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September 10, 2001

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TEL: 020 7622 3811

E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

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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 War, Plots and Civil Liberties

Was there really a plot to blow up transatlantic airliners or were the police just using a pretext to fish for information by rounding up and questioning people they suspected were up to something without knowing precisely what? Will ministers eventually say, as they did after the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes and after the raid on that house in Forest Gate when another innocent man was shot, that it's better to err on the side of safety? Better a few innocents are shot than a terrorist act in which hundreds die?

Whatever the truth, the "security alert" last month in which a terrorist attack was said to be "imminent" allowed the state to project itself as the defender of the public. It is no such thing. The state is controlled by pro-capitalist politicians who pursue policies they consider to be in the general interest of British capitalism, even to the extent of putting the lives of the general public at risk.

The present government, led by Blair, has decided that it is in the best interest of the British capitalist class to tag along behind the US government's global pretensions, especially its so-called "War on Terror", which is really a struggle with certain Middle East states and disaffected Arab elites and their supporters for control of that oil-rich region.

The US government is committed to furthering the interests of US capitalism, which don't necessarily coincide with those of British capitalism, and there are pro-capitalist politicians in Britain, some apparently within the cabinet, who think that Blair might have gone too far in his pro-US stance. But it is not up to us as socialists to judge which politicians best represent the interest of the British capitalist class.

It is this pro-US capitalism policy option that has put the "British public" in danger by making them legitimate targets in the eyes of the Islamist opponents of US domination of the Middle East. It is just plain ridiculous for government ministers to try to deny this. What makes it worse is that neither the attack on Iraq nor (even less) giving Israel more time to bomb Lebanon enjoyed majority popular support.

But no government can leave such a vital decision as to whether or not to go to war to a popular vote. This is because the role of governments is to be "the executive committee of the ruling class" and, as the interests of the capitalist ruling class are at variance with those of the rest of us, such a decision cannot be left to us as there is no guarantee that our decision will coincide with what the ruling class judge to be in their interest. In fact, in the case of war, people spontaneously tend to be against it.

It is true that, as most people do support capitalism, if a government launches an effective enough propaganda barrage it can generally persuade people to support a war. But this takes time and decisions about war cannot wait. Blair is on record as saying that as a leader it is his duty to give a lead on going to war, even against majority popular opinion. In Britain, until recently and still formally, going to war was a government decision that didn't require even parliamentary approval.

Democracy and war are in fact incompatible. States have to have a minimal degree of popular support to function, but this need not extend much further than allowing the populace to decide every few years which group of pro-capitalist politicians are to staff the state and, exercising "leadership", use it to further national capitalist interests.

Truth may be the first casualty of war, but civil liberties come a close second. Whether real or manufactured, "terror plots" and "security alerts" provide a pretext for a state to further erode civil liberties inherited from a more liberal past, as the string of laws introduced by the Blair government to increase the powers of the state bears witness.

It can't be denied that there is a conflict going on involving attacks on innocent civilians on both sides. In Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon the US and/or its allies bomb villages and villagers. In America on 11 September five years ago and in Britain last 7 July, the other side killed innocent workers at or on their way to work. Socialists condemn both sides. And we don't swallow the propaganda that the state is there to protect us.

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Odds Uneven

The Centre for Economics and Business Research is predicting that there will be a million millionaires in Britain within a decade, leading to a bonanza in economic growth, marketable wealth and house prices (The Business, 13 August). "The thinktank is forecasting a 71 percent rise in house prices over 2006 to 2020..."

Whoa, whoa, stop! Stop right there. That's it. Enough predictions already. There is something fundamentally wrong with this sort of news reporting, even though the papers are full of it and we base our lives on it. Whether it's future prosperity, the price of oil, life on Mars, England's chances in the next World Cup, the winner of Big Brother XXXXVIII, or tomorrow's weather, the only really reliable prediction that anyone can make is that the predictions will probably be wrong. And there is a good reason why that is.

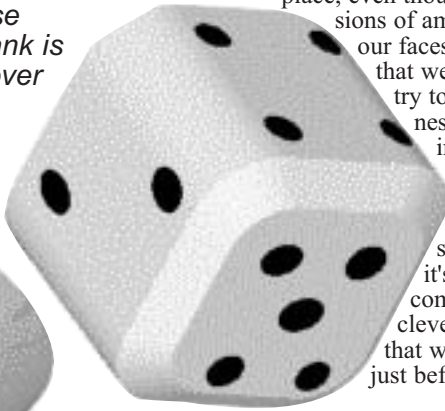


Statisticians refer to ordinary random events, such as the exact number of cornflakes that fall in your bowl, or the precise time that your bus turns up, as Type 1 events. The randomness of Type 1 events tends to disappear when you average them out over time, which means that they are measurable, and thus amenable to prediction with an acceptable margin of error. You can predict that your bus will turn up at exactly 8.31 if that's what it does on the average, and you won't be far wrong. But applying this predictive logic to complexities like the climate, science, the future or the economy just doesn't work, because when you introduce greater levels of complexity, or even if you extend the time frame, you inevitably introduce Type 2 events.

A Type 2 random event is a unique incident which it is not possible to foresee, and one which can cause seismic changes in the daily routine. Being run over is one such event, as is a lightning strike, a win on the lottery, or falling in love. There is no mechanism for predicting such events because the margin of error would be laughably gigantic, and history is littered with unprecedented events, such as the telephone, the computer, the internet, AIDS, economic crashes, and many wars. History, the economy, and society, are crammed with so many Type 2 random events, argues the statistician Nassim Nicholas Taleb, that it is sheer self-indulgent folly by anyone, government politician or horizon-tech scientist, to imagine they can predict anything at all (*New Scientist*, 1 July). Worse, he says,

we are not smart enough to realize how dumb we are, and we - or rather governments - persist in basing all kinds of plans and policies on these bogus social predictions, sometimes with disastrous effects.

So why do we like to imagine that the world is a predictable place, even though we walk about with expressions of amazement permanently pasted to our faces? The explanation, he thinks, is that we can't stand randomness, so we try to create meaning out of randomness by revising the past with invented and deterministic narratives. Instead of admitting that, 'bugger, we never saw that coming', we pretend that 'all the signs pointed to this happening, it's obvious with hindsight'. We comfort ourselves with our own cleverness, after the event, forgetting that we were jumping like jackrabbits just before it.



This may sound like another application of that popular game of applying the logic of one scientific principle to fields outside its domain, in this case chaos theory. However there are useful nuggets to be mined from this perspective, especially by socialists.

One is the undoubted fact that capitalism does indeed represent itself as a stable and predictable process when in fact it isn't, and that people need to be aware of the illusion of permanence in which it wraps itself, like the Emperor's new clothes. If people understood that social change could be minutes, rather than millennia away, the motivation to get up and do something might be a lot stronger in a working class presently browbeaten into submission by the weight of history and the endless blank horizon of the present.

The other point relates once again to Pathfinder's own favourite theme, which is the easy assumptions that scientists themselves often make, especially in fields outside their own area of expertise. Are wars really Type 2 random events, 'black swans' so bizarre and unexpected that they boggle the mind as they appear out of nowhere? Do we really overlay an essentially chaotic world with a veneer of rationalized narrative, merely to comfort ourselves that there is an underlying logic when in fact there is none? Physicists have wrestled for years with the desperate and intractable problems of uniting all the known laws of cosmology and quantum mechanics under one roof to create a single, elegant Theory of Everything. They clearly believe that there is an underlying logic, even if they are buggered if they know what it is. Meanwhile in the external earthly realities of economics and social change we are expected to heed the post-modernists and the chaos statisticians, and abandon any thought of a grand narrative, an intrinsic pattern that makes sense of much, if not all, that goes on around us.

In fact, when you look at it like that, far from being a scientific proposition, this appeal to chaos seems like an unhealthy invitation to return to a world where gods and goblins roamed the earth and ideas of social progress could not begin to gain a foothold. If scientists believe that the great developments of history, both bad and good, were entirely unpredictable and that the human condition is a random cacophony of the cosmic absurd, Pathfinders suggests that they have been spending altogether too long staring down the microscope, and ignoring the elephant standing in the room next to their elbow.



Nostradamus - correctly predicted that people are gullible

Letters

Nuclear Power

Dear Editors,

I would like to take issue with the Pathfinders article "Radioactive Days" (August *Socialist Standard*). The anonymous author - shouldn't articles that do not express a consensus of socialist opinion be signed? - argues that continued reliance on nuclear fission as a major source of energy may be unavoidable, even after the establishment of socialism. However, no account is taken of the widely recognized fact that the supply not only of oil, but also of uranium and plutonium for fission reactors, is likely to run out in the course of the present century.

Conceivably, development of a closed fuel cycle might solve this problem, as well as that of radioactive wastes. It is also conceivable that nuclear fusion will become a viable alternative sooner than some people expect. Or perhaps a way will be found to store solar energy, enabling us to rely on the main fusion reactor in our vicinity--the sun.

Nevertheless, it is quite possible that none of these solutions will materialize in time to avert a real energy crisis. If this proves to be the case, it will not necessarily be because the technological obstacles are insuperable. The most likely cause will be the short time horizons used in capitalist profit calculations.

Given all these uncertainties, we need to think about a wide range of scenarios for energy policy in socialism. A guaranteed abundance of safe and non-polluting fusion or solar energy is one scenario. But humanity may have no choice but to adapt to a low-energy way of life.

STEPHEN SHENFIELD, Providence, USA

Reply: Actually, the Pathfinders column does not necessarily express a consensus of socialist opinion on every issue, as many of the scientific issues discussed are very much open for debate and development by socialists and others - *Editors*.

Asked and answered

Dear Editors,

I've spent some time over the past few months reading a lot about political and social structures, for no purpose other than my own interest. I, like many, am discontented with the situation as it stands. The solution proposed by your organisation resonates with me, as few others have. As a result, I have read Marxist works, and much about varied forms of left-wing politics like Leninism and Maoism, etc. I do, however, keep coming back to your site. I have read all of the available information but still have a few questions I was hoping you could answer. I sincerely hope you can find the time to assist.

1. In a practical sense, how would labour be distributed in a socialist society? I'm not suggesting some jobs are any less important than others, but how would personal ambition (not ambition for material reward, but ambition of a personal nature, to achieve and feel accomplishment in a particular field) be matched with the needs of society? Could I, for example, say 'I want to be an electrician' and get trained? And what if, for example, nobody wanted to be a cleaner? Would people be assigned jobs on a take it or take it basis or is there an element of negotiation? If so, how much?

2. What would happen to people who refused to work/contribute?

3. What is your position on the punish-

ment of serious criminals?

4. How are the creative arts perceived?

As a necessary part of a healthy society, or as unnecessary? Could someone be, for example, a full-time writer, in a socialist society as you describe? Even if they were no good at it?

BEN I. (by email).

Reply:

1. The general principle of socialist society of "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" clearly recognises the obvious fact that different people have different abilities. How will these individual abilities be matched with the social need for particular jobs to be done? We can't give a blueprint (and don't want to, since this would be to try to dictate to the future when the details can only be decided democratically at the time), but we can imagine something like the "job centres" of today, only completely freed from any trace of coercion, monetary considerations and stigma. In other words, places where jobs to be done could be advertised and where people could go to volunteer to do them. Or maybe the whole thing could be done via the internet. If there is a shortage of people taking up a particular job, then a special effort would have to be made to encourage people to train for and take up these jobs. We are confident that socialist society will be able to find a practical solution to a practical problem such as this.

2. We don't think that, in the context of socialist society where a real community and community spirit will exist, there will be many people, if any, who would refuse to contribute. After all, there is nothing more boring than lying around all day trying to do nothing. Humans are social animals who

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Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS LONDON

Central London branch. 2nd Monday at 7.30 Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 622 3811**.

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MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**. Corres: David Coggan, 13 Bowling Green Rd, Stourbridge, DY8 3TT. Tel: **01384 348845**. email: djcoggan@hotmail.com

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL. Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: **01524 382380**

Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: **0161 860 7189**

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin.

01204 844589

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG
Carlisle. Robert Whitfield.
email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk
tel: **07906 373975**

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick.
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Southeast Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Hull. Hull: Keith Scholey, 12 Regina Ct, Victoria Ave, HU5 3EA. Tel: **01482 444651**

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Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: **07890343044**

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: **01209 219293**

East Anglia Branch meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: **01692 582533**.
Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: **01603 814343**.

Richard Layton, 23 Nottingham Rd, Clacton, CO15 5PG. Tel: **01255 814047**.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough. Tel: **02890 860687**

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

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Branch website:

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Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: **0141 5794109** Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: **01294 469994**. derricktrainer@freeuk.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: **01328 541643**

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506 462359**

Email: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

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Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: **01792 643624**

Cardiff and District. John James, 67 Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR. Tel: **01446 405636**

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Gambia. World of Free Access. Contact SPGB, London.

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi

Uganda. Socialist Club, PO Box 217, Kabale. Email: wmuenzi@yahoo.com

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini

ASIA

JAPAN. Micheal. Email:marukusboy@yahoo.jp

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Spobervej 173, DK-8220, Brabrand.

Germany. Norbert. Email: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford. Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

COMPANION PARTIES

OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia.. Email: commonownership@yahoo.com.au

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. Email: wspnz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. Email: wspboston@mind-

September 11, 2001:

Reflections on a Somewhat Unusual Act of War

On the fifth anniversary of the al-Qaeda attack on New York and Washington, we reflect on this act of war and try to place it in its true political and moral context

As an act of war, the al-Qaeda attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre was somewhat unusual, though not unprecedented, in three respects.

First, the method used was non-standard. Standard military practice is to blow things and people up by dropping bombs or firing shells and missiles on them. But flying planes right into the target has been done before. Japanese kamikaze pilots used the technique against US warships in the Pacific during World War Two.

Second, al-Qaeda is a non-state actor. Such actors rarely have the capacity to carry through such a complex and costly operation. Therefore al-Qaeda must have had financial backing from wealthy sponsors - Osama bin Laden himself comes from an extremely wealthy family - and the support, or at least complicity, of one or more powerful states. In general, arranging wars is a pastime for members of the capitalist class, though they get hirelings to do the dirty work for them. Working people don't com-

mand the necessary resources.

Finally, it is a little unusual for the US to be on the receiving end of a military assault from abroad. For a comparable attack on the continental United States, you have to go back to 1814, when the British army entered Washington and burned down the White House and the Capitol.

In other ways the attack was not unusual in the least. As an atrocity it was par for the course. The death toll, initially estimated at 6,500, was later revised downward to about 2,800. Atrocities on a similar or larger scale are committed routinely by the US in other countries. To take just one example, 3-4,000 civilians were killed in the invasion of Panama in December 1989. Even if we start the reckoning with September 11, we find that the US was quick to even the score. According to an independent study, 3,767 Afghan civilians (hardly any of them connected with al-Qaeda) had been killed in bombing raids by 6 December, 2001. This figure does not include the far more numerous indirect casualties resulting from the cre-

ation of refugees and the disruption of food and other supplies.

Betrayal

The attack should not have been a total surprise, a bolt out of the blue. After all, it was merely the next step in a war that Osama bin Laden had formally declared on the United States in August 1996. He had built up a far-flung network of front companies, banks, "charities," and NGOs (e.g., the World Union of Moslem Youth) to raise funds and recruit young fighters for the war. He had already attacked American assets abroad, notably the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, and there was ample intelligence warning that a major attack on US soil was in the offing. So the parallel with Pearl Harbor is pretty weak.

And yet September 11 clearly did come as a shock to Bush. That was because the attack came from forces that the US, its side-kicks Britain and Israel, and the Bush family in particular had long regarded as friends, allies and partners. This explains why Bush

ignored the warnings - just as Stalin ignored warnings of impending attack by Nazi Germany in 1941 and felt "betrayed" by Hitler when the attack came.

American, British, and Israeli ruling circles saw the main threats to their economic and strategic interests in the Moslem world as coming from "communists" and secular nationalists backed by the Soviet Union (e.g. Nasser in Egypt, Ghaddafi in Libya, the PLO). When Khomeini's theocracy took power, Iran was added to the list of enemies, together with associated Shi'ite Islamist movements in other countries. Sunni Islamist movements, however, were encouraged - largely on the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," although also because they seemed more interested in imposing ritual conformity on their own communities and in fighting "communism" than in challenging the substantive interests of the "infidel" powers.

The Islamists were also beneficiaries of the "neo-liberal" economic policies of Western institutions. In Pakistan, for example, the secular state schools collapsed in the 1980s as a result of IMF-mandated public spending cuts. This left the Saudi-financed religious schools (madrassas) as the only educational option available to boys who were not from wealthy families. (Girls, needless to say, didn't even have that option.) It was from these madrassas that the Taliban drew its recruits.

Moreover, relations with the leading Sunni Islamist power, Saudi Arabia, were and still are vital to Britain and the US in economic terms. The Saudi capitalist class, led by the royal family and influential families like the bin Ladens, not only sells these countries' oil but uses much of the proceeds to buy arms from them and invest in their economies. There are close and long-established personal and business ties between wealthy Saudis and British and American capitalists and politicians, including the father of the current US president and several members of his administration.

The Saudi-US alliance also entailed close military cooperation, above all in the fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden went to Pakistan in 1979 as an official of the Saudi intelligence service to finance, organize, and control the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance in collaboration with the CIA. It was here that Osama, who had trained as an engineer and economist with a view to taking part in the family business, acquired his taste for war.

Osama fell out with the Saudi royal family in 1991 when they allowed the US to set up military bases on the "holy" soil of Arabia following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But even in exile Osama received frequent visits from relatives, who provided a channel of communication between him and the royal family. An understanding appears to have been reached. Osama would abstain from attacking targets inside Saudi Arabia and in return no action would be taken against his Saudi supporters, who included various members of his own and of other wealthy families (such as Khalid bin Mahfouz, the "banker of terror") and even certain royal princes. And the Saudi authorities did protect these people, refusing to provide US intelligence agencies with any information that might compromise them.

So September 11 originated in a "betrayal" by the Saudi capitalist class of their American friends, allies and partners. How can we account for such strange ingratitude to those to whom they owe their vast riches? It probably has to do with the cir-

cumstances in which the Saudi capitalist class came into being. It did not make itself through independent entrepreneurial activity. It was *made* when oil was discovered in Arabia (in 1938) and property rights in that oil were vested in the pre-existing royal house. It is a class of bedouin patriarchs turned rentiers who became capitalists by investing their revenue. As a result, it retains to some extent a pre-capitalist mentality that it expresses in religious terms, and has a deeply ambivalent attitude to the capitalist world in which it now operates.

The endless "war on terror"

Despite the shock effect, US ruling circles did not necessarily regard September 11 as an unalloyed evil. In his book *The New Crusade*, anti-war analyst Rahul Mahajan draws

"Combating terrorism and drugs are covers for the pursuit of higher-priority interests"

attention to a document entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, issued in September 2000 by the Project for the New American Century, a neo-conservative think tank with links to the Bush administration. The authors call for increased military spending to preserve US "global preeminence," but add that such a programme will be politically impossible unless there is a "catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor".

The purposes for which the fear generated by the al-Qaeda attack was exploited suggest that it filled this bill. The threat of



Artist's impression of the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center

"terrorism" has been used to push through military programs ranging from anti-missile defence to germ warfare. Thus, a vast lab is being built near Washington called the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center, where in violation of the 1972 biological and toxin weapons convention the most lethal bacteria and viruses are to be stockpiled (*Guardian Weekly*, 4-10 August, 2006). What a tempting target it will make for terrorist infiltration or attack!

The "war on terrorism" unleashed in the aftermath of September 11, against first Afghanistan and then Iraq, is not - so Mahajan argues - a war on terrorism, just as the "war on drugs" is not a war on drugs. Combating terrorism and drugs are both low priorities, and the "wars" against them are covers for the pursuit of higher-priority interests.

In Afghanistan the US had turned against the Taliban (previously welcomed as a force for "stability"), mainly because they

were unwilling to host oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to Pakistan, and was looking for a pretext to overthrow them. Capturing Osama was that pretext, for it was obvious that the chaos of war would create ideal conditions for him to escape.

Iraq was invaded to secure control over its oil and in the hope of establishing a new strategic beachhead in the Middle East. Saddam had no ties with Islamic terrorism, just as he had no nuclear weapons. To the likes of Osama he was not even a genuine Moslem. Bush demanded of his experts that they find ties between Iraq and terrorism; when they replied that there were none, he pretended not to hear and reiterated his demand.

In October 2001 Vice President Dick Cheney declared that the war on terrorism "may never end -- at least, not in our lifetime" (*Washington Post*, 21 October, 2001). Am I alone in finding this suspicious? Ordinarily in a war it is considered important for morale to hold out some prospect of victory, however remote. Does Cheney want and need the "war" to go on forever?

The torture system

To sustain the facade of the "war on terror" it is necessary to arrest lots of people. As there is no real evidence against them, they are held without trial in secret facilities throughout the world, where - like the victims of Stalin's purges - they are tortured to extract the non-existent evidence. In her book *The Language of Empire*, Lila Rajiva describes for us the sickening tortures at Abu Ghraib, the prison complex outside Baghdad that the US occupation authorities took over from Saddam. The accounts and photos (some taken as exposés, others as souvenirs) are monotonous in their sameness. This is a clue: it strongly suggests that the torture is not a spontaneous practice of jailers and interrogators but a system designed by government experts and approved at the top.

The system goes by the code name R21 and is taught to British and American military intelligence personnel at the British Joint Services Interrogation Centre at Gilberthorne Priory, Chicksands, near Bedford (*Guardian*, May 8, 2004). It is designed to shock Moslem cultural sensibilities. Victims are stripped naked and hooded, savaged by dogs, and forced under threat of beatings to masturbate and simulate sexual acts in front of sniggering female soldiers (another triumph for sexual equality). That's just for starters, of course; it gets worse. I leave it to the reader to ponder what this means for the relative merits of Western and Middle Eastern "civilization."

And yet the people who authorize all these horrors know very well who is responsible for terrorism (the Islamist variety, that is) and where they are to be found. But no bombs have been dropped on the wealthy suburbs of Riyadh. No scions of the bin Ladens and bin Mahfouz, no princes of the House of Saud have been stripped naked, set upon by dogs or sexually humiliated. That's class justice for you! A few incidents, however regrettable, can't be allowed to spoil British and American relations with a vital ally and business partner. ■

STEFAN

After Hezbollah, war with Iran?

Was Israel's attack on Hezbollah part of preparations for a coming US attack on Iran?

As we go to press, a serious and already escalating crisis can be expected to go into overdrive the instant the Iranian government, at the moment under a UN deadline to stop uranium enrichment by 31 August, tells the UN what it can do with its resolution.

Sanctions will no doubt be announced, but to what effect and with what response from Iran remains to be seen. Iran has already intimated it would spark a global oil price crisis in response to UN sanctions, and it is unclear whether China and Russia - each with vested oil interests in Iran - will go along with any sanctions. The worst-case scenario is that the US will express feigned frustration at Iran's unwillingness to cooperate and use the rejected resolution as a conquered flag to attack Iran militarily.

It is against this backdrop that we can begin to set the present Middle East crisis in context, particularly the recent Israeli attack upon Lebanon. This latest act of Israeli aggression was not about capturing back the two Israeli soldiers kidnapped on 14 July but was rather, it would seem, about oil and the securing of other resources and about preparing for any wider conflict against Syria and Iran.

Planned in advance

There are numerous claims that the war in Lebanon had been planned in advance by Israel. Reporting from Tel Aviv for the *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 July), Matthew Kalman wrote: "More than a year ago, a senior Israeli army officer began giving PowerPoint presentations, on an off-the-record basis, to US and other diplomats, journalists and think tanks, setting out the plan for the current operation in revealing detail."

Speaking to CNN, veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersch said: "July was a pretext for a major offensive that had been in the works for a long time. Israel's attack was going to be a model for the attack they really want to do. They really want to go after Iran." (*Guardian*, 14 August).

In bombarding Lebanon and the Gaza strip (Gaza is still being bombed) the objective was to neutralise two opponents of Israel - and the US - Hezbollah and Hamas. Hezbollah's fire power and missile capabilities needed to be tested. Israel was unsure of the number of rockets in the hands of Hezbollah (some said 20,000) or indeed their range. Now they know. The Israeli bombardment of key roads and bridges and passage to Syria can serve no other function than to cut of the weapons supply route to Hezbollah. By striking pre-emptively Israel seems to have planned to destroy as many Hezbollah weapons as possible in advance of any rocket attack on Israel resulting from any US-allied bombardment of Iran.

Oil and water

Widely unreported in the Western popular media and brought to a wider audience by Michel Chossudovsky, a Canadian economics professor, on the Global Research website (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/>), was the inauguration of the Ceyhan-Tblisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline. This links the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, and was opened one day before Hezbollah's kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers that ostensibly started the recent war in Lebanon.

The BTC pipeline is anticipated to carry a million barrels of oil a day to Western markets. In attendance at the inau-

"Tel Aviv announced it was in for a "long war" - clearly not with Hezbollah "

guration ceremony were BP's CEO Lord Browne and senior officials from the UK and USA, along with Israel's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, accompanied by a delegation of top Israeli oil officials.

The BP-dominated pipeline skirts the Russian Federation, cutting through new pro-US states Georgia and Azerbaijan, countries allied with NATO and with a standing military pact with Israel. Israel already gets 20 percent of its oil from Azeri oil fields and this new pipeline is set to



Beirut airport after an Israeli attack

increase Israeli imports from the Caspian basin. Israel is now tipped to be a key player in the East Mediterranean oil transport protection racket.

Officially, the BTC pipeline will be channelling oil to Western markets. What is not admitted, however, is that some of this oil will be redirected towards Israel via a proposed underwater pipeline from Ceyhan in Turkey to the Israeli port of Ashkelon, and from there via a pipeline system to the Red Sea.

The plan not only seems to serve Israeli oil consumption needs, but also plays a part in the US's wider game of global-politics. Oil channelled from Ashkelon to the Red Sea will then be re-exported from the Red Sea port of Eilat to Asian markets. This will help undermine the inter-Asian energy market eventually weakening the position of Russia in Central Asia and cutting off China from Central Asia's oil reserves.

In April of this year Ankara and Tel Aviv publicised their intention to create four pipelines which would bypass Syrian and Lebanese territory. As the *Jerusalem Post* (11 May) reported:

"Turkey and Israel are negotiating the construction of a multi-million-dollar energy and water project that will transport water, electricity, natural gas and oil by pipelines to Israel, with the oil to be sent onward from Israel to the Far East."

The scheme further envisages a pipeline to carry water to Israel from upstream Anatolian rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Not only is this plan catered for in the recently-announced military pact between Israel and Ankara, its implementation will be devastating for Syria and Iraq. The execution of this joint Israeli-Turkish venture requires that land and sea routes between the Ceyhan border, through Syria and Lebanon, and to the Lebanese-Israeli border, be militarised.

Michel Chossudovsky asks in his article *The war on Lebanon and the battle for oil*:

"Is this not one of the hidden objectives of the war on Lebanon? Open up a space which enables Israel to control a vast territory extending from the Lebanese border through Syria to Turkey."

Israel is keen to play a more dominant role in the Middle East and seeks to achieve a degree of economic autonomy by becoming a key player in oil politics. Its military programme is increasingly looking like being tailored to the region's strategic oil pipelines and by the Western oil companies commanding the pipeline passages. Of course to punch above its weight it needs outside help, hence alliances with the US and more recently with Turkey and NATO.

Chossudovsky's oft-cited piece *"Triple Alliance": The US, Turkey, Israel and the War on Lebanon* details the alliances and agreements which apparently underpin the



Clockwise from top: The BTC oil pipeline; Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah; Hamas spokesperson Khaled Mashaal



war with Hezbollah:

"We are not dealing with a limited conflict between the Israeli Armed Forces and Hezbollah as conveyed by the Western media. The Lebanese War Theatre is part of a broader US military agenda, which encompasses a region extending from the Eastern Mediterranean into the heartland of Central Asia. The war on Lebanon must be viewed as 'a stage' in this broader 'military road map'."

Significant, for Chossudovsky, is the Turkey-Israel alliance which involves military and intelligence sharing on Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as joint military exercises and training.

Pepe Escobar, writing for *Asia Times*, stresses Israel's water needs as partly behind the recent war in Lebanon. :

"There's also the all-important matter of the waters of the Litani River in southern Lebanon. Israel might as well prepare the terrain now for the eventual annexation of the Litani. Beyond Lebanon, Israel is mostly interested also in Syria. The motive: the all-important pipeline route from Kirkuk, in Iraqi Kurdistan, to Haifa. Enter Israel as a major player in Pipelineistan. So Israel wants to grab water (and territory) from Palestine, water (and territory) from Lebanon and oil from Iraq. This all has to do with the inevitable - the 21st-century energy wars."

(http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HG26Ak02.html)

Seeking greater independence and an enhanced role in the Middle East, the smell of profits all around, Israeli aggression now becomes more understandable

Long war

Tel Aviv recently announced it was in for a "long war" - clearly not with Hezbollah. It has been stockpiling weapons for several years and was re-supplied throughout the war with Hezbollah by the US. On top of its arsenal of 200 nuclear warheads it has in excess of 500 bunker-busting bombs, only a few, by all accounts, used recently in Lebanon. Clearly Israel is preparing for a

widening and intense conflict.

Speaking of the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said: "We need to make clear to Syria and Iran that there is a choice: come into the international community and play by the same rules as the rest of us, or be confronted." Can this hypocritical statement be interpreted as anything other than a serious threat of violence to those Middle Eastern countries that would stand in the way of profit-hungry masters of war and their ambitions for global domination of the planet's vital resources?

Seymour Hersh has repeatedly asserted that President Bush ordered all-out war against Iran shortly after his re-election in 2004. Pat Buchanan's *American Conservative*, amongst other sources, sides with Hersh in arguing that vice-president Dick Cheney has drawn up a war plan for Iran inclusive of the possible use of nuclear weapons.

US Defence Secretary Don Rumsfeld has placed US forces on alert and Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Carlson, commander of the 8th Air Force acknowledges: "We're now at the point where we are essentially on alert. We have the capacity to plan and execute global strikes in half a day or less."

Dan Plesch (*Guardian*, 8 August) suggests President Bush has at his disposal:

"200 strategic bombers (B52-B1-B2-F117A) and US Navy Tomahawk cruise missiles. One B2 bomber dropped 80,500lb bombs on separate targets in 22 seconds in a test flight. Using just half the available force, 10,000 targets could be attacked almost simultaneously. This strike power alone is sufficient to destroy all major Iranian political, military, economic and transport capabilities."

Dangerous times

We live at a dangerous stage of human history, in which the greatest crime a country can commit is to have more than its fair share of resources in a world in which the leading superpower is seeking full-spectrum dominance. Iran's real and unforgivable

crime - leaving aside its refusal to halt its uranium enrichment programme - is to have enviable oil and gas reserves, to control access to the Persian Gulf, which is a vital oil and gas transshipment route to Europe, Japan, and the rest of the world, and to have contemplated oil deals with a serious rival for US supremacy, China. With China expected to have oil demands similar to US levels within 20 years, already consuming vast resources of coal, iron and steel, not to mention almost 70 percent of the world's cement supplies on a single dam project, the panic button has clearly been pressed.

As Socialists we are naturally fearful as we watch events unfold; fearful for our class, our fellows throughout the world and for whom we hold no ill feelings. As always, we refuse to take sides in conflict, seeing all war as rooted in the desire to make profit, and viewing workers, wherever they are, united as one class with the same basic needs and common interest, diametrically opposed to the interests of those who would urge them to kill each other.

Before the slaughter begins again, we once more take the opportunity to declare our heartfelt solidarity with the workers of all countries, and their true common cause. We appeal to workers to organise consciously and politically and to use the power at their disposal to head off the threatening bloodshed, and secure the space we need in order to build a world of peace and stability. As ever, we appeal to the workers of all lands to join with us in campaigning for a system of society where there are no leaders, no classes, no states or governments, no borders, no force or coercion; a world where the earth's natural and industrial resources are commonly owned and democratically controlled and where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and used for the benefit of all; a world of free access to the necessities of life. A world without waste, or want, or war. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Globalisation - what does it mean?

The second part of our article analysing capitalist globalisation. Last month we looked at how this affected capital. This month we examine its impact on the world's population at large.

The continuing surge in globalisation has had profound human and social effects on vast numbers of people, the fundamental nature of these effects depending on their class position in society, i.e. whether they are capitalists or workers. On the one hand the opportunities for the capitalist class to accumulate wealth has increased multilaterally with, for example, politicians and civil servants in the poorer states quite happy to find the funding for trade fairs, economic surveys, development studies, and visits by heads of state in an effort to increase the profits of that class from the global market.

On the other hand this global frenzy is resulting in upheaval for whole communities, while the transition from rural to

urban living is in turn altering human geography radically with rural areas either becoming human deserts or concentrated industrial sprawl. Likewise most global housing areas resemble one another to such an extent that even the shantytowns are becoming uniform in the type of building materials used.

When these social transformations are combined with factors like the increasing mobility of labour - mobility from the peasantry to the modernity of wage slavery - they come with well-known costs for the disempowered majority: misery, destitution, family breakdown and homelessness. The most visible aspects of this are to be seen with thousands of families living on the streets of Calcutta, or those families forced to scrape an existence by living on a waste tip in San Paulo, or perhaps a PhD from Addis Ababa University driving a cab in New York city, let alone those staffing a call centre in New Delhi alongside a wall full of useless diplomas.

Such potential human resources being wasted to further the interests of profit maximisation cannot but have an impact on rising social expectations and aspirations. These then come into conflict with people's sense of achievement. Consequently, we are witnessing a sharp rise in the incidence of mental health. And the resulting increase in cases of anxiety, depression, insomnia, mood swings and stress, are to be evidenced in the packed waiting areas of the mental health clinics, along with the expanding appointments for the services of psychotherapists. Add

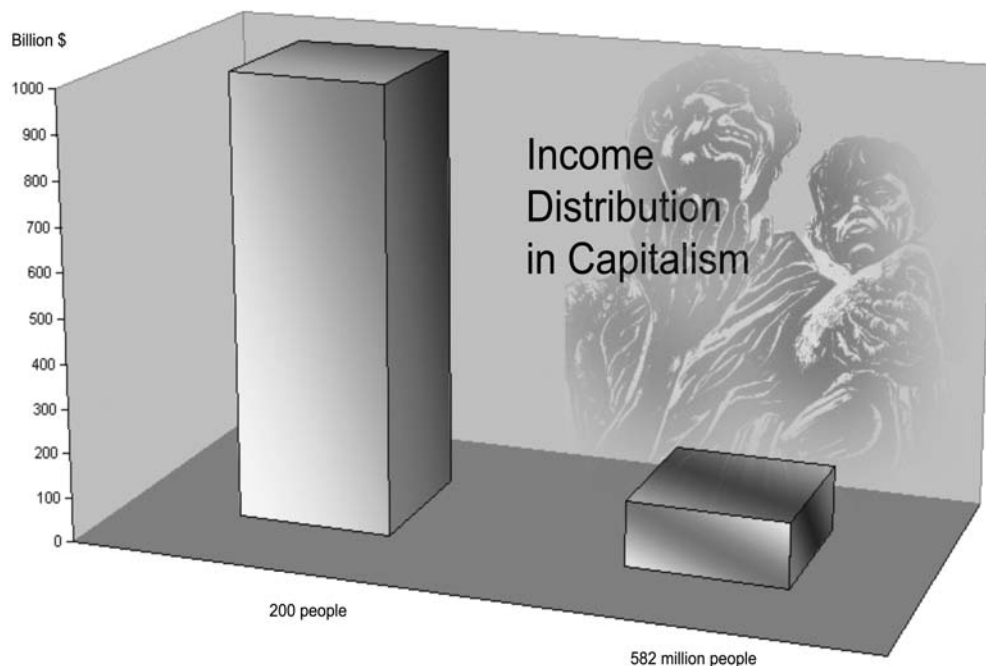
this to the overcrowded waiting lists for the physically sick in the developed and developing countries and many global health services there are in crisis management mode.

Inequality

Whilst this human tragedy unfolds our political masters are still chanting the mantra that some of the wealth created will eventually 'trickle down' to those 2.8 billion people living on less than \$2 a day and also to those 1.3 billion living in even more extreme poverty. Unable to solve the problem of absolute and relative poverty, the global politicians have now agreed in their misguided wisdom to try and tackle the problems and issues of extreme poverty only. By this they mean those 1.3 billion people who have to their cost found that the system of wage slavery holds no guarantees of the provision of a living wage, and subsequently finding it impossible to exist on less than a dollar a day. And where the material difference between relative, absolute and, and if you so wish extreme poverty, is so profoundly stark that it creates a sense of inevitability and disempowerment, it is invariably accompanied by disillusionment. This is especially so in cultural terms, with millions being forced from the rural poverty of subsistence living into becoming a landless peasant within an urban environment dominated by the tyranny of wages and surrounded by the advertising of mass consumerism.

The WHO, UN, World Bank, and Jubilee 2000 have reported many of the indicators of global inequality in recent years, and summarised they are:

- One-fifth of the world's population is living in extreme poverty.
 - 100 million children live or work on the street.
 - Half the world's population are lacking access to the most essential medicines.
 - The combined wealth of the world's 200 richest people reached \$1 trillion in 1999; the combined income of 582 million living in the 43 least developed countries is \$146b.
 - 70 per cent of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women.
 - An estimated 827.5m people are undernourished. Of which 647m, or over one-third (37 percent) consist of the world's children.
 - More than 30,000 children die each day from easily preventable diseases.
 - The top fifth own 86 per cent of the world's wealth, while the lowest fifth own just one per cent.
 - The wealth of the world's three wealthiest billionaires is more than that of the GNP of all the least developing countries and their 600 million people.
 - When Argentina defaulted on its debts, 300,000 people were forced to live off the garbage dumps surrounding the city of Buenos Aires.
 - The number of people living in extreme poverty has actually risen by 28m.
- Yet it is not only developing and undeveloped countries who are experiencing issues of inequality; even in the major developed countries, like the US, income inequality is now on the increase with one report claiming:
- "The gap between rich and



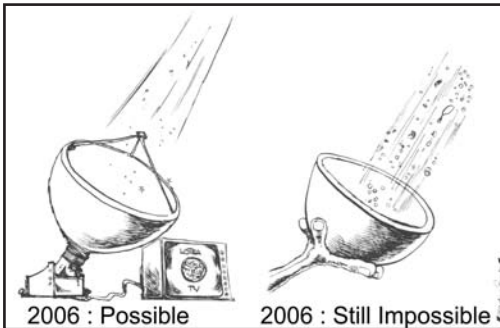
poor in America is the widest in 70 years, according to a new study published by the Center for the Budget and Policy Priorities. The research, based on newly released figures from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, shows that the top 1 percent of Americans - who earn an average of \$862,000 each after tax (or \$1.3m before tax) - receive more money than the 110m Americans in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution, whose income averages \$21,350 each year. The income going to the richest 1 percent has gone threefold in real terms in the past twenty years, while the income of the poorest 40 percent went up by a more modest 11 percent" (*BBC News Online*, 25 September, 2003: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3138232.stm>).

Much the same picture is painted in the UK with the figures from the National Statistics Office and Inland Revenue for 2002/3 showing that the richest 5 percent owned 43 percent of the wealth, while the poorest 5 percent owned just 6 percent; similarly the top 2.4m households owned assets worth around £1,300b, while the bottom 12m owned assets of around £150m. Also according to a Policy Institute report last year, 22 percent of the UK population are still living below the poverty line, including 3.8m children (or 30 percent of all children), 2.2m pensioners, and 6.6m working age adults. In effect a total of 12.6m people in the UK population are confronted with higher mortality; lower education outcomes; less decent homes; and financial exclusion, due to surviving on, or below 60 percent of median income after housing costs.

On a much more local scale the Child Poverty Action Group revealed in their publication *Poverty - the Facts* (5th edition) that over 80 percent of the children living in the Townhill district of Swansea were defined as poor; benefits make up a larger proportion of total income in Wales than in England or Scotland, with a higher proportion of children living in households claiming income support - 18.9 percent - compared to the UK-wide figure of 13.5 percent; and 32 percent of pensioners in Inner London were affected by income poverty, and children in London are even worse off than those in Wales with 24 percent of households in receipt of income support, or other means tested benefits.

Socialist Outlook

These are just some of the facts and figures that are considered normal to the modern workings of capitalism. They help to serve the purpose of illustrating that the globalisation of capitalism has masked a growing polarisation both within and between countries and that local circumstances are merely a reflection of the global situation where 'trickle-down' economics has in reality turned into a flood of inequality, destitution and instability. This confirms what Marxists have consistently stated that the prosperity for the few is dependant on the deprivation of the many. Indeed, despite the huge amounts of abundant wealth created by workers within capitalism, the system is incapable of accounting for the fact that the cases of millions of people dying through malnourishment, or because they lack clean water, adequate shelter, and health care is on the increase. This alone serves as a damning confirmation that there hasn't been any fundamental shift in the ownership of wealth. It also reaffirms our posi-



tion that this state of affairs is likely to continue, besides endorsing the contention that the capitalist class will use either system of trading - protectionism or free trade - when it suits their purpose to accumulate wealth.

Failure to grasp the revolutionary challenge this analysis poses has led to the formation of the anti-globalisation protest movement which campaigns on the issues of extreme poverty, world debt and the adoption of protectionist measures for those developing and undeveloped countries who have found that the reality of 'free trade' only applies primarily to the G8 nations. Whilst there is no denying that such campaigns have made tremendous strides in highlighting the effects of globalisation, when it comes to outlining proposals for viable alternatives to capitalism, their mindset is locked onto the belief that a 'fairer' global society is possible within the framework of capitalism. Their main tactic is to bring mass protest to bear on politicians and on institutions like the G8, WTO, IMF and World Bank, despite the fact that such a mindset of working towards a 'fairer' global society has a long history of failure, based as it is on the false assumption that capitalism can be made to work in the interest of all - rich and poor alike.

Although the effects of globalisation with the human suffering it brings can lead to bleak and negative conclusions about the future, it is also possible to draw different conclusions, ones that are far more positive and meaningful. For what comes out of this rather gloomy picture is the certainty that capitalism has outlived its usefulness as a progressive mode of production. For it reached its early retirement at the turn of the 20th Century - once it had established itself as a global system consisting of integrated and interdependent productive units. As soon as it reached this point it had fulfilled its purpose and turned into a global monster of uncontrollable destructiveness.

With capitalism failing to deliver for the majority it has become more obvious that now is the time to move on to a system of common ownership that is capable of meeting the self-defined needs of the great majority and not just the interests of a wealthy minority. In order to attain such a system of free access an essential prerequisite is for a majority of the global working class to reach an understanding that their sense of social achievement can only be fulfilled by becoming conscious in class terms that capitalism can never be made to operate in their interests. Once they have reached this revolutionary conclusion - and only then - will capitalism lose its basis of support and be replaced by socialism. ■

BRIAN JOHNSON



Cooking the World Bank Way (1)

Doing Business, the World Bank Way

The World Bank exists to oil the wheels of capitalism: to make

funds available for investment and various infrastructure projects. Basically it tries to ensure that things run as smoothly and predictably as possible, and always in the interests of the currently rich and powerful. Of course, this being capitalism, things do not always go as planned.

One of the ways in which the World Bank seeks to serve capitalism is by providing information about investment in different countries. It runs a website, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>, which gives "objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement", so making it easier for capitalists to know the pitfalls of investing in various parts of the world. The data on the site cover everything from starting a business to paying taxes, enforcing contracts and procedures for bankruptcy. One of the topics dealt with is employing workers, where the indicators, as they are termed, are how difficult it is to hire a new worker, restrictions on expanding or contracting the number of working hours, the difficulty and expense of dismissing a redundant worker and their costs (expressed in weeks of wages).

So we learn that the USA gets a score of zero for difficulty of hiring and rigidity of hours, and a redundant worker costs nothing (!) in terms of firing costs. The UK has higher scores, including 33 weeks' wages as the cost of dismissing a redundant worker. Germany has much higher scores on all these, and 66 weeks' wages as the cost of dismissal. Note that in all cases a higher figure means 'more rigid regulations', so low scores are good as far as the World Bank is concerned - for instance, the US has little to stop an employer cutting or increasing working hours. Russia has a mixture of scores: zero for difficulty of hiring but nearly as high as Germany for rigidity of hours.

From a working class point of view, however, the real issue is not how reliable the scores are or how they differ among continents and countries. Rather, the crucial thing is what they reveal about how the bosses view you and me. We aren't people with families and needs, rather we are just another aspect of doing business. The ease of acquiring a license or obtaining credit is put on a par with how easy it is to alter our working hours or how easy and expensive it is to dismiss us if we become redundant, i.e. no longer able to produce profits in the way that is required.

For capitalism, members of the working class aren't really human beings, just costs of production, cogs in the great wheel of making a profit and keeping the bosses in the style to which they have become accustomed. A society which is based on production for use will be centred around people, around satisfying our needs as both producers and consumers, as parents and friends. Then we can say goodbye to the World Bank and their offensive economic scores.

Death of a Tendency

The recent death of Ted Grant at the age of 93 has been a landmark, albeit a minor one, in British political history



Grant at Speakers' Corner, London, 1942

Grant was the last of the three great gurus of the British Trotskyist movement and the *eminence grise* of what became known as the Militant Tendency. Along with his two main Trotskyist rivals, Gerry Healy (of the Socialist Labour League/Workers' Revolutionary Party) and Tony Cliff (of International Socialism/the Socialist Workers' Party) he had a considerable input into what became - with the decline of the Communist Party - the most significant political trend to the left of the Labour Party.

Born Isaac Blank just outside Johannesburg, he changed his name to Grant when he came to Britain during the turbulent mid-1930s with a small band of other South African militants, convinced that it would be more fertile political territory than his country of birth. Attracted to the political ideas of the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, this small group of South African émigrés had already been influential in the founding of South Africa's first Trotskyist organisation, the Workers' International League, and soon made a mark on the fledgling British Trotskyist movement. Of the two small British Trotskyist groupings of the time, the Balham Group and the Revolutionary Socialist League (later to be called the Militant Labour League, selling a newspaper called *Militant*), Grant and his colleagues were attracted towards the latter. In what became a tradition of the Trotskyist movement not only in Britain but internationally, they soon split from it though to form their own organisation, this time a British version of the Workers' International League they had left behind in South Africa. Among those joining them was the Scottish orator Jock Haston and a voluble Irish militant, Gerry Healy.

Fourth International

In 1938 Leon Trotsky and his followers set up an international organisation intended to

rival the worldwide Communist ('Third') International. This 'Fourth International' cast around for a British section, but the tiny group around Grant, Haston and Healy was ignored and the franchise went instead to the larger Militant Labour League. For this key event in Trotskyist history then, Grant and his comrades were shunned and Grant himself never got to meet Trotsky before the 'Old Man's' assassination by Soviet agents in Mexico in 1940.

During the Second World War, Grant's WIL was active on the industrial front and soon began to eclipse its parent organisation in both membership and influence - so much so, that by 1944 the Fourth International persuaded the two organisations to merge, in what was effectively a WIL takeover. The new organisation created was called the Revolutionary Communist Party and was the first (and last) time the British Trotskyist movement was united in the one organisation.

Grant became editor of the RCP's paper, *Socialist Appeal*, and Grant and Haston were the organisation's first delegates to the Fourth International. The RCP existed for three years and grew to 500-600 members, being a thorn in the side of the Communist Party before, in true Trotskyist fashion, internal strife led to decline and a split.

Significantly, in the late 1940s three main factions had begun to emerge which were to be the main tendencies within the Trotskyist movement in Britain in the decades thereafter. Those around the Palestinian émigré Tony Cliff developed a distinctive version of the theory that what existed in the Soviet Union was a form of state capitalism (though only after Stalin's accession to power in 1928) and therefore couldn't be supported by socialists, while the groups around Grant and Healy held on to Trotsky's own belief that what existed in Russia was a workers' state, albeit a degenerated one. Indeed, the Grant and Healy fac-

tions had much in common politically, and it was mainly the bitter personal hostility that developed between the two men that kept their groupings separate.

Secret organisation

In the early 1950s, Grant and his small number of followers started a magazine called *International Socialist*. Grant lived in London and worked as a night-time telephone operator, which left him free to pursue his political work as a Trotskyist during the day. At this time he began to build up a close political relationship with a Trotskyist from Birkenhead called Jimmy Dean, who was the driving force behind *Rally*, a paper popular with the youth section of the Labour Party in the North West of England (and soon edited from Liverpool by a teenage Pat Wall, later one of the Militant-supporting Labour MPs).

By 1955 Grant and his supporters decided that the time was right to found a new organisation. Harking back to the group Grant first joined on his arrival from South Africa, it was called the Revolutionary Socialist League and its first General Secretary was Jimmy Dean. It effectively fused two small Trotskyist bases in London and Liverpool where Grant had an influence, and was a tightly-knit organisation built on the Leninist principles of the vanguard party, being hierarchical and secretive in almost equal measure, operating like other Trotskyist groups before it as a clandestine faction within the Labour Party.

Coincidentally, two years earlier the Trotskyist Fourth International had split. Healy's faction had the UK franchise but went off with the splitters, leaving a vacancy for a British Section which the leadership of the FI allegedly tried to fill by placing an advertisement in *Tribune*, which Grant answered. By 1957, the RSL was given the British franchise by the FI but advanced only sporadically, starting a new paper

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called *Socialist Fight*, but otherwise being eclipsed by other Trotskyist groups, particularly Healy's. At the time the Healy, Cliff and Grant factions were all building up support by working inside the Labour Party as secret parties within a party, focusing especially on the Labour League of Youth, but Grant's faction was so unsuccessful that the FI forced it to merge with an up-and-coming young group of Trotskyists in Nottingham around Ken Coates called the International Group. When this marriage of convenience led to the inevitable divorce within a year or so, the FI took the opportunity to rescind Grant's franchise altogether, giving it instead to the Nottingham faction which by then had turned itself into the International Marxist Group (IMG), a current which went on to develop a strong student base under the leadership of Tariq Ali.

Militant

The loss of the Fourth International franchise was an understandable blow to Grant, but around the same time his group had begun to take steps which were to prove more fruitful, the most significant of which was the creation of a new publication to be called *Militant - for Labour and Youth*. Its editor was a young Liverpoolian with strong organisational abilities called Peter Taaffe, who became Grant's lieutenant-in-chief, while Grant himself was political editor. The striking design of the paper was created by Roger Protz, later of the Campaign For Real Ale, but who was a notable activist at various times in each of the three main Trotskyist factions in British politics (later, in Cliff's International Socialists, he became editor of *Socialist Worker*). It was to be growing sales of *Militant*, combined with systematic, organised activity in the Labour Party, which was eventually to bear fruit for Grant's faction.

By 1966 they were the only one of the three main Trotskyist factions still inside the Labour Party. Healy's group had, by the early 1960s, almost completely taken over the (now renamed) Labour Party Young Socialists and after several attempts they were eventually expelled, with Grant personally refusing at one stage to vote to keep Healy-ites in the Party. Cliff's faction disengaged from Labour in the mid-1960s, seeing propaganda opportunities in disassociating itself from Wilson's Labour government, leaving the field free for Grant. By 1970 Grant's RSL had a majority on the Labour Party Young Socialists Executive and from 1972 onwards always had one of its members on the Labour NEC as the LPYS representative.

Throughout the 1970s, the influence of what by this time was becoming known as the 'Militant Tendency' grew apace, both in the Labour Party and trade unions. Grant's organisation moved from being the least well-known of the major Trotskyist sects to becoming the most well-known, with something of a 'workerist' face, placing less emphasis on building up student support than most Trotskyist groups and more on recruiting the skilled and semi-skilled working class, especially local government workers.

By the 1980s Militant's growth and influence was such that it could claim scores of Labour councillors across Britain as 'supporters' (when in reality they were RSL members who couldn't publicly admit to being a 'party within a party'). In addi-

tion, they could claim several Labour Parliamentary candidates - three of whom (Dave Nellist, Terry Fields and Pat Wall) eventually became MPs, and - most controversially of all - they took effective control of Liverpool City Council, with Derek Hatton as the council's Deputy Leader and Tony Mulhearn (a long-time RSL member more trusted by Grant) as his aide de camp.

The mid-1980s, when the Tendency claimed over 8,000 'supporters', was the peak of Militant's influence on British politics and the nearest Grant came to fulfilling his dream of creating a mass Trotskyist base within the Labour Party. But its size, influence and the notoriety attached to it by the mainstream press led to the first systematic attempt to deal with Trotskyist infiltration in the Labour Party since the expulsion of the Healy-ites. Earlier, in 1975, Lord Underhill had written a report on Militant's activities in the Labour Party for a left-wing dominated Labour NEC that chose at the time to do nothing about it. But in the 1980s the Labour leadership acted, first under Michael Foot and then under Neil Kinnock, with his famous attack on the Militants on Liverpool City Council at the 1985 Labour Party conference, after they had deployed the tactic

“(Grant) rejected real socialism for the type of politics that cast him in the role of leader”

of refusing to set a rate, issuing 30,000 council workers with redundancy notices.

Labour initially started by picking on the most obvious candidates for expulsion, the five members of *Militant's* Editorial Board, including Grant and Taaffe, who were expelled in 1983. After this, large and increasing numbers of their comrades were systematically put outside the Party they claimed was 'the mass party of the working class'.

Political positions

Throughout the lifetime of the RSL, 'entryism' into the Labour Party was one of its defining characteristics as a Trotskyist current. Others used entryism as a tactic, including Cliff and Healy, but for Grant's group it appeared to amount to more than this - it was a defining political position. Sometimes called 'deep entryism' it was not simply about a Trotskyist organisation going into the Labour Party, building up support and effectively raiding it for new members before emerging into the outside world stronger and fitter. For Grant, as Militant's main theoretician, the task of his tendency was to 'win the Labour Party to socialism' on the grounds that a united Labour and trade union movement under a Trotskyist leadership was unstoppable.

The means for achieving this goal was deep entryism plus a particular variety of Trotsky's 'transitional demands' programme, a strategy developed from Lenin's premise that the working class in capitalism was not capable through its own efforts of develop-

ing a socialist consciousness. This transitional programme was a carefully calculated list of demands - such as massive public works programmes, the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, and an implausibly generous minimum wage - which would be superficially attractive to supporters of reforms in the wider Labour and trade union movement, and which Militant thought contained the seeds of a future socialist society. The intention was a dishonest one, for Grant and Militant's other leaders knew that these demands were not generally capable of realisation within the normal politics of capitalism - indeed, that was the very point of advocating them. The resultant anger they expected within the working class when these demands were unmet would lead, they hoped, to a lurch towards the left under the leadership of the Trotskyist vanguard itself - the RSL.

The desire to stay in the Labour Party at all costs coupled with distinctive transitional demands that could lead to a Trotskyist leadership introducing 'socialism' (really state-run capitalism based on nationalisation) via an Enabling Act in parliament - and supported by workers' councils in the industrial field - was what really defined Militant in relation to the other Trotskyist sects. Also, and uniquely, the RSL quickly identified the arena of local government as a means for criticising traditional, piecemeal reformist politics (saying they would always oppose rent and rates increases), raising its programme of more radical transitional demands instead as the 'bridge to socialism':

"To lift the horizon of the local parish-pump politicians on to the broader national and international field - this is the first task of the revolutionary Councillor . . . It is necessary within the Labour Groups and in open council to point out the limitations of particular struggles and reforms and show how (in theory and practice) reformism (nationally and locally) cannot resolve the contradictions of capitalism." (RSL 'Notes on Council Work', by Ellis Hillman, 1961.)

These socialist-sounding phrases, in reality masking the advocacy of what were, in effect, just more radical reforms of capitalism, was typical of their entryist tactic, as later exemplified in Liverpool. Combined with their relentless workerism and disdain for non-economic issues, this constituted their 'Unique Selling Point' within the Trotskyist milieu (unlike others, Militant had relatively little interest in sexual or student politics, or supporting Third World nationalist movements).

These were the key perspectives handed down by Grant himself, consistently over decades. Indeed, it was often said by his supporters and opponents alike that Grant was saying the same things in the 1980s as he had been saying in the 1940s, and his book *The Unbroken Thread: the Development of Trotskyism Over 40 Years* is testament to this. This would have to include his oft-repeated claim (following Trotsky, and like his rival Gerry Healy of the WRP) that capitalist collapse leading to a Trotskyist leadership of a revolutionary working class was imminent in 'the coming period' of the next 10-15 years, somewhat in the perpetual manner of 'tomorrow never comes'.

Post-Militant

In the eventually, capitalism outlived Grant himself. Indeed, Grant's end appears to have been a rather sad one, in an old people's home, years after having been kicked out of

the Labour party and then, rather more remarkably, the RSL itself. The campaign of the Labour leadership in the 1980s against Militant had been so successful that by 1992 the majority of the RSL, led by Taaffe, came to the conclusion that continuing with entryism was pointless and stood 'Militant Labour' candidates against the official Labour Party, with mixed success. A group around Grant and one of his protégés, Alan Woods, refused to accept this reversal of what the Tendency had always stood for, and were expelled.

Just as Grant had borrowed from early Trotskyist groups when founding the Revolutionary Socialist League and its paper, *Militant*, so this expelled rump from the RSL started a new paper called *Socialist Appeal*, the name of the journal Grant edited while one of the leaders of the RCP just after the war. Never more than a couple of hundred at most, this group made little impact, while after a period of serious decline the slightly larger Militant Labour eventually voted in 1997 to dishonestly turn itself into the 'Socialist Party' (of England and Wales - SPEW to its enemies), effectively trying to usurp the name of the SPGB. This grouping has since declined further, though its leading elements in Scotland, such as Tommy Sheridan, were instrumental in forming the rather more successful but equally reformist Scottish Socialist Party.

The modern legacy of Ted Grant is an interesting one, for in many respects he was the most successful of the three main British Trotskyist leaders, while still falling well short of his ultimate goal. From a socialist perspective, the Militant Tendency (like the other Trotskyist groups) did much to muddy the waters of revolutionary politics in the

UK, posing as socialist while supporting the usual Trotskyist stew of radical reformist demands with the long-term aim of state-run capitalism organised by a Leninist vanguard party, another classic 'dictatorship over the proletariat', with Grant as leader-in-waiting.

Grant knew full well of the real socialist alternative promoted by the Socialist Party of Great Britain and our companion parties overseas (he debated Socialist Party



Grant appealing against expulsion from the Labour Party in 1983

speaker Tony Turner in 1945 and was wont to deride us as 'ultra left' sectarians) but he rejected real socialism for the type of politics that cast him in the role of leader, manipulating the mass of the proletariat towards a 'revolutionary situation'. But, as history proved, the working class were not so easily manipulated by Grant's particular mix of Trotskyist tactics, and his lifetime was effectively wasted on an ultimately dishonest political cause.

This was a shame, because like Tony Cliff, Grant had much energy and some talent as a writer and speaker. He was an obsessive analyst of - and collector of information about - the capitalist economy, though arguably (because of his unsupported belief in capitalist collapse) his best works were not in this field. His political tract *Against the Theory of State Capitalism* in 1949, for instance, was a relentlessly logical attack on the irrationality of the Cliff (SWP) position from an orthodox Trotskyist perspective, implying that the only coherent state capitalist theory applied to the Soviet bloc, etc came from those, like the Socialist Party, who rejected Leninist and Trotskyist politics altogether. And in more recent times, he collaborated with Alan Woods to write an excellent book called *Reason and Revolt: Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science*, a history of science and scientific methods from a general Marxist standpoint. Grant will be remembered, above all else though, for founding a political tendency which hit the headlines and gained public notoriety but which otherwise did the socialist movement huge amounts of damage. His political heirs in *Socialist Appeal* and SPEW fittingly continue to peddle the same kind of elitist and outdated reformist nonsense now as Grant did when he first became a Trotskyist in the 1930s. Indeed, for years Grant was derided by many for sounding rather like an old, broken record - and today, his surviving political heirs most certainly stand out as badly scratched vinyl in what is a transparently digital age. ■

DAP

Cooking the Books (2)

"Mass unemployment"

The government's Welfare Reform Bill is currently going through Parliament. It provides for people on incapacity benefit and single mothers to be harassed to take some crap job or

have their benefit cut. New claimants are to be treated even more harshly. This is par for the course. Cutting back on welfare payments has been the policy of all governments, whether Labour or Tory, since the post-war boom came to an end in the 1970s.

The Green Paper which preceded the Bill, bearing the Orwellian title of "A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People To Work", sets out the problem as seen by the government:

"In the 1980s and 1990s the welfare state failed those who most needed its help, instead of combating mass unemployment, the welfare state alleviated its worst effects and diverted people onto other benefits. Instead of helping people into work, it locked them into long-term dependency. By 1997, there were almost 5.5 million people on benefits, 3 million more than in 1979. The number of people claiming unemployment benefits had risen by 50 per cent, while the number claiming lone parent and incapacity benefits had more than tripled."

This assumes that, if only they had tried, the (Tory) governments of the 1980s and 1990s could have combated "mass unemployment" by somehow creating new jobs as an alternative to paying unemployment and incapacity benefits. But governments can't create jobs at will.

The Green Paper says that total employment in Britain is now at a record high "having risen by 2.3 million since spring 1997" (when Labour took over). This is indeed what the statistics show but "employment" doesn't have the meaning which the unwary might assume of full-time employment. It includes part-time employment however short (even one day a week), the self-employed and family members who help them, and people on training courses.

The statisticians divide the population of working age (16-64 for men, 16-59 for women) into three groups: people in employment, the unemployed and the economically inactive. The latest figures, released by the Office for National Statistics on 12 July, show that in the three months to June there were 28.9 million (74.6 percent of working age population) in employment, 1.65 million (5.4 percent of economically active working age population) unemployed and 7.85 million (21.1 percent of working age population) inactive (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=12>).

The government has set itself the aim of achieving "an employment rate equivalent to 80 percent of the working age popu-

lation". A look at the above figures shows that this would be the equivalent of reducing unemployment to zero. But this is not how the government aims to achieve this. Their plan is to reduce the number of economically inactive by at least 2.3 million:

"To achieve our aim, we will reduce by 1 million the number on incapacity benefit; help 300,000 lone parents into work; increase by 1 million the number of older workers."

This is all very well but where are the jobs to come from? The latest ONS figures give the number of job vacancies in the three months to June as just under 600,000. Gordon Brown believes that by encouraging "enterprise culture" the Labour government has created the conditions which have allowed businesses to expand and take on more workers and that, if it continues this, more jobs will be created.

What is more likely to happen is that the employment rate will go up a little (with a contribution from people going on government-funded training courses) but not to 80 percent. Instead, the unemployment rate will go up as a result of people on incapacity benefit being transferred to "job seekers allowance". The government won't be too displeased with this as they will have saved on welfare payments, since unemployment benefit is lower than incapacity benefit. But it will also, unintentionally, reveal that the "mass unemployment" of the 1980s and 1990s never really went away.

Political ideas in Africa



A brief look at the history of left-wing ideas in Africa

In the years following independence from colonial rule, left-wing political thinking and activities were not uncommon especially in anglophone Africa. There were lots of vanguardist, anarchist and other pseudo-socialist organisations in many countries. Some of such movements included the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards, Pan-African Youth Movement, United Revolutionary Front, New Democratic Movement, (Ghana); Movement for Justice in Africa (Sierra Leone, Gambia and Liberia); African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Pan Africanist Congress, etc (South Africa). These were all narrow-minded national pressure groups but whose left-wing leanings nevertheless provided forums where people learned of the existence of an alternative ideology - socialism. In fact that is how some of us later came to learn about and joined the World Socialist Movement.

However, around the mid-eighties the capitalists shot into a higher propaganda gear such as the newly independent countries never thought of. The free market and private sector idea came down so heavily that the leftist groupings were virtually swept off the political scene. Today only the South African ANC, SACP, PAC, etc are still around but they have all capitulated and metamorphosed into outright right-wing political parties. Even trade union activities have almost become non-existent now except of course on Mayday when pro-government sections of the working class come out to express their loyalty to the system.

This is the situation that accounts for the absence of even such anti-capitalist demonstrations as are staged in the West and other parts of the world each time representatives of big business hold their summits.

As for socialism (à la WSM), it is yet to be grasped by even the few who still see themselves as socialists here. Almost all of them understand socialism to mean the state capitalism of the soviet era.

Working class thinking

It is not surprising then that one can hardly talk of any positive working class thinking here in Africa. With the intensification of exploitation through a massive invasion of all sectors of the economy by capital, the economic situation of both urban and rural folk has drastically worsened. Under the dire circumstances, peasants drift to the towns with the hope of escaping from the hunger and lack of opportunities whilst the urban factory and office workers are preoccupied devising ways and means of pilfering at their workplaces in order to make ends meet. Consequently, many of these frustrated people find it difficult to engage in political activities thus reducing the chances of potential cadres deepening their

socialist consciousness. Indeed many, in their attempts to stay alive, finally abandon the political struggle altogether.

On the other hand, the very few who are fortunate enough to find well paid jobs tend to live ostentatious lifestyles obviously influenced by the type of negative western media output that is predominant here in Africa. A good lot of these people, with an imposed insatiable ambition to "make it", prove more injurious to left-wing politics than their poorer counterparts in the working class who cannot afford the luxury of discussing politics.

The media

As the dominant ideas of the day are but a reflection of the views of the ruling class so is the media replete with

information that is as poisonous as it is deceptive. On the one hand the television feeds viewers with adverts and news items which have the infectious intention of making ignorant people (and that means almost all Africa) think and harbour illusions of "making it". On the other hand the print media and the radio stations are mostly devoted to such topics as religion or race-based discussions. Thus, even when serious issues like poverty, hunger, war, etc are touched, they always treat them in the light of "god will work miracles" or "all African hands on deck". Such ill-fated notions as "Africa for Africans", "African lingua franca", "NEPAD is a winner" etc are all what is found in the media. Naturally, the ordinary people pick them up and continue the misguided debate. That is the part the media play in formulating opinions.

Obstacles

However, in spite of the poverty, hunger and ignorance, the working class could still have had elements within it who would interest themselves with real political issues like it happened between the sixties and the mid-eighties. Yet such a potential situation is hampered by other factors. Foremost among them is religion. Pushed to the wall by want, many ignorantly flock to religion as the last resort. Western big business, seeing the opportunity, quickly seizes it to its advantage. They worsen the already bad state of affairs by pumping money into the formation of more religious groups; the production of religious material; and the use of food, second-hand clothing, etc as incentives to the religious leaders and bait for the working class. Once captured it becomes an uphill task to salvage them or even let them see reason.

Another problem is the effectiveness of the capitalist propaganda machine. Their ideologues are always at hand to demonise socialism (citing the famous fall of the Berlin wall and the "collapse of communism") and eulogise the virtues of the free market economy. In fact today seminars, workshops, clinics, and other so-called sensitisation programmes are organised on a daily basis to entrap the poor and hungry people. The issues on the platform of which such meetings are held include HIV/AIDS, the emancipation of women, child abuse, etc. Participants are lavishly fed and at the end of the day paid a generous honorarium. Such programmes are mostly channelled through NGOs. This problem also has the dangerous side effect of getting people used to shunning meetings or groups where immediate financial gains are not available.

In conclusion, though the picture painted looks so gloomy, that does not mean there is no hope. There are several oases dotted around this desert of hopelessness. And especially now that some basic democratic rights seem to be getting the nod from the dictatorships here (for example the criminal libel law has been repealed in Ghana), we only need to keep up the struggle and to give courage to the already liberated. ■

SUHUYINI

Desperate lies

The man who faced the choice of dropping dead while waiting on the NHS list or bluffing.

Early in August, a story broke about retired painter and decorator, Roy Thayers, having to lie in order to be free of terrible pain he'd been suffering for years, because of heart trouble.

A cardiac specialist warned the 77-year-old that he needed a life-saving operation as soon as possible, because he was in danger of having a fatal heart attack at any time. He was told the coronary angioplasty treatment he required would not be available from the NHS for nine months because of a waiting list, but added that by going private, Roy could have the operation within a week. Being penniless, Roy had the option of dropping dead while waiting on the NHS list or bluffing. He chose the latter, and said he'd pay, when he knew he couldn't.

He managed to stall requests for payment by hospital administrators, claiming he mislaid his chequebook. His operation took place quickly, he wrote out a "Mickey Mouse cheque" for the £8,500 cost the very next day, knowing he'd have to face the consequences later.

Speaking of his ploy, Roy said: "I love life, I love my dogs, I love fishing - why should I die for the sake of money?" Indeed, why should bits of paper decide who lives and who dies, or who eats and who starves, or who has a comfortable home and who has a stinking hovel, and so on? It's sick and idiotic. But seeing how, under capitalism, goods and services are provided to make profit - not meet needs - this system has created a universal comparison commodity (a.k.a. money) against which other commodities can be measured. Comprising paper notes, metal discs or mere digital data, this comparison commodity exists in order that those with something others need can make its supply dependent upon receiving a specified amount of this measuring tool. No money, no provision.

When Tony Blair developed a dicky ticker, naturally, he got treated very quickly. No long delay for the likes of him. Not forgetting that the Oxford Radcliffe NHS Trust, having provided the PM with his cardiac catheter ablation operation, shortly afterwards decided to deny this treatment to others in order to cut costs and meet the government's six-month waiting-list targets.

Of course, Roy hasn't managed to defeat capitalism by writing his rubber cheque. For a start, as he said himself, "I paid into the NHS for years to look after me, but the doctors were telling me they wouldn't, so who's robbing who?" Furthermore, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in charge of the hospital that treated him was soon threatening to send in the bailiffs, and he eventually settled on repaying his debt at

£25 a week from his meagre pension.

No doubt, private health care enterprises will now do their utmost to ensure people have sufficient funds before they get treated in future. So although the money-loving *Sun* tabloid praised Roy for being "canny", and the profit-hungry *Mirror* said "well done", don't count on acquiring desperately needed medical care by the same method.

The fact is, no one should have to come up with devious methods to obtain critical health care or any other essential services and goods. In a decent and rational world these would be available according to need - not how much money people have depending on how much, or little, capitalism has allowed them to have in return for their exploitation and control by a minority ruling class.

The only reason this appalling and damaging situation continues is because we allow it. If all those unhappy and irate with the way they're made to live, work and struggle on pitiful pensions came together with the aim of getting rid of the system which allows a super-rich minority and their money mechanism to control, deprive and manipulate this majority, then capitalism would be in serious trouble.

Roy Thayers is also quoted as saying: "The real working classes of this country - the ones who have very little money - have been abandoned by their own government." From his own experience, Roy might well now accept that this government (and those before it) has never had the needs of the electorate as its priority. The main concern has always been looking after British capitalists, not the working class majority.

The answer isn't more money for the NHS - since in a competitive world, there'll always be pressure on all governments to keep cutting back on state funding, and increasingly make people pay directly for what they need. No. The answer is a society with *no money at all*. That's the only way to end the idiocy where, these days, NHS hospital employees are being told by PCTs to stop "overperforming" by providing treatment too quickly, because the government then financially penalises the Trusts for not adhering to minimum waiting times (as a result, one gynaecologist said he now spent more time doing sudoku puzzles than treating patients). And a moneyless society is also the only way to end the obscenity of driving people to desperate lies and deceit to obtain vital life-saving treatment that should be available to all - not just those sufficiently well off or powerful. ■

MAX HESS

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Book Reviews

Future humans

Glasshouse. By Charles Stross. Ace Hardcover. 2006. 352 pages. ISBN: 0441014038 (published in US)

If you go to the Science Museum in Kensington, up to the top floor, to the aviation gallery, you can discover a sign on the wall that informs us that the technology for flight has existed for hundreds of years, but that the obsession with flapping prevented any actual heavier than air flight until well towards the close of the nineteenth century.

This highlights the importance of exploring ideas and technological changes - and being bold and speculative. Contemporary science fiction performs much of that role today - dreaming up new technologies that seem impractical now but will soon become everyday. In a real sense, compared to the founders of our party, we are living in a science fiction world now - sadly it's a dystopia.

Charles Stross has recently been awarded a prize for his fiction by the transhumanist association (they hold that humans whilst they have evolved technologically are still the basic animals they were half a million years ago, but that soon the technology will exist to change our bodies and begin a new technology driven phase of biological evolution - the capacity to re-write our bodies). His book, *Glasshouse*, is an examination of the effects of technological change on our society - starting from the fact that within the last hundred years alone that human life has been fundamentally altered by technological innovation, and that the rate of change will increase dramatically within our lifetimes.

Set several hundred years from now, it features Robin, a historian who has wiped his memory agreeing to take part in an historical re-enactment of late twentieth century life as part of an experiment. He finds himself in the role of a woman, trapped both in her own biology and the social roles that come with that.

The participants in the experiment have to live in a panopticon - their every action potentially observed - with rules which they gain or lose points by following - and have to ensure that their 'team mates' (their local community) don't lose them points. It thus forms a useful device for examining the construction of social life and power. Some players - the score whores - unreflectively play the game as presented to them but Robin (renamed Reeve) tries to find ways of breaking out of the restrictive role given her by reading the rules sideways.

She cannot, however, escape the rules and the inertia of the score whores; and she has to stand by and witness the horrors of the rules of the game which she objects to but cannot escape from. As such it is an acute depiction of dissidence in society.

The book is thus both an examination of social power and the power of ideas, as well as a meditation on the importance of memory and history for understanding where we are and where we are going. A flight of fancy that depicts the present in a deeply realistic way.

PIK SMEET

Western vanguardist

A Rebel's Guide to Gramsci. By Chris Bambery, Bookmarks, 2006. 60 pages. £3.

This is a short introduction, from an SWP viewpoint, to the life and ideas of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist Party leader who died from natural causes in a fascist prison in 1937. Gramsci appeals to the SWP and Western Leninists generally because of his more sophisticated version of vanguardism than Lenin's.

In his *Prison Notebooks* he distinguished the situation in Tsarist Russia and some other parts of Eastern Europe from that in the West. In Tsarist Russia, he argued,



Gramsci

the state was everything and the ruling class relied directly on repression to maintain itself in power; in this situation the task of revolutionaries was (in Bambery's summary of Gramsci's views) "to lead a direct assault on power when the opportunity arose", as the Bolsheviks had successfully done in Russia (only to install themselves, we would add, as the embryo of a new ruling class)..

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the ruling class ruled mainly through the "hegemony" it exercised over the working class rather than through direct force. In Bambery's words again:

"In Western Europe . . . the ruling class rested mainly on consent and was able to rely on a variety of institutions within civil society which organised and reinforced this. Gramsci described these as acting like a complicated series of earthworks surrounding a great fortress - the state. So institutions like the church, the media, the education system and political parties helped secure the consent of the masses allowing force to be used sparingly and only in the last resort . . . So these networks of support for the ruling class and the ideas they helped to reinforce had to be undermined first through a long ideological struggle before a direct assault on the ruling class was possible . . . Communists had to set themselves the task of undermining the consent, however grudgingly given, which allowed capitalism to rule."

This is an analysis we can accept and indeed had made ourselves. But the conclusion Gramsci drew from it was not the same as ours. We concluded that, as socialism too could only exist with the consent of the working class, the task of socialists was to directly, incessantly and exclusively campaign amongst fellow workers against capitalism and capitalist ideas and for socialism. Gramsci concluded that a vanguard party should seek to establish its own "hegemony" over the working class, by assuming the leadership of the workers' day-to-day struggles.

ALB

Theatre Review

Coriolanus at the Globe

This play features the citizens of Rome, as was customary for Shakespeare, as a fickle and foolish lot, shifting wind under the power of the words of their rulers and betters. The performance of it at the Globe leads to the intriguing twist of bringing the action into the audience (most of whom stand as a crowd before the stage for three hours of more).

We were thus cast as part of the mob, the mob despised by the title character - Gaius Marcius (given, during the play, the name Coriolanus for his part in the capture of the city of Corioli). As Coriolanus ranted how he hated the mob, he moved within the audience, speaking to placed actors in period costumes. The sentiments towards the mob must have jarred with the generally democratic instincts of the modern population.

The play centres on his being appointed Consul (leader) of Rome, and being compelled by the plebeians to gain their votes - for which he must plead and show his war wounds. He believes that consulship is his by right, and resents asking the scum for their voices.

The action then focuses on what is essentially a revolution. The play began with the people in revolt for more bread - which won them tribunes - a representation in government. The tribunes then organise to bring down Coriolanus - as a fierce opponent of democracy.

This leads to him being banished - only to return at the head of a rival powers' army - much to the consternation of the revolutionary tribunes. Eventually, he is persuaded by the entreaties of his wife and mother not to wage war on Rome, and he returns with his army to be murdered as a traitor to the rival power.

Coriolanus himself is presented as a utopian idealist. He fights for glory, reveling in war. He actively refuses a share of the spoils, claiming only glory motivates him. At war with the world, he wants to be 'the author of himself', without any bonds trying him, living only for his glorious legend. His defeat is organised by more worldly Machiavellian politicians.

This raging anti-democrat still manages to hold our sympathies because of his idealism and his proven abilities. He stands as the ultimate individualist - who scowls like a schoolboy when chided to behave by his mother.

The play is littered with corporeal imagery - the state is a body with hands, feet and head. The common people are reduced to mere voices, as airy as Coriolanus' own glory. It is this sense of powerlessness and insubstantiability that being in the crowd conveys. Audience members could easily recognise the regret of the crowd in making Coriolanus' the consul for much the same way that most modern politicians - like Tony Blair - are appointed to disappoint by our simple voices.

PIK SMEET

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letters continued

need to be active as well as appreciated by others.

3. Since over 90 percent of crimes today are crimes against property and since property and poverty will disappear in socialist society where everybody will automatically be able to satisfy their material needs, the main "crimes" that would remain would be such things as breaking traffic regulations or hosepipe bans. But by "serious criminals" we assume you mean people who kill or harm other people. Any such behaviour is likely to be highly exceptional but, should it occur, the person responsible would have to be stopped and, if need be, detained. We are not sure that "punishment" is the right word since most such instances are likely to be medical cases.

4. Yes, of course the "creative arts" are a necessary part of any society, but in socialism won't be confined to such things as opera and poetry. We go along with William Morris in saying that the everyday work of pro-

Meetings

East Anglia

Saturday 23 September, 12 noon to 4pm
12 noon: Informal chat.
1pm: Meal.
2pm to 4pm: Discussion.

The Conservatory, back room of
Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich.

ducing something useful can also be creative and art. And we would imagine that most people will want to take advantage of the possibility socialist society will offer them of being able to do a variety of jobs (even in the same week) rather than being tied to the same job, day after day, year after year - *Editors*.

Manchester

Monday 25 September, 8.15 p.m.
**'WHY SOCIALISTS OPPOSE
THE LABOUR PARTY'**

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
(This meeting will take place during the Labour Party Conference in Manchester, and Labour Party members and others are invited to attend)

Chiswick

Tuesday 19 September 8pm
**FREE SOFTWARE:
DOT.COMMUNISM?**

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

What is Behind the Fight for Suez



The men at the top see more clearly the economic issues and interests involved but as they need to rouse the emotions and win the support of the mass of the people they dress up most of the declarations in the rabble-rousing language likely to move their listeners and readers. So over Suez we have had from the Western politicians a spate of talk about law and illegality, international rights, and wrongs, Fascist acts of plunder, etc., while from the Middle East Nasser and his defenders have worked up themselves and their audiences with passionate speeches about imperialism, oppression, insults to dignity, sovereignty and nationhood (...).

To the Socialist the world is not capable of being divided into the good and the bad statesman and the good and bad nations; they are all Capitalist and all are impelled by the nature of the social system to struggle for markets for their products, for sources of cheap raw materials, and for control of trade routes like Suez and strategic points like Cyprus. These are the things for which they fight, no matter what the fine phrases and slogans in which their aims and motives are garbed.

The crux of the Suez dispute is firstly the oil that exists in abundance in the countries of the Middle East, and secondly the Canal through which much of it, as well as other cargoes, is transported. Oil is now an indispen-

sable fuel for the motors and tractors, aeroplanes and warships, merchant vessels and factories of the countries of the world. With coal production and hydro-electric power failing to keep up with rapidly growing demand for fuel and with atomic power only a development of the not very near future, all, countries need oil and many of them, including Britain, have practically none within their own frontiers (...).

At the time of writing the discussions between the Powers have not produced a settlement though the evident lack of war-fever among British workers and the disinclination of other Governments to back up Britain and France in forcible action against Egypt have had some effect in restraining the Eden Government and its supporters.

On the other hand Arab workers, misled by the belief that nationalisation of the Canal Co. (and eventual nationalisation of the oil industry) is in their interest, have been vigorously backing their governments.

This is the real tragedy of the Suez dispute, that there is no unity among the workers of the different countries in opposing the war-talk of their Governments.

(From front page article, *Socialist Standard*, September 1956)



British troops in Port Said

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.



Peter Hain - a case of mistaken identity

With things as they are anyone wanting to lead the Labour Party must be driven by such pronounced tendencies to self-harm as to classify them as, if not certifiably mad, then clearly unsafe to be let out by themselves at night. So what can be said about anyone whose ambitions run, not to the leadership, but to election as Deputy Leader? How can we take seriously anyone who is willing to work so hard to get a job with so bitter a history of crushed ambitions? A job held by the likes of Morrison, Brown, Healey, Hattersley, Prescott? Well there is reason to think that politicians can survive only through a stubborn ability to distort reality, which would explain why even now, with the Labour Party in such disarray, there is no lack of candidates eager to take over as second-in-command of the party's ragged army when, eventually, Blair steps down and presumably takes his Deputy Prescott with him.

Among this hopeful, if hopeless,



Could anyone be more irritating than Blunkett?

assembly is Peter Hain who, taking the long view, has busily fertilised his campaign with support among the party grass roots and the trades unions. There have been a variety of descriptions of Hain. In his book *The Rise of Political Lying* Peter Osborne exempts him, with some other Labour ministers, from "...lying or deceiving the public in a serious way". However a blogger on 11 July, who may be closer to public opinion, referring to his policy on Northern Ireland devolution, described him as "a duplicitous tosser". David Blunkett thought that "If there's anyone who upsets colleagues more than I do it's Peter (Hain)" - a characteristic which in August seemed to extend beyond Hain's colleagues when he fell asleep during an interview with a man who had come to see him about the investigation of his son's murder in Northern Ireland. Hain

upset Robert Mugabe - whom he once supported in the struggle against white minority rule in Zimbabwe - by backing the white farmers in that country. But of course all of this is common currency among politicians; what may recommend Hain to the voters is his presentation, in the words of Andrew Rawnsley (Servants of the People) as "Curly headed and perma-tanned, the former anti-apartheid activist ... a member of the soft left trusted by Number 10".

Robbery

So is it to be another case of mistaken identity, of the voters misreading a politician's future intentions through disregarding their past? Hain is no stranger to identity problems. In 1976 he was on trial for the attempted robbery of a bank near his home in Putney. The prosecution case was that Hain had gone into the bank, snatched £490 and ran off, chased through the local streets but got away. The bank cashier involved in the snatch identified Hain, if with some reservations. In any case Hain had some convincing alibi evidence, which persuaded the jury that he was not the robber. It was suspected that the case had been an attempted frame-up by the South African security services, in reprisal for Hain's stand against the apartheid laws. (A few years before the robbery he was sent a letter bomb).

Hain was born in Kenya but brought up in South Africa where his parents were active campaigners against apartheid; he grew up accustomed to his home being raided by the police and to a system which legally banned his parents from speaking to each other. The family came to London, to continue their campaign; Hain was the leading light in the protests aimed at stopping the England cricket team touring South Africa and to disrupt the Springbok Rugby tour to England (the pitch invasions by shaggy youths certainly upset the boozy blazers and duffle coats in the stands at Twickenham). For a time he was in the Young Liberals - who were then rated as more "radical" than Labour - and was elected their president before he switched to the Labour Party, in which his career has been more notable for conformity than for disruptive protest.

In Government

Hain was elected in 1991 as MP for Neath, in South Wales - one of those constituencies where Tories have been something of an endangered species. His majority climbed to over 30,000 in the heady days of Labour's 1997 triumph; since then it has steadily fallen with the Blair government's decline in popularity but he still holds more than half the votes cast. He is Secretary of State for Wales as well as for Northern Ireland and has held other jobs such as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Commons. So he has been firmly in position to live up to the promise of his early days as a determined, principled "radical" who would justify the expectations of his admirers. And now, how has it turned out? Has it been a case of mistaken identity, has Hain been wrongly assessed as someone he is not? Or is he guilty of gross deception?

As an opposition back benchner he showed that his talent for being disruptive had not deserted him when, as the Major government was approaching its final days in power, he tried to unseat some Tory MPs by getting them declared bankrupt after losing money as underwriters at Lloyds, which would have forced them to resign their seats. The government had just lost two for-

merly rock solid seats at Christchurch and Newbury and they were understandably nervous about the prospect of having to face any more by-elections. The Speaker obstructed Hain's scheme but the details of individual losses were published in the *Independent*. One of the MPs was Edward Heath, who furiously denounced Hain for his "...sleazy desire to get Tories out". Hain also managed to upset the Labour Party in Blaenau Gwent, a seat once held by Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot. The Welsh Assembly Member there, Peter Law, was keen to be the next MP for Blaenau Gwent but the party insisted that the Labour candidate would be selected - foisted on the local party - from an all-female list, which he opposed. So he persisted in standing as an Independent. In an attempt to get round this awkward situation Law was offered a peerage in return for not standing - according to reliable evidence, Peter Hain was the person who did this particular piece of dirty work. In the event Law defeated the official Labour candidate; he died earlier this year and at the by-elections in June his wife stood for the Assembly and his agent for Westminster. Both won, again as Independents. (Not surprisingly, in spite of the evidence, Hain has always denied having been involved).

Iraq

But Hain's betrayal of his reputation has extended far beyond Wales. During his time he has been a strong supporter of the government on many issues which at one time, consistent with his record, he should have opposed. He has been a strong supporter of ID cards which, according to the government, are essential to prevent suicide bombers blowing up aircraft or tube trains. There is little evidence to support this but what is known is that the cards will be useful in chipping away what civil liberties are available to us. He was firmly in favour of those same student top-up fees which Tony Blair trumpeted as vital in the struggle to make the very best in education available to everyone, rich and poor but which will in fact lead to workers emerging from university under an enormous burden of debt. And of course he has been an ardent supporter of the war in Iraq, which was justified on the grounds that it would usher a parliamentary democracy into that ravaged country but which has resulted in a chaos of strife and slaughter, all in the cause of American capitalism taking a grip on that vital area. And Hain has justified this abominable attitude with typically sickening Blairite verbiage: "Sunday will be a historic day for Iraq, and the extent of Iraqi participation in the elections is enormous, with 8,000 candidates, 150,000 officials and thousands of polling stations" (27 January 2005) and later "The future of Iraq is about building democracy and not succumbing to terrorism..." (17 March 2005).

Perhaps Hain will become the next Deputy Leader of the Labour Party or even, against precedent, the party Leader and Prime Minister. If any of this happens we shall be subjected to the customary drivel about a different, radical way of organising this segment of the capitalist system. This may impress the voters for a while, as it did with Blair, until capitalism itself unmasks it and there will be no more mistaken identity.

IVAN



Voice from the Back

Blinded By Capitalism

The following news item appeared in the *Guardian* (17 June): "Drug firm blocks cheap blindness cure. Company will only seek licence for medicine that costs 100 times more. A major drug company is blocking access to a medicine that is cheaply and effectively saving thousands of people from going blind because it wants to launch a more expensive product on the market." People with wet macular degeneration, a common condition among the elderly, have previously been treated with Avastin, which prevents impaired eyesight and blindness. The manufacturer Genetech have not presented it to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence because they are putting Lucentis forward instead. This treatment costs 100 times more. This is good business practice but bad news for the elderly workers suffering from the condition.



Genetech - robbing you blind

Conned By Capitalism

An example of how capitalism threatens lives is given in the *Guardian* (26 June): "Drug companies are accused today of endangering public health through widescale marketing malpractices, ranging from covertly attempting to persuade consumers that they are ill to bribing doctors and misrepresenting the results of safety and efficacy tests on their products. In a report that charts the scale of illicit practices by drug companies in the UK and across Europe, Consumers International - the world federation of consumer organisations - says people are not being given facts about the medicines they take because the companies hide the market-

ing tactics on which they spend billions."

Kicked By Capitalism

Sport according to most dictionaries is a "pleasant pastime; amusement or diversion", but inside modern capitalism it is no such thing. It has become, as most other human endeavours have become - a ruthless competitive business. In the business pages of the *Observer* (16 July) we learn that Leeds United borrowed over 25 years' future earnings, were relegated and had to sell all their good players; we also learn that Leicester City borrowed on future earnings to the extent of £26 million, and by the way they were relegated too. So while supporters on the terraces sing their songs of devotion and undying support the banks, investors and other money lenders count their gains.

Disgusted By Capitalism

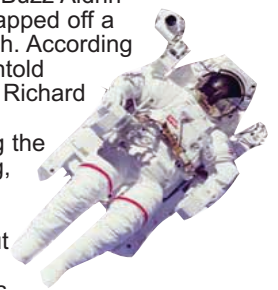
In a world where 8 million kids die every year through lack of clean water and sanitation the following news item disgusts us, how about you? "Forget the salt and lime, you'll need a mint to enjoy this tequila. Producer Tequila Ley.925 announced Saturday that it had sold a bottle of Mexico's best-known beverage in a gold and platinum casing for a whopping \$225,000. This is a really unique bottle of tequila and our client, a US based collector of fine wines and spirits, will treasure this prize to add to an already impressive collection" (*Associated Press*, 23 July).



Abandoned By Capitalism

President Nixon's praise for the US moonlanders was a cynical vote-catching ploy as can be seen by the following press report. "America was so eager to beat the Soviet Union to the moon it launched its

1969 mission before it was ready, a documentary claims. The documentary reveals that the crew had to use a pen to fix a broken switch on their lunar module to return to earth, the *Daily Mirror* reports. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had accidentally snapped off a circuit breaker switch. According to *Apollo 11: The Untold Story*, US president Richard Nixon prepared an address announcing the deaths of Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins. The US ordered NASA to cut links with the astronauts if disaster was imminent, not wanting the world to see images of astronauts spinning off into space" (*Herald Sun*, 25 July).

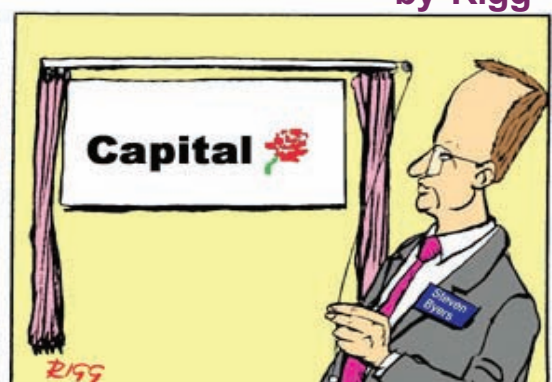


Shunned By Capitalism

"Las Vegas councillors have made it illegal to give food to homeless people. In an effort to curb charity that is said to be having unintended consequences, the city council has decided to ban food hand-outs to the homeless. The law targets so-called mobile soup kitchens. It carries a maximum penalty of a \$500 fine and six months in jail." (*New York Times*, July 31). It is all so logical, isn't it? You are trying to con workers into the fantasy that capitalism is a wonderful society and that they can become capitalists too, when some poor worker in Las Vegas tries to ask for something to eat. Solution? Ban the soup kitchen.



Free Lunch



by Rigg