difficult to see why. The wages system means that most people are dependent, for satisfying their needs, on the money they are paid for the sale of the one saleable commodity they do possess (their labour power), money which they then use to buy what they must have to live. So the "commodification" of labour power means

the commodification of food, of clothes, of accommodation, and of other, less material wants too.

One of the things that the spread of capitalism meant, in concrete terms, was the spread of money-commodity relations. It's a process that's still going on in parts of the world and which even conventional economists speak of as integrating formerly largely self-sufficient subsistence farmers in Asia, Africa and Latin America into the "money economy".

What we are talking about here is the commodification of people's material needs. Some people might not find this objectionable. Some even find it a progressive, even a liberating development. In fact this is one of the standard defences of capitalism - that the money economy gives people the freedom to choose what to consume by how they spend their money and that this is the most efficient way of organising the satisfaction of people's material needs and wants. Of course this



Above: Marcuse. Right: Fromm

have to go to the pawnbrokers or live in vermin-invested rooms. In fact, the commodification of the "wants of the mind" is based on the fact that most people have money to spend on satisfying wants over and above those of "the stomach". If people didn't have this discretionary purchasing power after having satisfied their material needs, then there would be no market for cultural and entertainment products for capitalism to stimulate, manipulate and exploit. (As to why people have this "extra" money to spend on entertainment, it will have something to do with increased intensity and stress at work requiring more relaxation - more escapism - for people to recreate their particular ability to work.)

The criticism of "consumer society" was not just that it represented the invasion and colonisation of every aspect of social life by money-commodity relations, but that it also encouraged passive consumption rather than active participation. There is a great deal of validity in this point - that the "consumer society" is one where, sometimes literally, people sit in armchairs

watching the passing show provided for them. This is a criticism of people's lack of participation is shaping their lives, a lack that was also reflected politically where "democracy" is conceived of as merely choosing every four or five years between rival would-be elites (using in fact marketing techniques to attract support). Instead of people making their own sport or their own entertainment - or politics - they consume them as a pre-packaged commodity.

There must be something wrong with a society in which, instead of people living their own lives and interacting with their neighbours in a human way, they sit in front of a screen watching actors perform artificial scenes based on exaggerations of everyday life and identifying with the fictitious characters in these programmes. And in which the most widely-read newspapers don't discuss real events so much as the artificial ones portrayed in these programmes and the lives and loves of the leading actors who play in them - as well as those of other so-called "celebrities" from the world of sport and entertainment.

As long as capitalism lasts, the quality of life will continue to decline. There's nothing that can be done to stop this within the context of capitalism as it is due to capitalism, representing, as it does, the dissolving effects on society of the spread of money-commodity relations into all aspects of life. So, despite the slow, but undeniable increase in material living standards in certain parts of the world the case for socialism as a non-commercial society in which human welfare and human values will be the guiding

principle retains all its relevance. With the common ownership of the means of life, there could and would be production directly to satisfy human needs and wants and not for sale with a view to profit - the death of the commodity, the end of what William Morris called "commercial society" - and a classless community with a genuinely common interest in which humans can relate to each other as human beings and not as social atoms colliding with each other on the market-place as commodity buyers and sellers. ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (2)

The Property Rights Act

When Labour got back into office in 1997, one of

the first things they did, to show without spending any money that they were reformers, was to sign up to the European Convention on Human Rights. This was supposed to give people more legal "rights". Actually, as infringements could give rise to monetary compensation, it was more a bonanza for lawyers and has resulted in the further spread of "compensation culture", capitalism's tendency to put a monetary value on everything.

But it has also had another effect: to entrench further the rights of property, as two recent legal cases have shown (*Times*, 18 April and 23 November). Before the entry into force of the 1998 Human Rights Act, "squatters" acquired a legal right

to a property after occupying it unchallenged for at least 12 years.

The cases involved property companies which had acquired titles to land which had been squatted by farmers for more than the 12 years. The companies relied on an article of the Convention that states: "Every natural person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided by law."

The judges in both cases (the second those of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasburg from which there is no appeal) ruled that the previous English law that allowed the farmers to assume ownership of the land was an infringement of the property companies' rights as enshrined in the Convention. As a result they will receive as compensation a nice fat cheque, likely to run in one case to millions of pounds.

So-called "human rights" have always been linked to

property rights. As C.B. Macpherson showed in his classic study of 16th and 17th English political philosophy, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, the whole concept of human rights was based on the idea of every human being having a property right to their own body. The state is not supposed to stop them using their mental and physical energies as they think fit; this involves not just freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, but also the freedom to exercise their mental faculties in speech, publication and religion.

Property as such came to be regarded as a human right when it was argued that humans also had a right to what they themselves had got from nature by their own bodily efforts, i.e. by their own labour. However, given the existing unequal ownership of property, especially land, the bourgeois "theorists" of possessive individualism shied away from the egalitarian implications of this labour theory of property. Instead they came up with various more or less

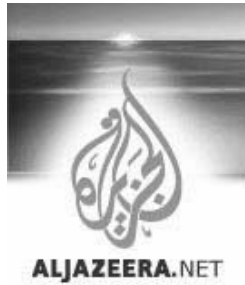
specious reasons as to why property, however acquired (and including land, which no one created by their labour, and even slaves), was, in the words of the French Revolution's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, "an inviolable and sacred right".

The freedom of property-owners from arbitrary dispossession by the state was what the French Revolution established in France, but which the so-called Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and the US Constitution had already established in these countries.

The European Convention of Human Rights is a direct descendant of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, itself a reflection of the theory of "possessive individualism". It is essentially a Convention on the Rights of Property - as neatly illustrated by the fact that the article under which the property companies won was not some obscure subsection, but Article I of Protocol I entitled "Protection of Property".

When the truth hurts

How open is 'open government'? John Bissett looks at the Freedom of Information Act and the cover-up over American plans to bomb Al Jazeera.



Under a section headed 'Open Government', The Labour Party election manifesto of 1997 declared how "Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in government and defective policy decisions". It made reference to the Scott Report on weapons sales to Iraq under the Conservative Party and pledged that Labour would fight for a Freedom of Information Act and more open government. Many voters were highly impressed with New Labour's alleged crusade for accountability and gave them their full support at the election.

In December of that year Tony Blair proudly revealed the White Paper Your Right to Know: The Government's Proposals for a Freedom of Information Act. The document advocated "establishing a general right of access to official records and information", and stated this would lead to more open and accountable government.

The much awaited Freedom of Information Act received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000 and was brought fully into force in January 2005. In June a report by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, which assessed the first three months of the new Act, found that Ministers and Whitehall bureaucrats were failing to open up the government and disclose information punctually to the public as previously pledged. The report showed that Whitehall departments had not revealed all the information asked for by the public in half of all cases and that there had been hold-ups in a third of all requests.

Maurice Frankel, director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said in the Guardian (24 June) that some departments had been so bad that "in any other field, the

government would be sending in a hit squad to take the functions over from them because they couldn't do the job". Pointing particularly at the Home Office, he continued: "The legislation seems to have passed them by. They are living in a time warp."

In July, with Blair gearing up for his G8 meeting in Gleneagles, the government decided to release more than 500 documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act - previously blocked documents produced by the Strategy Unit under Lord Birt, a Blair adviser. However, the government chose to release them on the Friday evening of the Live 8 events around the country, in the full knowledge that the weekend press would focus so much on the Live 8 concerts they'd have little concern for anything else.

On 22 November the Daily Mirror printed a report, headed "Bush plot to bomb his Arab ally", which referred to a leaked 5-page government memo contending that US President George Bush considered bombing Al Jazeera's headquarters in Qatar and was talked out of it by Blair. Readers eagerly awaited further revelations and wondered how the government would react to the disclosure. But did the Blair government greet the openness that such an enquiry could bring and comply with requests for further information on the matter? Not on your nelly! The government rather had the attorney general, Lord Goldsmith, threaten the Mirror and other newspapers with the Official Secrets Act, elevating the disclosure of any further information to a treasonable offence.

It is somewhat ironic that a government, which had blatantly and dramatically lied to the British public over Iraq's WMDs in an attempt to get them to support a war in Iraq, a war which was presented as being very much in our interests, should now be saying that disclosure of the memo was not in the national interest. After all, such an attack on Al Jazeera's Qatar base could have resulted in retaliation against the British public at home and abroad.

And it was not as if the USA had not already set a precedent in attacking Al Jazeera offices. During the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, a US 'smart bomb' hit their Kabul offices. Two years later, in April 2003, the war in Iraq in full swing, their Baghdad office was hit by a missile. In the latter incident not

only had Al Jazeera provided the Pentagon with its co-ordinates, fearing another 'mistaken' attack, but witnesses in the area saw the plane fly twice over the building before it was hit. That same day the Baghdad office of Abu Dhabi TV was also hit.

What possible motive could the US have had for wishing to bomb Al Jazeera? Well, Al Jazeera is based in Qatar, a country considered a US ally and its staff are gleaned from all around the world, even Britain, so there can be little question of the TV station being considered an enemy. Al Jazeera's only agenda is to report the news to an audience of 50 million and in a difficult climate. When the TV station first began broadcasting it won much acclaim in the US. The New York Times eulogized it as a "beacon of freedom" and White House officials saw it as living testimony that the Arab world wanted democracy and freedom of speech. But then the US top brass realised that Al Jazeera has a 'tell it like it is' method of reporting; that it was not going to bury the truth like so many western TV stations. It began reporting in gruesome detail what it saw, so much so that it has a nifty sideline in selling footage to foreign TV companies. Moreover, it aired the alleged Osama bin Laden video tapes to the Arab world. Clearly the TV station was becoming something of a "turbulent priest" that the kings of oil wanted rid of.

When, in 2003, Paul Wolfowitz, the US Deputy Defence Secretary claimed Al Jazeera was "endangering the lives of US troops", it was Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense who upped hostility to the TV station by falsely claiming it was collaborating with Iraqi insurgents. At the behest of their US puppet-masters, the newly elected Iraqi government had Al Jazeera temporarily thrown out of the country.

Back in June of 2005, Donald Rumsfeld further complained about Al Jazeera tarnishing the good old US image "day after day". When US forces launched a massive and merciless assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah, stopping all men of military age from leaving the city

Socialist Standard January 2006



Wolfowitz: "Al Jazeera endangering the lives of US troops" and **Rumsfeld:** "Al Jazeera collaborating with Iraqi insurgents."



"If the people knew what we had done, they would chase us down the street and lynch us." George Bush Snr.

before the attack and with many hundreds of civilians dying in the consequent napalm bombardment, Rumsfeld commented on Al Jazeera's coverage of the atrocity: "I can definitely say that what Al Jazeera is doing is vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable."

George Orwell once said: "during times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." Well, events before and since the invasion of Iraq have revealed we certainly live in times of universal deceit, so maybe Bush wanted Al Jazeera knocked out for its revolutionary act of telling the truth about the occupation of Iraq.

In prosecuting the former Cabinet Official David Keogh along with Leo O'Connor, a researcher to the former Labour MP, Tony Clarke, over the leaked memo, and in threatening the media with the Official Secrets Act, the government is guilty of the **Socialist Standard** January 2006

same crime that the story focused on - namely that of attempting to strangle the truth. Blair, on the one hand, allegedly advises Bush that it would not be wise to bomb Al Jazeera, who would have been bombed because they reveal the truth which the US finds harmful. Yet Blair clamps down on all attempts to bring the circumstances surrounding the memo to public attention, because to do so would likewise harm Bush.

George Orwell left us with another memorable quote: "He who controls the present, controls the past. He who controls the past, controls the future." This is exactly what New Labour, indeed the Bush-Blair bandwagon, is all about - controlling the future via their control of the present and what information is available to us and in the interests of their own backers. The Labour government ceases to be "open to scrutiny" and accountable to the people and instead becomes the puppet of US foreign policy its detractors always claimed it to be, losing what trust supporters might have had in it.

Of course none of the above should come as a surprise to the well informed, who are highly attuned to the Machiavellian goings-on of the executive of big business, namely governments. Few governments rule by force nowadays; most rule by consent, a consent granted by a misinformed and constantly lied-to public. Were governments really open with the truth, they would live as long as it would take the masses to tie

their metaphorical nooses. Indeed, it was George Bush Snr who once said: "If the people knew what we had done, they would chase us down the street and lynch us."

One thing that the Socialist Party can pride itself on is its openness. We have no secrets; nothing we say or do is said or done behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny. Our EC meetings, Conferences and Delegate Meetings are always open to the public and there is nothing stopping members of the public speaking at the same. Moreover, all of the reports of these meetings are available for scrutiny, even posted on the Web. And there are reasons for this - not only do we believe in accountability and feel it important to win the trust and respect of our fellow workers, we further envisage socialist society to be free, open and democratic, with all delegates wholly accountable to the people who elect them, so it makes sense that an organisation advocating such a society should hold its own democratic procedures up as a model.

And as advocates of democracy, free speech and accountability, we will be closely watching the trial of David Keogh and Leo O'Connor at Bow Street Magistrates Court on 10 January, though without much hope that this case will result in a triumph in the cause of government accountability. For Blair and Bush there is just too much at stake - the truth.

■ **John Bissett**

Working till we drop

The motto of the ancient Roman slave owners was that slaves should work, or sleep. It seems the modern capitalists' version of that term is that wage slaves must work till they drop. In November last year the media was filled with furore over the publication of the Turner Report onto the future of the pension system - calling for the retirement age to be increased from 65 to 68 by 2050.

The proposals in the report appear to try and be balanced, playing off the increase in retirement age with an end to means-testing, restoring the link between pensions and earnings (so that pensions will rise with wages and thus be a more secure hedge against inflation) and compelling employers to contribute towards individual pensions of employees. It also proposed that individuals should be encouraged and facilitated in providing a personal pension for themselves. Essentially, the report seeks to spread the burden of the ageing population among all concerned parties. Turner himself told the BBC: "Unless we want the state pension to get meaner and meaner we either have to have higher tax or a higher state pension age, we have decided on both."

That's how it is presented in the media, that is. We are all getting older, and so pensions are going to cost more. How are we going to pay for them? Put another way, though, with the reality of the class struggle in mind, the problem looks more like: workers living longer means that the share of the national income going to the working class and away from the capitalists will rise if the current settlement is maintained. This is clear from Turner's choice. The reality of paying for the pensions through higher taxes would have been to take the cost of pensions from the surplus value produced by the working class as a whole and channel it back into their total life-time wage packet. It would have meant a transfer from capital to labour.

It obviously cannot be about real privation, real shortages - there is more than enough food, clothing and housing to go round. What will happen, though, is that relative to capital invested - and more importantly capital put aside in pension funds - the cost of outlays will rise. From this comes the myth that we are not saving enough - as if in choosing not to eat a loaf of bread today, it would mean there will be two loaves of bread tomorrow. Further, many of these retirees go on to do much useful work in the community or in family life - but it is work which does not generate profits directly and so is invisible to the capitalist planners.

This is a clear example of capital holding back production and distribution - causing complications and distortions to rational



economic activity by compelling us to play the game of turn-over. The system always ensures that production leads to the creation of more money and value and ultimately more money (and capital) for capitalists real and imaginary. Put another way: the advances from our labour - including an increased life span - are being clawed back by capital to its advantage.

In seeking, therefore, to try and spread the pain around, what the report is proposing is in fact to push the burden from the capitalists and onto the workers. We need to be clear: raising the retirement age of workers is a very real pay cut. We will be asked to work more years and for a greater proportion of our lives than we expected. For some this will be a very real loss.

Already there is a marked difference in life expectancy across income groups, with unskilled manual male workers having an expectancy of 71 years as compared to an average of 79 for professionals (and of course, these being averages means a great many do not reach them). That means that more than just cutting these workers' pay, these proposals will actually cost them a great deal of any extra life expectancy they might gain by 2050.

The distinctly Old Labour reforms to pensions of ending means-testing, linking pensions to earnings and compelling employer contributions are just a way of buying off the unions and disguising the reality of the attack. Of course, this report is just a set of proposals and it will be up to the Government to implement changes which may include some parts and not others. Already Gordon Brown has been making ominous noises of concern - preferring his model of means-testing (he calls it targeting resources on the poor) to a general simplified and slightly increased state pension.

The unions, though, are obligingly making noises about the poorest and least well off being hit hard by these proposals, but are essentially content with them. Now that 'class warfare' is a term to be derided in the labour movement, these organisations are blinded to the reality of the situation and the working class is left intellectually disarmed before a media barrage of lies about people living longer meaning paying more.

Rousing the unions to defend the workers' position within capitalism, though, isn't the job of socialists. Even if these reforms were stopped, the next economic crisis, the next half-baked excuse would soon come along to try and roll back the workers' share. Our mission is to show clearly both how we are robbed and exploited by the system ruled by capital and how we can untap the wealth of our collective productive power by taking control of the means of production directly.

In socialism everyone would have the opportunity to contribute to the community for as long as they could. Their contributions would not have to be strictly rationed nor controlled and all would be able to share in the common produce. The creation of second class cast-off workers known as pensioners would cease to be and in its place we could have a fair share for all. The struggle for such a society is in our immediate practical interest. ■

PIK SMEET

Be disobedient - think for yourself

Let's rebel! Let's free ourselves from the corrupt, rapacious society we live in!

We workers produce, organise, and manage production for a minority of capitalists who own what we produce; then, from the sale of the products we make, the capitalists accumulate more capital from profits. Some of the profits are reinvested to have us work to develop the production facilities for the owners, the remainder of the profits are used by the owners to expand their wealth and extend their power by controlling their governments and "persuading" politicians, both nationally and internationally.

Let us change this way of running affairs! We workers produce and distribute all goods; let us own everything and abolish private property, so

everyone can democratically decide how to care for each other.

This division of world society into those who own and control capital (the capitalist class), and those who have to work to increase the capitalists' wealth (the working class) must be abolished and replaced by a co-operative society of common ownership by freely associating individuals - that is everyone. A real inclusive society of carers with no selfish, private owning capitalists, as now, accumulating wealth and running society through their politicians and governments.

Under common ownership real democracy will work; everyone can participate fully in administration and be heard - not like now, when the 30 seconds it takes you to put a cross on the ballot paper is ignored for years by politicians too busy pocketing brown envelopes.

Within a society of

common ownership, if there are individuals elected they will be controlled by the electors and subjected to immediate recall. This means the elected will be servants of the electors, and recalled to be removed immediately by those who elected them, if they do not follow the instructions of those who gave them the chance to be public servants.

The evidence that everyone has equal power and an equal vote in every decision taken will be obvious within this future society by the removal of the threat of hunger, exercised under capitalist society against all who are unwilling to accept the conditions of work and compliance. Within this future society of freely associating, equal individuals, every man, woman and child will take what goods they want from a communal store. This free access, this freedom is what will maintain real democracy, and it will be possible because

money will be unnecessary and non-existent.

Money is a means of exchange in capitalist society, a form of rationing by the owners of the non-owners - no money, no goods. In a society of common ownership and free access - we use the word socialism to describe it - everybody will own everything, so why would we want to pay ourselves? Our common sense will tell us not to waste what could be shared with others.

As socialists we want to participate in a global-community progression to free humankind's real human potential. We are all equals, if different. We don't accept leaders, which is why we invite you to ignore leaders too. Begin to free yourself, be disobedient, think for yourself, ask questions, and inquire after the case we suggest.

- leaflet issued by socialists in Ireland.

Rationed freedom

The Economics of Freedom: An anarcho-syndicalist alternative to capitalism. Solidarity Federation. 2003. £2.50.

This 40-page pamphlet presents an alternative, variously described as an "anarchist economy" and "libertarian communism", to capitalism.

We wouldn't disagree with the general description of the alternative offered:

"... a society without money. People work as a social duty; wages are unnecessary - 'from each according to their ability'; and cash is no longer needed to acquire goods - 'to each according to need.'"

"... a system without the market and where everyone has equal rights to have their needs met ..."

"... a society where all have equal control over decision-making and equal access to goods and services."

"All work is voluntary, and goods and services equally accessible. Money, wages and prices do not exist."

But what is surprising is the alternative to having to use money to acquire consumer goods described in the section "planning basics", which speaks of "voluntary 'rations', decided democratically":

"Some sophistication is needed to run this 'rationing' system. There is no point in allocating everyone four eggs a week. Some people do not eat eggs; others would prefer six but no cheese, and so on. In the case of food, it might be a ration of calories and nutritional intake, taking into account factors like age, height, special dietary and other needs. People would be entitled to any common foodstuff that met these needs, rather than being allocated quantities of specific foodstuffs."

We really are talking here about a system of rationing (without the inverted commas) in which people would be allocated (equal for people in equal circumstances) certain amounts of things. The proposed alternative to money turns out to be a computerised card to be presented to draw your entitlement from the common store:

"Allocation of goods can be computerised to record every product or service a person takes or uses with the information also being stored on cards to be presented when someone wants a product or service. The purpose is to prevent very excessive consumption. For example, it allows staff in common stores to query why someone might be requesting a new suite six months after getting the previous one."

This is surprising as the pamphlet is supposed to be describing an "anarchist economy" whereas the scheme proposed, involving as it would keeping computerised records of everything individuals consumed, can only with great difficulty be described as "libertarian". Not even capitalism does that! And, what about the shoplifters?

Socialist society will certainly, for

planning how much to produce, need a rough figure for what people are likely to consume over a given period, but this only needs to be measured globally for any district - as, for instance, by a computerised system of stock control or by sample polling - not at the level of each and every individual.

But why could not people have free access to consumer goods and services according to what they themselves decide their needs are? There are only two circumstances that would make this unworkable: (a) if it wasn't technically possible to produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone, and (b) if it was thought that even a significant minority would consistently take more than they could use.

All the evidence suggests that, once the artificial scarcity imposed by the need to make a profit has been removed, and once all the resources currently wasted on selling activities (and on armaments and armed forces) have been redirected to useful production, then enough could be produced to supply everyone's needs. And experience of where even today people have free access to something - e.g. buses, telephones, drinking water, in some places - they only use these things when they need to. In any event, what would be the point of taking more than you needed when you could be certain that the stores would be stocked with what you wanted? That would just clutter up where you lived.

Certainly, particularly in the very early days of socialism and perhaps later after some unexpected natural disaster, there could be shortages of some things that might necessitate recourse to some system of rationing for those things. But this would only be exceptional and temporary, the normal situation being free access to goods and services according to self-determined needs.

What this pamphlet proposes is an intrinsic system of long-term rationing, even if the rations are to be decided democratically. That would be a possible alternative to money and, if it worked, fairer than money, but it's not necessarily what socialists advocate could - or should - happen in "a society without money".

ALB

Karen Horney Again

Dear Editors,

A letter last month quotes Karen Horney. Her book on neurosis is really worth a read since she was much in the same social psychology vein as Erich Fromm, i.e. finding more to neurosis in the way our society is than merely positing biological and individual causes. She argued that the neurotic individual doesn't have a large ego (real sense of self, not the negative connotation of ego) and substitutes an unreal sense of self in place.

As an illustration, every one of us gets told to get passes in this or that in order to get a well paid job. That can lead to someone knocking their head against a wall, doing things they aren't in to, and having an unrealisable goal to achieve and thus having a measure for their failure to get down over.

It has always been a socialist argument that we will do what we like doing in socialism and thus this will lead to harmonious development of people. Horney the psychiatrist put a theoretical or psychological insight/argument that backs this up somewhat.

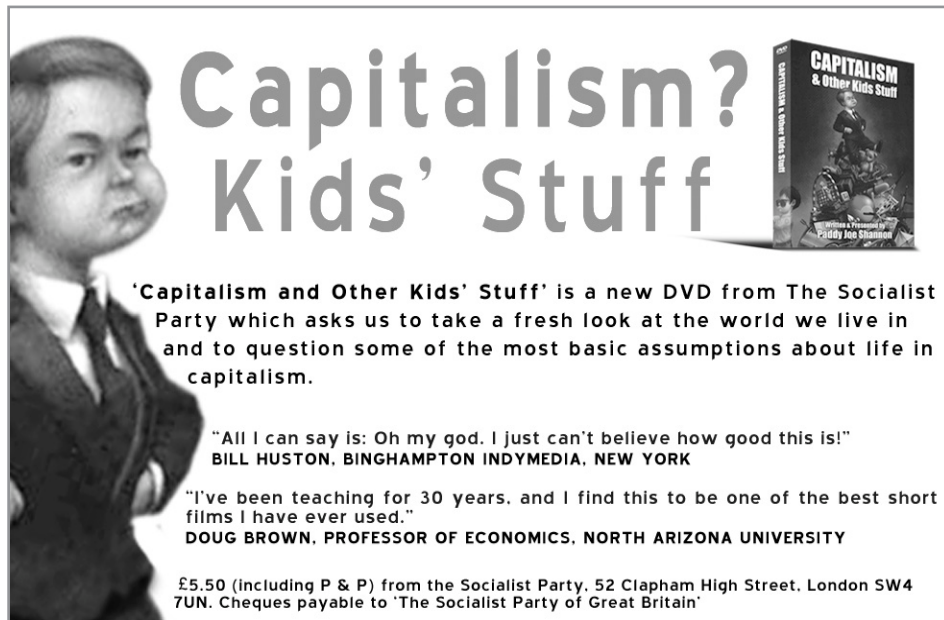
GRAHAM TAYLOR, BRABRAND, DENMARK

Dear Editors,

Regarding Karen Horney, I found her first and last books the best and her other stuff mediocre. Her first book, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, is excellent if you want a crash course on Freud and she seems to be a bit more radical probably under the influence of "her close friend" Fromm. She seemed to have sold out a bit in her last book.

I don't want to give the impression that Neurosis and Human Growth is not worth a read. I think it is a must and is one of the most influential books I have read. I think you have to read it at least twice to get the full impact.

DAVE BALMER (by email)



Capitalism? Kids' Stuff

'Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff' is a new DVD from The Socialist Party which asks us to take a fresh look at the world we live in and to question some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

"All I can say is: Oh my god. I just can't believe how good this is!"
BILL HUSTON, BINGHAMPTON INDYMEDIA, NEW YORK

"I've been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used."
DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

£5.50 (including P & P) from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

EAST ANGLIA

A new East Anglian Regional Branch has been formed. The branch's first meeting will take place on **Saturday 11 February** in Norwich from 12 noon to 4pm.

The agenda is as follows:
12 noon. Informal chat.

1pm. Meal

2pm to 4pm. Branch organisation and future activity.

The exact venue is: The Conservatory, back room of the Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich.

All welcome.

CHISWICK

Tuesday 19 January

RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT CHANGES

Speaker: Vincent Otter

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Correction

Due to a printing error the last line and the name of the writer were left off the "Report from Paris" on page 8 of last month's *Socialist Standard*. The last sentence of the article should have read: "And capitalism should be eradicated without further delay to enable us to enjoy the beautiful things of this world without fear". The writer was Dele C. Iloanya, Paris.

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Mr. Bevan and the Bombs

The *Daily Sketch* (3/12/55) reported a BBC Television interview with Mr. Aneurin Bevan the previous evening in which he was asked what he would do about the H and A bombs if he became Prime Minister. According to the report he replied that he would abolish the H bomb but keep the A bomb. As he was a member of the Labour Government that made the A bomb any other reply about that weapon would have needed some explanation, but the reason he gave for regarding the H and A bombs as different propositions was singularly unconvincing.

"Pressed to express the difference, he said the differences of quantity became differences of quality. 'It's like comparing drowning in a bath with drowning in an ocean,' he said." - (*Daily Sketch*, 3/12/55.)

We would have supposed that both ways of drowning led to the victims being equally dead.

Mr. Bevan went on to say that he did not think that the H bomb "either postpones war or brings it nearer". In

this he differs from his associate, Mr. Richard Crossman, Labour MP for East Coventry (who, it is rumoured, has now moved away from the Bevanite group). Writing in the *Daily Mirror* (25/11/55) Mr. Crossman claimed that with both sides having the bomb the Powers dare not go to war.

"We are at peace today because no Great Power can make war without automatically blowing itself to pieces."

Mr. Crossman is, therefore, in favour of keeping the H bomb as well as the A bomb.

In the meantime the *Manchester Guardian* reports (7/11/55) that the American Government has given urgent instructions to the American military authorities "to widen research into germ and gas warfare, and warfare by the use of radio-active particles." It would appear from this that the American Government does not accept Mr. Crossman's view that large-scale war between the big

Powers must either be with the use of the H bomb or not at all. They evidently envisage other possibilities.

(from "Notes by the Way" by H., *Socialist Standard*, January 1956)



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.

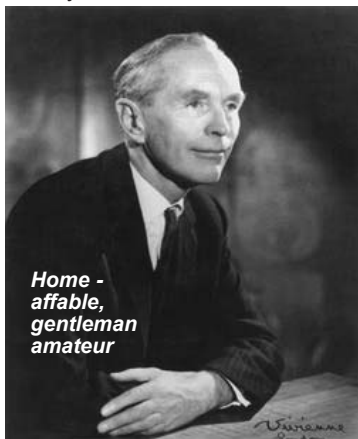


Nightmare for Tory leaders

By their decisive vote the Tory membership have elected, in David Cameron, a leader who seems to be unsure about his own identity. Is the man they have chosen the same David Cameron who, perhaps trying to impress us with his fearlessly rounded personality, recalled his ballet lessons as a child? Or is he the David Cameron who quickly denied having those lessons "after checking with his mother" (although not, apparently, with his spin doctors)? Is he David Cameron speaking, at the start of his campaign, to the Centre for Social Justice (and there's a grand name for an organisation that hardly anyone has heard of): "The biggest challenge our country faces is not economic decline, but social decline"? Or is he David Cameron three months later, when he told the assembled hacks outside Parliament: "I want us to confront the big challenge that this country faces: making sure we have a strong economy so we can generate the jobs we need . . ."? Is he David Cameron looking forward so much to being party leader: "I am very excited by it. I want to be a voice for change, for optimism and hope"? Or is he David Cameron shortly afterwards, who was asked on the Richard and Judy



show if the Tory leadership would not be some kind of poisoned chalice and responded starkly "It's a nightmare job"? There are not a few precedents to encourage Cameron in that pessimistic - or rather realistic - assessment. At the Tory conference in 1963 it dawned on Alec Douglas-Home, then known to readers of Burke's Peerage as the 14th Earl of Home, that he - the government's affable gentleman amateur - was in serious danger of being uprooted from the mellow courtesies of the House of



Home - affable, gentleman amateur

Lords and dumped, as party leader and prime minister, into the bear garden of the Commons. This was not an attractive proposition. "Oh they must find someone else" he wailed to a lobby correspondent "Even if they can't agree on Rab (Butler) or Quintin (Hailsham) there must be someone else. But please, please, not me". But "they" did not "find someone else" because of all the contenders for the leadership he was considered to be the one least likely to be a disaster.

And on that unpromising assumption he was pitched into battle against Harold Wilson, whose craftily cultivated Yorkshire vowels enunciated the claim that the Labour Party stood for a thriving, technological Britain while the Tories, by the very fact of Douglas Home becoming their leader, had proclaimed their resolve to cling to a discredited past. It did Home no good that he saw himself to be a "moderniser", charged with uniting his party after the schisms of the Macmillan years. His Party Chairman, along with many of his supporters, came to dread his efforts to compete with Wilson's grasp of the irrelevances of capitalist economics. On some of his prime ministerial journeys abroad his wife repeatedly had to remind him of their destination for fear that he would step off the plane and use the welcoming microphones to let everyone know how delighted he was to have arrived in some other city.

Heath

Home never mastered the techniques of putting across on television the deceptions and evasions so necessary to a politician. He came across as someone whose historically privileged background prevented him having any idea of how the majority of people lived - not that the politicians who do show some such



Heath - the frying pan...

understanding are any more effective. So it was some surprise, that it was by only a small margin that Home lost his one and only election in 1964. He then largely left the job of opposing the Wilson government to his lieutenants and in July 1965, as the tide of criticism rose around him, he resigned. In 1989 a TV interviewer asked him "You never really wanted to be Prime Minister did you?" and Home replied "Terrible intrusion into one's private life". As he left Downing Street his party resolved that never again would their leader "emerge" as he had; in future it would be through an election. Not that it has done them much good, or made the job less of a nightmare.

The first person to gain advantage of the Tories taking their first nervous steps into any kind of internal democracy was Edward Heath. He was by then already a controversial figure in the party, partly because of his support for British membership of the European Community and partly because he had pushed through the abolition of Resale Price Maintenance, which had affected a great many small shopkeepers. In a sense unknown to Home he was a "moderniser" whose modest background was in contrast to the earl in his castle among the grouse moors. But Heath resisted any attempt by Tory propagandists to "sell" him in that way, on the grounds that to do so would be to descend to the same depths of cynicism as Wilson.

During his five years as Leader of the Opposition Heath signalled that the Tories had broken with the policies of "Butskellism" - the consensus between Labour and Tory Chancellors about economic policy. In its place the party developed plans to reform - which really meant to curb - the effectiveness of trade unions to resist any attacks on wages or working conditions. At the same time there was to be an end to government helping out "lame ducks" - propping up firms or even industries which were in difficulties. In the short term the argument ran, this may cause problems, for example to workers who lose their jobs; but in the long run the logic of profitability would ensure greater and enduring prosperity for all.

Cameron

This was also called modernising but this latest plan to solve all the problems of British capitalism did not long survive the Tory victory at the 1970 election, as it was undermined by a series of what came to be called U turns. Finally, Heath's government was seen as a bunch of rigid blunderers who willingly reduced the country to a three day week rather than question the dogma contributing to the crisis.

By the time he lost the election in February 1974 Heath had few friends in his party and he was infamous for his unprovoked rudeness. He seemed genuinely to fail to understand why anyone could possibly resist the force of his arguments; as Douglas Hurd, who was then his Political Secretary, put it "He believed that people deserved the evidence and by god they were going to get it". Worse was to come for him as an exasperated party deprived him of the leadership and elected Thatcher in his place, leaving Heath to moulder on the back benches, jeered by his own party when he criticised the Thatcher government and immersed in what looked very much like the comfort of a long-term sulk.



Thatcher - the fire

And now it is Cameron's turn; the question is, in spite of his assurances, has anything really changed? On his way to the leadership Cameron presented himself as an architect of compassionate conservatism - as distinct, presumably, from cruel and pitiless conservatism. Well he would say that, wouldn't he - just as all the other recent leaders - Hague, Duncan Smith, Howard - have said it, before their party went on to fight an election on policies which were anything but compassionate. Of course cadging for votes does strange things to a politician; how else can we explain Cameron's recent yearning to give up his £1.2 million house in Notting Hill and move to Neasden. Or his inability to remember, not just whether he took Class A drugs, but whether he joined the Tory Party, when he was at Oxford. (With a memory like that, how on earth did he get a degree?)

When he said the job of Tory leader is a nightmare perhaps he had in mind, not just the experiences of the three men most recently in that job but the fact that he is the fifth Tory leader during the last eight years and that of the ten leaders starting with Churchill the majority have either been ousted or have resigned. A persistent feature of nightmares is the sensation of being out of control - something which all the politicians who profess to be able to shape capitalism to their will, perhaps to make it a compassionate social system - must know about. They may try to conceal the chaos behind a mask of confidence, until reality ensures that they wake up screaming. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

Never Steal Anything ...

The owning class through their schoolrooms and churches are forever telling young workers never to steal, but in reality the capitalists turn out to be the biggest thieves of all. "Fraud is costing British business £72 billion a year, according to a report out this week. Despite the warning of recent corporate scandals involving Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat and Refco, UK companies are still estimated to be losing 6 per cent of their annual revenue to fraud and corruption, says a study by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners and international lawyers Mishcon de Reya" (*Observer*, 20 November). £72 billion a year! It seems to be a case of never steal anything .. small.

Scots died from malnutrition, but last year that figure had soared to 99." (*Times*, 21 November) Even more alarming figures have been released for the UK by the charity Age Concern. "150,000 people over 65 have died as a result of the cold in the past five years." (*Times*, 25 November)

The Slaughter Of The Innocents

Capitalism's record of murder is even more horrific when looked at from a world perspective. "Nearly six million children die from hunger or malnutrition every year, The Food and Agriculture Organisation says. Many deaths result from treatable diseases such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria and measles, the agency said. They would survive if they had proper nourishment, the agency says in a new report on world hunger." (*BBC News*, 22 November)

Ah, Progress

The rapid growth of capitalism in China and India has been greeted with acclaim by all its supporters. There is another side to the story though, illustrated by two recent developments as reported in the *Observer* (27 November) The Chinese city Harbin, population 3.5 million, has had no water supply for four days because of the pollution caused by 100 tonnes of benzene - a colourless, odourless carcinogenic chemical - spilling into the river upstream after an explosion at the local chemical factory. "The poisoning of the Songhua river has exposed the murkier side of China's spectacular economic growth; the emphasis on business rather than environment, the tendency to cover up health risks and splits within the government." From India comes news of the exploitation of children to feed the rapacious growth of capitalism. 400 children were found



The Songhua river at Harbin, now full of benzene



Average digs at the Plaza Athenee

Room At The Top

Good news for the homeless in France, according to a recent report on hotels that have some vacancies. "The least expensive room at the George V, is about £390 per night including bedroom, bathroom and breakfast. The most expensive suite at the Plaza Athenee costs almost £10,000 per night and includes four rooms and breakfast" (*Times*, 30 November)

instance is Sir Digby Jones, the chairman of the CBI, on trade unions and international competition: "Trade unions in the private sector in the 21st century will become largely irrelevant... There are 1.3 billion Chinese out there who want your lunch and a billion Indians who want your dinner." (*Times*, 22 November). Sir Digby is of course indulging in wishful thinking, he knows that the British working class's greatest protection against the profit-mad owners on the industrial front is the union. A greater threat to all the capitalists of the world would be the world's working class uniting politically. (See Rigg's view below).

Our Masters' Voice

The Confederation of British Industry expresses the views of the British capitalist class. Here for



Some of the Delhi child labourers, photographed before being rescued

working in factories in Delhi. "Housed in a night shelter for beggars, the embroidery workers, aged 5 to 14, were waiting yesterday to hear their fate."

Free lunch

by Rigg

