

socialist standard



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

Mental Health

It's not
capitalism
- it's YOU!

MEDICAL DICTIONARY

NEW CONDITIONS IDENTIFIED:
Addendum 2008

RESENTMENT AGAINST BOSSES (*Indignari Dominus*)

A syndrome comprised of various signs, amongst which are: negativism, automatic disobedience, the holding of grudges, inability to identify with authority figures, and the inability to sympathise with high-income earners. Until recently it was thought to be related to schizophrenia, but this view has been discredited when the biochemical basis for the syndrome had been discovered. The current thinking is that *Indignari Dominus* is an exaggerated form of mania (in other words: an affective disorder). It also appears in certain psychotic states and mental disorders that have organic (medical) roots.

HATRED OF POLITICIANS (*Politico-phobia*)

A psychotic state accompanied by hallucinations such as the feeling that politicians of one particular party are in some ways better than others or are able to provide solutions to society's ills. *Politico-phobia* is one of a family of disorders which includes *Indignari Dominus* (see above).

FEAR OF THE FUTURE (*Futurophobia*)

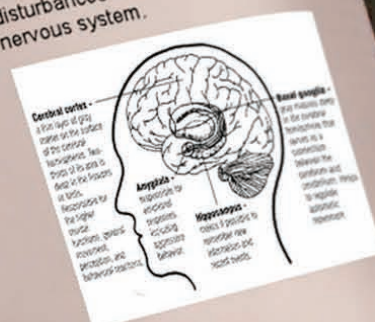
Inability or diminished capacity to form or voice positive thoughts about the future or to take a long view of things. Can also be Defence Mechanism comprised of: ignoring unpleasant facts, filtering out

INSECURITY OVER INCOME (*Insecurus Salarium*)

A set of signs in depression which includes loss of appetite, sleep disorder, loss of sexual drive, loss of weight, and constipation. May also indicate an eating disorder. Sufferers often believe that they are being stalked or followed, plotted against, or maliciously slandered, often by banks. They constantly gather information to prove their "case" that they are the objects of conspiracies against them.

INEQUALITY-RELATED FRUSTRATION (*Aqualitas Frustrare*)

A form of mood or anxiety disorder that manifests as overpowering physical and mental fatigue coupled with dizziness, headaches or migraine, diffuse pain, difficulty to concentrate and perform tasks, sleep disorders, and memory loss. Usually co-morbid with gastrointestinal dysfunction, irritability, excitability, lability, and disturbances of the autonomic nervous system.



The Happy
Slave
page 11



Football
page 13



Biafra
page 16



contents

FEATURES

- 9 Biology as ideology**
For over 40 years there has been an increasing momentum to the wholesale medicalisation of human and social problems.
- 11 The happy slave syndrome**
Why do we so doggedly embrace the wages and money system when it openly makes use of us?
- 13 Football: a capital idea**
Football is now a commodity packaged and sold to make money for the clubs' shareholders.
- 15 Boris who?**
Does the election of a Tory mayor of London mean the end of civilisation as we know it?
- 16 Nigeria, Biafra and Oil**
Oil was a major issue in the Nigerian civil war forty years ago.
- 19 Relearning history**
Don't believe what you were taught in school or hear from the media about benevolent Britain. We look at some books that give the other side of the story.

REGULARS

- 3 Editorial**
Know your enemy
- 4 Pathfinders**
Love is the drug
- 5 Letters**
- 5 Pieces Together**
- 6 Material World**
Evo Morales
- 8 Contact Details**
- 12 Cooking the Books 1**
The way the world can feed itself
- 14 Cooking the Books 2**
The nature of business
- 21 Meetings**
- 22 50 Years Ago**
The Liberal Revival
- 23 Greasy Pole**
Timer for a change
- 24 Voice from the Back**
More Profit Means More Hunger Dignity? No way; The Killer System, and more.
- 24 Free Lunch**

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 7 June** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

tel: 020 7622 3811

e-mail: spgb@worldsocialism.org

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 Know Your Enemy

Capitalism is everywhere these days. Turn on the TV or open a paper and “capitalism” is being talked about. And not just one capitalism – so many different types !

There’s turbo-capitalism, free market capitalism, selfish capitalism, crony capitalism, natural capitalism, laissez-faire capitalism, Chinese capitalism, state capitalism, and even disaster capitalism.

The fact that the media are increasingly calling a spade a spade in terms of the actual words they use is a positive development to be accepted. It’s good to know your enemy and it helps if you can call it by its real name.

But that’s not to say all these different types of “capitalism” don’t themselves sow confusion. World socialists would argue that while the outward appearance of an economic system may vary from region to region or over time, at the level which matters, it all comes down to the same thing. So what is the level that matters and what does it all come down to ?

We would argue that an economic system should be judged on how it produces and distributes wealth to its members. All round the world we see cast-iron evidence that – whatever the supposed form of capitalism practiced locally – capitalism itself is a system that is failing the vast majority.

In the more mature capitalist areas useless goods are increasingly produced that workers have to be persuaded to buy; in younger capitalist regions humans starve in their thousands because their suffering is invisible to the logic of the profit system. It makes no difference whether there is a King or a President on the banknote, it’s still capitalism, and the banknote is the part of the unnecessary rationing system.

So what does capitalism all come down to ? In a nutshell capitalism is about wealth being produced for sale on a market with a view to ensuring a profit for the owner of the capital invested in the production process (e.g. wages). All supposed “forms” of capitalism must comply with this rule to make profit. That profit may be partially hidden in a nationalised industry or obscure within the workings of a co-operative enterprise, it makes no difference. The economic system as a whole must carry on making a profit. If it does not, then investment stops and production stops, and individual businesses go to the wall. For states with significant state capitalist enterprises, the reality may be held off for some time but ultimately that state itself may become bankrupt.

What we have then is global capitalism arranged worldwide to satisfy the needs of the small minority who live in various degrees of luxury, off the unearned labour of the large majority, who live in various degrees of poverty. We do not for a second deny that in terms of standard of living there are enormous differences between workers globally. But that difference (caused by centuries of unequal development across the globe) in access to wealth is insignificant compared to the gulf between the employing class and the employed class living literally yards away from each other, whether in Lagos or London

So forget the various versions of capitalism. Don’t waste time trying to work out where selfish capitalism becomes unselfish capitalism, or where turbo capitalism stops and laissez-faire starts. Look beyond the label: the problem lies with capitalism itself.

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Calculations in
Pages 4
Page 10

Consumerism
and
Capitalism
Page 12

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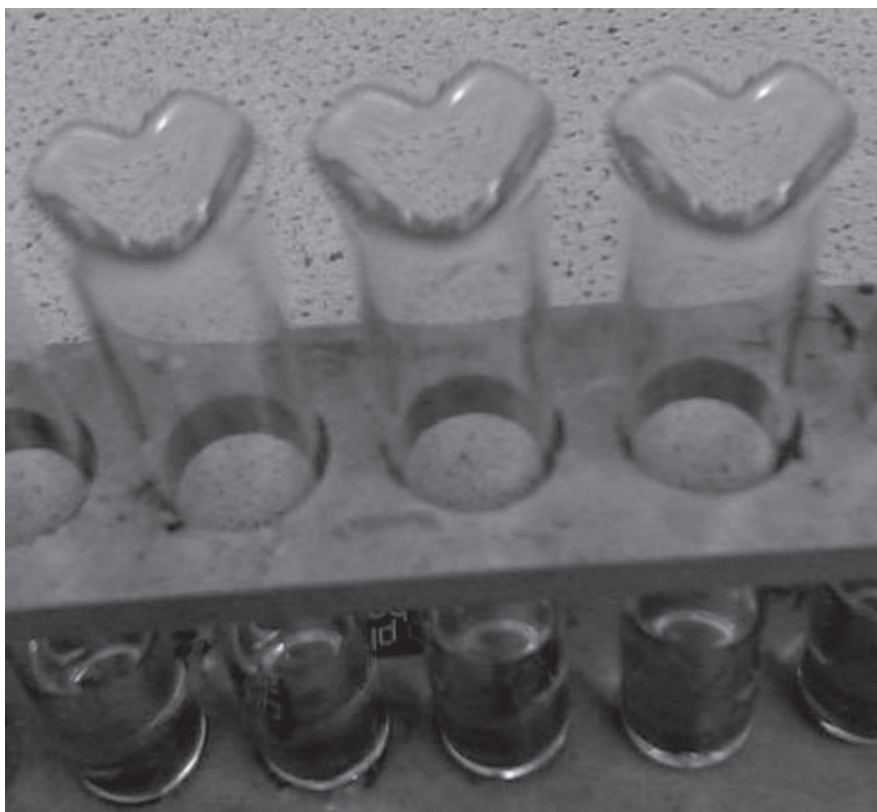
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Love is the Drug



In a lighter moment the other day, the present writer penned a short tale about a society at war which agreed for humane reasons to exempt all couples in love from military service, an infallible test for love being available in the form of an MRI scan of the hypothalamus. What followed was the black-market proliferation of Cupidol, a drug to make people fall in love with anyone. This story, as may be surmised, was intended as futuristic comedy.

As if to prove that fiction can always be trumped by fact, what came through the door a week later, in the May 17 issue of *New Scientist*, was the story of how MRI scans of the hypothalamus, part of the limbic system of the brain which governs emotions, are being used to track the neurotransmitter oxytocin, known as the 'love hormone'. This hormone is now the subject of intense research as a possible new wonder therapy for so-called people-problem mental disorders, as well as its offshoot commercial potential as a recreational love drug that would beat Ecstasy - pants down, presumably.

Oxytocin seems to be released in varying degrees and pulses during social interactions, and in strong doses during romantic and sexual encounters, it reduces stress, aids relaxation and assists in bonding. Studies suggest that blocking receptors of this neurotransmitter results in the turning-off of bonding patterns in prairie voles, and rats and mice stop nurturing their young or even recognising their own familiars. Its function appears to be to associate social interaction with pleasure, and it works in tandem with the 'reward' transmitters dopamine and opioids to create a feel-good effect.

The implications, according to the article, could be enormous for human psychological disorders that arise from relationships with other humans, among them depression, personality disorders, psychosis, social

phobias and autism. But before one gets too excited, one must bear in mind the cogent point Ed Blewitt makes in this issue (page 9), that biology is no quick fix for endemic social problems which are rooted in the way society is organised, a point doubtless conceded yet scarcely emphasised by science-based writers. If there was a drug for socialism, for example, it wouldn't work anyway.

Still, the general trend in that perennially polarised debate between the environmental and the biological determinists seems to be settling on a middle ground where cause and effect are bound up together in a still little-understood feedback mechanism. Somehow, our relationships with other people affect our body chemistry, and in turn our body chemistry affects our relationships with other people. What is significant about such a recursive cause-and-effect loop is that you can intervene at any point, and even at all points, to disturb or transform it.

Imagine, for example, that somebody wrote a self-help book that actually worked, as proposed in Will Ferguson's 2002 novel *Happiness*. Would the social

institutions of capitalist coercion and wage-slavery begin to crumble and break under the weight of joyful anti-capitalist non-cooperation, as Ferguson gleefully suggests? Presumably not, or not right away. If self-help books could cause revolutions, Marx's *Capital* would have been the last self-help book in history.

But it is tempting to speculate just how close the artificial bond of identification between system and psyche, referred to by Peter Rigg (page 11), would continue to be if people, either through drugs or DIY therapy, weren't quite so devastatingly messed up by the social order they help maintain.

In reality, the biggest problems with any pharmaceutical road to earthly paradise are first, that the effects would wear off and you'd have to keep re-dosing and second, and more to the point, that even if citizen worker got herself loved up and liberated, the bosses still have the loot and the law. That, and a cold and distinctly unloving gleam in their eye. Like it or not, conscious political action will not come out of a 30 milligram dose of delight to the limbic system. For that you have to rely on the more prosaic technologies of reason, democracy and organisation.

Research into such frontier territory as neurobiology, while not offering any magic bullet for social or psychological disorders under capitalism, certainly should be explored and would be pursued in socialism too, because of its potential for insight into how our minds work, what happens chemically when we relate to other people, and when we don't. And this in turn may offer us further insights into how best to organise our social and democratic structures, given that in socialism we will be at liberty, for the first time, to debate such things as a matter of conscious collective design.

Letters

Dear Editors

I was interested to read Gwynn Thomas's article on Kosovo (and Soros) in the April issue.

In the 1990s, the OSCE created a democracy fund to 'democratise' East Europe. Reagan and Hurd 'warned' Rumania and the GDR, respectively, in their elections, that unless opposition parties enjoyed "reasonable access" to (state-controlled) media, the resulting administration would not enjoy access to low-interest loans from Western banks.

As an enthusiastic investor in/supporter of "democratic" capitalism, Bob Maxwell donated (with others' money?) to the OSCE fund—and 'emerged' with a Polish TV station and a Hungarian newspaper, if I recollect.

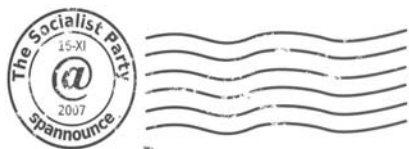
And, in the 1996 Bosnian election, a fascist candidate was able to access the OSCE fund, for politicking/propagandising purposes. The Foreign Office denied it had contributed to the support fund, but claimed Italy had provided the funds. I thought all funds were usually contributed to pro-rata (Guardian article and Foreign Office correspondence to me.)

D. SHEPHERD, London NW4

London election result

The Socialist Party stood a candidate in Lambeth & Southwark in the 1 May elections to the Greater London Assembly when we distributed some 20,000 leaflets. The result was:

Labour 60 601; LibDems 36 953; Con 32 835; Green 18 011; Christian 4432; UKIP 3012; LeftList [SWP] 1956; English Democrats 1867; Animals Count 1828; Socialist 1588.



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Evo Morales: A Call for Socialism?

On 21 April, 2008, President Evo Morales of Bolivia delivered the opening address to the Seventh Session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. His speech included the following passage:

“If we want to save the planet earth, to save life and humanity, we have a duty to put an end to the capitalist system. Unless we put an end to the capitalist system, it is impossible to imagine that there will be equality and justice on this planet earth. This is why I believe that it is important to put an end to the exploitation of human beings and to the pillage of natural resources, to put an end to destructive wars for markets and raw materials, to the plundering of energy, particularly fossil fuels, to the excessive consumption of goods and to the accumulation of waste. The capitalist system only allows us to heap up waste. I would like to propose that the trillions of money earmarked for war should be channelled to make good the damage to the environment, to make reparations to the earth.”

Despite the striking anti-capitalist content of most of this passage, the last sentence reveals that Morales does not have a clear conception of the socialist alternative. He still thinks in terms of the money system. The accurate way of posing the problem focuses not on the waste of money but on the waste of *real* resources of all kinds – the waste of nature and its bounty, of human life and labour, of knowledge and its potential. True, money represents or symbolizes *some* – far from all -- of these real resources, but in a very inadequate and distorted manner. To substitute the symbol for the reality is a mystification.

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that Morales is a good deal closer to a true understanding of socialism than most of the so-called “left” in Latin America or elsewhere. The very fact that he is addressing a world forum about the future of the species and the planet suggests that he is seeking an alternative at the global rather than national level. Although nationalization forms part of his domestic policy (the oil and gas

industry in Bolivia was nationalized in 2006), he does not equate nationalization with socialism.

The model of the ayllu

In a number of interviews Morales has been asked what he and his movement – the Movement for Socialism (MAS) – understand by socialism. Thus, Heinz Dieterich of *Monthly Review* (July 2006) asks him what country the socio-economic model of the MAS most



President Evo Morales of Bolivia

closely resembles. Brazil? Cuba? Venezuela? Morales does not like the way the question is put. (“[Socialism] is something much deeper. ... It is to live in community and equality.”) He talks instead about the traditional peasant commune or *ayllu* of the indigenous peoples of the Andes, based on communal landholding and “respect for Mother Earth.” He himself grew up in an *ayllu* of the Aymara people in Oruro Province; in some parts of Bolivia such communities still exist.

In another interview, to journalists from *Spiegel*, Morales says: “There was no private property in the past. Everything was communal property. In the Indian community where I was born, everything belonged to the community. This way of life is more equitable.” As the *World Socialist Review*, published by our companion party in the United

States, comments: “This is more than just a variation on the leftist cop-out that socialism is a goal for the distant future; it is, on some level, an acceptance of it as a real alternative to capitalism” (<http://www.wspus.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/wsr21b.pdf>)

Rejecting vanguardism

Another indication that Morales is closer than most of the “left” to a genuine understanding of socialism is his opposition to the Bolshevik idea of the “vanguard party.” The MAS, he tells Dieterich, “was not created by political ideologues or by a group of intellectuals, but by peasant congresses to solve the problems of the people.” It has always rejected the pretensions to “leadership” of Leninist groups of different varieties -- followers of Stalin, Trotsky, or Mariategui (a Peruvian Bolshevik who has had great influence on the left in Latin America).

Of course, Morales is not only a thinker with more or less clear ideas about capitalism and socialism. He is also head of the government of an underdeveloped country that has to operate within the parameters of a capitalist world. As such he is no position to realize his more far-reaching aspirations. At most, he has been able – like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela – to divert some of the proceeds from the sale of oil and gas to making some improvement to the life of the impoverished indigenous communities.

The fact remains that an internationally known figure has stood up at the United Nations and called upon the world community to bring the capitalist system to an end. Morales’ concept of socialism may be less clear than we would like, but it does at least bear some relation to the real thing. Viewed from the time when the UN and its specialized agencies are converted into the planning and coordinating centre of world socialism, this will, perhaps, be regarded as a milestone in its history.

Stefan



Pieces together

BIG BROTHER IS LISTENING

"Hundreds of benefit fraudsters have been caught out by lie-detector technology. More than 370 people were identified fiddling their benefits in Lambeth, South London. As part of the pilot project, Lambeth Council staff phoned 2,000 residents and used Voice Risk Analysis, which picks up tiny changes in the voice that show a person is lying. Benefit staff then made further checks to see if claims needed investigation. A total of 638 people were investigated and 377 were caught lying and had their benefits stopped or decreased." (*Times*, 21 April)

AN EXPENSIVE TIPPLE

"While the global credit crunch has forced many consumers to rein in spending, one Beijing-based billionaire has splashed out a record \$500,000 on 27 bottles of red wine, London-based Antique Wine Company said on Saturday. The anonymous Chinese entrepreneur bought a mix of vintages of Romanee Conti, a Burgundy wine and considered to be among the world's most exclusive with only 450 cases produced each year. The client bought 12 bottles of Romanee Conti 1978, two bottles of the 1961, 1966, 1996 and 2003 and single bottles of the 1981, 1990, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2001 and 2002. "It is the highest price that has ever been achieved for a single lot," Managing Director Stephen Williams of the London-based Antique Wine Company told Reuters on Saturday. "I don't think he has bought this as an investment -- he has bought it to drink," he added. "The fine wine industry is completely immune from the global credit crunch." (*Yahoo News*, 19 April)

HEATHROW HOMELESS

"Each night, scores of London's homeless men and women take advantage of modern travel delays by posing as stranded passengers in order to sleep in a warm, safe place. ... Those contacted included a man sleeping under his coat, another conspicuously hiding behind an open newspaper, and a woman clutching a duty free bag, who insisted she was waiting for a flight, only to whisper when police were out of earshot, "I can't afford electricity. It's warm here. Please let me stay." (*Times*, 21 April)

100 YEARS OF POVERTY

The columnist Richard Morrison on pensions "The old-age pension is 100 years old. When Asquith introduced it in 1908, it was five shillings a week - a sum that was regarded as shamefully low by progressives in his party. But if even that paltry figure had kept pace with the growth in Britain's GDP, the state pension should now be £161 a week. The actual figure? £90.70p. Some progress." (*Times*, 30 April)

Contact Details

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Central London branch. 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. The Shakespeare's Head, 64-68 Kingsway, Holborn. (Nearest tube: Holborn.) Tel: Tristan 0207 6223811

Enfield and Haringey branch. 2nd & 4th Monday. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

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West Midlands branch. Meets every two months on a Sunday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615

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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

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

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Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 5794109. E-mail: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

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Biology as ideology

For over 40 years there has been an increasing momentum to the wholesale medicalisation of human and social problems

It was in the late 19th/20th centuries that the notion of conceiving of distress/madness as a 'mental illness' came to predominate. In particular, the work of Emil Kraepelin, and the notion of trying to classify distress into a number of discrete psychiatric disorders, and that these disorders were diseases of the brain, and that these diseases of the brain were categorically distinct from the normal brain and normal behaviour.

For the last hundred years biological psychiatrists have been looking for pathologies in the brain to explain the different symptoms that 'patients' present. What with the 1990s being declared the Decade of the Brain, and with the Human Genome Project, they have had a good twenty years to propagate their view. Indeed, for over 40 years there has been an increasing movement towards the wholesale medicalisation of human and social problems. Virtually every problem is conceived as something that can come under the scrutiny not only of medicine in general but psychiatry in particular. Who are the gurus on TV and the press to whom we turn to for

solutions to our personal and societal problems—Dr. Mark or Dr. Joan! The politics is taken out of problems. It is not social conditions that require changing—it is our biology. And for 'mental illness', this means the resort to pills—the chemical balance of your brain needs to be adjusted.

Today, the bible of psychiatric approach to human misery is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* (DSM-IV). When it appeared in 1994 (only 7 years after DSM-II), it was some 900 pages long (a revision is due in 2010 and is expected to be 1250 pages). Within DSM are over 300 diagnoses. If you feel in need of a diagnostic label you are sure to find one here.

Over the years of revision from DSM in 1952 the shift has been away from a psycho-analytic perspective to a biological one. Now, the biological perspective is the dominant one, and refusal to toe the line can lead to a psychiatric career coming to an end—not only in terms of posts but also any research grants. No longer is the personal political – the personal has become biological.

The biological approach, however, has come under attack from a number of perspectives. The whole of the conceptual apparatus has been undermined by psychiatric service users, psychologists and sociologists. Yet the edifice still stands and may be gaining in strength. The general public seems to be keen on it, let alone other professional and political interests. It will be a tough nut to crack.

As more mental illness categories are added because more people are showing their misery in different ways, this provides an ideal opportunity for the commodification of happiness—with the solution to unhappiness being offered by the pharmacology industry, often referred to as BigPharma.

No place for culture

The biological approach claims that its diagnostic categories are objective and universal because they are based on the pathologies of the brain. Schizophrenia is schizophrenia in AD 2007 or 2007 BC, in Britain or Borneo. The particularities of culture have no place here.

But this is not the whole story. There are cultural psychiatrists who

are opposed to this Western imperialist encroachment. Not only are there differences across contemporary culture but even in the West differences are found across time. To show the difference in how misery shows itself across cultures consider these examples of what are called culture-bound syndromes.

Koko: usually Malaysian males who believe their sexual organs are shrinking, and is accompanied by panic as this is an indication of imminent death.

Latah: experienced by Indonesians who develop an exaggerated startle response, which includes shouting rude words and mimicking the behaviour of those nearby.

Western psychiatry tries to put these cultural forms into its categories.

To show how even in the West psychiatrists have changed their mind, consider what Samuel Cartwright classified as "drapetomania" in 1851. This disease was previously unknown to medical authority, although its diagnostic symptom was well known to "our planters and overseers". This symptom was found only in black slaves and involved "absconding from service".

He concluded that what "induces the Negro to run away is as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation and much more curable". The cause was not pills but "whipping the devil out of them". The patient should be treated like a child. But he warned against being too lenient or overly severe whipping—both of which would induce "drapetomania". The term is derived from the Greek "drapetes"—a runaway slave.

Even schizophrenia has been seen as a disorder that is of recent origin, being rarely noted before the rise of modernity, in traditional or pre-literate societies.

The biological approach is not only wrong, but it is also ideological. This is not to deny that biological factors are not prominent in certain disorders. But whatever role biological factors play, psychological interactions cannot be reduced to the biological. As biological entities, all our activities have a biological component. But psychological activities are constituted in the interaction or transaction of a biological organism and a physical social environment.

Social relationships

A significant difficulty in looking at the literature which makes reference to social conditions is trying to sort out those which are capitalist specific or class specific from those which are a part of social life in general.

Moreover, it is difficult to sort out those sites where capitalist social relationships have direct effect on the conditions occurring there, such as work and unemployment, from where they have a mediated effect. That is, where capital does not directly create that site but works through an already existing institution, such as the family, gender relations, 'racial' relations, and personal relations.

In addition to those, there is the problem that capitalism has with the notion of class. Capitalism likes to think that class problems are a thing of the past or is a subjective matter. Therefore, it is reluctant to fund research which looks at this as a variable. It will accept an occupational or educational definition of class but it will not accept a Marxian definition.

Psychiatric research relating to class seems to have gone through three phases:

First, from the Victorian period up to the Second World War. Unlike mainstream medicine which was very much concerned with the environmental and social conditions of the poor—important public health measures, e.g. sewerage and water, were the focus in trying to improve the physical health of the working class—the focus of psychiatric epidemiology was on the identification of types of mental disease and (because of the brain pathology notion) localising the source of these in the constitution of the person and their family inheritance. This was the period of tainted genes and eugenic solutions.

Second, from the Second World War to the 1970s. The period of the long boom and of social reconstruction, of making capitalism modern, saw an interest in the social conditions of the working class. With the rise of the community health movement, the sources of mental health problems were seen to be, at least in part, those of poverty. Eugenics had of course lost all credibility. So, instead of segregating the mentally ill, the issue was to ameliorate social conditions. Studies showed that schizophrenia was more common in the poorer communities, as well as depression and anxiety.

Third, from the 1970s to the present. With the end of the post-war boom and the crises of the 70s and 80s, the social reformism came to an end. Community care was found to be too expensive and so cuts were made. Once again identification of problems, rather than sources of problems, became the main issue. With the introduction of new diag-

nostic practices and pharmacological treatments there was a return to the biological, and there was a strong bias against showing the effects of social conditions on the origin and development of the disease. There were exceptions, but that is what they remained. If you wanted large research grants from the biologically dominated institutes you put in a biological proposal.

Because of this state of affairs, it is difficult to identify clear-cut research studies which put social class in the forefront. But those few that are available all show that the 'lower' the social class and degree of urban poverty the greater the incidence of mental health problems. However, the relationship is not always clear-cut. For example the chronically unemployed are less distressed than those who are poorly employed (i.e. those in stressful, badly paid and insecure jobs).

In dealing with this distribution of mental health problems two, antagonistic, hypotheses have been proposed. The first assumes that social stress causes mental health problems. The second assumes that inherited or acquired causes lead to the patient being socially disadvantaged, and this leads to a downward social drift.

The emphasis on social stresses points toward a change in social conditions, whereas the social drift model with the emphasis on genetic faults or self-induced damage, such as alcohol or drug abuse, points toward blaming the person and the use of individual treatments.

Psychic reformism

Throughout the 20th century there have been movements that have promised happiness to us: Dale Carnegie, Norman Vincent Peale, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better", Gestalt Therapy, EST, self-actualisation, the human potential movement and so on. They've come and they've gone. They fail to meet the hype because in part they are confined to merely individual happiness—I'm OK. They argue that if you sort your head out you can be happy. But it ignores the nature of the society in which we live. Unless this necessary condition for being a human being—miserable or flourishing—is taken into account, any hope for change is doomed to failure—yet another form of reformism. But we've had enough of reformism dangled in front of us, promising this time that things really will be different.

But is there anything to think that socialism has something to offer as an answer to the problem of human misery? In socialism we will still have some of the problems that make you feel miserable, scared, depressed or demented. Socialism is not a solution to all mental health problems, it is a solution only to those created

by capitalist conditions of life, or to class conditions of life. While some of the problems are due to being human beings living within a social setting, others are due to being biological organisms, and as such will break down if we are damaged or just get old (e.g. aphasia, epilepsy, anger management problems, Alzheimer's, front lobe syndrome, pharmacologically induced psychosis). While there could be a reduced use of medication and an increased use of social therapy, the power to detain people whose condition renders them dangerous to others will still be needed.

Socialism involves the abolition of the wages system. This entails that our ability to use our labour power is no longer subjected to the power of the capital social relationship, to be used only when capital sees a profit. Rather our labour power becomes ours, to be used voluntarily as part of our relationship with others, working in association towards our goals—to production for use to meet our needs.

Socialism also involves:

The abolition of useless production, freeing up of millions of people from producing products and services necessary only for capitalism.

Social decision-making on what is useful—no tat, built-in obsolescence or environmental damage.

Breaking up of the division of labour, having multiple roles in society.

Voluntary work—from each according to their ability; less emphasis on efficiency so people can work as much as their competence allows

Co-operation between user and provider: not a commodity relationship; providers doing it because they want to—so less likelihood of abuse; no power differential between providers and users but partners; emphasis on building competencies

The case for socialism as more than an opposition to the economic exploitation of the working class. Throughout their writings, Marx and Engels criticised capitalism because of its effects on the working class as human beings, as more than mere economic agents.

In arguing against capitalism there was a positive model of human being set up in opposition, and as a position from which to evaluate capitalism. This positive possibility of human socialism needs to be put forward. Socialism is about establishing a mode of society which allows individuals to develop their powers to be more than mere producers or consumers. Capitalism has long produced the potential for such individual development, the task now is to realise it, to persuade working people that there is more to living than the shit of capitalism—we are more than pigs, content with mere physical satisfaction.

ED BLEWITT

The happy slave syndrome

We're H.A.P.P.Y. ...



Why do we so doggedly embrace the wages and money system when it openly makes use of us?

For some of us our wage slavery can buy us a comfortable, prosperous lifestyle and personally rewarding work; for others it means being discarded; for most of us perhaps it's something in between. But in any event, the sole purpose of the capitalist system is to make a profit out of us and to accumulate capital, and no amount of TV property programmes, cars, foreign holidays, latte coffee, or shopping makes any difference to that.

A certain proportion of us are able to believe that 'we're all middle class now', because some of us at least can afford to accumulate a certain amount of stuff. But this is an illusion; there is no middle class. We're all working class in the economic sense that we have to sell our labour in order to live, with the exception, of course, of the small number of capitalists who can live entirely on the labour of others. The rest of us are all, economically speaking, working class by virtue of the fact that we have to let ourselves be used, to sell our labour power, to live.

And yet, how readily we embrace the illusion! From the 'minnows' of the Wall Street stock boom in the 20's to Margaret Thatcher's new homeowners and the 'Sids' of working class share ownership, and now, in Russia, China and India, we reach out again and again in individual aspiration, setting aside the hope

of banding together and ending our exploitation. We try to win in the rat race instead of trying to abolish it, thereby ensuring that the capitalist class goes on mining our lives for profit. We are like the credulous 'natives' of imperial mythology, marvelling at our handful of pretty beads while the white man robs us of everything.

Our hope has been dashed in so many ways. Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot have poisoned our understanding by pasting the word 'socialism' onto the very opposite, their barbarous tyrannies. Labour movements have been disabled by the capitalists' increased ability to move capital and workers round the world. Reformist parties have caved in to the needs of capital to the point of embarrassment. We find dumb serenity staring at a screen or through a windscreen.

Nevertheless, beyond this, I think that we ourselves have been structured to accept this system. One way of looking at the way capitalism has formed us and we form it in turn, is through a consideration of our psychological defences, a psychological term for the means we use to manage our lives in the face of threats to our stability.

We all try to find ways of defending ourselves psychologically. It's natural and necessary. We couldn't get through the day if we were con-

stantly overwhelmed by the world, if we were totally impressionable. However, a defence can distort our awareness of reality, in this case, of how we are made use of, and so we shape ourselves to the economic circumstances, in order to be able to tolerate them.

The first means of defence I want to look at is 'projection'. To project can be to imagine that some outside figure or power possesses something that is part of ourselves. For example, a woman who had an unfriendly piano teacher as a child, might project her love of music into her daughter, and want her to do well. Both she is impoverished by her projections, missing out on an opportunity to be creative herself.

In a similar way, I think that we project our capacities into money, we imagine that money holds great powers, although in reality those powers belong to us.

We have the ability, all of us, working together as citizens of the world, to run the world together democratically, as equals, with no need for money or other forms of domination. But we act as if we don't. We project our own functions and capacities into money, we attribute those qualities to money and deny them in ourselves. Money is endowed with the same sort of status as a god, it seems to be the source of everything; but of course *we* are, as the people of the world, self-evidently, the source of everything. Nothing comes from money; money is an agreed convention; it's a fiction that holds and wields all the power we can't bear to own. We are like our fictitious piano woman – she *could* play the piano but she sees all of that in her daughter. The analogy is that we *could* run the world, but we let money run it instead.

We also project into money our adult capacities and onto money the status of a parent on whom we depend. In relation to money it is as if adults are babies or small children, unable to judge whether we need something or not. It is money, the stern parent, that tells us we can't have things. This parent can be so stern that for many of us money refuses us enough to eat, refuses us medical care. It can deny us the barest dignity in old age, or even life itself. When we can't have something we need, we say 'Where's the money going to come from?' And this can apply equally to goods which are, in reality, either plentiful or scarce.

It works the other way too. We assume that our wants are limitless and that, if money weren't an obstacle, we'd just accumulate things

endlessly and not know when to stop. Money then can be an overindulgent parent, that lets us be completely spoilt, that offers us no limits. Money can give us victory over the social and human limitations that come from considering others. If you've got enough money you don't have to give any thought at all to other people, and in this society that's just about the highest form of freedom we can imagine. When we are living in a wasteful and reckless way, we say 'We are prosperous now and this is what we want! Nobody can tell us what to do!'

So the centre of decision making is located outside ourselves. If we can't afford it we can't have it, and if we can afford it we *have* to have it.

Money starves us or it fattens us up, but either way, it is money that is in control, enabling our labour to be siphoned off and gathered together as profit.

This oppresses us, but it also frees us of responsibility. If we project our power elsewhere then we are excused the work of taking responsibility for it. Living in a socialist society, having assumed our own power, will indeed be hard work and a lot of it will unfortunately be the boring slog of going to meetings and trying to sort out our relationships with each other socially, and make decisions. In a sense, we don't want to grow up – far better to leave it to

the parents to tell us what to do, while we just gripe from the sidelines.

The second defence mechanism I'd like to discuss is that of 'identification'. To 'identify' means we fuse or confuse our identity with that of another. For example, I might watch a Clint Eastwood film and feel, for a while at least, as if I too am hewn from granite. But it also means the taking in of another person, so that I might recognise enduring traits in me that are like my own father or mother, for example.

In this case of our adjustment to capitalism, we identify with the powerful. We prefer to imagine that we are all pocket capitalists. Instead of recognising that the owners of capital might be using us, we imagine ourselves to be in control, and the owners of capital to be our servants. We think we are sophisticated, knowing consumers who know a bargain when we see one, and companies exist to meet *our* every caprice and whim, rather than the reverse.

Campaign groups try to publicise the exploitation of suppliers that is the cost of low prices to 'the consumer'. I wonder whether, identified with the capitalist class, we in some way enjoy supermarkets acting as our agents in pushing other working class people to the limit so we can feel we're getting a bargain. Isn't there a seductive joy in being able to feel like the oppressor, like a proxy

slave owner with all these poor little people slaving away so we can pick our week's shopping off the shelves? And what about the fast food customer bullying and patronising the person serving the burgers? Isn't there an element of acting like the lord of the manor in that behaviour? Isn't that part of the deal, that you get to boss somebody about?

However, the supermarkets' own marketing patter describes our slavery accurately enough, though they put it in advertising code. They describe us as 'discerning consumers with an eye for price'; decoded, that means that we're broke and overwhelmed with debt. They say we are 'leading today's high pressure, busy lives'. That means we're overworked, sweated labour just like in Dickens' time, but repackaged as living some kind of exciting fast-lane lifestyle. We're not even consumers, not really. The capitalist is the ultimate consumer. The cost of our labour is the total value of keeping us going, keeping us fed, housed, entertained and all the rest of it, so low prices in the shops means that we are cheaper too. The rich are sophisticated consumers of our labour and *they* certainly know a bargain when they see one.

My argument, in short, is that we are characterologically adapted to the capitalist system; that we feel no need to get rid of it because of

continued page 22



Cooking the Books 1

The way the world can feed itself

That was the headline of an article in the *Sunday Times* (27 April) by their Economics Editor David Smith. The way he endorsed was allowing "large, technologically sophisticated agro companies" to take over food production from peasant farmers in Africa and elsewhere. Yes, but

what will happen to the millions of dispossessed peasants this would create? How will they be able to get money to buy food? But at least he conceded that it is technically feasible to produce enough food to feed the world's population.

It might have been expected that the recent increase in the world market price of wheat and rice and the resulting food riots in Haiti and other countries would lead to a revival of the views of the Reverend Thomas Malthus, the 18th English parson turned economist, who argued that world poverty and starvation are due to overpopulation, to not being able to produce enough food for everyone. But no. All the pundits and all the spokespersons of international capitalist institutions such as the World Bank and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) seem agreed that the problem is not that enough food cannot be produced to feed the hungry, but that the hungry cannot afford to pay for the food that has already been produced. As Peter Smerdon, Africa spokesman for the WFP put it in an interview with the *Times* (8 April):

"it is not a question of availability as one saw in previous drought-induced famines. 'People can suddenly no longer afford the food they see on store shelves because prices are beyond their reach. It is about accessibility . . .'"

In fact, it seems to be generally admitted that food production

could be increased and, indeed, will be increased in response to high prices.

David Smith made the same point we made here in February: "Set-aside subsidies have been an important part of the common agricultural policy. Farmers have been paid not to produce. Last September, however, EU ministers agreed on a zero set-aside rate for 2007-8, to boost grain production by 10m tons".

Meanwhile in rice-growing Thailand:

"Fields that have lain fallow are being ploughed and planted; in wet and fertile central Thailand . . . farmers are contemplating three or even four harvests a year, beyond the usual one or two" (*Times*, 28 April).

This raises the question of why in a world where there is mass hunger in some parts – 1 billion in "absolute poverty" and a further 854 million who are "food insecure" (*Times* 8 April) – this land wasn't used before to produce more wheat or rice. The answer is obvious: it wasn't profitable, the price wasn't high enough.

The ironic thing is that this extra food production will not benefit those in "absolute poverty" since they still won't be able to afford to buy it. And if prices fall again, as they might well do since the rise is partly due to a speculative boom amongst commodity traders, then the land will be taken out of production again. That's the way the market works. But what a way to run the world.

There is an obvious solution: produce food directly for people to eat. But, first, the land and all the rest of the world's resources, industrial as well as natural, will have to stop being the private property of rich individuals, multinational corporations and states and become the common heritage of all humanity. On this basis enough food could rapidly be produced to eliminate starvation immediately and, within a few years, to provide every man, woman and child on the planet with an adequate diet.



Football: a capital idea

Football is now a commodity packaged and sold to make money for the clubs' shareholders.

Football fans were given something meaty to chew on recently when the English Football Association appointed an Italian, Fabio Capello, as manager of the national team. Capello, in turn, brought with him a bevy of besuited Italian colleagues to help him to ensure that England qualify for, and preferably do well in, the next major tournament, the 2010 World Cup.

Most football fans, including large sections of the press, have been tearing their hair out in frustration because the England team hasn't been doing too well recently in comparison with the top national sides. (Let's leave aside the fact that England isn't strictly speaking a nation and that the United Kingdom actually has four 'national' teams). The crunch came when the previous manager, Steve McClaren, failed to 'lead' England to the 2008 European Championship finals this coming summer. He was considered not to have enough charisma or technical know-how for the job. Capello was seen as the best qualified manager to take over. The only fly in the ointment was his nationality, but for the sake of getting the right man, this was overlooked and those who would have preferred an Englishman breathed a collective sigh of resignation. At least this foreigner, with his no-nonsense approach and impressive managerial CV, might knock a bunch of spoiled, overpaid players into shape and win something.

This is not the first time a foreigner has been involved in English football, although based on the press coverage and fan reaction, we'd have been forgiven for thinking so. Only a few years ago, the England team was managed by a Swede, Sven-Goran Eriksson, but, perhaps because he spoke good English and was temperamentally more like an Englishman than Capello, he was more readily accepted. More significantly, there is now a proliferation of non-English players in professional English club football, to the extent that some sides rarely field an English player at all. In this sense, the game in some quarters is truly cosmopolitan.

Looking farther back, the reality is that there has always been a foreign or non-local element in English football. Almost from its inception as an organised sport,

in the late nineteenth century, players moved around from club to club if their services were required. Thus we had, firstly, northerners playing for southern clubs and vice versa, then Scots playing for and managing English clubs, then English players and managers moving abroad to foreign clubs as their overseas counterparts came in the opposite direction, only more recently in far greater numbers. At every stage of increasing "foreignness", there were many objectors.

But after the inevitable cries of horror, each encroachment of 'foreigners' into the game is accepted as long as it helps 'your' team to win. For the fans, winning is an end in itself, a kind of vicarious success and reflected glory. For the players, it means a better living (sometimes, in the case of the top players, dramatically so). For the clubs, it is a means of making profits, or at least avoiding losses and staying in business. So if foreign players and managers can help in the process of winning, most people involved in the game are satisfied, albeit grudgingly in some cases.

The other side of the coin is that employing foreign players and managers is regarded as a failure for the national game. The general view is that the England team is not good enough because, as a result of the foreign influx, there aren't thought to be enough good English players or managers bubbling up through the system.

Shame, we are told, and we hear players saying that to play for their country is the greatest honour. But interestingly, club managers aren't so patriotic – they don't like 'call-ups' for fear their players get injured and reduce the chances of winning for their club.

The issue of club versus country or national versus foreigner in football is a reflection of the confused attitude to nationalism in capitalist society in general. After all, organised football is entirely a product of capitalism. The same is true of all modern professional sport. Its increasingly ruthless and competitive nature is a direct result of the increasingly ruthless and competitive society it is a part of. Here are some more examples which show the increasing pervasiveness of capitalism into sport as in everyday life.

1 Sponsorship is a big money-spinner: thus we see a proliferation of company logos on team kit and perimeter fencing. 'Lesser' sports get away with even more crass commercialism, such as the large RBS logo painted into the centre of rugby pitches and angled directly at the camera such that it is almost constantly in view.

2 Merchandising is an integral aspect of any football club's everyday activities: typified by the annual introduction of new strip to keep up sales of replica shirts.

3 Pressure to succeed becomes ever greater: at some clubs, huge sums are paid for what are seen as star players and managers (regardless of nationality), who are then discarded almost as a matter of routine after a year or less if they don't bring instant success.

4 As in many other areas of capitalism, the top strata of football are awash with money while there's precious little to spare lower down, with many of the smaller clubs are living from week to week.

5 We have the absurd situation of millionaire players bullying referees who until recently didn't even get paid to do the job.

6 There is regular tinkering with the laws of the game to make it a more entertaining, and thus saleable, 'product'.

7 Clubs are now known as brands – even some players such as Beckham.

8 Returning to the nationality issue, the increase in foreign 'trade' reflects the increasingly global nature of capitalism: witness the recent proposal of the Premier League for an extra match per team each season, to be played at various venues around the world – there can be no other reason than that of generating more profit.

9 The game is ultra-competitive: mistakes by players or referees are more and more costly; at a far lower level we have pushy parents on the touchline at school matches bullying their children to play harder and be

more like the heroes they worship.

10 So much rides on success that you have to have a winner. This is particularly ironic in football when roughly 25% of matches are drawn. The draw is increasingly unacceptable, hence the increasing number of penalty shoot-outs to replace replays.

11 The desire to win also perversely means a fear of losing – for many decades the game has been over-defensive, with too few goals.

12 Teams are run on almost military lines, with the players being routinely drilled like soldiers by their coaches and disciplined by referees and organising bodies.

13 Football is now a so-called 'middle class' game and lower-paid fans are being priced out. To watch even a modest club play can cost three times as much as a cinema ticket.

Most of the above observations are commented on weekly in the national press. Most football fans agree that money coupled with the overweening greed of the big clubs is spoiling the game. Alas, lasting solutions are never suggested since most fans and journalists are as blinkered by the constraints of money-based society as the sport's practitioners.

The only way to stop the rich clubs getting richer and the poor clubs getting poorer is not to limit the amount of money in the game or to distribute it more evenly – a virtually impossible task anyway – but to take the money out of football altogether. And that in turn means abolishing money in all other areas of life. And how do we stop foreigners being brought in to manage the national team? Well, why don't we try abolishing nationality? The national football team is a product of the nation as a competing political unit in capitalism, and in a nationless society would have no role.

ROD SHAW



Cooking the Books 2

The nature of business

Remember the scenes in January last year when hundreds flocked to Branscombe beach in Devon to scavenge for the cargo of a beached container ship? Some saw this as confirmation of the popular prejudice that it is "human nature" to grab, grab, grab. Actually, it was a manifestation of human behaviour

in a society where normally everything has to be paid for when something becomes unexpectedly and temporarily available for free.

But that's not the main lesson of the incident. This April the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) of the Department for Transport published its report on what happened (www.maib.dft.gov.uk/publications/investigation_reports/2008/msc_napoli.cfm). The report didn't just deal with the technical aspects of why the hull cracked and why the ship had to be beached to avoid a serious oil spillage but looked at the wider context too.

In section 2.10 on the "Container Ship Industry", the MAIB observed:

"Without the ability to quickly ship large quantities of containers across the oceans, containerisation would be generally constrained within the continents. However, the commercial advantages of containerisation and intermodalism such as speed and quick turnarounds appear to have become the focus of the industry at the expense of the safe operation of its vessels. The industry is very schedule driven, and operators inevitably have an eye on the timetable when making key decisions".

On the particular accident last January, the report went on:

"In this case, the decisions to sail: without an operational governor; sail in excess of the maximum permissible seagoing bending moments in order to allow greater flexibility for the time of departure; to operate at near maximum bending moments when underway; and to keep the ship's speed as fast as possible when pounding into heavy seas, were symptomatic of the industry's ethos to carry as much as possible as quickly as possible".

This wasn't the first time the MAIB had pointed this out. The report quotes from a previous report put out in September 2007 on another accident:

"Working practices relating to the planning, loading, transportation and discharge of containers are largely unregulated and have been understandably focussed on the need to maximise efficiency and speed of operation. While key industry players will attest that safety is of paramount concern, evidence obtained during this and other MAIB investigations into container shipping accidents suggests that in reality, the safety of ships, crews and the environment is being compromised by the overriding desire to maintain established schedules or optimise port turn round times".

Something will no doubt be done to tighten up the regulations – or rather the unenforceable "code of best practice" – if only because accidents cost the shipping companies money. But the real question is why weren't proper safety measures already in place? The answer is the commercial pressures that all firms are subject to under capitalism. The shipping companies are all in competition with each other for business, and those who can deliver quicker get the contracts.

It is not human nature to grab, grab, grab, but it is the nature of capitalist businesses to take risks and cut corners with safety to win the battle of competition and make more profits.

Does the election of a Tory mayor of London mean the end of civilisation as we know it?

Boris who?



I came back from attending the London elections count on the 2nd of May, to find the following letter on my welcome mat, from a Labour Party member of my acquaintance.

Dear Pik,

As I write, Tories overhead are taking over my city. Otherwise civilised people, with a knowledge of Beethoven and Shakespeare, are trying to enact Tory policies. I am currently cowering in my cellar, with my Grandad's old steel helmet on my head, and a phrase book of how to speak Tory. I have stockpiled on bully beef and powdered egg, and with my knife tied to a broomstick I am prepared to last out the rule of Boris Karloff – or whatever his name is.

I remember our conversations, in those now far-off days of Labour rule, in which the sun always seemed to shine. You said, if I recall, that Boris is just a saloon bar bore – heartland Tory who believes in small government and just letting the rich get on with running their lives. Just look, you said, at his housing policy, he wants to end the requirement to have 50 percent affordable housing (and no, I still don't know what "affordable" actually means in practice, nor for whom they are supposed to be

affordable) on all new building projects. Instead he promised to "work with the boroughs" in order to build the same 55,000 such new homes. In other words, he was going to allow Tory boroughs to refuse to allow low cost housing in their halcyon areas that might attract the likes who might vote Labour. Likewise his promise to promote building that won't spoil existing views – protect the rich and drive the poor into already ugly ghettos.

I know I've spent the last few years talking up Labour's increase in policing, and how that has cut crime. You said that crime always falls while the economy grows, and showed me graphs and stuff to prove it (do you always carry those round in your pocket?); but Boris wants to cut the cost of policing, while at the same time putting more police on the tubes and buses. He wants to cut and cut taxes, and the expensive part of the mayoral budget is the police part. I know you said "how can Boris be tough on crime if there isn't plenty of crime to be tough on", and I agree that the Tories do try to have it both ways, but I was shocked when you said "look, the root cause of crime is free enterprise – so long as there

are profits to be made, and entrepreneurs ready to enter the crime market, there will be blood." How can you say such things when, under Labour, free enterprise has brought us such prosperity?

I know Ken Livingstone almost said as much, blaming the rise of teenage violent crime on his success in smashing the drugs networks (apparently, he reckons, with their foot soldiers in prison, the drugs barons just started recruiting a new generation). But, really, how could you possibly equate the likes of Shell or BAE with a bunch of violent hoodlums using violence to make money?

So what that Karloff will surround himself with are advisers he can delegate to – just like the way he ran the right-wing rag *The Spectator*. So, you reckon, that means that they'll ensure that he stays within the law, and doesn't do anything so disastrous that the profit of the people who own London will be threatened. Most of what will change will be the mood music from city hall – even if it will be the harsh sounds of the right-wing dog whistle.

You'll miss Ken now he's gone. He fought for a living wage in London £7.20 an hour, the European decency

threshold. He won awards for equal opportunities – the most gay friendly workplace in the country and using the London Development agency to promote Black and Minority Ethnicity businesses. OK, a lot of that was compliance with national law, so Boris will hardly be unable to undo it all, but he will say mean things, and upset a lot of people – you just watch.

I mean, you said, “Livingstone hasn’t got rid of poverty, and can’t – he’s consciously working within the capitalist system. Look at his arguments over the Public Private Partnership – he wasn’t against capitalist finance, he just thought the state should borrow on the open market, and pay profits in the form of interest on that debt.”

And you said “he didn’t use his position to call for radical change, instead he used machiavellian tactics to hold on to power while working behind the scenes to secure his basis of support. That’s why he lost, he just strung workers along with a few paltry promises – and when a better snake oil salesman came along, they buggered off and voted for him instead. Selling promises isn’t democracy, it’s the politics of the market place, and Ken was just out-entrepreneuried by Karloff.”

So, you reckon Ken lost because the workers preferred what the Tories had on offer and wanted that. I don’t believe it, I think their minds were warped by the *Evening Standard* using mind rays or something. How could they possibly want to vote for someone who will allow them to drive gas guzzling cars, opposes a 24 hour freedom pass for pensioners and who will doubtless cut back on free bus travel for school kids?

Next you’ll be telling me that the fact that the BNP won a seat isn’t a cause for concern. I know what you’ll say, that they just got one of the seats that went to UKIP at the last election (the Tories got the other), and so that just means that the anti-immigration rightwing majority on the GLA will be maintained (yes, I know the fact that under PR the right predominated previously shows that there is mass support for such views in London, and that Karloff’s victory is just a reflection of this).

Of course, the three seats for the Liberals make them decisive, but given that they’ve tacked onto the cost cutting message of the Tories, and ran on a platform of tax cuts they’ll back the Tories on crucial votes to try and woo the latter’s supporters. At least you and I agree on this, that the Lib-Dems are yellow Tories, people who just can’t admit to themselves

that they are Tories.

But the BNP are fascists – I know, they’re mostly ageing suburban cockney’s who are deeply confused. What was that you were telling me about the BNPer you overheard talking about why he believed his “mixed race” grandson that he was raising should be allowed into the BNP (despite understanding the need to “protect the species”)? I know “its irrational” and that they’re clinging to this sense of identity. Of course, the Tory party has long contained such people, and if the workers come to believe such nonsense there’s nothing we could do to stop them.

Except, you were there when we both heard Frank Dobson MP suggesting we should just change the electoral rules to keep the BNP out. That seems fair to me – these people are opposed to democracy anyway, so we need to take away their votes in order to save voting. After all, if we can point to the BNP we can persuade people to vote for us to keep them out. I know you keep saying that unless we give people something to be for, and actively try to change their minds, then the BNP is what you get. I know that Brown shamelessly pandered to their prejudices with the slogan “British jobs for British workers” that the BNP then prominently displayed on their election material. But trying to change people’s minds is a way to lose elections, unless we tell them what they want to hear, we’ll never get to get into government and enact our programme.

So, the “socialism” you talk about sounds lovely. It’s a great idea, but no-one will ever go for it. In the meanwhile we’ve got to try and run capitalism as it exists. We don’t have time for changing minds, for education, for the hard slog of building up a clear line of advance, we just need to adjust how we sell our product better. Brown will try and make out that he has gifts to give the electors in return for their votes, and if we overcome this mid-term blip, then, at least, we might hang on, or at least deny the Tories a majority.

Anyway, I must go now, I think I heard Tories trying to sniff me out. I’ll come out of my bunker when its safe, until then, here’s a record of me chanting “Boris, Boris, Boris, out, out, out.” Hey, back to the good old days under the Tories, stormy meetings, out on the streets. We can do it all again!

Yours,
L. P. Hack.
Sigh.

Nigeria, Biafra and Oil

Oil was a major issue in the Nigerian civil war forty years ago.

Nigeria is a country that was created artificially by British colonialism. It has a complex ethnic mixture of groups, with a division between the North, inhabited by Muslim Fulani-Hausas with a rigid feudal system, and the South where a number of different ethnic groups co-existed loosely, the largest of these groups being the Christian Igbos and Yorubas. The trick of British colonialism was the divide and rule system. They knew the nature of Nigeria; that it is a country that doesn’t have the same climate, not the same religion, not the same mentality, not the same food, not the same dress, not the same dialect, and not the same culture. They used their military might to force Nigeria to be one by the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates of Nigeria. They gave the Fulani emirs political prominence at the expense of the Southern population and left a time bomb with the fuse burning.

Prior to independence, and afterwards, many threats of a Northern secession were made by the Northern politicians because they did not want to be part of Nigeria. But in reality these Northern political kangaroos called leaders did not want to lose the benefit of Southern oil and industries. Nigeria was supposed to get its independence before the Gold Coast (now Ghana) did in 1957 but, because Northerners were not prepared to be part of the new country, Nigeria lost many years in debate and compromise until the North agreed to be part of it. It was only in 1960 that independence came.

But the new Nigerian constitutional framework did not resolve everything, it being clear that Nigeria was sitting on a time bomb that would explode and cause real dangerous harm to all Nigerians.

The constitution did not change the relative cultural backwardness of the North compared to the South. What the Northern leaders wanted

was a guarantee that they would retain their dominant political position after independence. If not, they would pull out and form an “Arewa Republic” for the interest of the Fulani-Hausa. British imperialists taught that the North were fools to be used, and stole the resources from the South. But, the North got their way in political domination in Nigeria.

Military rule

In 1966, a group of young officers assassinated the Northern leader Bello, the federal Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa and the Western leader Akintola who had become discredited in the eyes of the population. The coup leader, Major Kaduna Chukwuma Nzeogwu (now dead) broadcast the following reasons for the coup on radio:

“Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office as Ministers and VIP’s of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles”.

In the North, jubilant masses ransacked the governor’s palace and cheered the coup leader, despite his Igbo origin.

The coup did not succeed. In Lagos, General Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi Ironsi had restored peace and order in the name of the old government with British backing. He placed himself as the first army general at the head of the federation and declared Nigeria under military rule.

Despite opposition from Northern politicians, General Ironsi announced his “Unification Decree” which although it changed little but names – regions became provinces, the federation became a Republic – caused a series of the most violent massacres of Southerners yet seen in the North. “Armed thugs moved across the space between the city walls of Kano and the Sabon Garis where the Easterners lived, broke into the ghetto and started burning, raping, looting and killing as many men, women and children from the

East as the could lay their hands on”. It is without doubt that these massacres were deliberately planned by Northern politicians using their own armed gangs to whip up local feelings against the Igbos and other Southerners.

General Ironsi then went on a tour to Ibadan, Western region, to promote the “One Nigeria” ideal.



While he was on this tour another coup was staged, by Northern army officers. General Ironsi and two of his commanding officers were stripped, beaten, tortured and then shot. With taking over command, the coup leader, led by a young British trained officer, General Gowon, issued instructions for Igbos in the army – many of them formed the majority of the technical corps – to be rounded up and imprisoned. And Gowon declared himself the supreme commander of the Nigerian armed forces. During

September and October 1966, three months after Gowon’s takeover a large scale massacre of Southerners was reported again from the Northern region.

The British High Commission in Lagos after meeting with the coup leaders came out in their full support – including their demand for recognition of the dominance of the North in any political process. All the regions except the South Eastern region – where the former governor, colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, remained in command with his troops and refused to recognize the new dictatorship. This Ojukwu, son of a millionaire who had been knighted by the British, had been educated in Oxford University and Sandhurst college, saw the atrocities of Gowon and decided to lead the South-East to secession and war.

Gowon taught that British imperialism liked him and that was why they would support him to fight a war against Ojukwu. But he failed to understand that Britain and America were only interested in stealing Nigerian oil.

The Biafra War

On 30 May 1967, Colonel Ojukwu proclaimed the independent Republic of Biafra. Biafra fought a war against Britain, the United States of America, the Nigerian federal army and the River State militia. The actual fighting lasted for 24 months and took the form of an initial conquest of towns and a whole region to the west of Biafra by the Biafran Army and then the slow re-conquest of this region and Biafra itself, town by town, with the Nigerian Federal Army with its imperialist backers pushing the Biafran troops further back.

What the Nigeria and Biafra civil war did achieve was hatred, tribalism, nepotism, marginalization, ethnic inquisition, killings of 2 million innocent Nigerians who did not know anything about politics nor the oil in their region by Gowon and his capitalists backers, i.e. Britain and US. It also resulted in the reinforce-

ment of the Gowon regime as the military dictatorship was to remain in power for a further six years before being kicked out of power by another brutal military dictator Major General Murtala Mohammed in 1976.

Rivalries for Oil

The BBC journalist Frederick Forsyth, who reported from Biafra during the war, later highlighted a major factor precipitating the war:

“It has been postulated that if the Biafrans had had their way as a republic of semi-desert and was allowed to separate from Nigeria, there would have cries of ‘Good Riddance’ in their ears. One foreign businessman said that ‘it’s an oil war’ and felt obliged to say no more.”

Biafra was not a semi-desert, beneath it lies an ocean oil. Approximately one tenth of this field lies in neighbouring Cameroon, three tenths in Nigeria. The remaining six tenths lies under Biafra.

Gowon and his ruling bandits and Ojukwu’s Eastern interest group had attempted to make an agreement over the terms of their relationship with the British and US oil companies in New York in June 1967. Ojukwu claimed the right to the royalties paid in Lagos by Shell/BP. Up until June 1967, £7 million due to Nigeria in oil royalties had not yet been paid. It was discussed that Biafra should receive 57.7 percent of the royalties and the rest be put aside until there was a political settlement. Gowon vehemently refused to pay and threatened to extend the anti-Biafra blockade to the Bonny Island oil terminal. Without respecting the agreement, Gowon’s troops launched their attack and captured the terminal at Port Bonny.

As soon as the Nigerian army took the oil terminal, the British and US oil companies arrived behind them building new oil installations as fast as they could while war was still raging a few kilometres away.

The Gowon regime represented by proxy the interests of Britain, the US and Muslim countries including Egypt whose pilots flew the Ilyushin jets provided by the USSR. The important imperialist interests at work were those of the oil companies owned by the British, Americans and French and backed by their respective governments in the way they lined up for and against Biafra.

Shell/BP was the biggest exploiter of Nigerian oil. This Anglo-Dutch consortium held the major concessions for oil in both the Biafran and Niger delta region where oil had more recently begun to be pumped. When

Biafra was blockaded all oil ceased to flow – because the oil from outside of Biafra, from the Niger Delta’ was conveyed to Port Harcourt, now in Biafra, via a large pipeline. The US companies were also exploiting Nigerian oil but their interests were mainly in the Niger Delta region.

As to France, since all oil concessions in the Biafran region were not yet taken by super imperialists, they had been planning to expand their own concession already operating in Biafra in the name of the state-owned company ELF. Because of that they were in direct rivalry with Shell/BP and hope to gain something at their expense.

The President of France, General Charles De Gaulle kept his options open. Though he never formally recognized Biafra, he did support Biafra’s “right to self-determination” and gave aid through France’s colonized states like Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Gabon. Biafra also got support from South Africa, and Israel.

In 1970, after the genocide, a series of peace talks were held and a settlement was reached and Gowon made his famous speech that there were no victors, no vanquished in this war. Of course, this was true. Both sides had suffered severe losses and part of the country had been devastated. But there was one victor not only in Biafraland but, also in the whole world. Imperialism had established a number of new oil terminals and ensured the stability of its oil profits thanks to Gowon.

The “unity” of Nigeria in reality disappeared because of the mistrust built up during the war and the atrocities perpetrated against Biafrans by Gowon and his imperialist backers.

Every war fought in the world is at the advantage of capitalism. The Nigerian-Biafran war, Rwandan genocide, Liberia war, Sierra Leone war, Democratic Republic of Congo war, Ivory Coast war, Uganda war, Eritrea-Ethiopia war, Darfur conflict, Angola war, Iraqi war, Palestinian-Israeli war, Afghanistan war, India-Pakistan war, Somali war, Zimbabwe conflict, Senegal-Cassamace war, Guinea-Bissau war, Chechnya-Russia war. All wars to the advantage of capitalism. Beware and be warned.

Do not say that you did not know or hear about socialism and what we do. The choice is yours. Enough is enough - we must work together and join hands and cast capitalism and imperialism to burn in the abyss of everlasting fire.

CEBILOAN HYACINT

Las Vegas and the environment



In the US the so-called “richest country in the world”, millions are so desperate for more money (and/or are bored to tears with their lives) that gambling is a major industry. Las Vegas in Nevada grew up to supply this demand. Now no one in their senses - if human considerations were the only issue - would think of siting a city in the Mojave Desert, 22,000 square miles of desolation in the south of California and Nevada, and the west of Arizona and Utah. Much of it is elevated: its highest peak is 11,918 feet, but it also descends to 282 feet below sea level, in Death Valley, where temperatures range from below freezing on winter nights, to 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54 centigrade) on summer days. The Mojave Desert has less than ten inches of rain per year. But this is where get-rich-quick entrepreneurs - and they did get rich quick - built Las Vegas. (And according to some accounts, much of the money came from the Mafia.)

With monumental disregard for the environment, they built enormous casinos and hotels and entertainment palaces all dedicated to a single end - sucking in many thousands of hopefuls from all over the US (and abroad), and encouraging them to lose their money twenty-four hours a day. The whole place is ablaze with lights; great fountains shoot into the sky; in the “Venice” complex, gondolas travel down wide canals; lawns are supplied by endless irrigation. It now houses 1,900,000 people, and of course water has to be pumped in, 90 percent of it from Lake Mead, a man-made reservoir on the Colorado River thirty miles away. (Several small communities were drowned when the lake

was flooded.) In February this year the reservoir stood at only 50 percent of capacity. University of California researchers have concluded that if present climatic trends continue, Lake Mead will be empty in 2021.

However, building in Las Vegas is going ahead at frantic speed to make the city still bigger, the profits still fatter, and the water problem still greater. Despite the current worsening economic conditions, a number of prestige projects - hotels, casinos, plazas, apartment blocks - are going ahead so fast that a *Times* reporter (8 April) said there were fears that "all this financial pressure is resulting in sloppy construction practice. Over recent months nine workers have died in eight accidents at various sites: one man was cut in half when a counterweight" for a lift fell on him. (There would no doubt have been an outcry if this had happened to an owner instead of to a worker.) But beside all that, another gigantic project is going forward called "the City Centre". The journalist said a local told him it was "a city-within-a-city. They say it's gonna cost more than \$8 billion: the most expensive private land development in American history. Only in Las Vegas, huh?"

Well, just before you put all this down to the boneheaded Americans, rather than to boneheaded capitalism, here's another item in the very same paper - this time from Spain. Catalonia (the north-east part, round Barcelona) and Valencia, just south of it, including the Mediterranean coast down to Alicante, have had less rain than at any time since 1912. Farmers fear for their crops; "water reserves there are at 19 percent of capacity - they must be shut down when they reach 15 percent because there is too much sediment near the bottom"; and Catalonia is considering bringing in water from elsewhere by boat or train. It is also thinking of a new desalination plant (to take the salt out of seawater), but it seems that such plants produce a lot of carbon dioxide, held responsible for feeding global warming, so that would make things worse in the long run. Catalonia wanted to take more water from the River Segre; but Aragon, on the other side of the river, refuses to let it. "Catalonia accuses its neighbour of hoarding water for unsustainable developments, such as a 'European Las Vegas' with seventy hotels, five theme parks and several golf courses planned for a desert region." Only in capitalism, huh?

ALWYN EDGAR

Relearning history

Don't believe what you were taught in school or hear from the media about benevolent Britain. We look at some books that give the other side of the story.

For those caught in their long-held conviction of the benevolence of British history, of the goodwill and generosity extended by successive governments to subjects of colonial conquest around the world; for those whose history books told stories of great white men's great adventures into darkest Africa, of fantastic voyages to unknown shores lasting years and necessitating the loss of many lives, of returning heroes laden with treasure and tales of faraway cornucopias; for those who retain romantic visions of countries conquered and occupied for reasons of honest trade and incidentally to improve the lot of indigenous populations, to bring them civilisation and democracy; for those who considered the invasion of Iraq an aberration, an atypical intervention, something outside the realms of normal government procedure, blatant lies deliberately told to the populace as a cover-up for an illegal act; for those who cling to the fallacy of their leaders being beyond reproach because it's not "British" to collude behind the scenes or to manipulate events. They always play the game by the rules and British justice is known to be above reproach. After all, didn't we invent cricket?

For all those - it's time to re-learn history, this time the real history, to have the scales removed from the eyes, to be confronted with the hard evidence, undeniable facts revealed from previously secret documents painstakingly investigated and compiled by those who seek the truth for humanity's sake. This time to have the courage to question one's enduring beliefs in the light of authentic revelations. This time to see through the obfuscation and downright lies that have been the staple diet fed to us by our elected representatives, generation after generation, with the purpose of pursuing their own secret agenda, extending personal interests and cementing alliances with powerful allies often with complete disregard for international law, agreements and that detail of small importance, public opinion.

The following are a sample from investigative journalists and historians known as tenacious and imperturbable individuals resolutely determined to get the truth out into the public domain.

Birth of the corporation

The history of the East India Company, a forerunner of the modern shareholder/corporate set-up is a story of 'executive malpractice, stock market excess and human oppression.' Nick Robins says in *The Corporation that Changed the World* that he set out to address the issue of the company's social record as a corporation, something which he believes no other history of The Company does. Compared with today's "corporate leviathans" the East India Company "outstripped Walmart in terms of market power, Enron for corruption and Union Carbide for human devastation." From its origin in 1600 as an aggressive spice trader, using guile, bribery, mercenary armies, piracy and plunder it moved on to take control of Bengal and Bengal's cotton fabric industry. Robert Clive (of India) decimated the weaving industry and, as an eerie precursor to current day India's farmers' suicides as a result of impoverishment by transnationals, weavers amputated their own thumbs rather than be forced to spin thread for less than starvation wages.

Later came Warren Hastings, responsible for pushing opium into China (illegally), causing the later "Opium Wars" and eventually forcing Chinese ports to open to trade. Despite the British government's initial protests at the opium trade they were soon persuaded by the company's Governor General in India that the revenue was growing too quickly to be abandoned. Nick Robins shows only too well that "a peculiar amnesia continues to hang over the role that corporations such as the East India Company had in the creation of the modern world."

Public statements; Private record

Covert military action, support of

military dictators, direct and indirect responsibility for millions of deaths around the world since the end of World War Two, support for various regimes that would surprise a lot of the British public. From previously secret files, now released into the public domain (even if still partially censored) Mark Curtis, in *Unpeople. Britains Secret Human Rights Abuses* reveals that “British ministers’ lying to the public is systematic and normal”, that “the culture of lying to and misleading the electorate is deeply embedded in British policy making”, that “the policy makers are usually frank about their real goals in the secret record” and that “humanitarian concerns do not figure at all in the rationale behind British foreign policy.”

A strategy beyond propaganda, ‘perception control’ (thought control to you and me) “is designed to counter the major threat to British foreign policy: the public.” How many in Britain know – that British forces fought in Vietnam? And that in breach of the Geneva Accords also supplied arms to the US for use in Vietnam? About Britain’s support for Idi Amin? Support for Pinochet? About the “dirty war” in North Yemen in the 1960s where the British engaged with the wrong side for purely political reasons?

With enormous discrepancies between public statements and private files in both Labour and Conservative terms of office it is shown quite clearly that successive governments have nothing but contempt for their electorate. Curtis recommends the reader to undergo “a personal transformation, decolonising the mind of accepted truths and received wisdom.”

Media and government united in deceit

The role of the media, controlled by monopolies of multinational companies, requires ever more scrutiny; however, much of the public still tends to take their pronouncements at face value. Within the world of the media, integrity and the search for the truth is the main motivator of only a minority. It is interesting how mud tends to stick though, even when thrown at the innocent. People remember the breaking of a story but are often more unsure or forgetful about the outcome. The “no smoke without fire” syndrome. Take, for instance, the Scargill affair in 1990 when Maxwell’s *Mirror* launched an all-out attack on Arthur Scargill. According to Seumas Milne (at the time a journalist with the *Guardian*

and author of a subsequent book *The Secret War Against the Miners*), Arthur Scargill and “Scargillism” were and had been “the enemy within” to Maxwell’s media empire, the “modernising” Labour Party leadership (Kinnock et al), the Conservative government and Thatcher in particular (she had voiced this comparison of the miners with the Argentinian junta that had invaded the Falklands two years earlier) and to British security and intelligence agencies. The two year smear campaign against Scargill came close to the end of two decades of determined effort by the Tory party “and Margaret Thatcher above all – to avenge absolutely and unequivocally their double humiliation at the hands of the miners in the historic strikes of 1972 and 1974.” A vendetta against the miners which was aimed at destroying the NUM and, as collateral damage if necessary, the British coal industry too. Maxwell’s *Daily Mirror* smear campaign, Milne asserts, would never have taken off had it not been for “the monopoly ownership grip of multinational companies on great swathes of the media” and too many compliant journalists happy to report what they knew to be fabrication as fact. It was the perfect distraction of public attention from Scargill’s warnings of the government’s intention to bring down the coal industry. The campaign worked as planned except that ultimately Scargill was acquitted of all and any crimes and the corrupt were only found to be amongst his accusers. Ironic, but another result for a government against its people.

The Chagos Islands (inc. Diego Garcia)

A tiny archipelago, home to some 2000 people living in “conditions most tranquil and benign” (1950s Colonial Office film), a group of islands so small as not to warrant a place on a page of the 2002 Peters World Atlas. It can only be found like fly droppings inside the back cover. But, starting with Harold Wilson’s, seven successive governments have clung together around a huge lie – a lie they fabricated and used against the islands’ inhabitants since they started removing them from those islands in 1968 – that they were merely transient workers. In fact they were first taken there as slaves by the French in the eighteenth century and became British in 1815 after Napoleon’s defeat. Now the islands are home to around 4000 US troops plus all their support personnel and paraphernalia, swimming pools, golf course, two of the longest military runways in the

world (used for bombing Afghanistan and Iraq) and suspicions that captives are being “rendered” there for “serious interrogation.” The US are seeking to extend their current lease, which expires in 2016, for another ten years at least, for islands which are deemed too risky (with spurious claims about climate, water shortages etc.) for the original British inhabitants to return to, even though there have been two High Court rulings allowing them to do so. (See *Freedom Next Time* by John Pilger).

To compare and contrast the forced removal of these British citizens (compensation of about £1,000 GBP per person) with Britain’s resistance to the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands (also with a population of about 2,000) in 1982 at a cost of £2 billion pounds is poetic irony; an order-in-council agreed by the Queen in 2004 to ban the islanders from ever returning home for one population, for the other a Christmas broadcast by Tony Blair in 2006 telling them, “It is your right to determine your future.”

Why must these atrocities be kept secret from the public? Simply because if too many of us get too angry for a sustained period and decide collectively to get active it’s all over for them. Justice and morality; values we have been tricked into believing are at the core of the leadership of our society, propaganda of the most despicable kind used against the very people they are mandated to represent. *They* may be immoral and pervert justice but that doesn’t negate *our* individual humanity and desire for honesty. It may even strengthen our resolve in the search for the truth. It reveals the rottenness of the establishment, not of the people. We, the people, can decide to reject that establishment and work together towards a truly representative democracy.

What has to be remembered and given serious consideration is this; if we do nothing after being party to such a revelation in a book, credible newspaper account or reliable TV documentary the atrocity, injustice, inhumanity, chauvinism or deceit will still be there and will continue to affect those afflicted by it and the lie will still be a lie and we will still be the recipients of the lie. When these shameless lies are put firmly into the public domain it is the public’s responsibility to guard against collective amnesia, to constantly remind ourselves and each other of the accumulation of crimes committed in our name.

JANET SURMAN

OBITUARIES

Ron Cook

Members were saddened to hear of the death of Ron Cook, of Birmingham branch, at the beginning of May. He was born in 1927 and joined the Party in 1948 while he was a student at Ruskin College from where he won entry to Cambridge University. At the end of the war he had been a teenage sailor on the battleship HMS *Illustrious*. He worked as a teacher and later as a tutor for the Open University.

He was an active member both at local and national level, a regular delegate to Conference until recent years. He had his own viewpoint on a number of issues. A keen student of Marxian economics, —and the writings of Paul Mattick in particular—he argued that crises under capitalism tended to get worse and worse. He was also impressed by Herbert Marcuse's 1955 work *Eros and Civilization* and was inclined to be take on board more of Freud's theories than most members. In 2001 he published a book *Yes Utopia! We have the Technology* in which he presented the case against capitalism and for the sort of society he would like to see established, (including some of his personal preferences, such as that people in socialism would live in something akin to hotels).

Besides being a speaker and debater for the Party, he wrote for the *Socialist Standard* (sometimes under the pseudonym of S. Stafford) and drafted pamphlets including the latest edition of *Socialist Principles Explained*. In 1994 he represented the Party in the elections to the European Parliament, standing in the Birmingham East constituency. Until last year he organised the annual Party summer school at Fircroft College in Birmingham. Members were expecting to meet him there this year but his friendly and encouraging presence is going to be missed from now on. A party representative spoke at his non-religious, humanist funeral where John Lennon's song *Imagine* was played.

Our condolences go to his wife and family.

Robert Russell

Robert Russell joined the Socialist Party during the second world war. He was born in 1925 and came from a deprived area of Glasgow called Anderson but despite an impoverished background he

managed to obtain a bursary grant and attended the fee-paying Allan Glen's school. He was an extremely intelligent man and after some time working in the shipping trade he qualified as a Chartered Accountant.

Bobby, as he was known to his friends was to become something of a Marxist scholar inside the Glasgow branch of the SPGB. He was particularly adept at conveying this knowledge to younger members of the branch. I for one am grateful for the time he took encouraging me to read the Marxist classics and for his arguments and discussion.

He was a very active branch member and during his membership he must have held about every post in the branch. As a regular branch attender he could always be relied upon to make worthwhile contributions to the branch's activities. He was a modest sort of man and could often be self-depreciatory about his abilities as a speaker.

Despite this he was a regular indoor speaker and an excellent tutor at many of Glasgow branch's study classes. During the sixties when Glasgow branch conducted many electoral campaigns he stood as a candidate for the SPGB at local elections.

Bobby was an extremely kind and generous person and when he married later on in his life he was especially kind to his new adopted family. When he retired from work he was the Managing Director of a Glasgow Iron Works and used his pension with great generosity towards his family. He was especially good at dealing with children as many of the young in his family can attest to.

Bobby was in many ways the embodiment of what is called a "self-educated" man. He took a lively interest in politics, science and language, but what he will be remembered for by his Glasgow comrades was his friendliness and



Meetings

Swansea

Monday 9 June, 7.30 pm

IMMIGRATION: CAN IT CARRY ON?
Unitarian Church, High Street.

London

Saturday 14 June 11am to 5pm

SOCIALIST PARTY OPEN DAY

Book, pamphlet and back numbers sale, exhibition of historical documents, free socialist literature, questions and answers on socialism. Free light buffet and refreshments
Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St., SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North)

Chiswick

Tuesday 17 June, 8pm

CLIMATE CHANGE

Open discussion

Committee Room, Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W. 4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Manchester

Monday 23 June, 8.30pm

CAPITALISM VERSUS NATURE

Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre.

Summer School

Friday 18 July to Sunday 20 July

RELIGION

Our weekend of talks and discussion will explore socialist views on religion and its impact on society. How does faith relate to other aspects of capitalism, such as relations between countries or between communities? How does a religious outlook differ from a socialist or humanist one?

The venue for Summer School is Fircroft College, which offers excellent facilities within easy reach of Birmingham city centre.

Full attendance (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) costs £120 per person, or £60 to those on low incomes. Send a £10 deposit (cheques made payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. Enquiries to Mike at spgb-school@yahoo.co.uk.

from page 12

the firmness of our defences against knowing just how merciless it really is. How could it be otherwise, when we have created it and lived in it for so long? This view has the virtue of explaining why we stubbornly hold onto this exhausting, murderous society of rich and poor, user and used; but I can see how it might appear to be a pessimistic outlook.

However, I don't think it is. It seems to me that that hope lies in a paradox here; paradoxically it is in admitting our slavery that our freedom lies.

Our difficulty is in realising that,

no matter how seductive the consumer society is, we are still wage slaves, and our lives are lived, as Fromm says, 'for purposes outside ourselves'. And it seems to me that if enough of us were to face up to that seemingly unbearable fact, and start to take back our capacities and set about using them, then that could be the beginning of the end for capitalism. It could also be the beginning of a completely new system, where our common purpose is the fullest development of every single person in the world.

PETER RIGG

THE LIBERAL REVIVAL



The managers of the Tory and Labour Parties, during the past year, have had to endure a nagging worry of a kind they both thought had gone for ever, the revival of the Liberal vote. To make it worse they see that it has happened not because voters particularly like the Liberals, but because the voters in increasing numbers have had a lively urge to register their dislike of Labour and Tory.

The suffering Labour and Tory leaders, as if by agreement, jeered at the Liberals for having no policy, until Lord Rea, Liberal Leader in the House of Lords, undertook to tell the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* (18th March, 1958) what that policy is.

He did not make a very good job of it for, like the spokesman of the two big rival parties, he had the delicate task of steering between the fault of saying too little

to please anyone and the risk of saying too much and scaring off some potential voters. In this country, with wage and salary earners making up nine-tenths of the electorate, competition for their votes is a tricky business and the three parties have given much thought to working out the best tactics. What has evolved is the situation in which the Tory, Liberal and Labour parties each has a list of vague general principles, and the three lists are almost identical, except for small differences of emphasis. Thus they all say they are working for Peace, Disarmament, low prices, high wages, and making everybody happy, and all declare themselves to be not a class party, but a party of the nation.

(From editorial, *Socialist Standard*, June 1958)

Socialist Ramble

A RAMBLE along the Green Chain Walk in South-East London, approx 6 miles. Sunday **8 June**, meet Falconwood station 11am.

This is open to members, supporters, non-members, etc. - anyone interested in finding out about socialism and the Socialist Party in a relaxed informal setting. We shall stop at a pub for lunch.

If you would like to know more about the route in advance, contact Richard Botterill on **01582-764929**. On the day, phone Vincent Otter's mobile **07905-791638**.



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Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Timer for a change?

“There is nothing to hope for from a clutch of privileged Tories”

When they woke up on 2 May, did the electorate realise what they had done with their votes on the day before? Were they alert to the fact that they had encouraged David Cameron’s party to an excited optimism that, after all those agonised years of Blair’s Britain, they had been brought to the threshold of again being accepted as The Natural Party Of Government? (The capital letters are used in acknowledgement of how vital such concepts are to the well-being of the Conservative mind). The experience of Labour government, particularly since their last election victory in 2005, went a long way to persuade many of their previous supporters that, apart from anything else, it was time for a change even if the only other choice was a Conservative government. Gordon Brown has not helped his party by being such a tormented gift to the slick operators of the Tory propaganda machine. So it came to pass that people whose daily life is continually threatened with being little short of a wretched struggle to balance their income against what they need to get by were narcotised into opting to be ruled by a government led by an Old Etonian whose great achievement has been to re-fashion his party’s image by blanketing its disreputable past.

History

Panic-stricken Labour MPs, as they contemplate an approaching electoral massacre, may take some misguided comfort from their history. In the 1968 local elections, when the standing of the Wilson government was at rock-bottom after the devaluation climb-down and the imposition of “necessary austerity measures” (for which read “wage cutting” and “reduction in working class living standards”) they managed only a 30 per cent share of the vote – a little more than their 26 per cent this year. However they staged something of a recovery so that when Wilson called the 1970 general election they were the pollsters’ favourite. The snag, however, was that they still could not avoid defeat by Ted Heath’s Conservatives. This might have taught their successors something about the volatility of voting intentions which are not based on an understanding of capitalism and its destructive machinations. But in the 2005 general election, when Labour’s majority was slashed from 161 to 67, the response of MPs was predictably chaotic, as they queued up to lay the blame at the door of their then leader. “You can’t beat about the bush” said one of them “Blair was a negative factor on the doorstep, time and time again”. Another plunged hastily (too much so, in view of recent events but in any case he has announced that he will not be standing again and the local Labour Party have selected his successor) into: “It would be nice to see Brown crowned as early as the next party conference”. In a moving display of grief at losing her seat, a former Blair Babe speedily adapted her alleged principles and applied to join the Conservative Party. We are witnessing a similar reaction, as the promised post-Blair revival fails to materialise and the Tory threat gets ever more menacing. Brown’s response was as exhausted and as unhelpful as ever:

“Of course we can recover from this position...by sorting out the immediate problem of the economy and showing people we can come through, as we have in the past...by showing people that we have the vision of the future that will carry this country...into its next phase.”

Once again, Labour have no more to offer by way of explaining their defeat than to blame the shortcomings of their leader. Only hours after the results had been declared on May 2, the calls for Brown to go began, with a desperate search for an acceptable alternative. Should it be ex-postman Alan Johnson? Cadaverous John Hutton? Already discredited Jack Straw? Head Prefect David Miliband? Risibly callow James Purnell? There is no cause to believe that any of these would, in the face of capitalism’s anarchy, succeed where Blair and Brown failed. And while Labour commences yet another civil war the Tories have time to wallow in their victory and plan

the campaign to take the greater prize whenever the government dares to take their chance in another general election.

London

In this it could not have turned out better for the Tories than for Boris Johnson to be elected Mayor of London, even if they had to bring in some expensive manipulators to persuade this irritatingly professional buffoon to look a little more credible as someone to be trusted to manage a city with a budget of £12 billion and to throttle off his more oafishly empty attempts at humour. There will now be a period during which Johnson’s mayoralty is taken as a measure of the likely success or failure of a Cameron government. It is not only on his avowed intention to replace the lumbering bendy buses with Routemasters with conductors and to ban alcohol on public transport that Johnson will be judged. He has also promised that all Londoners will actually be able to live in homes which they can afford (while accepting that what he can afford is rather better than anything available to most Londoners). There will be special attention given to the problem of youth crime and particularly to the fearful procession of youngsters being murdered in the capital. To this end Johnson has appointed as his Deputy Mayor an admirer of his – Ray Lewis, who was once governor of a Young Offenders Institution and who now runs something gloriously called a Young Leaders Academy in London. Lewis advises the parents of the boys attending his Academy that they should remove the TV from their bedroom and stop any listening to “dirty music”. His boys are taught to march and to salute: “When we go out, they walk in line, they walk in time, they catch the eye”.

Johnson’s approval of the “boot camp” style of dealing with young delinquents conveniently overlooks his history of (suspiciously unrecorded) offences. He did not report to the police an approach from his Old Etonian friend Darius Guppy, asking him to arrange to have a journalist beaten up who was investigating Guppy’s record as a fraudster too closely. During his time at Oxford Johnson (with Cameron and Shadow Chancellor George Osborne) was a member of the Bullingdon Club which, although it claimed to be a sporting and dining club, devoted itself to serious vandalism. One of their achievements was to hire a string band to play at a garden party and then to destroy all the instruments, including a Stradivarius. In a recent outing involving Johnson they wasted a beautiful cellar in a 15th Century Oxfordshire pub. The pub owner called the police – which the club members dismissed as due to his lacking “a sense of humour” – and Johnson remembered their arrest:

“The party ended with a number of us crawling on all fours through the hedges of the botanical gardens and trying to escape police dogs. And once we were in the police cells we became pathetic namby-pambies.”

To the fury of the pub owner, the police did nothing more than impose a few on the spot penalties – rather different to how they would have reacted if the damage had been caused by youngsters from Oxford’s Blackbird Leys estate. But the Bullingdon is rather more exclusive – to begin with the traditional dining suit costs three thousand pounds and there is a need for a rich relative to smooth things over and avoid calling the police by paying generously for the damage. This is the background of the man elected by the people to rule the heaving, tempestuous city of London.

So is it time for a change? Ten years of Labour rule have shown that party quite unable to prevent, or even interfere with, the crises and malfunctions of capitalism. There is nothing more to hope for from a clutch of privileged Tories. But rather than dither in a futile panic between one bunch of hopeless careerists and another, why not use the vote properly and effectively and opt for a real alternative?

IVAN



Voice from the Back

MORE PROFIT MEANS MORE HUNGER

"This year global production of biofuels will consume almost 100 million tons of grain – grain that could have been used to feed the starving. According to the UN, it takes 232kg of corn to fill a 50-litre car tank with ethanol – enough to feed a child for a year. The UN last week predicted 'massacres' unless the biofuel policy is halted. Jean Ziegler, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food, said biofuels were 'a crime against humanity', and called for a five-year moratorium." (*Independent*, 16 April) The UN can issue all sorts of pious resolutions, but if it is more profitable to produce bio-fuels than food, then that is what capitalism will do.

THE NAME IS BOND - CAPITALIST BOND

Capitalism pervades everything in modern society. If you buy a football shirt it will advertise a beer or a soft drink. Formula 1 car racing would be impossible if advertising logos didn't cover every space on the cars and the drivers. It is in the entertainment business though that this pervasive influence is growing at an astonishing speed. "The name is Bond, James Bond. And he likes his Martinis shaken, not stirred. That is, as long as they are Smirnoff. Product placement is playing an increasingly important role in Hollywood blockbusters. The last Bond film bore a string of high-end sponsors, such as Omega, Sony, Ford and Sony Ericsson. Television shows have also lured advertisers, often preferring product placement or sponsorship over traditional advertising. .. The expectation is that television



Daniel Craig enjoying a quantity of solitude

advertising will become more about the 30-minute sponsored advertisement than the 30-second shot." (*Times*, 21 April)

DIGNITY? NO WAY

"Eight out of 10 nurses say they have left work distressed because they have been unable to treat patients with the dignity they deserve, a poll suggests. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) poll of more than 2,000 UK nurses cited washing and privacy as key issues." (*BBC News*, 27 April) The NHS is provided for members of the working class. They are the class that produce all the wealth of the world but being poor can ill afford the best of housing, food or even medical care. Dignity for the only worthwhile class in capitalist society is an impossibility.

THE KILLER SYSTEM

Supporters of capitalism claim that it is the most efficient way to run society, but that is a claim that rings hollow to millions of hungry people today, as even one of capitalism's stoutest supporters is forced to admit. "Giant agribusinesses are enjoying soaring earnings and profits out of the world food crisis which is driving millions of people towards starvation, *The Independent on Sunday* can reveal. And speculation is helping to drive the prices of basic foodstuffs out of the reach of the hungry." (4 May)

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

"In the semi-arid forests of the Chaco region of Paraguay, where summer temperatures top 40C (104F), the continent's last uncontacted Indians outside of the Amazon basin are on the run, their traditional forest home increasingly encroached upon by ranchers. ... These formerly nomadic tribes people struggle to maintain a

semblance of their traditional way of life in camps on the edge of the agricultural colonies that invaded their territory." (*Times*, 6 May) This process called by Karl Marx the so-called primitive accumulation of capital was dealt with him in his *Das Kapital* (1867) mirrors what had



The Amazonian rainforest, or what's left of it

happened in Europe at the beginning of capitalism. "In actual history it is notorious that conquest, murder, briefly force, play the great part ...As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic." A view echoed by one of the Indians in the *Times*: - "The whites are violent. They just want land. We are afraid of them, they are very aggressive."

BUSINESS AS USUAL

"Burma is still exporting rice even as it tries to curb the influx of international donations of food bound for the starving survivors of the cyclone that killed up to 116,000 people. Sacks of rice destined for Bangladesh were being loaded on to a ship at the Thilawa container port at the mouth of the Yangon River at the end of last week, even though Burma's 'rice bowl' region was devastated by the deadly storm a week ago. The Burmese regime, which has a monopoly on the country's rice exports, said it planned to meet all its contractual commitments" (*Observer*, 11 May). Inside capitalism business is business, and the fact that millions of Burmese risk death by starvation is of no concern. That is how capitalism operates. During the Irish potato famines foodstuffs were still being exported from Ireland.

Free Lunch

by Rigg

