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socialist standard


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

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



A look at their party case



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Introducing The Socialist Party

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.

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 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.

Editorial

The Way the World Is

It is sometimes argued that the kind of destitution and abject poverty that existed in the 1930s and earlier is no longer to be found in developed capitalist countries like the UK. Nowadays, the argument goes, workers take holidays abroad, have homes with several TVs and computers, and can spend large parts of their leisure time on shopping expeditions.

It is fair to respond to these observations by making two main kinds of point. Firstly, that workers are in fact by no means as well off as such a sketch implies. In England alone, for instance, there are a hundred thousand homeless families, few of whom take holidays abroad. Many migrant workers, here for fruit-picking, earn £70 for a six-day week when various deductions are taken into account (Guardian 5 June). They cannot even afford to buy the strawberries they pick. The UK minimum wage is a mere £5.05 per hour for those over 21, and around a million workers are on the legal minimum - few home computers for them. A couple of years ago, it was claimed by a trade union that employees in British supermarkets would have to work 94 hours a week to earn the national average wage. So low pay is by no means a thing of the past.

Secondly, how well off workers are in terms of wages is not the whole picture. The insecurity caused by redundancies and the fear of redundancies, the short-term contracts now so widely used, the boring dead-end 'McJobs', the ever-present fear of production being moved to other countries with lower wage rates - all these undermine workers' sense of well-being. Nearly one person in six in Britain is described as depressed, while over a million are mentally ill and receiving incapacity benefit. Such is the stress and hassle of living under capitalism. At the same time hospitals close and trained medical staff are made unemployed, while overall levels of sickness show no sign of decreasing. The amount of debt is also an indication of how badly off workers really are. Eight million people have over £10,000 of unsecured debt (that is, excluding a mortgage); a third of

these say that their debt situation has had an adverse effect on their health or relationships. This year perhaps as many as 100,000 people will declare themselves bankrupt as a means of escaping from their financial problems.

Thus it cannot be said that capitalism has raised workers' living standards to a level where they no longer have to concern themselves with how high their wages are or how secure their position in society is. Poverty and worry about the future are built-in to capitalism as far as the working class are concerned.

Moreover, if you take a global perspective, you can see that things are even worse. Half the world's population live on less than two dollars a day, and many on far less. Every day one person in five goes hungry. Over a billion people have no reliable water supplies and more than twice that number lack sanitation. Statistics like this can be multiplied for ever: the essential point is that an incredibly large part of the earth's population lead lives of numbing poverty and precariousness.

At the same time, a relatively small number of people are rich beyond the imaginations of ordinary people. A few hundred billionaires own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people. The inequality which exists under world capitalism is simply breathtaking, and it is increasing: the world has never been so unequal as it is today. Governments exist essentially to defend the interests of the rich and powerful. Wars are fought to serve their interests too, whether to gain access to oil or to deny such access to others, or to open up some area to so-called free trade.

This is the way the world is. But it should not and need not be this way. Instead, the world could be run on Socialist lines, without rich or poor, without wages or money, without countries or governments. If you think this sounds like a better way of organising things, contact the Socialist Party and see how you can help to bring it about.

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Blue-blood genes

Something even non-scientific readers of scientific developments quickly become wary of are bold claims. As Carl Sagan often insisted, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

In the absence of this, one is entitled to take the proposition that entrepreneurs (capitalists) are genetically predisposed, with a pinch of salt (*BBC Online*, June 6). A study of 609 pairs of identical twins and 657 pairs of same-sex non-identical twins in the UK found that the rate of entrepreneurship between the two groups was the same as the general population, but the rate of entrepreneurship for both twins was higher in identical twins (sharing all their genes) than non-identicals (sharing about half their genes). This, announced the researchers, was evidence that genes play an important role in determining who is likely to succeed in business and who isn't, which in turn may affect which students business schools might prefer to enrol on their courses.

Professor Tim Spector, director of the Twin Research Unit at St Thomas' Hospital, London, is enthusiastic about genetics but plainly out of his depth in economics: "Although entrepreneurs are vital to the economy, as they create wealth and jobs, no-one knows precisely what drives people to become an entrepreneur." This illustrates something *Pathfinders* has noted before, that scientists have a tendency to one-dimensional thinking: while they may challenge every assumption within their own field of research, they are happy to base their work on any and every assumption in other fields, no matter how crude and unsupported. That capitalists create wealth is not simply an assumption fostered only by capitalists themselves, it displays an ignorance of the everyday world, of economics and of history, bordering on the crass. Moreover, the current craze of looking for genetic causes for every aspect of human behaviour is fast becoming as tedious as it is futile, and simply plays to the media obsession for simple soundbite science. There is no capitalist gene, just as there is no fat gene, or violence gene, or possessive gene. Scientists who make public announcements of tenuous results of tenuous studies of tenuous premises risk immersing the debate in mud and obscurantism. The truth is, if you run your society in a violent and competitive way, it will inevitably produce violent and competitive people. Which particular DNA proteins or base-pair combinations were involved, is in one sense rather beside the point.

La Dolce Vita

New Scientist of June 3 ran a cover page splash on nine different routes to health and long life, all supposedly based on the latest research. These nine ways were: 1: have a little of what's bad for you; 2: socialise more; 3: consider moving to where people live longer; 4: enjoy your vices (er, same as 1?); 5: keep your brain active; 6: relax, have a laugh, kill stress; 7: be a hypochondriac; 8: eat healthier; 9: make life more exciting. *New Scientist* clearly should have read their own magazine from the week before (May 27), because while there may be nothing wrong with these suggestions, there is one more way of staying healthy and living longer which the magazine inexcusably forgot to mention: don't be poor, be rich. According to Michael Marmot, professor of epidemiology and public health at University College, London, and author of *Status Syndrome* (Bloomsbury, 2004): "There is a social gradient in health. It is not only that the poor have poor health: the lower someone's social position, the worse their health is. During the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, the gap in life expectancy between men in the top and bottom socio-economic groups in England and Wales increased from 5.5 years to 9.5 years" (*New Scientist*, May 27). And as Marmot notes, it is not a question of absolute poverty, as for example in sub-Saharan countries, but relative poverty and lack of autonomy. Marmot conducted a study of civil servants that showed that lower ranks, with less control, had a higher risk of heart disease. He argues that there is a causal relationship between low status and lack of control over decision-making and stress-related disease, and his solution is government legislation to redistribute income more equitably. Socialists know there is a fat chance of this happening, and that within the framework of capitalism, any short term advantage thus gained would soon be wiped out anyway. All the indications are that common ownership and democratic control are the best way to long life and happiness.

A Whale of a Tale

When members vote in Socialist Party ballots, the votes are open, whereas in capitalist political elections, the votes are secret. In a society free of sectional interests, there ought to be no reason for an individual to keep their opinions and their votes to themselves. However in early capitalism, where votes were also open, huge pressures were brought to bear on individual voters. These pressures included bribery, blackmail, and threats of eviction, sackings, personal injury and death. Eventually workers won the right to a secret ballot, and thus the situation remains,



except in the Socialist Party, of course, where elections tend not to inspire such extreme responses, and where, besides, the feeling is that a democratic process needs to be as transparent as possible in order to see and understand what is going on. Thus, paradoxically, both open and secret voting can be seen as aiding, or inhibiting, the practice of democratic fair play.

A recent case illustrates both sides of this problem. The International Whaling Commission is, as most marine environmentalists know, about to have control wrested back from the whale-friendly conservationist ruling junta, who for the past twenty years have imposed a moratorium on all commercial whaling. The country leading the coup, Japan, have been busily running around offering bribes of aid to small island countries in order to get their votes to resume whaling (*New Scientist*, June 17). Japan is not in a position to gain 75 percent of the vote to do this yet, but can probably secure over 50 percent needed for a simple majority to change current voting practice from open to secret. As small countries like the Marshall Islands face what Australia describes as 'international outrage' if they succumb to bribes and vote with Japan, the incentive to cast their votes secretly is clearly very strong. But most of these countries, indeed most of the IWC members, are not whaling countries. So what are they doing in the IWC in the first place?

The original regulatory body of the IWC, established in 1946, consisted of just 15 whaling nations. Through a long and, some might say, heroic struggle by Peter Scott of the World Wildlife Fund, a loophole in the IWC's constitution was exploited, allowing non-whaling nations to join. These new members outnumbered the original 'butcher's club' and were happy, as a result of various 'incentives' by the conservationist lobby, to vote the whalers into retirement. All that Japan have done is to open the membership still further, to the present level of 70 countries, and change the nature of the incentives. However, the big discouragement to small countries is that they may lose more than they gain by supporting Japan, unless they can do it on the quiet. Hence, the first step to the resumption of whaling is to obtain a secret ballot.

The question of whether whaling would exist in socialist society is not the biggest that will face that society. However, a huge factor influencing the activities of countries like Japan and Norway is that a large proportion of their economies rely on it. At present the taste for whalemeat is in decline globally, even in Japan, so they may be fighting a losing battle in any case. But in socialism, where people's lives and livelihoods won't depend on this hideous practice, it is hard to imagine any justification for continuing it. Let the giants keep their deep. Humans can find other ways to provide for themselves.

Scientific proofs

Dear Editors

As both a scientist and a socialist, I was dismayed to read two statements in the May *Socialist Standard* which appear to reflect an anti-science or anti-academia bias.

The first statement, found in the Pathfinders column, is that "science itself is unable to prove anything very much at all, whether it is a theory of gravity, evolution, or climate change". While this is 'technically' true, it is more than a little disingenuous, and may lead readers to believe that the Socialist Party rejects science as a tool for understanding nature and the human condition.

Science works by proposing theories, which are tested to see if they account for the available data, and then modified if they do not. Because new data is always being discovered, scientific theories are never proved with absolute certainty in the sense of a mathematical or logical proof, but rather in the sense of a legal proof - "beyond a reasonable doubt". The overwhelming evidence in support of the theory of evolution is such that no biologist disputes its ability to account for the fossil record and origin of species; in this informal sense the theory can rightly be said to be "proven". Socialists should therefore not reject calls for scientific proof of our social and economic theories; rather, we should meet them by providing supporting evidence, or by modifying our theories when presented with contradictory evidence.

The second passage with which I take issue appears in Voice from the Back, where some professors are ridiculed for speculating on some matter of Christian mythology

instead of speaking out against world hunger. I'd like to know what evidence the author of this piece has that these professors are not socialists and are unsympathetic to the problem of world hunger. And is it his belief that the study of ancient history and literature has no redeeming value, and that it will be abandoned in socialism? Or merely that any activity not directly related to bringing about socialism should be held up to condemnation and ridicule? Perhaps the author may be able to devote every waking hour of his life to socialist propagandizing, but most of the rest of need to set aside at least some of our time for employment, hobbies, relaxation, and yes, even inconsequential philosophical debates.

TRISTAN MILLER, London SW4

Another view of Freud

Dear Editors

I'd like to comment on the article "Freud and Marx: do they mix?" (May *Socialist Standard*) and put forward some of my own thoughts on the subject. In order to appreciate Freud you really need to approach him with the right mind-set. That mind-set, in my opinion, is an ability to understand where he's "coming from", together with a willingness to appreciate his insights without necessarily buying into his ideas wholesale. This second point was explained by J.A.C. Brown in his book *Freud and the Post-Freudians*:

"It is convenient to regard the total body of Freudian thought as falling into roughly three categories: its basic psychological concepts; the theories based on clinical observations and described in terms of this conceptual scheme; and the

essentially philosophical conclusions on such subjects as the nature of society and civilization, war and religion, which Freud drew from his own thought and experience. Whether or not such a division is logically justifiable it is undoubtedly empirically useful in any consideration of his influence on scientific thought; for many would accept his general approach to psychological problems who would not be uncritical of his theories, and others would accept both without taking very seriously his metaphysical conclusions."

Freud's outstanding fault was over-generalisation. But even this criticism of him has to be qualified because you have to judge each of his points individually. Making sweeping statements about someone who made so many different individual points over so many years is it itself an over-generalisation.

Many people have claimed that Freud's ideas are untestable. This isn't necessarily true. Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg have made a concerted effort to test Freud's ideas against a wide range of scientific evidence. Their findings are compiled in their two books *The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy* and *Freud Scientifically Reappraised*. The following paragraph, which appears in their first book, gives you an idea of their general approach:

"Overall, the best argument we can muster for scientifically testing Freud's models is the fact that many competent people have already tried their hand at it and discovered new, interesting things. It should be added that their fairly precise quantitative observations are making it possible to speak in terms of the degree to which Freud's ideas are valid or not valid, rather than simply

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The 'Prescott Express'.

What price democracy?

Recent scandals about donations to political parties confirm that under capitalism some - those with money - are more equal than others.

Births - marriages - deaths - everything in capitalism, even that which currently passes for democracy, has a price, and last month the Electoral Commission, an independent body that oversees political party spending on elections, published its balance sheet on the costs of the last UK General Election.

Mrs Blair, the wife of the Prime Minister, who was not contesting any constituency, apparently spent £7,700 on having her hair done. The acceptance of this by the independent commission presumably means that this woman's hair was in some way related to the electoral system that is supposed to underwrite our alleged freedom of choice.

There were other serious items: £3,638 went on make-up for the then Tory leader, Michael Howard - an expense that failed utterly to disguise his loutish leer. The Labour Party spent £264,000 on a bus and another £75,000 having it converted and yet a further £3,172 re-branding it as the Prescott Express - a somewhat tantalising sobriquet in the light of recent events.

And then there were the very serious items; very serious because the huge amounts involved were spent on providing personnel in the form of spin doctors and professional liars skilled in mendacity and obfuscation who it was calculated could con voters into parting with their votes. £441,000 was paid to an Australian 'political tactician', while his short-stay accommodation in London cost the Tories a further £27,000. Fortunately for Labour, there was no need to import political charlatans as part of the carefully choreographed Blair strategy was to

cultivate their own indigenous species of con artists.

Why?

In total the infamous 'three main parties' spent some £40 million buying representation in the House of Commons. That, it could be said, is the price of British democracy. The Labour Party spent £18 million, the Tories roughly the same amount and the Lib-Dems £4.3 million. Effectively, this is what it costs to ensure that the personnel staffing British capitalism's political administration do not pose any threat to an economic order firmly based on the exploitation of the overwhelming majority of the electors.

Traditionally, rich and very rich people supported the Tories and when the Liberal Party was the alternative government of British capitalism it, too, enjoyed the influence and affluence of the rich and powerful. It was unnecessary to ask why rich people and prosperous business enterprises supported these parties; their donations were investments in politics; investments that would encourage a healthy return in the form of ensuring that government would not pursue legislative practices harmful to the interests of its donors. In other words, that politicians would not bite the hand that feeds them.

Labour Party spokespersons were once vociferous in exposing and emphasising this support of the landed gentry and the industrial and commercial magnates for its political opponents. Labour's then more frugal organisational and campaigning funds came largely from the trade unions, who also assumed they were promoting a political interest sympathetic to the cause of their members

as well as opening avenues to career betterment for aspiring union leaders.

That was before the Labour Party had demonstrated to the British ruling class that it had become the electable alternative to the Tories and could safely exchange places with the Liberal Party. Despite the occasional bit of leftist sloganising from its slow learners, experience had clearly shown that Labour leaders were now aware that in government they had to facilitate capitalism - a task they could frequently do more efficiently than the Tories because the fiction prevailed that they represented the working class.

Incompatible with genuine democracy

The media, which is supposed to inform us, didn't raise a head of steam about the Electoral Commission's report but did raise a fuss about the remarkable generosity of the millionaires clamouring to 'lend' money to the Labour Party under foot of reasonable expectations of titles of one sort or another. The Tories, on the principle of honour among thieves, didn't overly embarrass the government either - indeed Prescott's sexual adventures received more attention than the scarcely covert corruption in both government and opposition.

The question is, where does all this leave the issue of democracy, that vague principle which the government have men and women trained to kill and die for and which we are told is the guarantor of our freedom?

The politicians, the media and the rest of what are called 'opinion formers' insist that we have democracy, that we have free elections which allow us to choose whatever form of government we wish, unlike countries where a single-party dictatorship exists.

Such dictatorships usually allow elections where the people may approve or



The expensively coiffured Cherie Blair with, inset, her hairdresser

“the ‘three main parties’ spent some £40 million buying representation in the House of Commons”

disapprove of given candidates within the dictatorship but have not the freedom to vote for any other parties or for independent candidates. In other words the people have imposed on them by force, corruption or the control of information a specific political regime and have not got the necessary democratic machinery to challenge that regime.

Dictatorship and bourgeois democracy

Looking at the vast sums of money involved in our allegedly democratic elections we can hardly claim that they are 'free!' In fact in most of the so-called democratic countries it could be said that the astronomical costs of challenging for political power have been deliberately manipulated in order to ensure that those who cannot attract rich backers will be denied meaningful access to the democratic process.

Effectively this means that in the same way as people in dictatorships are denied the right to make real *political* changes, in Britain and other allegedly democratic societies prohibitive financial restrictions are placed in the way of the working class organising politically to effect real *economic* change.

This does not mean that socialists equate dictatorship and bourgeois democracy. Within the latter we are free to organise politically and to develop our support to the extent where we can eventually overcome the embargoes and impediments that capitalism's restricted democratic forms impose on us, whereas in the former any Socialist work is necessarily clandestine and can invoke severe penalties.

What we can equate is the hypocrisy of bourgeois politicians, who rightly condemn those capitalist dictatorships where political freedom is denied and yet are willing participants and vociferous defenders of a form of capitalism wherein

financial impediments exist that make a mockery of real democracy.

Consolidation

The recent debacle surrounding the revelations of enormous financial donations and alleged loans from the millionaires to Labour and the Tories (the Lib-Dems do not represent as promising a political investment as the others) may have caused some embarrassment. It will, however, be a passing phenomenon because the very system that exposes them



“providing the parties of capitalism with the financial means of maintaining their monopoly of power”

also protects them in that it excludes meaningful opposition from outside the 'three main parties'.

That said, however, the evident chicanery of the whole nasty business requires some means of political sanitising that will shield the politicians while still providing the parties of capitalism with the financial means of maintaining their monopoly of power - without allowing any democratic access for cultivating meaningful opposition either to the system itself or its trusted political agents.

Various suggestions have been made but the front runner appears to be the state funding of elections. Such a method, across the board and pertaining to every candidate in elections, might be a welcome

widening of the political process, which is why it is unlikely to happen. More likely is a scheme to allocate funds on the basis of the number of MPs each party has in parliament, which would simply perpetuate the present situation and consolidate the current undemocratic scheme while resolving the embarrassing issue of funding for the politicians and their parties.

Fair and free elections

The idea of fair and free elections would give the ruling class political apoplexy. Imagine a general election where socialists had a level playing field, an election that was in effect a plebiscite on the question of Socialism or Capitalism. The traditional parties of capitalism would be united in telling us about the remarkable plethora of reforms they intended to introduce to ease poverty in certain areas, to reduce crime, to tackle the housing problem, help the aged, build nuclear bomb shelters, etcetera.

The socialists would not be offering any reforms of the old, failed system in which the vast potential of the planet is owned and controlled by a relatively small minority of people who allow the production of goods and services only when it holds the promise of profit for them. On the contrary, we would be asking for a mandate to abolish the entire concept of ownership in the means of production and distribution so that everyone could freely participate in wealth production and everyone would be free to take from the common pool of wealth thus created in accordance with their needs.

Further, in the context of what we are discussing, we would be offering the establishment of an open and genuine system of participative democracy in a world where the massively destructive and ubiquitously corruptive power of money would no longer exist. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

A so-called socialist in parliament

George Galloway is a corrupt and corrupting man. Not corrupt in the sense in which a good capitalist would understand - grubbing for money in brown envelopes, a wide boy with an eye for the main chance when the price is right. His success in the libel courts, which only understand the pecuniary corruption which is such a threat to capitalists' profits, underlines this. His corruption is one of a sort more familiar to the workers' movement: a man giddy on success and status born from his ability to be at the centre of things.

The US Senate enquiry - in which he displayed his prolixity with sufficient robustness and deftness as to be able to have scored a victory by speaking truth to power and rebutting their slanderous lies - proved the point despite all his bluster. The outcome of their enquiry was not that he had trousered cash corruptly obtained from the Oil For Food Programme set up by the UN under the Iraq sanctions regime - no matter how much they wanted that to be the outcome and the press trumpeted that likely outcome. The truth was subtler than that. It revealed how Galloway's Mariam Appeal had been funded chiefly by a man called Fawaz Zuriekat - who was in all likelihood (according to the Senate investigation) a recipient of such theft.

Whether Galloway knew this or not is irrelevant. As he rightly notes, the rest of the cash came from a handful of Saudi princes and potentates; but therein lies the real truth of his corruption. Everything he is now is based on the success and prominence the Mariam Appeal won for him - it made his reputation as an opponent of the siege and attack on Iraq; but that appeal was funded by powerful capitalists with vested anti-working class interests in the Middle East and beyond.

The effect of this can be clearly seen in his parliamentary behaviour. At the best of time a notoriously lax MP (he famously managed to miss a key vote on the terrorism act that the Government only

won by one vote); however, when he does raise questions they almost always relate to Israel and the government's behaviour towards it. His primary purpose is to be a cheerleader for the ruling class in the Arab world against the ruling class in Britain and America - presumably in the name of some sort of anti-imperialism, a doctrine long used by capitalists in relatively weak countries to try and pursue their ends.

The indication of his worthlessness was on 8 May when he secured an adjournment debate. This is an opportunity open under parliamentary procedure for all MPs to be able to make speeches and have a reply from a government Minister on the subject of their choosing, lasting about 40 minutes all told. The MP, who maintains that the fall of the Soviet Union was the saddest day of his life and whose biographies still refer to him as a socialist, chose to spend his nearly two thousand words in a fifteen-minute speech not on attacking capitalism, revealing its brutalities and its failure.

Instead, true to his egomaniacal form, he chose to discuss press regulation and call upon the government to make "thorough caps on media ownership, especially ownership by foreign billionaires whose loyalty is certainly not to this country." He dwelt extensively on how beset and abused he himself was by the media, as a basis for this call for a reform. This, apparently, is the tribune of the working class, the voice of the oppressed majority - a so-called socialist in parliament.

What a Socialist could do

As the *Socialist Standard* has demonstrated for over a hundred years, two thousand words is plenty to incisively damn capitalism and point the way towards socialism. The condition of the working class is such that it would be easy to find detailed cases and generally observable trends that need and deserve

the light of day - ignored by the mainstream parties in their open support of capitalism. The endless sophistries from their own mouths are meat enough for socialist attack.

Galloway, however, is a living confirmation of the Socialist Party's case of avoiding leadership and leaders in our movement. The SWP and its Respect front are tied to this man and his spurious reputation.

Obviously, he is not the first. The Communist Party had MPs in Parliament - even the trotskyst Militant Tendency managed to claim some MPs as their own in the 1980's. Usually, they were part of a minority of one, unable to make any real effect on the proceedings of Parliament.

The Socialist Party, though, maintains its intention to send delegates to parliament. Not as leaders, but as servants of the cause - with a specific job to do. The very minimum we could expect of a small number of socialist MPs is that they use the resources of parliament to uncover as much detail and information as they can about what is happening under capitalism to the working class. The machinery of government collects vast reams of data in the course of its daily business, but data is worthless unless it is put into context and turned into information.

They could add to this by using the weapon of the parliamentary question, to try and force the government to give up more information and to ensure that it has an incentive to collect the relevant data in order to be able to answer such questions. This would have the added advantage of giving the opportunity of getting our agenda onto the television and other media.

Whilst the votes of a small handful of MPs may not matter overall, their voices also would carry weight - and socialists in parliament would be able to put the case for socialism alongside defending the interests of the working class in their day to day struggle - such as

“Galloway maintains that the fall of the Soviet Union was the saddest day of his life”



Dead or alive? Galloway on Channel 4's Celebrity Big Brother

during any major strikes or the like. This would allow us to expose the sitting MPs of the capitalist parties and assist workers in rallying to the cause of their class - a platform from which to speak to the whole world.

Moreover, we would use whatever votes we would have while a minority to vote in the interests of the working class. This would not be something for the still small conscience of our delegates but a matter for our movement to decide and instruct them upon - a means of being grit in the parliamentary machine as well as one of demonstrating our greater democratic legitimacy. The growth of the socialist movement is the advance of the working class movement. Until such time as the movement is able to take control of the whole of society, we will push for our common interests. Not with some plan of making capitalism work for us, or with a set of reforms in mind but as a mill stone round the neck of capital.

The case for socialism rests on the understanding of the workers. The working class's support is needed for the ongoing existence of capitalism. Once we understand our real interest and begin to consciously organise to get it no leader or deceiver is going to be able to deflect us from our course, and the days of the likes of Galloway will be numbered. Until then the workers get the leaders and representatives they choose and deserve. The job of socialists here and now if to promote the case for using our party as a weapon in the class struggle. We don't need to be in parliament to demonstrate how worthless Galloway and his followers are to the workers' movement.

Going to Parliament is not the act of good boys but of rebels fighting canny. ■
PIK SMEET



Cooking the Books (1)

Baron Rothschild rides again

According to the *Times* (13 May), the Rothschild dynasty is to invest again in Black

Sea oil from which they were ejected after the Bolshevik coup in 1917. In the 19th century the Rothschilds were often regarded as the archetypal capitalists. To be honest, this wasn't entirely free from anti-semitism. Even Paul Lafargue, who was married to one of Marx's daughters, was not immune from this.

But if, as the pre-WWI German Social Democrat August Bebel remarked, "anti-semitism is the socialism of the fool", then a leading contender for the prize of biggest fool must go to the anarchist and comic opera revolutionist Bakunin who wrote in one of his polemics against Marx:

"I am sure that, on the one hand, the Rothschilds appreciate the merits of Marx, and that on the other hand, Marx feels an instinctive inclination and a great respect for the Rothschilds. This may seem strange. What could there be in common between communism and high finance? Ho

ho! The communism of Marx seeks a strong state centralization, and where this exists, there the parasitic Jewish nation-which speculates upon the labour of people-will always find the means for its existence" (*Polemique contre les Juifs*, 1872, quoted <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakunin>).

On the other hand, F. A. Sorge, who was one of Marx's correspondents in America, recounted the following anecdote concerning a member of the dynasty:

"One day in 1848, as the story goes, Baron Rothschild took a walk on the Common of Frankfort-on-the-Main. Two labourers met him and accosted him thus: 'Baron, you are a rich man; we want to divide with you.' Baron Rothschild, not the least puzzled, took out his purse good-humouredly and answered: 'Certainly! We can do that business on the spot. The account is easily made. I own 40 millions of florins; there are 40 millions of Germans. Consequently each German has to receive one florin; here is your share;' and giving one florin to each of the labourers, who looked at their money quite confused, he walked off smiling" (www.marxists.org/archive/sorge/1876/socialism-worker.htm).

The point Sorge was making is still valid. Bill Gates could behave in the same way today. One estimate of his personal

wealth is \$100 billion. The world's population is about 6.5 billion. So, if similarly accosted, the amount he would give would be \$15. Even if only the US population was concerned they'd get only \$333 each.

Contrary to a widespread belief, socialism is not about equal sharing or redistributing wealth more evenly. It's about the common ownership of the means of wealth production. Which is a different proposition altogether. These means are already a single integrated network operated collectively by the whole working class, but they are owned separately, whether by rich individuals, capitalist corporations or states. It's not a question of dividing them or their monetary value up amongst the population but of making them the common property of all.

On this basis they can be used to turn out what people require to satisfy their needs and to which everyone can have access to satisfy those needs in accordance with the principle "from each their ability, to each their needs". Because people's needs are different so will be what they take and use. But everyone will have an equal right to satisfy their different needs. That's what socialism means, not sharing out the wealth of Bill Gates, the Rothschilds or other wealthy individuals.

Exploding the human nature myth



Picture this:

Scene: The High Courts of Justice, London. On trial is a 30 year-old man, charged with 3 armed robberies, 3 counts of attempted murder, and 5 charges of assaulting police officers and another of incapacitating a police dog. The QC for the prosecution has finished summing up. He sits down, satisfied he had done enough to see this psychopath imprisoned for 350 years, and now the defendant's barrister approaches the jury, one hand in his pocket and fidgeting with his car keys.

Barrister: Members of the Jury! It's an open and shut case as far as I can see. It's human nature, innit? Humans are by nature greedy, selfish and aggressive. We've been like this for donkey's years. Nothing you can do about it, eh? He can't help it (points to defendant) - he's naturally predisposed to be a violent robber. I, therefore, urge you to find my client not guilty on account of this 'ere human nature thing.

The jury retires and the judge adjourns. Five minutes later the jury returns. The foreman of the jury hands the usher a note which is then passed to his Lordship Justice Fairlaw. The judge looks at the slip of paper, raises an eyebrow and puts the note to one side.

Justice Fairlaw: Have the ladies and gentlemen of the jury reached a verdict on which you are all unanimous?

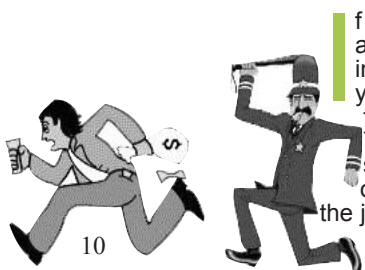
Foreman of the Jury: Yes, M'Lud.

Justice Fairlaw: And it is?

Foreman of the Jury: We find the defendant not guilty, M'Lud. We're all agreed it's not really his fault. Like his barrister said, it's human nature, innit?'

Justice Fairlaw: In that case you're free to go Mr Stabbemall

If you read this account of a trial in a newspaper you would be flabbergasted. You'd think this some huge joke or, if not, that the judge, barrister



and jury were completely and utterly bonkers. Your faith in the criminal justice system would be shattered into a billion pieces.

This, however, is just the kind of logic socialists come up against when trying to convince people of the benefits of a socialist society. People will hear us out, agree that capitalism is insane and that our vision of a future society sounds perfect, and then wallop you with their evolutionary psychological analysis of human society, saying:

"Yeah, I agree with everything you say. But it ain't gonna work, is it, coz of human nature? At the end of the day, humans are greedy selfish and aggressive. Always have been, always will be."

Which immediately puts your socialist on the defence: "Are you greedy, selfish and aggressive?"

"No, but . . . err . . . I'm . . ."

"Good to hear it. Neither am I. Hold on a sec, I'll ask this bloke here." And the socialist holds out an arm and attracts the attention of a passer-by. "Sorry to bother you. I wonder if I could ask you a question."

"Yeah, sure?" The passer buy joins the socialist and his critic.

"Right, would you consider that you are greedy and selfish?"

"Most certainly not."

"Maybe aggressive?"

"No."

"Thanks. That's all."

"That it?"

"Yes, thanks. Have a leaflet." The socialist turns back to the evolutionary psychologist. "I'll ask this woman crossing the road."

The street psychologist walks off, muttering under his breath that the socialist is distorting his words.

The 'human nature' objection to socialism manifests itself in numerous ways, though it is usually the human nature of others, the wider society, which is acting as the barrier to socialism, never that of the model citizen and objector.

Let's look briefly at the argument that humans are "by nature greedy, selfish and aggressive."

So are humans naturally aggressive?

Well, if this is so then why do governments have to bring in conscription to force young men and women into their armies during times of war? At previous times, in Britain's history, people have woken up from a drunken night to find themselves clutching the 'king's shilling', turned into cannon fodder overnight, having been tricked into the army, and others have woken up in the holds of war ships which had already put to sea. Here, in Britain, where there is no conscription, very few people join the army with a view to killing others. Most join because they see it as an alternative to the dole queue or because they seek adventure or believe the army can teach them a valuable trade.

Moreover, one real problem armies have is that of desertion. In the Vietnam War, 50,000 US soldiers deserted. Since the current war in Iraq began some 8,000 members of

the US armed forces have deserted (http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-03-07-deserters_x.htm). In previous wars, the army hierarchy has



A group of U.S. Army deserters who fled to Canada and reunited at the American Deserters Committee, Montréal, Quebec, 7 February 1970.

had to introduce the death penalty for deserters in an attempt to prevent so many fleeing the front line. So much for innate aggression.

Again, if humans are naturally aggressive, then why is there so much opposition to war? Surely our inborn aggressiveness compels us to cheer on "our boys" into battle, but this is not so. The February 2003 Anti-War demo in London became the biggest ever demonstration in British political history, with almost 2 million protestors taking to the streets of the capital, having travelled from all over the country. They were not alone; there were coinciding demonstrations in cities right across the globe. Hundreds of thousands carried placards saying "Not in my name" - determined to make clear their opposition to conflict.

Critics may counter by citing the rising levels of physical violence as evidence of a violent trend amongst humans. But even this can be attributed to the fact that well over 90 percent of this violent crime is carried out when the



Biggest ever demo - London, February 2003

perpetrator is drunk or high on drugs. The remainder tend to be violent crimes of desperation, rooted in poverty. When for instance, did you hear of a member of the aristocracy jumping an old lady on her way out of the bingo hall and snarling, "rightho, missus, let's 'ave yer 'and bag"?

The human aggression argument is looking pretty dubious, so we'll move on.

So humans are greedy?

Our objector assumes that in a free access society, which socialism would be - where people give freely of their abilities, taking from the stockpile of communal wealth according to their own self-defined needs - that there would be an orgy of consumption. It is assumed that people would simply go mad and grab at anything that did not have to be bought; running home with 20 loafs of bread and five walkman cd players.

Now, have you ever watched a mother and, say, a two-year old child in a corner shop? The mother will be at the counter, momentarily distracted, paying for her groceries, and her child heads for the confectionery display. The child has no real conception of the buying, selling and exchange game that parents play; one penny might as well be a pound coin - they're just little fiddly things adults play with. Children simply take so much for granted. The mother will call the child away from the sweet display, and the child, wanting something, brings an item back - a packet of Smarties maybe - to her mother in the hope the parent will approve. Now note, it is just one packet, not ten and six bags of crisps! Just one packet of Smarties! Surely innate greed would mean the child would be more predisposed to fill his or her arms with a stash of chocolate than an adult - believing this to be simply for the taking. But no, the child will take what he or she thinks will satisfy his or her immediate needs. For him or her there is always another day - mum's always in this shop - and it doesn't look like all this free access confectionery is going anywhere in a hurry.

What possible benefit could there be to storing goods that were in plentiful supply and freely available? Take more than you need by way of perishables and you'll end up with a cupboard full of stinking and rotting vegetables. Water is generally considered to be "free" - you can for instance go into a public building and get a free drink at a water fountain - but no one runs in with 10 gallon containers in order to hoard it at home. Air is free, but when did you last hear of anyone extracting it and storing it in warehouses?

In a free society it is far easier just to take for your immediate needs and to



How much bread can you possibly want?

return when you require more. It is only in class society as exists today, where commodities have two values, a use value and an exchange value, where the profit motive results in artificial scarcity, that people display characteristics associated with greed. But establish a society in which the artificial constraints on production are removed (profit), in which goods have a use value only, and are produced for no other reason than that people need them, and people's approach to obtaining them will change.

Humans are selfish?

Are we really self-seeking, self-centred and egotistical? Well, let's begin with a few facts.

In Britain, as of March 2006, there were 167,000 registered charities (Charity Commission website) and in the USA there are 1.3 million charities (Independent Sector, a US coalition of non-profit organisations). These charities involve millions of people who give their free time, unpaid, for what they believe are worthy causes that benefit others. Some 85 percent of the British public give regularly to charities. According to a survey by Independent Sector, a US coalition of non-profit organisations, the percentage of volunteers in America is the largest of any country - almost 56 percent. The average hours volunteered per week by an individual is 3.5 hours. According to Charity America, donations to charity for 2002 were \$241 billion, 76.3 per cent of this given by individuals.

Now let's go back to 26 December 2004, when the Asian tsunami hit, killing upwards of 200,000. Overnight charities

“What most critics of human nature are actually referring to is human behaviour”

mobilised all over the world to get food, medical aid and other supplies to the millions left homeless in the disaster zone. The generosity shown towards the victims of the tsunami disaster by, say the people of the USA, were not Bush administration "values", which Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, seemed to imply during his damage limitation exercise in Indonesia, but rather the basic values of human beings in America, indeed, the world over, who had been motivated by the sorry plight of their fellows overseas.

Unlike other animals, humans are endowed with the ability to sympathise and empathise with their fellow humans. Humans derive great pleasure from doing good, are at their best when faced with the worst and will go to extraordinary lengths to help alleviate the suffering of others.

Right across the US, as in many other countries, there were all manner of fundraising events, in all sections of society, inclusive of nursery schools, prisons, universities and impoverished communities. In some instances people queued for over an hour to put money in a plastic collection bucket. People raised hundreds of millions of dollars to help people they had never met before, nor knew anything of, and it was the same during the Ethiopian Famine of 1985 and again last year, with millions around the world mobilising to help the starving of Africa.

Several years ago, when the Yangtze River in China threatened to burst its banks, seven million people came out and began to fill sand bags, pillow cases, anything, to build up the fragile river banks, the breaching of which threatened their communities.

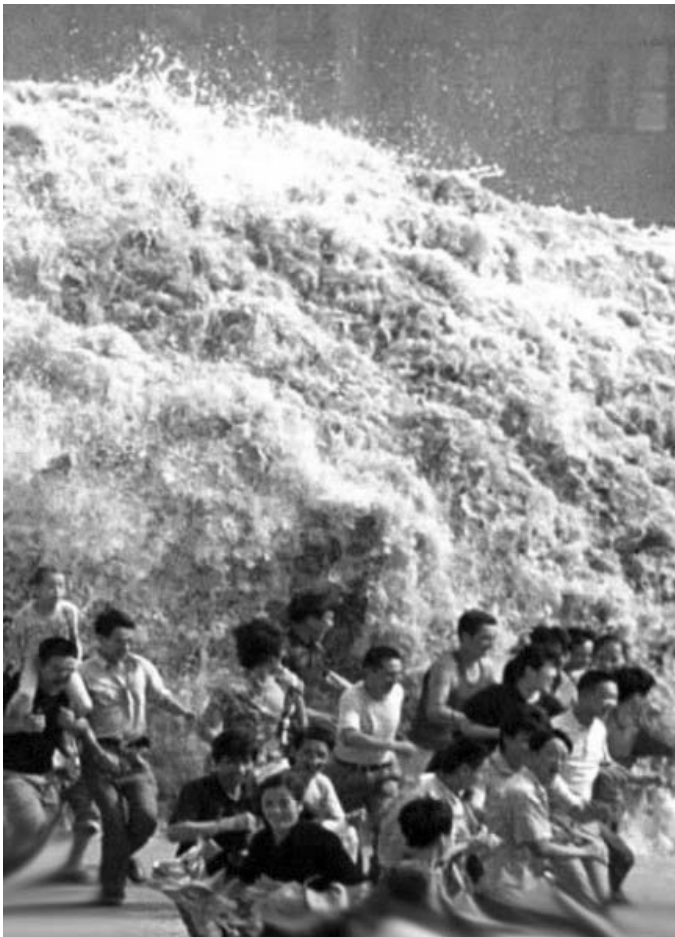
Here in Britain, and indeed elsewhere, millions attend donor centres to give blood - usually every 17 weeks. Others put themselves on bone marrow registers and carry donor cards. All of this to help people they know they will never meet.

There have been cases where a small animal, a cat or puppy, sometimes even a child has become lodged in some deep underground pipe. Hundreds of people have mobilised to rescue it - fire crews, ambulance personnel, engineers, rescue services of every description. Contractors have freely sent in mechanical diggers. In most cases these people work endlessly, sometimes for days on end, sometimes without sleep, more often than not unpaid, until the cat or dog or the small child is rescued. You can't get near the site for TV crews and newspaper camera men - all desperate to capture the 'human interest' story, in the knowledge that this makes big news (as well as profits for the newspapers and TV networks, it must be said).

So the evidence hardly suggests that humans are selfish, greedy and aggressive. Indeed, if this was the case, if we could just not help ourselves, then we would very much see the type of court case we began this episode with far more often.

What most critics of human nature are actually referring to is human behaviour, behaviour exhibited in varying circumstances, and sometimes this reveals humans to be displaying behaviour that is aggressive or selfish.

For instance, if you go to Newcastle on a Saturday afternoon you'll see thousands of people out shopping, strolling along quietly, minding their own business. Return ten hours later when the



When the tsunami struck, 'selfish' humans queued for hours to put money in buckets for people they had never met.

pubs and night clubs empty, when the same streets are full of drunken youths and you'll see behaviour that is quite blatantly aggressive and anti-social. This is not natural aggression, but aggression which is arising because the normal functioning of thousands of brains is being

upset by an overdose of the chemical alcohol and other drugs taken during the course of the evening as these young workers try to unwind after a stressful week at work.

Anti-social behaviour is also influenced by our social circumstances at any given time, i.e., when we are poor, depressed, lonely, afraid, angry or frustrated - sometimes a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion arising from abnormal and unfamiliar circumstances.

Socialists maintain that human behaviour is shaped in general by our surroundings, our circumstances, by the kind of system people are conditioned to live in - that it is not our consciousness that determines our social existence but our social existence which determines our consciousness. Nobody, for example, is born a racist or a patriot, a bigot, or with a belief in gods - this has to be learned. Nobody is born a murderer, a robber or a rapist, and our

assumed greed for money is no more a function of the natural human thought process than were slavery or witch burning.

Ordinarily, the reactionary ideas the common people hold have been acquired

second-hand, passed down from the ruling class above us. This is because, as Marx observed, the class which owns and controls the productive process also controls the intellectual life process in general.

In most cases, those who produce the world's wealth (some 95 percent of the world's population) have had that second-rate education that makes free-thought difficult - an upbringing that conditions us to accept without question the ideas of our betters and superiors. Indeed, the education system is geared to perpetuate the rule of an elite, insofar as it never encourages children to question and take issue with the status quo. Children may well cite that 8 times 8 equals 64, but how many will ask about the cause of wars or query the destruction of food? Moreover, the master class is allowed to hold onto power by controlling exactly what we think to the point that we imbibe a false class consciousness and readily acquiesce in our own exploitation. They control the TV, the radio, the newspapers, the schools. They perpetuate ideas that become so ubiquitous many people accept them as their own, uncritically. Many of these ideas are reactionary and, once imbibed, provide fertile soil for other reactionary ideas.

Socialists hold that because we can adapt our behaviour, the desire to cooperate should not be viewed as illogical. We hold that humans are, "by nature", cooperative and that we work best when faced with the worst and that our humanity shines through when the odds are stacked against us. Today, world capitalism threatens the human race with extinction. The reason this obnoxious system survives is because we have been conditioned to accept it, not born to perpetuate it.

Rest assured: no gene inclines us to defend the profit system. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Asylum: from pillar to post and back

It is not good news for Chu Hua (*'At the Bottom of the Heap'*, February *Socialist Standard*). She came from China hoping for asylum but her application was turned down and she was forbidden to find a job or claim benefit, which reduced her to living off friends or getting involved in something illegal - like selling counterfeit DVDs. That was why she appeared in court, threatened with a prison sentence - which probably persuaded her to take her chances elsewhere by going on the run.

This is where the bad news begins. On 28 May the Crown Court at Guildford sent a 34 year old man called Ling Cheng to prison for six months. Like Chu Hua, he is a rejected asylum seeker from China and, again like her, his offence - for the fourth time - was selling counterfeit DVDs. This case highlighted the uncomfortable fact that the manufacture and selling of illegal DVDs is dominated by organised gangs of Chinese. Gangs which make money in ways which are illegal - in the sense that they don't actually conform to the type of theft and extortion which capitalism thrives on - often assert their territorial or commercial integrity with extreme violence. In other words anyone who does not do as they say or who tries to muscle in on their territory is liable to be subjected to organised punishment beating or even killings. Chu Hua would be desperately vulnerable to that - it was not why she came to England.

Deportation

Worse news for Chu Hua was that when Ling Cheng was in court there was already an order that he should be deported back to China (although luckily for him the Chinese government had refused to take him, which means he had avoided a fate even worse than trying to scrape a livelihood in England out of nothing). If Chu Hua were also sent back to China she could well be tortured or executed. Her asylum application was based on the fact that she is a member of the Fa Lun Gong cult, which the Chinese government regards as dangerously subversive of their style of capitalism and of the discipline they need to impose on their workers if that country is to maintain its

bid to become one of the great competitors of world capitalism. This is why members of Fa Lun Gong have been imprisoned, beaten and killed.

As if this is not menacing enough for Chu Hua, there has recently been some news about the Chinese government's keen interest in the profit prospects of the international trade in human organs - and the lengths they are willing to go to in order to get a slice of the market. There is a world shortage of some transplant organs and plenty of desperately sick people who will pay a great deal for one. A kidney costs around £35,000, a heart about £80,000. Among the organisations which openly advertise their wares there are transplant centres in China running websites which promise to supply most organs quickly - a kidney can be had within four weeks, some viscera almost immediately. Perhaps the people whose lives depend on a quick transplant will not ask themselves too many searching questions about the origins of the organ they are buying and why it should be available so quickly. For them, a recent statement by the British Transplant Society should have made disturbing reading:

"an accumulating body of evidence suggests that the organs of executed prisoners are being removed for transplantation without the prior consent of either the prisoner or their family."

Executions

Professor Stephen Wigmore, who is chairman of the British Transplant Society's ethics committee, has referred to "a reported close relationship between transplant units and the authorities

regulating executions and the availability of organs" in China and says that "The weight



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of evidence has accumulated to a point over the last few months where it's really incontrovertible in our opinion". He told BBC Radio Five Live that the speed with which patients and donors in China are matched must imply that prisoners were being selected before execution to give up their organs. Motoring enthusiasts may see some similarities between this and their expectation of popping down to the local breaker's yard to buy a salvaged part for a damaged car.

The government of China lays claim to it being a socialist country. Leaving aside the fact that this is a contradiction in terms, the truth is that that country exhibits some of the crueller, more repressive characteristics of life under capitalism. It is common for prisoners in China to be subjected to the humiliation and terror of a public sentencing rally. Of all the countries where the death sentence operates China is easily the most active; according to Amnesty International 3,400 people were executed there in 2005 - about 90 per cent of the total world wide. (Iran was in second place, a long way behind with 160). The number of executions in China can only be estimated as it is an official state secret. Some judge it to be far higher than Amnesty, for example one delegate at the National People's Congress put the figure nearer 10,000. In addition there is an unusually wide definition of capital crime, encompassing corruption and repeat instances of minor, or attempted, offences.

Terror

That definition also includes membership of the Fa Lun Gong, which the Chinese government is trying to wipe out. Supporters of the Fa Lun Gong say that members of the cult have been held at a labour camp near a town called Shenyang before being put to death so that their organs could be sold. It was to escape this kind of terror that Chu

Time for capitalism to go

Up until the time when capitalism had created the potential for the establishment of a truly socially democratic society it had, despite its awful costs in terms of human misery, been a progressive system. Inevitably, like earlier social systems, class interest, and the power and influence to enforce that interests, makes it resistant to change and inevitably it became a reactionary, anti-social system.

But its rules and its values predominate in our world establishing their own social morality and we cannot judge capitalists by the social morality of an equitable system predicated on human need when such a system does not yet exist. Indeed the nature of capitalism, its response to competition, its compulsion for expansion and its imperative for profit, gives it a dynamic beyond the control of either those who profit from it or those who suffer under it.

The capitalist class does not seek to create things like unemployment as a punishment on the working class - after all its profits ensue from the wealth created by employed workers. The capitalist class does not want wars and the colossal costs which are a burden on taxation which, in turn, is a charge on the surplus value accruing to the capitalist class. The capitalist class does not want crime (other than the 'legal' variety it itself perpetrates!) which, like armaments and wars, are a charge on capital. Capitalism would be a more secure and socially restful system without the multiplicity of evils it creates but its nature precludes human control even by the capitalists or their political agents and within itself it is a system of fiercely conflicting interests.

Political unanimity within the capitalist class is limited to the need to protect its class interests. Individual capitalists might feel constrained towards some charity or amelioration of some facet of a situation the system creates but such a response to social 'conscience' does not question the values and the priorities of the system itself and certainly the capitalist class, like their historical predecessors, are hostile to the idea of revolutionary change. That change - again, like previous socially revolutionary changes - must be the work, and, thus, the politics, of those on whom capitalist exploitation is based: the working class.

Even if they wanted to - which of course they don't - the capitalists could not institute the next phase in the social evolution of human society. That job is the task of the working class, not because of its

Hua made her way to England and eventually to the court where she was under threat of imprisonment for selling those DVDs - an offence which in China would almost certainly have resulted in her being executed. She went on the run from the court a few months ago and seems to be still at large. Perhaps she decided that after all she would be better off back in China. Either way it is not good news for her or for the people of the world, who are capable of organising human affairs much better than this. ■

IVAN



Chinese executing a woman in Tibet

'moral' superiority but because of its overwhelming numerical superiority and its historic imperative.

Foot soldiers

Previous social revolutions have occurred when the political and economic basis of a new phase of social evolution have matured in the womb of the old society and the means used has been the physical overthrow of the dominant class by the class representing the new phase for which history has prepared it.

The situation that determines the means of social revolution in modern capitalism is, however, markedly different in several respects to that of earlier societies and earlier revolutions. The purpose of these latter was to overthrow an existing minority class and replace it with another minority class in order that the new class could establish political conditions that would facilitate a new mode of production. The chattel slave and the feudal slave may each in turn have been the foot soldiers of revolution but only the conditions of their slavery was changed.

There is now no further minority class interests pressing the norms and social structures of capitalism for new relations in the mode of production and the working class can not turn the system on its head and carry through a revolution that would allow it to exploit the relatively small capitalist class!

At this stage we should define in general terms - because it is only thus it can be defined - what we mean by the working class. We mean all those who in order to live are obliged to sell their physical or mental abilities to an employer for a wage, salary or commission. Within that context there is a great variety of income but the common denominator is the compulsion to be and to remain a hired hand. Conversely, a capitalist can be defined as someone who can live by profit, rent or interest and who works only if he or she wishes to do so. Again, as with the working class, there is a great variety of income within the capitalist class and there are occasional situations that do not lend themselves to this form of categorisation but it is the only form of general classification that fits the situation as it is.

Capitalism made production social; now history imposes on the working class the task of making distribution social which is the sole means by which the myriad problems of society can be resolved. It is this change to social distribution that establishes socialism and the politics

governing the revolutionary role of the working class in bringing about this change is not only conditioned by the nature of the change itself but distinct from all previous revolutionary changes in the social organisation of society.

End of buying and selling

This can best be appreciated by an understanding of what socialism involves. Briefly, socialism will be a system of society in which the means of life, the entire productive and distributive resources, will be owned and democratically controlled by society as a whole on the principle of "from each according to their ability and to each in accordance with their self-determined need" The establishment of that principle will mean that the wages system will be ended as will buying and selling and, hence the need for money as a means of exchange.

It needs little thought to appreciate all the wasteful functions that capitalism's buying and selling world makes necessary. Hundreds of millions of people are currently occupied in jobs and in entire industries that would disappear with the ending of the marketing system. Similarly, with the ending of competition for markets, resources and areas of strategic interest, the cause of wars would no longer exist; armed forces and the vast and wasteful array of weaponry these employ would be redundant. Equally, in a world of free access to needs most crimes would disappear along with the personnel on both sides of that industry.

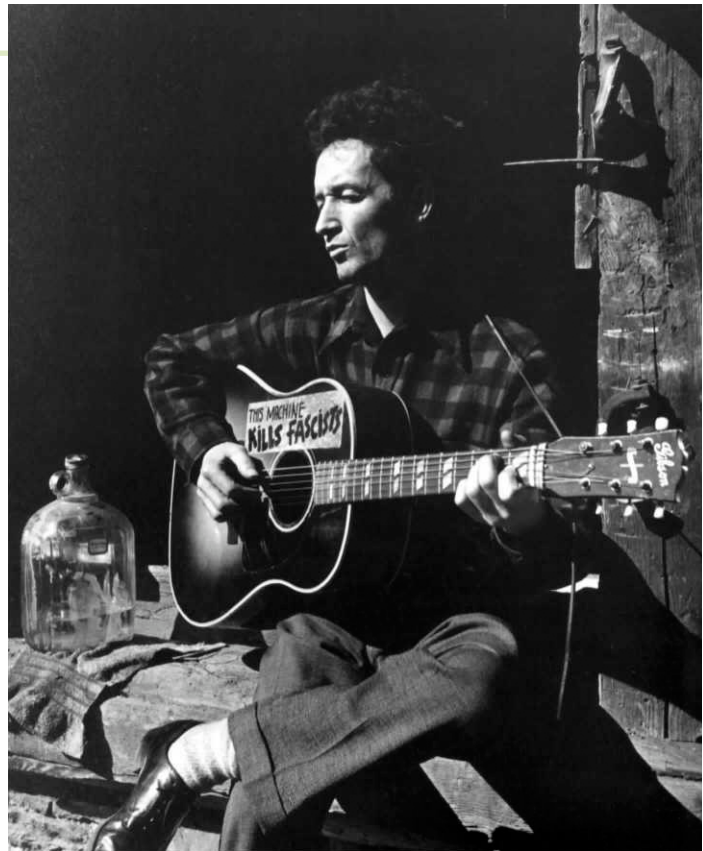
Whereas in capitalist society the ending of hundreds of millions of jobs would be ruinous, in socialism the freed workers could be absorbed into the workforce ensuring firstly that the social infrastructure needed to end the appalling poverty that currently afflicts the lives of billions of people throughout the world could be speedily ended. Thereafter, they would augment the workforce to lighten the burden of producing the goods and services needed in their communities and elsewhere.

It will be obvious that the society here envisaged could only be established and maintained on the broadest voluntary human co-operation. Once established it will create, like all other forms of social organisation its own social conventions affecting human behaviour. Initially, the 'politics' of its revolutionary establishment

will require the endorsement of the overwhelming majority organised consciously within the general ambience of a political movement. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

Woody Guthrie: Resonant Voice for the Downtrodden or Woolly-Eyed Lefty?



Curious things were afoot in Greenwich Village, New York City around the year 1960. Doves of earnest denim-clad youths could be observed traversing the streets, all affecting the same hunched posture and shuffling gait. From every clenched jaw a king-size sprouted and (curiouser and curiouser) each throat emitted the same sporadic dry cough. One such *poseur*, a Minnesotan balladeer, Robert Zimmerman, would presently win universal acclaim as Bob Dylan.

Curiously too, the template for all those cardboard cut-outs also happened to be in the vicinity. Just across the Hudson River, those five years past, he had languished in New Jersey's Greystone State Institute. His name was Woody Guthrie.

As writer, broadcaster, political activist and composer of some one thousand songs, Guthrie had been famous long before the birth of any of his young impersonators although this had since faded and, anyway, was always heavily laced with both controversy and notoriety. Why then was an ailing, ageing figure suddenly the focus of such adulation that the very hackings of his tobacco-added bronchial tubings were deemed worthy of reproduction?

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie was born in 1912 into a tragedy-prone family in Omaha, Oklahoma, being named in honour of the Democratic contender and President-to-be. Guthrie senior was an opportunistic businessman and Ku Klux Klan member whose racist views his son ingested and held well into adulthood. Mother, an unstable woman, was destined to die in the "insane asylum" from the hereditary condition then known as Huntington's Chorea. In her more lucid moments however, she bequeathed Woody her rich musical heritage. She sang to him ballads of farmers, of sailors, of the humble triumphs and sorrows of ordinary people; an art-form that decades later, would find itself neatly sanitised, packaged, and marketed as "folk" music. At conception, unknowingly, she had also bequeathed him the Huntington's genes. Inevitably, this upbringing left its

mark and young Guthrie developed into a decidedly maverick adult; as erratic in his business affairs as he was neglectful of his several wives, his numerous children, his personal presentation and hygiene. He developed also an enduring, and endearing, aversion to money, observing that "getting it turned people into animals and losing it drove them crazy". Money to him was only ever a means of satisfying immediate requirements; any surplus being promptly squandered. At the height of his fame he would spurn lucrative contracts with the same panache that had seen his younger self regularly bestow entire evenings' busking tips upon any convenient vagrant whose needs he perceived to exceed his own.

The final disintegration of the family

“the IWW provided Guthrie with a simplistic political consciousness beyond which he never materially developed”

unit saw a teenage Guthrie embark on an itinerant life, hitching rides and hopping freight trains across America, using his musical skills to access life's basic necessities. He dosed in railway boxcars, under bridges, in hobo encampments, all the while adding to his repertoire. This would later constitute much of the romantic "Hard Travellin'" Guthrie legend but in reality it was a precarious existence, with regular harassment from the authorities; the next meal or bed a constant preoccupation.

There were an estimated 200,000 drifters and migratory workers during the

1920s, a figure which increased drastically in the 1930s as first the effects of the Great Depression then the Oklahoma Dust Bowl, bit deeper. This latter calamity, so graphically portrayed in Steinbeck's magnificent novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, saw entire communities forced off the barren land and on to the highways. Guthrie was both moved by their plight and angered by the hostility shown towards them; the taunt "Okie" so widely used that it swiftly became the generic term for all "poor-white" destitutes.

Round the hobo campfires, Guthrie encountered grizzled, broken men; erstwhile members of the Industrial Workers of the World, muttering about there being a class struggle within society between the "rich" capitalists and the "poor" workers. In the finest of leftist traditions, the IWW had been a chaotic outfit with little idea of what actually constituted socialism, nor indeed how it might be established; violent strike action and sabotage being foremost amongst its strategies. Its nickname, "Wobblies" was indeed apt.

The propaganda potential of both music and humour was however, recognised and its *Little Red Songbook*, largely parodies of Salvationist hymns, contained such gems as "The Pious Itinerant (Hallelujah I'm a Bum)" and "In the Sweet By-and-By" with its irreverent promise of "pie in the sky when you die".

If nothing else, the IWW provided Guthrie with a simplistic political consciousness beyond which he never materially developed. More significantly, it lent a focus to his growing anger and taking his cue from the songbook, began creating his own material. In an anthology, "Dust Bowl Ballads", he berated the "Vigilante Man" who would "shoot his brothers and sisters down", lampooned the bungling incompetence of "these here politicians" in "Dust Bowl Blues" and mocked the preacher who, having first pocketed the collection, abandoned his flock with a "So Long it's Been Good to Know Ya".

Settling down briefly around 1937,

Guthrie worked with the radical Los Angeles radio station KFVD. Here his racism underwent transformation; a Negro listener labelling him "unintelligent" for performing his "Nigger Blues" over the airwaves. Guthrie had used the term casually since childhood and was mortified. He apologised unreservedly, expunging the disgusting word forthwith from his vocabulary - although the "Japs" and "Wops" did continue to catch it in the neck for some time to come.

Back on his travels, it seemed to his open, if blinkered eyes that those striving hardest to assist the Okie refugees were "communists". The American Communist Party had been founded in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution by an enclave of native radicals, Wobblies and immigrant Europeans, all mistakenly identifying it as somehow connected with the establishment of socialism - the reality being that it was simply one more chapter in the global triumph of capitalism over feudalism, taking in this instance, the form of state capitalism.

Routinely persecuted by a nervous government, it endured as a zealous, paranoid sect, but as the "Roaring Twenties" gave way to the "Hungry Thirties" following the 1929 Wall Street Crash, it effected some popular headway by depicting the apparent success of Stalin's "planned" Soviet economy, with unemployment (officially at least) non-existent.

Then, following the Nazi triumph in Germany and the growth of Fascism elsewhere, the 1935 World Congress of the Communist International urged member parties to forgo their "ideological purity" and unite with other leftists in a Popular Front against this menace. Accordingly, the Party began to "Americanize", becoming active, indeed dominant, in the labour union movement and supporting the 1936 election of "progressive" Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This then was the organisation that Guthrie embraced. Whilst never adopting actual membership, he sang at party rallies and contributed a rather folksy column, "Woody Sez", to its journal, *Peoples' World*.

"I ain't a communist necessarily," he quipped, "but I've been in the red all my life."

The Hitler/Stalin non-aggression treaty of August 1939 which caused such heartache for the Party faithful (and headache for its leadership), troubled Guthrie not the slightest. With the Popular Front now summarily dispatched, he blithely swallowed the spluttered explanation that Russia was simply pro-peace; not pro-Fascist. It was Roosevelt, instantly transmogrified from hero to villain, who was trying to drag America into conflict on behalf of British imperialism. "Pact sets peace example", proclaimed the *Peoples' World*.

And when the "peace-loving" Red Army invaded Eastern Poland shortly afterwards, why, they were merely liberating the place. "Stalin," sang Guthrie, "stepped in and gave the land back to the farmers."

The German attack on Russia in June 1941 meant about-turn yet again and with America's entry into the war six months later following Pearl Harbour, the Party became in a trice the most fervently patriotic of institutions; union organisation and strike action now subordinated to the overriding imperative for military success. "Sure," reasoned our Woody, "the Communists change policy, but so do the Democrats and Republicans."

Victory secured, the western alliance quickly foundered. Stalin denounced his former bedfellows as worse than Hitler, Churchill responded with his "Iron Curtain" speech and the Cold War was underway.

In an era of low unemployment and rising wages, the American left found itself in decline. Labour unions were now established in society, requiring pension fund managers rather than militants and among the newly-consumerist working class, a fear prevailed that its relative prosperity might be in jeopardy from leftism. Guthrie too was in decline, succumbing by degrees to the lingering horrors of Huntington's Disease, dying eventually in 1967.

By the late 1950s, further societal change was underway. Following Eisenhower's 1954 election, the "Great Red Scare" was evaporating and in the emerging teenage generation, an intellectual curiosity and idealism could be discerned, transcending the parochialism and acquisitiveness of its War-era parents. Political activism, particularly in the Civil Rights Movement reawakened and nonconformity of sorts, became acceptable.

Guthrie had somehow filtered into the "radical psyche" as a free-wandering spirit representing all things open, honest and unmaterialistic. His songs began to be listened to.

Tin Pan Alley too, had its role to play and profits to consolidate. Rock 'n' Roll had arrived some years earlier and had proved anathema to "White Middle America", a subversive presence inciting youthful rebelliousness and promiscuity; the term itself Negro slang for sexual intercourse. For the first time, black musicians, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and others were accessing mass white audiences. Could the unthinkable happen and integration ensue?

Clean-cut Caucasians - the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul and Mary etc, - churning out "folk" songs seemed a much safer option and from record stores everywhere wafted bowdlerised versions of *Oklahoma Hills* and *This Land is Your Land* - to the joyful ringing accompaniment of the cash register.

Woody Guthrie was never a socialist in any scientific sense of the word. He was however, manifestly "socialistic" in his whole outlook on life. "This land," he sang "was made for you and me" and the fruits of his "Pastures of Plenty", rightfully everyone's.

He once wrote, "The worst thing that can happen is to cut loose from people and the best thing is to vaccinate yourself right into their blood... We have to get together and work and fight for everybody." Hardly apocalyptic, but nonetheless sentiments with which socialists will heartily agree. ■

ANDREW ARMITAGE



Cooking the Books (2)

The nutty philosopher

"Tax breathing, not chocolate cake" ran the headline in the *Times* (30 May) of an article by a certain Jamie

White, who was billed as "a philosopher". It didn't say of what but he seems to be a philosopher of taxation.

In any event, he advanced the view that the best things to tax are things people are prepared to pay for irrespective of the price. When the price of cakes reaches a certain level people will stop buying them, but whatever level a hypothetical price of air would reach people would still buy it.

"Privatising the air is the ideal solution", wrote the philosopher. "Alas, it is difficult to arrange".

Alas, be buggered. Fortunately, it is impossible to arrange. Not that some enterprising capitalist wouldn't seek to own and sell air if they could, as in the nightmare situation envisaged by Owen in Robert

Tressell's classic novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*:

"They have monopolized everything that it is possible to monopolize; they have got the whole earth, the minerals in the earth and the streams that water the earth. The only reason they have not monopolized the daylight and the air is that it is not possible to do it. If it were possible to construct huge gasometers and to draw together and compress within them the whole of the atmosphere, it would have been done long ago, and we should have been compelled to work for them in order to get money to buy air to breathe. And if that seemingly impossible thing were accomplished tomorrow, you would see thousands of people dying for want of air - or of the money to buy it - even as now thousands are dying from want of other necessities of life. You would see people going about gasping for breath, and telling each other that the likes of them could not expect to have air to breathe unless they had the money to pay for it" (chapter 15).

While only a nutty professor would argue that the private ownership of air was an "ideal solution", most people today

accept that the private ownership of the productive resources needed for life - land, water, minerals and the instruments needed to fashion them into useful things - is reasonable. Actually, from the view of meeting human needs, it is a quite unreasonable solution.

Why should the land, water and the other things that are just as essential to life as air be privately owned any more than the air we breathe? Why should a section of society be in a position to hold the rest of us to ransom and say "unless you work for us (for less than you produce) you can't have access to what you need to live?"

Of course they shouldn't. All the means and instruments of production should belong in common to the whole community as the only basis on which they can be used to satisfy the needs of every member of society.

The good news is that White will be regarded as a fruit cake by most supporters of capitalism too. Even Madame Thatcher balked at the free buying and selling of body parts, inconsistent with her own nutty philosophy as this was.

Porritt remodels capitalism

Capitalism As if the World Matters.
Jonathon Porritt. Earthscan. 304 pages.
£18

Capitalism can be reformed so as to be compatible with achieving an environmentally sustainable society. That's the view put forward by Jonathon Porritt (right), well-known Green and unofficial political adviser to HRH Prince Charles (as he refers to him in his latest book) which presents a version of capitalism that is supposed to allow it to function while taking ecological considerations properly into account, which it doesn't do today.

What would a society have to be like to be environmentally sustainable? Basically, says Porritt (and we can agree), this would be a society whose methods of providing for the needs of its members did not use up non-renewable resources quicker than renewable substitutes for them could be found; did not use up renewal resources quicker than nature could reproduce them; and did not release waste into nature quicker than the environment's ability to absorb it. (Porritt himself adds - and we'd be the last to disagree, even though it ups the bar considerably - that it would have to be a society in which "human needs are met worldwide".) If these practices are abided by, then the relationship and interactions between human society and the rest of nature would be able to continue on a long-term basis - would be able to be "sustained" - without harming or degrading the natural environment on which humans depend.

Socialists contend that these practices could be systematically applied only within the context of the Earth's natural and industrial resources being the common heritage of all humanity under democratic control. In other words, we place ourselves unambiguously in the camp of those who argue that capitalism and a sustainable relationship with the rest of nature are not compatible. The excessive consumption of both renewal and non-renewable resources and the release of waste that nature can't absorb that currently go on are not just accidental but an inevitable result of capitalism's very nature.

Capitalism is a society in which:

- (1) nearly all new wealth is produced for sale on a market;
- (2) money is invested in production with a view to obtaining a monetary profit;
- (3) those who produce the new wealth are exploited in that the source of profits is work they are not paid for;
- (4) production is regulated by the market via a competitive struggle between separately-owned enterprises for profits;
- (5) capital is accumulated out of profits in the form of new means of production, leading to the growth both of what can be produced and what is actually produced;

To which it can be added that capitalism exists as a single global system and not as a collection of separate national capitalisms.

Porritt accepts all of these as features of capitalism except point 3 (of course). His case is that if the government set the limits within which the market, the pursuit of profits, separately-owned enterprises and

competition operated, these could operate to allow an environmentally sustainable society. According to him, capitalism and environmental sustainability "are only compatible under certain conditions (it isn't



capitalism per se that is at issue here, but which particular model of capitalism)". He therefore subscribes to "a reform from within" strategy: identify those characteristics of today's dominant capitalist paradigm that most damagingly impede progress towards sustainability and set out to change them through the usual levers - government intervention, consumer preference, international diplomacy, education and so on".

In short, a classic reformist strategy. This is based on the assumption that "today's dominant capitalist paradigm" is only one of a number of different possible capitalist "paradigms" or "models". But the evidence is against this: there is not a range of different models of capitalism from which government can pick the one they prefer. Capitalism is a single, organic whole (to use a term Greens will understand), functioning to pursue and accumulate profits, which cannot be remodelled mechanically. Past attempts to re-form capitalism in this sort of way, as for instance by the Labour Party and similar parties in other countries, have shown that, if there's capitalism, it imposes its priorities - profit, competitiveness, accumulation - over all other considerations, and that in the end governments have no choice but to go along with this.

Rather than Labour-type parties changing capitalism it has been the other way round. These parties have ended up accepting that priority has to be given to capitalism's priorities. The same is beginning to happen to the Greens, who have already participated in the government of capitalism in a number of European countries. In fact, Porritt's own shift of position could be seen as a sign of this, though it can be admitted that some of the earlier Green positions he used to espouse but has now abandoned - such as "zero growth" and that decentralised local communities could solve global problems - were never tenable.

One of the ways in which Porritt suggests that governments could achieve a "a market-based model of sustainable

capitalism" would be to force the competing enterprises to treat natural resources as if they were capital, subject to depreciation which had to be accounted for in monetary terms. He talks of "natural capital", while acknowledging that even some Greens find treating nature as an economic category with a price-tag abhorrent.

All governments set as a policy goal increasing the "Gross Domestic Product" (GDP) of the country they govern. GDP is supposed to be a measure of the new value produced in a country in the course of a year. (Actually, strictly speaking, this should be Net National Product since GDP includes an element for depreciation and replacement of used-up fixed capital, which is not really new value.) This aim of governments is an unconscious reflection of the logic of capitalism since the new value created over and above what is consumed during the same period of time is the source of new capital which capitalism is driven to accumulate.

Endless "growth" (even if in fits and starts) - and the growing consumption of nature-given materials this involves - is built in to capitalism. However, this is not the growth of useful things as such but rather the growth of money-values, which is only indirectly the growth of things since money-value can only be embodied in things (not that all of these things are useful from a human point of view, even if they are within capitalist society, such as bombs and automatic cash machines).

Porritt cites the first law of thermodynamics ("energy is neither created nor destroyed as it is changed from one form to another") to make the point that the production of wealth is not the creation of new material; it is merely a transformation of existing material that either comes directly from nature or originally did so into something useful or considered useful to human life (the definition of "wealth"). The material substratum of wealth comes from nature but, because it is not itself the product of labour, it has no value in the capitalist economic sense. Marx was fond of quoting the 17th century writer Sir William Petty's remark that labour is the father and nature the mother of wealth. The problem is that, as under capitalism it is only labour that confers an economic value, nature is neglected when it comes to economic calculations and the operation of the economy.

Porritt complains that "we show nothing but contempt for the contribution from nature, valuing it at zero as some kind of free gift or subsidy" and that, as a result, "today's dominant paradigm of capitalism" leads to the plundering of non-renewable resources (such as oil and minerals) and the over-harvesting of renewable ones (such as fish and forests).

This is true but his proposed solution - to take into account the non-renewed consumption of natural material as a negative amount when calculating GDP, as an incentive to cut back on it as a way of avoiding a reduction in GDP - is merely mucking about with the thermometer while leaving the real world unchanged. In the real world, which GDP merely attempts to measure, the competing enterprises would still only take into account as a cost what they had to pay for. As it costs no labour to produce natural materials (only to extract or

harvest them, not to create them), whether or not they are renewed doesn't enter into the calculation. If enterprises were forced to artificially take into account using up non-renewed natural resources in their business accounts, that would distort the calculation of the rate of profit which is the key economic indicator for capitalism. Mucking about with that under capitalism would cause all sorts of problems.

There is no way round this under capitalism, which simply cannot be remodelled or reformed on this point. To be fair, Porritt does concede that he could be wrong about capitalism and environmental sustainability and muses how bad it would be "to be committed to a reform agenda if the system one sought to reform was inherently incapable of accommodating the necessary changes in the first place". Actually, this is precisely his case. This being so, he ought to draw the conclusion which he says then imposes itself:

"If, as a politically active environmentalist or campaigner for social justice, one's answer to the question is that they are, indeed, mutually exclusive (that capitalism, in whichever manifestation, is in its very essence inherently unsustainable), then one's only morally consistent response is to devote one's political activities to the overthrow of capitalism".

We have nothing to add.

ADAM BUICK

Corrections

Political trainspotters will have noticed the mistake in the part of last month's Greasy Pole devoted to Margaret Beckett when we said she "once savaged Neil Kinnock for his refusal to back Tony Blair against Denis Healey for the Deputy Party leadership". The Tony in question was of course Benn not Blair. Our apologies.

Also last month, in reply to a letter on "redirecting production to meet needs", we wrote that "it has been suggested that world food production would have to be increased by at least 60 percent to get to a position of sufficiency for everybody on the planet". To avoid misunderstanding, this suggestion referred to more than basic food needs. Total food production even today is theoretically enough, if evenly divided, to prevent anyone dying of starvation. "Enough food is now produced worldwide to provide sufficient calories for all humans, but distribution is uneven and inequitable" (http://uk.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761576477/Food_Supply_World.html#3). Of course, in socialism, with the artificial scarcity and organised waste of capitalism gone, enough food will be able to be produced to provide a more than adequate diet for all.

The editorial in April stated that "real power today does not lie in elected bodies but in the hands of those who own the world's wealth". This was a reference to the power to take economic decisions not to political power - the power to set the machinery of state in motion - which is in the hands of governments ultimately responsible to elected bodies, even if used today in the interest of those who own the world's wealth since those currently elected support and sustain capitalism.

Freud, at least in terms of his theoretical conclusions, had a somewhat pessimistic view of human nature, and in this sense saw things differently from socialists. However, I believe that this should be set against Freud's compassionate acceptance of human weakness and limitation, and in this respect, I believe, Freud and Marx were soul mates. Many of their peers would have been happy to regard the hysterical men and women as well as the poor oppressed masses as both, each in their own way, the cause of their own misfortune. Freud and Marx regarded them as fellow human beings, championed their causes, and sought to relieve them from their suffering. In doing so they both went completely against the grain of the societies they lived in, and for that bravery of spirit alone, deserve our gratitude and respect. The idea that people are the cause of their own misfortune is a central argument of those on the political right. This is particularly so in America where it's even accepted by many of those who suffer as a result of it. The idea is that whether someone is emotionally disturbed, or mentally ill, or a single mother, or lacks the skills, strength, or ability to get a well paying job, they are somehow supposed to have chosen to be exactly as they are. Giving them no support is then justified on the grounds that they could choose to somehow magically change themselves and their circumstances if they really wanted to. It's interesting to note that these right-wingers choose to see emotional and economic difficulties in a very similar way.

Freud and Marx would have been united in opposing this absurd idea. Freud would have pointed out that people with emotional problems are victims of their own natures and certainly don't choose to be the way they are. I don't need to say what Marx would have said about the source of economic hardship.

In spite of the huge differences in their areas of interests there are quite a number of ways in which Freud and Marx parallel one another. They were both big fans of Darwin and saw themselves as doing work in a similar vein to him. For an explanation of how Marx's views on religion correspond to Freud's ideas about paranoia see *Paranoia* by David Bell. This is an excellent little booklet which I thoroughly recommend. It gives a brilliant explanation of "false communities", racism, hatred of asylum seekers, resentment welfare recipients, etc. from a psychoanalytic point of view.

Psychoanalysis has a tremendous amount to offer to anyone who wants to have a better understanding of human behaviour. I can't resist mentioning the books of Robert Jay Lifton in which he applies his background in psychoanalysis to the study of recent historical and political situations. Socialists should simply take from Freud and psychoanalysis whatever they find helpful or interesting and leave aside that which they don't.

ADAM WATERHOUSE, Bristol

Dear Editors

The article on 'Freud and Marx' (May *Socialist Standard*) was quite interesting and may lead some readers to study more of the works of Freud, Reich and Fromm. However, it appears to make the usual errors by critics of their pioneering work

Freud's discovery of psycho-analysis is used by the medical profession world-wide and has proved to be beneficial and

invaluable in treating patients with deep emotional difficulties.

The article states that "Instinctual Sexual Energy" has never been found. This is not the case. Any objective observation of older babies and very young children will demonstrate that they have a natural and "instinctive" sexual or sensual drive for genital play for long before they have any understanding or knowledge of sexual functioning.

While there have been advances in sexual liberation for adults, in recent years, this has not led to much improvement in social attitudes. There is a specific reason for this. Development in the first five years of life pass through the stages of oral, anal and genital evolution of pleasure zones.

By puberty, on average, girls are menstruating at 10 years of age and boys, on average, are ejaculating at 12 years. So physiologically they are ready for mating. This in our "Civilised" society is understandably unacceptable. So unlike all other living creatures, the "Sexual Instincts" must be repressed and thwarted.

Freud and Freudians understood this and suggested that a price in emotional terms would be made. Hence the 'Life and Death' instincts evolve that give rise to the emergence of all kinds of sexual perversions that can develop. These are also expressed in 'death' drives in addictions, such as drug taking, smoking, alcohol, etc. And as Wilhelm Reich proved, into homoerotic political diversions, such as fascist and nazi fantasies. (Study the Nazi symbols and expressions and the "death instinct" is self-evident.)

Sexuality or sensuality is the deepest natural emotional instinct all humans possess.

Most people, though unaware of their repressed emotions, are able to cope sufficiently in life.

It is essential, however, to understand the complexity of our personalities, if we are ever going to be able to create a fully successful socialist society that will be really lasting. For we are not machines or robots, but thinking animals with many emotional layers.

Just as the work of Marx is a guide to understanding, and not a dogma like religions. So also, is the work of Freud, Reich and Fromm.

LIONEL RICH, London NW6

Manchester

Monday 24 July, 8 pm

Discussion on Nationalism

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre.

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see page 3 for details

Obituary for Kevin Lennon

Members of North East Branch were saddened at news of the death of Kevin Lennon in March. Kevin had been a member of the Socialist Party since October 1979, almost 27 years. Anyone who ever met Kevin knew him as an activist above and beyond the call of duty - rain, snow or hail, he never missed branch meetings, indeed he was almost always the first one there, regardless of the location of the venue or how difficult it was to get there via public transport. He was always with us at demos and during election activity and always spoke his mind, with passion, on

subjects he felt strongly about.

Members who turned up for his funeral at Sunderland Crematorium found it painfully ironic that Kevin should be given a religious send off - a member of his family had said funerals were for the bereaved - for if there was one thing Kevin was famous for at branch meetings it was when someone raised the subject of religion and he'd rise to his feet, finger in the air, venting his spleen on Rome and Mecca. Again he very often turned up at meetings with some quote, or photocopied article on religion that he'd copied from a book in the local library and which he would use to reinforce his arguments. For Kevin, religion taught us to put out faith in Gods to help

sort out our problems, whereas, most of our problems being social and economic, rooted in the way we organise our world for production, we were more than capable of solving such problems and creating a paradise on earth - if only the workers could be convinced it was well within their capabilities to create such a world. He would often remark that if the time people spent praying over the past 100 years had have instead been spent campaigning for socialism, then we'd have a paradise on earth already.

Needless to say Kevin was much loved within the branch and each member has their own favourite anecdote of him.

John Bissett



Cat out of the bag

Upton Sinclair once wrote that "even Von Papen had to tell the truth sometimes, if only to rest his mind." The saying applies to all politicians. The time comes when even the most diplomatic will blurt out the real motives of the British ruling class.

For example, Sir Anthony Eden. At Norwich recently he said:

"The United Kingdom's vital interest in Cyprus is not confined to its N.A.T.O. aspect. Our country's industrial life and that of Western Europe depends to-day, and must depend for many years to come, on oil supplies from the Middle East. If ever our oil resources were in peril, we would be compelled to defend them. The facilities we need in Cyprus are part of that defence. We cannot, therefore,

accept any doubt about their availability." -(The Times, 2.6.56).

The Prime Minister here admits that British capitalism's need to protect its profits-which it could not do without oil supplies-comes before the promise which Britain has made, as a member of the United Nations, to uphold the principle of self-government. Socialists have been saying for a long time that



capitalism always puts profits before principle, but it is not often that a politician as eminent as Sir Anthony Eden confirms it so explicitly.

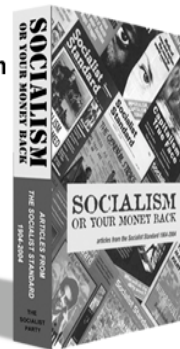
(From an article by Alwyn Edgar, *Socialist Standard*, July 1956)

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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.

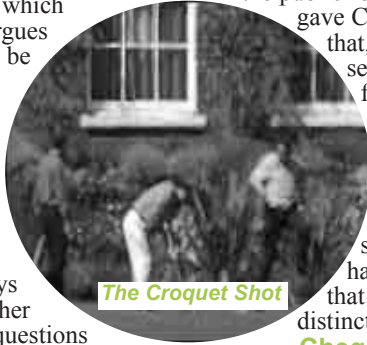


No grace without favour

Anyone whose memory is flavoured with a proper measure of vindictiveness will have little sympathy for the corpses of careers, once so promising, which crowd into the political morgues of capitalism. They will not be moved by tales of the bewilderment and distress experienced by the careerists at the dying of their ambitions. There will be no bereavement counselling for those who contemplate a bleak life without a platoon of flunkys to organise their days, to usher them unscathed by probing questions from one media-intensive exposure to another. No sympathetic third ear for those who pine for the emotional highs sprouting from a passage of adroit fencing across the Despatch Box. A stolid indifference will be shown to anyone grieving for red boxes and gleaming limousines, uniformed chauffeurs and swarming police escorts. And no glimmer of empathy will console previous inhabitants of the architectural jewels which are known as Grace and Favour Residences

Dorneywood

As almost everyone who can switch on a television set or read a newspaper knows, it was deputy Prime Minister John Prescott who, at a time when he must have been desperate to avoid any more bad publicity, swung the media searchlight onto the whole matter of grace and favour residences when he was snapped by a tabloid photographer playing croquet on the lawn of Dorneywood. Croquet - a game which needs immaculate turf, traditionally played by men and women in straw hats with hat bands in club colours. John Prescott, who is supposed to represent the interests of the people of Hull East, where croquet is not a popular game. John Prescott - who once decked a man at an election meeting for throwing an egg at him, who feeds copy to the parliamentary hacks by gabbling his Commons speeches in a riot of confused syllables, mangled words and malapropisms. Prescott the ocean going steward who angered Harold Wilson by being among the leaders of the 1966 seamen's strike. And all of this was played out on the immaculate turf of Dorneywood - Prescott's elegant grace and favour home in leafy Buckinghamshire. The tabloids were ecstatic, playing the game they know so well - making sure as many people as possible are aware of embarrassing facts which, no matter how trivial, can then be left to speak for themselves.



The Croquet Shot

Grace and favour residences are big business, coming in a variety of sizes and shapes and being awarded for many different reasons. But none of these homes attract the same degree of attention as the few which are allocated to prominent politicians - "given to the nation" as a retreat for senior ministers where they can re-energise themselves after the exhausting business of trying to control British capitalism. Chequers is unique because it is reserved for the Prime Minister of the day, donated in 1917 for that purpose by Arthur Lee, the Tory MP for Faversham and later Lord Lee. The house nestles among the Chiltern Hills, easily visible from some of the public footpaths around about. Lee gave Chequers on the assumption that, consequent on the sequence of electoral reforms flowing from the Reform Bills, it could no longer be assumed that the Prime Minister would necessarily have their own landed estates. (At the time, some sections of the ruling class had not woken up to the fact that this was an unimportant distinction).

Chequers

Thatcher was enchanted by the place: "I do not think anyone has stayed long at Chequers without falling in love with it" she wrote - an assessment which would not have chimed in with the millions of workers who spend their lives in homes which, emphatically, they do not "fall in love with". Ted Heath was also fond of



Chequers

Chequers and stayed there most weekends, although he was typically frustrated by the refusal of Arthur Lee's widow, who was allowed to live there until she died, almost forty years after Lee's death, to agree to the improvements he was impatient to make. Heath organised social events and concerts there, when his guests could enjoy the indoor swimming pool which was a gift from another rich benefactor. If Heath could see no irony in this, the same can be said about Tony Blair and his fondness for hosting events attended by fashionable stars of the media and the entertainment industry - Elton John, David Bowie, Richard and Judy. The publicity was a useful promotion of Blair's assumed credentials as a trendy - while he devoted himself to his mission to govern the rest of us in a distinctly outworn fashion.

Chevening, a grand house surrounded by a 3,500 acre estate, is now occupied by Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett - although what this will do to her well-known preference for caravan life is anybody's guess. The Earl of Stanhope left Chevening to "the nation" in 1967, specifying that it must be used by the Prime Minister, a Cabinet minister or a descendant of George VI. Prince Charles at first had his eye on it but then changed his mind; perhaps he was uneasy about being spoiled for choice. In fact Chevening, along with the now notorious Dorneywood, has

previously figured in events exposing the meaner, ruthless nature of a politician's ambitions and their perceived need to enforce recognition of their standing. When the scandal of Prescott's office affair first broke he was adamant that he would not be forced out of Dorneywood, clinging to the house as a symbol of his power and influence; to give it up would be to admit to a decline in his standing. It was not until the pressure on him became too intense, symbolised by those photographs of him leaning on his croquet mallet, that he changed his mind, in the hope that this would assuage his critics and so save his place in the government. It was rather like Arctic travellers trying to distract a pack of pursuing wolves by throwing chunks of meat off the sledge - except that in this case it was not human lives, but the vanity of an arrogant, discredited politician that was at stake.

Chevening

There has been another, equally illustrative and sickening, example in recent years. In July 1989 Thatcher had run out of patience with her Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, on the grounds that "...his clarity of purpose and analysis had dimmed". (which meant that he had disagreed with her too often). When she came to sack him Howe was furious, partly because he would have to give up Chevening, where he was very comfortable. To prevent him becoming too much of a rebellious nuisance Thatcher offered him another post and occupancy of Dorneywood, which at that time was occupied by Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson. After a spell of bitter bargaining Howe settled for Leadership of the Commons, the meaningless title of Deputy Leader - and possession of Dorneywood. A Tory peer later raged at Woodrow Wyatt about Howe's behaviour and the fact that the reshuffle had been "...overshadowed by a squalid squabble about houses... Why didn't he keep his own house?": to which Wyatt replied "probably because he doesn't have any money and maybe he needed the money when he sold it". This sordid episode is a commentary on how devotedly our leaders protect their own interests while they savagely denounce any workers who dare to resist the constant pressure to depress their conditions.



Chevening

John Prescott must have found it very satisfying to lord it over Dorneywood and its acres. It was, after all, tangible evidence that this man who took pride (and won a few votes) in being rough and ready had climbed so high up the greasy pole. All the more bitter the irony then, that the place should have triggered his downfall.

IVAN





Voice from the Back

The Failure Of Reformism

We are opposed to trying to patch up capitalism, we always say that such reforms will end in failure. So often do we engage in attacking these schemes that cynical opponents have dubbed us the "we told you so" party. Now we have one of the reformers telling us that his reforms are useless. "Tony Blair began his Let's Talk initiative yesterday by admitting for the first time that both his Sure Start scheme for under-fives and policies for children in care have failed the socially excluded" (*Guardian*, 16 May). But he will carry on his task of patching up capitalism. "If we are to change that we need a different way for government to operate ..." When this "different way" ends in failure, remember - "we told you so".

A Mad Social System

The madness of capitalist production was recently illustrated by a European Commission directive to order nearly a billion bottles of French and Italian wine to be turned into fuel and disinfectant. "The commission's announcement that it would spend 2.4 million euros to distil 430 million bottles of French wine and 371 million bottles of Italian wine into fuel was met with protests by French wine growers ..." (*Times*, 8 June). Another 2.4 billion euros is to be spent digging up vineyards across the continent. Inside a socialist society wine like every other product will be produced to satisfy human needs not to make a profit. Jesus was supposed to have turned water into wine, but only capitalism would turn wine into disinfectant.



Try Workers' Wine - it tastes like disinfectant anyway

The Power Of Prayer

"Ken Lay, his family, his friends and legal advisers joined hands in a circle of prayer on the steps of Houston's Federal Court last night and, with the help of their family pastor, asked for divine intervention. But their plea came to late. A 12 strong jury had already decided Lay's fate and that of Jeff Skilling his right-hand man in the most celebrated criminal enterprise in Wall Street history" (*Times*, 26 May). The multi-million dollar fraudsters of Enron now await jail sentences for the 25 guilty verdict between them. Although Mr Lay's faith in prayer might impress the gullible it should be noted that Lay and Skilling also employed a team of lawyers costing \$20 million. So they weren't only relying on divine intervention.

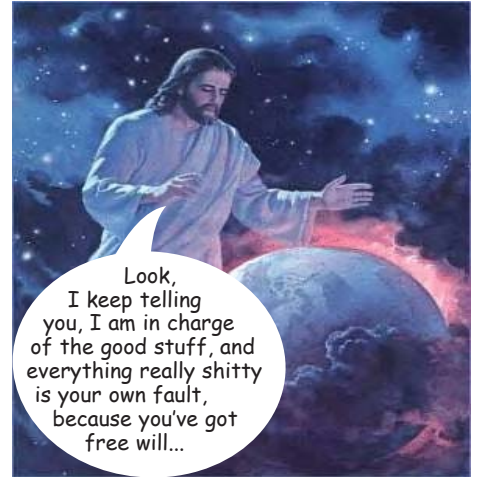
Outdated Marxism?

Away back in 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. Ever since its publication it has been attacked by supporters of capitalism. Today the main criticism is that it is outdated and old-fashioned. Is the following passage outdated? "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourer." (*Guardian*, 31 May) carried the following report, "Lecturers today threatened to take further strike action and toughen up "other sanctions", after they voted to formally reject the latest pay offer from universities." Far from being out-dated the *Manifesto* appears to be bang up to date.

Good Question

Pope Benedict XVI raised an interesting question when he recently visited the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. "In a place like this, words

fail. In the end, there can only be a dread silence - a silence which is itself a heartfelt cry to God. Why Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this?" (*Time*, 12 June). Like we say - it is a good question, but we doubt if the holy father has had any reply. God has remained singularly silent since biblical times.



Look, I keep telling you, I am in charge of the good stuff, and everything really shitty is your own fault, because you've got free will...

Suffering In Silence

A recent study by the charity Men's Health Forum, that questioned 1,212 men, found that 66 percent of them experienced depression or anxiety at some period in their lives. "Depressed men often suffer in silence, under pressure to keep up a macho front. ...The most common causes of anxiety and depression were work (44% of sufferers said it was a factor), financial worries (44%), fast paced living (27%) and relationship problems (25%)" (*Herald*, 12 June). It seems that capitalism is turning large sections of us into basket cases. Let's throw capitalism into the out-basket of history.



Capitalism would depress anyone

Free Lunch

by Rigg

