

# socialist standard



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

## Mayfair? Not fair!



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#### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 5 December** 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](mailto: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

### Copenhagen: another predictable failure

THE MOST recent IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) findings say that rich, industrial countries must cut emissions from 1990 levels by 25-40 percent by 2020 if the world is to have a fair chance of avoiding dangerous climate change.

In July the G-8 leaders agreed to limit the global temperature rise to 2 degrees C above the pre-industrial level at which human civilisation developed. Pre-Copenhagen the EU has pledged 20 percent cuts by 2020, but will increase this to 30 percent if others – like the US – do likewise. Japan has pledged 25 percent reductions by 2020 if others will do the same. Chinese president Hu pledged to cut emissions 'by a notable margin' by 2020. The US has given no assurances but a bill Obama has said he supports (the Waxman-Markey bill) would give less than 5 percent reductions by 2020.

Also in July, the findings of a newly completed study by WBGU (a German acronym) – the chairman of which, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, is chief climate adviser to the German government – were given for the first time to an invitation-only conference in the Santa Fe Institute, New Mexico. The study has since been published. This WBGU study says the US must stop all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2020; Germany, Italy and other industrial nations by 2025-30 and China by 2035, with the whole world needing to be carbon-emissions-free by 2050. The study would allow the big polluters to delay

their slowdown by buying emissions rights from developing countries, enabling possible extension times of around a decade for some. A fundamental principle of the study is the 'per capita principle', meaning that the right to emit greenhouse gases is shared equally by all people on Earth. Applied to a world population of seven billion, each person on earth would have a quota of 2.7 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, whereas currently US citizens emit 20 tons per capita.

Schellnhuber claims that meeting these criteria will give humanity a two-in-three chance of staying within that 2 degrees C limit – although there is no guarantee. To increase the odds in favour carbon emissions would have to end sooner; delaying another decade or so before halting all emissions would reduce the odds to fifty-fifty.

Odds are that whatever is promoted at Copenhagen there will be much jockeying and positioning, many fine words and ifs and buts by self-important world leaders and another decade down the ever-more polluted and climate change-affected road we'll look back and see another abject failure – just like Rio, Kyoto, Johannesburg, etc. ad infinitum. What more can we expect from a system which makes a habit of fouling its own and everybody else's backyard as long as it's making money by blind pursuit of growth? Come 2020 the King Canutes of capitalism will still be trying to hold back the waves with empty gestures.

# FREE

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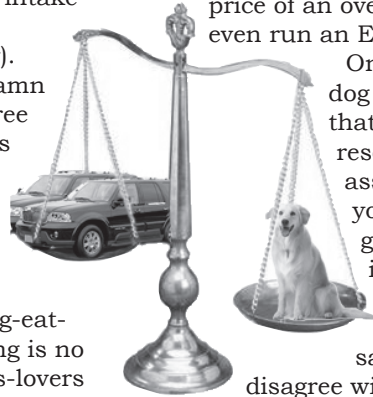
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## Calorie counts and pet scans

Hail the season of good capitalist cheer which will soon be upon you, while you're on holiday from your lack of job and looking forward to the Christmas repossession and credit collection letters. Since you're not likely to be merry and you can't afford to buy presents or drink, let Pathfinders at least assure you that you can eat crap food because the scientists have got all their calorie intake levels wrong by about 16 per cent ('Rethink for calorie eating levels', *BBC Online*, 14 November).

But please stop feeding the leftovers to the damn dog, who's probably clinically obese. One in three household pets in the UK, about 7m animals, is overweight ([http://www.vetpulse.tv/blog/385\\_pfma-confirms-extent-of-obesity-epidemic-in-british-pets](http://www.vetpulse.tv/blog/385_pfma-confirms-extent-of-obesity-epidemic-in-british-pets)) while in USA it's 50 per cent (<http://www.petobesityprevention.com/facts.htm>).

The fact that pooch has got a paunch in a dog-eat-dog world where 750m people eat nearly nothing is no surprise to socialists, however Fido and Tiddles-lovers



in the top 10 cat and dog-owning countries might be surprised to learn that it takes six and a half times the land area of New Zealand to provide the petfood. And in a delicious knife-twist to any self-righteous organic dog-owning vegan climate-protestors at Copenhagen this month, it turns out that for the eco-pawprint of an average sized dog you could instead drive not one but two SUVs 10,000 kilometres over a year (*New Scientist*, 24 October and *Guardian*, 13 November). In fact, for the price of an overweight small Scottie dog you could even run an Ethiopian or a Vietnamese human.

Once you've eaten the dogfood and the dog you can always resort to drugs, now that the debate has been satisfactorily resolved and we can reliably tell how to assess the relative safety of any drug. Oh, you didn't know? Well it's simple. If the government says nothing at all about it, it will most probably kill you, whereas if they swear blind it's dangerous and what's more do their Nutt and sack any scientific advisor who dares to disagree with them, you know you can party!

## Crystal balls-ups

No doubt many readers have come to regard Pathfinders as their infallible technical and scientific guru, and one is of course reluctant to disabuse them of such notions, however in positively the last anniversary item of 2009 it might be fun to reflect on the fate of pundit predictions from 20 years ago. The following comes from the book *Towards 2001 – A consumer's guide to the 21st century*, by Malcolm Abrams and Harriet Bernstein (Angus, London, 1989). Quite what qualified these two journalists to write this book is unclear, however they probably did about as well as Pathfinders would have done.

- Correct (if late): Flat screens, pocket computer, CDRs, digital cameras and hearing aids, impotence pills, sat-nav, supermarket self-checkout.
- Wrong (or not heard of): walking TV, self-weeding gardens, bark-stopper dog collar, flying car, potato ice-cream.
- Not predicted (stand by for a shock): pen-drives, DVDs, small mobile phones, text messaging, World Wide Web, PDAs, lithium-ion batteries (making small portable electronics possible).

What do we learn from this? Not much, apart from never believe what gurus tell you. The list of things they signally failed to predict accords eerily with the most revolutionary changes in our culture, which is a kind of reverse trick-shot. Hope for socialists, perhaps, since people are always telling us socialism will never happen. But Pathfinders can hardly stand by and laugh without entering the fray, so here are a few modest offerings for the next ten years:

They won't find a graviton or a Higgs boson; they won't understand what they *do* get; the LHC will break down anyway because somebody sneezed; somebody will announce the overthrow of Einstein (again); most of the heat from the Caderache nuclear fusion plant will be generated by rows over money; Dawkins will get baptised a Catholic.

## Things that go Plod in the night

Modern detective work is a serious and scientific business, apparently. Only not in Wales, whose police force embarked on a £20,000 investigation into a suicide after being told that the man's ghost had visited psychics and told them he had been poisoned (*Guardian*, 7 November). Learning that the words 'lion', 'horse' and 'fox' were significant, the cosmic coppers set off to visit every pub with one of those names in its title, and one with a statue of a horse outside. The case was closed only after a second post-mortem revealed no trace of any poison. "We are a laughing stock," complained one police source. True, but no doubt enquiries in these pubs resulted in various spirits being apprehended as a consolation.

## Competition results

If you interrogate your 140 character memory you will recall that Pathfinders attempted, back in September, to raise the level of debate on Twitter by holding a competition to find the best SMS-length rendition of the socialist case. To say that there was a tsunami of enthusiastic responses might be a slight exaggeration (ask a socialist whatever you like, but don't ask them to be brief) however some notable entries deserve honourable mention (the prize is that we keep your name out of it).

- Most rallying: Society marches on its belly; give us the land, farms and the bakery not the crumbs! 4 1 world socialist community! (FA)
- Most exact: From each according to ability, to each according to need. Free labour, free access. That's Socialism. (SJW)

- Most poetic: The essence of capitalism is the stench of cordite and blood. The essence of communism is the flavour of fulfilment. (JN)
- Most McGonagall: The essence of capitalism is wages and profit. The essence of socialism is how to get off it. (ALB)
- Most conversational: Think outside the box of capitalism and make the world a pleasurable place to inhabit. Work for the benefit of society, not your masters. (JV)
- Most economical: I vote to end capitalism X (PM)
- Most toddler-friendly: world socialism - for a world without war, want, wages and the Fat Controller.
- Most street-hip: Banish the gods from the sky, the capitalists from the earth and the chuggers from the high street. (DON)

Thanks to all those who contributed. Due to postal difficulties the prize Seychelles tickets regrettably cannot be mailed out. Pathfinders will return in January. With a tan.



# Eric Fromm on modern life

**“CAPITALISTIC SOCIETY is based on the principle of political freedom on the one hand, and of the market as the regulator of all economic, hence social, relations, on the other. The commodity market determines the conditions under which commodities are exchanged, the labour market regulates the acquisition and sale of labour. Both useful things and useful energy and skill are transformed into commodities which are exchanged without the use of force and without fraud under the conditions of the market.”**

“Modern capitalism needs men who cooperate smoothly and in large numbers; who want to consume more and more; and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent, not subject to any authority or principle or conscience—yet willing to be commanded, to do what is expected of them, to fit into the social machine without friction; who can be guided without force, led without leaders, prompted without aim—except the one to make good, to be on the move, to function, to go ahead.

**What is the outcome? Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not being different in thought, feeling or action.”**

“Man becomes a ‘nine to fiver,’ he is part of the labour force, or the bureaucratic force of clerks and managers. He has little initiative, his tasks are prescribed by the organization of the work; there is even little difference between those high up on the ladder and those on the bottom. They all perform tasks prescribed by the whole structure of the organization, at a prescribed speed, and in a prescribed manner. Even the feelings are prescribed: cheerfulness, tolerance, reliability, ambition, and an ability to get along with everybody without friction.”

**“From birth to death, from Monday to Monday, from morning to evening – all activities are reutilised and prefabricated. How should a man caught in this net of routine not forget that he is a man, a unique individual, one who is given only this one chance of living, with hopes and disappointments, with sorrow and fear, with the long for love and the dread of the nothing and of separateness?”**

“In the modern work process of a clerk, the worker on the endless belt, little is left of this uniting quality of work. The worker becomes an appendix to the machine or to the bureaucratic organization.”  
(from *The Art of Loving*, 1956)

## Socialist Party Merchandise

Teeshirts:

**Blue** with polar bear and ‘If you were a polar bear, you’d be a socialist’ plus party website address. **Yellow**, with blue and green globe ‘The world is a treasury for all’ plus party web site address on.

Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL.

**MUGS:**

One style: ‘Duet’ - Red and white with ‘Only sheep need leaders’ and website, with “Famine? War? Pollution? Capitalism is the Problem. World Socialism is the Solution” and party telephone number.

**PENS:**

Blue and white, with blue ink ‘Only sheep need leaders’ and a sheep plus party website. Red and white, with blue ink ‘Workers of the world unite’ plus party website Black with black ink. ‘Only sheep need leaders!’ and a sheep plus party website.

**BASEBALL CAPS:**

navy blue, with embroidered “World Socialist Movement” on.

**BALLOONS:**

different colours, with “World Socialist Movement”.

**Prices:**

Tee shirts £7.00 each (**state size when ordering**). Mugs £5.00 each. Pens £0.50 each. Baseball caps £5.00 each.

Balloons

15p each.

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£2.50 for the first £10 and then £1.50 for subsequent £10 worths or part thereof. Please send cheque or postal order (no cash) made payable to SPGB SW Regional Branch, c/o Veronica Clanchy, FAO: South West Regional Branch, 42 Winifred Road, Poole, Dorset. BH15 3PU. Any queries, please phone 01202 569826. Please include own phone number or other contact details.

## WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via [www.worldsocialism.org](http://www.worldsocialism.org)

## Socialist Standard

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# The advance of capitalism

THE ADVANCE of capitalism throughout Europe proved to be a disaster to all the old institutions of feudalism. The feudal landlord was displaced by a capitalist one. The once all-powerful land owners were now to be rivalled for power by the merchants and industrialists of modern capitalism. In a series of epoch making changes in Britain we had the Enclosure Acts and the Highland Clearances. In many places centuries old villages were replaced by sheep enclosures as agricultural labourers were forced into the growing towns and cities of capitalism to seek a pitiful existence. It's what Marx described in *Capital* in 1867 as the "so-called primitive accumulation". As he so aptly put it: "The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process." It is still going on in parts of the world.

### Primitive accumulation

A recent Channel 4 programme entitled *Unreported World, Peru: Blood and Oil* depicted the bloodshed and military violence that has accompanied the Peruvian government's decision to auction off large parts of the Amazon countryside that has been used for thousands of years by the indigenous people. "For the first time isolated indigenous groups are uniting to fight the government's plans to auction off 75% of the Amazon - which accounts for nearly two thirds of the country's territory - to oil, gas and mining companies. ... These would allow companies to bypass indigenous communities to obtain permits for exploration and extraction of natural resources, logging and the building of hydroelectric dams." (*Times*, 9 October).

In another part of the Amazon region capitalism's lust for profit was carried to an even more awful extreme - the complete destruction of the Akuntsu people. A once proud group of several hundred now have only five survivors. "Much of the Akuntsus' story is - for obvious reasons - undocumented. For millennia, they lived in obscurity, deep in the rainforest of Rondonia state, a remote region of western Brazil near the Bolivian border. They hunted wild pig, agoutis and tapir, and had small gardens in their villages, where they would grow manioc (or cassava) and corn. Then, in the 1980s, their death warrant was effectively signed: farmers and loggers were invited to begin exploring the region, cutting roads deep into the forest, and turning the once verdant wilderness into lucrative soya fields and cattle

ranches. ... The only way to prevent the government finding out about this indigenous community was to wipe them off the map. At some point, believed to be around 1990, scores of Akuntsu were massacred at a site roughly five hours' drive from the town of Vilhena. Only seven members of the tribe escaped, retreating deeper into the wilderness to survive." (*Independent*, 13 October)

### Ruthless system

The recent speed-up of the development of capitalism inside China has also led to even more misery for the working population of that part of the world. In an effort to compete with more established industrial nations the Chinese owning class have ruthlessly swept aside small peasant-like production for the mass production of modern capitalism. The resultant displacing of labourers and the mammoth increase in water and air pollution has led to a near catastrophe of unimaginable proportions

The World Bank recently estimated that China has experienced an annual industrial growth of 10 percent over the last 25 years, and reckoned the number of deaths from pollution alone in 2007 as 760,000. To grasp an inkling of this social disaster it is probably better to look at two local horror stories than quote mere statistics.

"The residents of Shuangqiao village say that their homes are now nothing but places in which to wait for death. In the paddy fields surrounding this small community in Hunan province, southern China, the rice is neglected and strewn with weeds. The vegetable plots stand empty, stripped of the green beans and cabbages that were grown as cash crops. Underfoot, the earth has been poisoned to a depth of 20cm (8in). The water in the wells is undrinkable. Tragedies like this - the legacy of China's rush to get rich - are all too common. Yesterday more than 600 children in Shaanxi province were found to be suffering from lead poisoning caused by a nearby lead and zinc smelter. The plight of Shuangqiao, however where three people have died and 509 are sick from poisoning by the heavy metals cadmium and indium, produced by a nearby factory, has drawn wide-spread attention since residents took to the internet to air their grievances." (*Times*, 15 August)

What lies behind this seemingly callous action by the owning class on their own national working population? It

cannot be mere coincidence that the price of indium soared from \$600 (£360) a kilogram in 2003 to \$1,000 by 2006. China now meets 30 per cent of world demand and at its peak the Xianghe factory produced 300 kg of indium a month. Capitalism is an insatiable monster as far as profits are concerned. Human misery is of no concern where the profit motive reigns supreme.

One farmer's plight summed up the hopelessness of the situation when he was told by officials that his land would be unusable for 60 years but that he could grow non-edible crops such as cotton or trees to clean the soil. "Farmer Yang has abandoned hope, "It's the children, the children," he lamented. "We want our children to have a future. We have to leave."

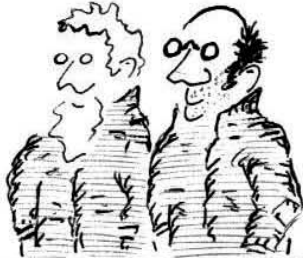
RD



# IRE OF THE IRATE ITINERANT

JUST CHECKING OUT THE 'PERSONAL' COLUMN HERE.

CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE HOW VIRTUALLY EVERY ADVERT STIPULATES 'PROFESSIONAL'. YOU KNOW, 'I'M PROFESSIONAL, WLTM PROFESSIONAL', ETC. WHY DON'T THEY JUST HAVE DONE WITH IT AND SAY 'WOULDN'T TOUCH WORKING CLASS WITH A BARKEPOLE' ...



RACE, SEX, SEXUALITY, RELIGION ... THE BAD OLD PREJUDICES EVERY INTELLIGENT PERSON HAS LEFT BEHIND, THANKFULLY. BUT CLASS PREJUDICE IS EVIDENTLY STILL RESPECTABLE ... EVEN AMONG THE IMPECCABLY ENLIGHTENED READERS OF THIS PERIODICAL.



THE BOURGEOISIE STILL NEEDS LABOUR, TO TOIL AWAY PRODUCING ALL THOSE MANUFACTURED GOODS IT COVETS. 'MANUFACTURING DOESN'T MATTER?' OF COURSE IT DOES. MORE THAN EVER. WE'RE SURROUNDED BY STUFF! IT ALL HAS TO BE MADE!...



OF COURSE, 'CLASS' IS A DIRTY WORD. IT'S NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO EXIST ANYMORE. WHERE IS YOUR CLASSIC URBAN PROLETARIAT? YOUR 'HORNY HANDED SONS OF TOIL' AS PETER MANDELSON SARCASTICALLY PUT IT.



... IT JUST ISN'T MADE IN THIS COUNTRY ANYMORE, THAT'S ALL. THE CHINESE PROLETARIAT COMES FAR CHEAPER. AND WITHOUT ANY THOSE UNIONS, OR HEALTH AND SAFETY RED TAPE.



... AND ILLEGAL, SO THEY CAN'T EVER COMPLAIN.



THE FACT IS, THE RULING CLASS SIMPLY DON'T NEED THE PROLES IN THIS COUNTRY ANYMORE. THERE'S A LIMITLESS SUPPLY OF CHEAP LABOUR OUT THERE IN A POVERTY STRICKEN DEREGULATED GLOBAL ECONOMY. AND THOSE DESPERATE ECONOMIC MIGRANTS, STRUGGLING TO GET INTO BRITAIN, PROVIDE A SCAPEGOAT, A CONVENIENT DIVERSION FROM THE REAL INEQUITIES OF THE SYSTEM. THEY ALSO PROVIDE A NEW SERVANT CLASS... NANNIES, CLEANERS, MAIDS ... SO HARDWORKING! SO CHEAP!...

SO THERE'S JUST NO RAISON D'ÊTRE FOR THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS. THATCHER'S DIVIDE AND CONQUER PLAN WAS DESIGNED TO ENTICE THE UPPER SECTION OF THE WORKING CLASS TO BECOME RESPECTABLE MIDDLE CLASS HOMEOWNERS, WITH A STAKE, AN INTEREST IN, THE MARKET.



ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WORK?



AND THE LOWER WORKING CLASS? GRIND 'EM DOWN! CREATE AN UNDERCLASS. THE JEREMY KYLE SHOW IS THE MODERN EQUIVALENT OF THE PILLORY, BEDLAM ... SEE THESE FECKLESS IDLE TYPES LIVING THEIR DISMAL WASTED LIVES AND FEEL SMUG... IT'S THEIR FAULT, NOT SOCIETY'S. NOT ME AND YOU.



IS WORK LOOKING FOR US?...



# Pieces together

## CAPITALIST PARADOX

"Scientists and development experts across the globe are racing to increase food production by 50 percent over the next two decades to feed the world's growing population, yet many doubt their chances despite a broad consensus that enough land, water and expertise exist. The number of hungry people in the world rose to 1.02 billion this year, or nearly one in seven people, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, despite a 12-year concentrated effort to cut the number. The global financial recession added at least 100 million people by depriving them of the means to buy enough food, but the numbers were inching up even before the crisis, the United Nations noted in a report last week. "The way we manage the global agriculture and food security system doesn't work," said Kostas G. Stamoulis, a senior economist at the organization. "There is this paradox of increasing global food production, even in developing countries, yet there is hunger." (New York Times, 22 October)

## ALL RIGHT FOR SOME

"As workers up and down the UK sat at home last week worrying about whether they would still have a job in a month's time, a raucous crowd of hedge fund managers and investment bankers at the Whisky Mist nightclub in Mayfair pulled yet more vodka out of their huge ice bucket and called for the waiter to bring another bottle of Dom Perignon, served with a sparkler. ...In London nightspots last week, the City's finest were spending with a swagger. ...As City workers once again prepare for corporate excess, and investment banks such as Goldman Sachs get ready to pay record bonuses, new bars, restaurants and nightclubs are springing up around the office tower blocks in the City and Canary Wharf to feed demand." (Observer, 1 November)

## DRUG PUSHERS PAY OFF

"Could you imagine how much money you would have to have to be able to spend \$609,000 a day? What would you expect to receive for that amount of money? Who has that kind of money to spend, especially during a "recession"? According to the latest issue of *Time* magazine, in the first 6 months of this year, the pharmaceutical industry spent about \$609,000 a day to influence lawmakers. Can you imagine the financial payoff they must expect to get to be able to spend that kind of money. This does not include all the money they spend on advertising as well. The drug industry has 1,228 registered lobbyists. This equals 2.3 lobbyists for every member of congress. Obviously, the pharmaceutical industry does not want to be left out of the current healthcare reform debate and are willing to pay handsomely to make sure they aren't. The return on that investment has already been considerable. As drug lobbyist Jim Greenwood says, "we've done very well." (Dr Brian's Blog, 26 October)

## Contact Details

### UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

#### LONDON

**Central London branch.** 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

**Enfield and Haringey branch.** Thurs 5th. 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

**West London branch.** 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Comer Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

**Pimlico.** C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 8186

#### MIDLANDS

**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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**Northeast branch.** Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690. E-mail 3491@bbarry.fs.com

#### NORTHWEST

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**Bolton.** Tel: H. McLaughlin.01204 844589

**Cumbria.** Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

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**Todmorden:** Keith Scholey, 1 Leevine Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ. Tel: 01706 814 149

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**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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#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Newtownabbey:** Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062

#### SCOTLAND

**Edinburgh branch.** 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995 JIMMY@jmoir29.freeserve.co.uk Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

**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

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

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

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

#### WALES

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

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

#### INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

##### AFRICA

**Kenya.** Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi.

**Zambia.** Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

##### ASIA

**India.** World Socialist Group, Vill Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

**Japan.** Michael. Email: [worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com](mailto:worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com).

##### EUROPE

**Denmark.** Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

**Germany.** Norbert. E-mail: [weltsozialismus@gmx.net](mailto:weltsozialismus@gmx.net)

**Norway.** Robert Stafford. E-mail: [hallblithe@yahoo.com](mailto:hallblithe@yahoo.com)

#### COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

##### World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia. Email: [commonownership@yahoo.com.au](mailto:commonownership@yahoo.com.au)

##### Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. E-mail: [SPC@iname.com](mailto:SPC@iname.com)

##### World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

##### World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. E-mail: [wspboston@covad.net](mailto:wspboston@covad.net)



## This year's Nobel Prize for Economics

Every year the Bank of Sweden awards a prize to some economist, often called the Nobel Prize for Economics even though it wasn't established by the old merchant of death himself. It has in fact only been going since 1968. Usually the prize goes to some obscure economist for work on some obscure aspect of the market economy. Sometimes it goes to a big name such as the Keynesian Paul Samuelson (1970) or the Monetarist Milton Friedman (1976). Even the mad marketeer Baron von Hayek got one, in 1974.

Very occasionally it goes to someone who has done some interesting work, as when in 1998 it went to Amartya Sen who had shown that famines were caused by a collapse in legal access to food (via money or direct production) and not by any actual shortage of food or overpopulation. This year, too, it has gone to someone whose work sounds interesting – Elinor Ostrom whose 1990 book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* refuted the so-called “Tragedy of the Commons” parable that is often used to try to show that socialism wouldn't work.

In 1968 an American biologist Garrett Hardin conceived of a parable to explain why, in his view, common ownership was no solution to the environmental crisis and why in fact it would only make matters worse. Called “The Tragedy of the Commons”, his parable went like this: assume a pasture to which all herdsmen have free access to graze their cattle; in these circumstances each herdsman would try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons and, in the end, its carrying capacity would be exceeded, resulting in environmental degradation.

Hardin's parable was completely unhistorical. Wherever commons have existed there also existed rules governing their use, sometimes in the form of traditions, sometimes in the form of arrangements for decision-making in common, which precluded such overgrazing and other threats to the long-term sustainability of the system.

One of the conclusions that governments drew from Hardin's armchair theorising was that in existing cases where producers had rights of access to a “common-pool resource” the solution was either to privatise the resource or to subject the producers to outside control via quotas, fines and other restrictions. Ostrom took the trouble to study various common property arrangements some of which had lasted for centuries, including grazing pastures in Switzerland, forests in Japan, and irrigation systems in Spain and the Philippines.

According to *The Times* (13 October),

“Based on numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes and groundwater basins, she asserts that resource users frequently develop sophisticated mechanisms for decision-making and rule enforcement to handle conflicts of interest”.

In other words, common ownership did not necessarily have to lead to resource depletion as predicted by Hardin and trumpeted by opponents of socialism. The cases Ostrom examined were not socialism as the common owners were private producers. In socialism the producers, the immediate users of the common resources, would not be trying to make an independent living for themselves but would be carrying out a particular function on behalf of the community in a social context where the aim of production would be to satisfy needs on a sustainable basis. But the rules they would draw up for the use of the grazing land, forests, fishing grounds and the like would be similar to those in the cases she studied.

In the wake of the horrific events of the day, his captain is cool. He walks up to Massey and asks; “Are you doing all right, Staff Sergeant?” Massey responds: “No, sir. I am not doing O.K. Today was a bad day. We killed a lot of innocent civilians.”

Fully aware of the civilian carnage, his captain asserts: “No, today was a good day.” Relatives wailing, cars destroyed, blood all over the ground, Marines celebrating, civilians dead, and “it was good day”!:

<http://tinyurl.com/58j2ag>

Even as the financial system collapsed last year, and millions of investors lost billions of dollars, one unlikely investor was racking up historic profits: John Paulson, a hedge-fund manager in New York. His firm made \$20 billion between 2007 and early 2009 by betting against the housing market and big financial companies. Mr. Paulson's personal cut would amount to nearly \$4 billion, or more than \$10 million a day. That was more than the 2007 earnings of J.K. Rowling, Oprah Winfrey and Tiger Woods combined:

<http://tinyurl.com/yicsbwm2>

Sixteen workers are killed a day in the United States because of reckless negligence on the part of their employers. Under existing laws, these employers get a slap on the wrist, or walk away scot-free. Meanwhile, workers who blow the whistle face threats and retaliation at the workplace:

<http://tinyurl.com/yath3mq>

Its ruler re-named the days of the week after himself and his mother. Opera, ballet and the circus are banned. To get a driving licence, citizens must sit an exam on the dead leader's autobiography. Welcome to Turkmenistan:

<http://tinyurl.com/yhxf6ev>

When veterans die -- from lack of health insurance More than 1.5 million vets don't have it, and 2,200 vets die every year because of it :

<http://tinyurl.com/yebo3fg>

“..We suggest that it will be pretty much like this in socialist society. Although it will be global as opposed to tribal, people will still live in small localised communities..” But some people I imagine will choose a clean, green high-rise city lifestyle instead:

<http://tinyurl.com/yIrgg6l>

Why are so many Americans now toying with socialism, in a country that created the most successful free market economic system in history and spent half of the last century fighting the heresy of Marx's socialism?

<http://tinyurl.com/yfp76hd>

“Americans are saying that with their planes they can see an egg 18 kilometers away, so why can't they see the Taliban?” ABDULLAH WASAY, an Afghan pharmacist:

<http://tinyurl.com/yc46rq8>



# Down and out in Mayfair

*We still live in a society that if you don't have the ability to pay you 'goes' without.*

**P**aying fuel bills can be hard at the best of times but you are twice as likely to fall into fuel poverty if you've recently been treated for cancer, according to new research from Macmillan Cancer Support. Following diagnosis, three-quarters of cancer patients in active treatment need to use their heating more, yet those under 60 do not qualify for any help to pay for it. Fuel poverty – having to spend more than 10 percent of your income on heating – is a relatively new phenomenon that is beginning to grip Britain faster than the spread of swine flu and serves as the cold reminder that we still live in a society that if you don't have the ability to pay you go without.

The true extent of such hardship and poverty in Britain and its impact is conveniently bypassed and generally ignored by mainstream politicians who have more to peevishly whinge about when it comes to their own expenses. As we come to almost the end of this the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it's as if the hands on the clock of time have been turned backwards. If it wasn't for the constant sight of all manner of technology's advancement from transport to the smallest iPods, cyberspace and the internet you would not be wrong to conclude that some

things change but much, very much just stays the same, as I'm constantly reminded when I visit and spend time with my many friends who live their lives out and on the streets of London, the capital city in this the fifth richest nation in the world.

## **Homeless**

The people that I speak of are the visible homeless that no one seems to see. Their numbers are hard to place a finger on, they live in hostels, squats and a growing number sleep rough on our streets. Keeping warm in winter is a battle waged every year by the rough sleeper in his or her skip, but truth is every season brings its problems when you're forced to share the outdoor life with the birds, urban foxes and city rats.

A great many of my friends on the street live and rely solely upon street handouts and day centres for food, laundry and bathing facilities. Many refuse to claim entitled benefits, preferring not to be a part of a welfare system that incessantly strong-arms the unemployed into taking low paid employment with the use of sanctions and penalties. This is in complete contrast to what Richard Bacon, a Tory MP on the committee which acts

as a watchdog over public spending, said:

“The Department for Work and Pensions does not know how many people are out of work by choice, rather than by chance. Properly targeted help must be put in place for those who want to work. Only then will the Government be able to flush out the shirkers who are sticking up two fingers at hard-working families and treating the benefit system like a cash machine.” ([www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-512754/Britains-benefits-generation-State-handouts-way-life-million.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-512754/Britains-benefits-generation-State-handouts-way-life-million.html))

How can anyone not be moved by the spectacle and lines of men and women who gather every night in London’s Lincoln Inn Felids for a meal provided by the

Hari Khrisnas or a Jamaican Christian Church. On some occasions I’ve counted up to three hundred people who arrive hours in advance with all their worldly possessions rammed in to rucksacks and carrier bags, sleeping bags and their wind-up radio. This is no easy life. The streets are fraught with danger for many homeless people; over the last few years people living on the streets have become more vulnerable to violence and attack; this threat can be from other street users and from those who are intoxicated through alcohol and/or drugs.

Rough sleepers are 13 times more likely to experience crime and 47 times likely to be the victim of theft. Crime, and the perception of crime, can play a major role in the decisions of rough sleepers in not only where they sleep but also where they take part in daytime activities. Many rough sleepers avoid danger and stay clear of violence by using the London night bus service to get some rest, as one friend told me: “You take the longest route say to Heathrow Airport and back that kills 4 hours and before you know it it’s morning.” Female rough sleepers are particularly vulnerable to physical attack and abuse, and to protect themselves they tend to be amongst the most hidden.

Rough sleepers are met with a mixture of emotions from the general public ranging from pity and support to anger and distrust. But one thing almost goes unasked and that’s why are people, fellow human beings living, existing on our rich streets; streets that are not paved with gold.

London has seen a big increase in the number of migrant workers left homeless and destitute in the city, without access to benefits or housing help. The effects of the economic downturn, as well as a legal block preventing migrants from certain countries claiming benefits, has meant increased numbers of rough sleepers in the city from eastern European countries.

Every year an official head count of rough sleepers within Westminster is carried out and recorded for official purposes. In recent years allegations of tactics designed to reduce the figure have been made. The Simon Community, an organisation that works and lives with the homeless on the streets, undertook its

own street head count at the end of October, and found 247 people sleeping rough in the City of Westminster, almost 100 more than official figures now state. The Simon Community along with some rough sleepers have claimed that diversionary tactics were put in place days before the street count took place. A number of known rough sleepers were offered travel warrants by Police and community officers, in an attempt to transfer them out of the area. In a BBC report on the issue of travel warrants being handed out, the Metropolitan Police denied the allegation that they were shifting people out of the area, saying that they regularly issue travel warrants for homeless people, particularly during the winter

months. Allegations have also been made that local authorities exerted harsh measures against homeless people, according to the Simon Community. They received information

about a group of homeless people being physically moved out of the Victoria Street area by Police. Similarly, there are accusations of doorways used to bed down in were hosed by cleaners to make them unusable.

There are claims that charities were also instructed to make beds available in their hostels ahead of the count, and emergency accommodation was opened up on the week the count took place.

### Reality entertainment

During the summer the BBC screened a very different type of reality television; this involved celebrities who were asked to partake in the programme ‘Famous, Rich & Homeless’. This TV documentary, described as thought-provoking, recruited five famous volunteers who were asked to experience the life of a homeless person on the streets of London for a few days (ten) during the winter of 2008. When I say famous, what I mean by that is household names drawn from the entertainment and media industry. The Marquess of Blandford, the *One Show*’s Hardeep Singh Kohli, journalist Rosie Boycott, former Coronation Street actor Bruce Jones

and tennis commentator Annabel Croft all swapped their lavish privileged lifestyles, their fame and fortune for a time; for a world of soup runs and hostels.

They were helped and manoeuvred throughout by *Big Issue* founder John A Bird and Craig Last, a former youth worker for the charity Centrepont. Having watched the show myself, I came away thinking that this type of reality entertainment achieves nothing more than accepting and approving that the daily struggle for life’s existence at the bottom of the pile is a normal part of the structure of society. But the best response to the show came from a homeless person writing in the letters page of *Pavement*, the free monthly magazine produced for London’s homeless. They said:

“I found it quite ironic that ‘Famous, Rich and

## “properties serve as investments for owners who pay the bills to keep them empty”



**New figures show there was a 15% rise in the overall number of rough sleepers in London in the last year - and the equivalent of five new rough sleepers on London’s streets every day ([www.mungos.org](http://www.mungos.org))**

Homeless' was shown on the BBC. I spent seven months living rough on London's streets, often at All Souls' Church in Portland Place. Having crashed there for several months, rough sleeping with the full knowledge and permission of the church authorities, I was woken one night and "moved on" by a couple of Westminster police officers. When I enquired about the incident at the church reception the following morning, I was informed by a staffer that the alleged complaint had not been lodged by the church authorities but by BBC security staff at Broadcasting House, directly across the road, no doubt because they were irritated by having to constantly step over cardboard boxes whilst filming fearless, hard-hitting documentaries about the plight of London's homeless."



**A female rough sleeper - "particularly vulnerable to physical attack and abuse"**

### Empty homes

About the same time as these programmes were broadcast, *The Wall Street Journal* (15 July) reported that in the London Borough of Westminster, where Mayfair is located, homes can cost up to £50 million. Yet Westminster is fifth among London's 33 boroughs in the number of unoccupied properties. In 2008, 1,737 homes had been vacant for six months or more, the third highest number among all London boroughs, according to the Empty Homes Agency, a non-profit group that seeks to put empty homes back into use.

Westminster Council have placed according to its website (at the time of writing) 3,000 homeless families into temporary accommodation. Many have been exported to the poorer boroughs of East London because they claim there are not enough temporary in Westminster.

The high concentration of rundown, empty homes is striking for a posh Mayfair, with its ornately gated manses. The hub of aristocratic society before World War II, Mayfair's modern-day image is demonstrated by its prominent place on the British Monopoly board.

Mayfair's homeowners aren't down on their luck, far from it. Rather, their properties serve as investments for owners who pay the bills to keep them empty – something the neighbours and council object to when the homes fall into disrepair. Many owners decline to rent the homes due to local council tax rules, with tax on properties at a lower rate if they are empty and unfurnished, which is a loophole that helps the filthy rich. As the number of homes



**London mayor Boris Johnson examines the housing problem**

now priced at more than £1m has fallen by a third during the past two years the problems surrounding the abandonment of posh homes may get worse.

The whole business of empty homes came to light last winter when a group of young squatters occupied

two £20 million homes on Park Lane overlooking Hyde Park. Before the squatters settled in, the homes had been empty for seven years. During that time, the Council had tried three times to contact their British Virgin Islands-based property owners: Red Line Ltd. and Perfectil Ltd. Following two years of silence, the property owners surfaced once newspaper reports outed the squatters. The result of such media reports has meant that wealthy homeowners have turned to private security firms to protect their empty London properties from squatters at a cost of up to £2,600 a week while according to the Empty Homes Agency there are more than 80,000 empty properties in London (*Evening Standard*, 11 November). In the recession this is one business that may prove to be very lucrative as a growing number of homes are bought by foreign investors who want a secure asset but continue to live elsewhere.

In our daily press we read much about the housing problem, about lost homes repossessed by the banks and the so-called housing shortage, with thousands stranded and languishing for years on the council housing waiting list or simply held hostage to the private landlord, the cry goes out for more affordable homes or a proposed programme of public works that embraces house building as the desired solution, peddled by those who still offer the dried-out old fig leaf of failed reform. Over a hundred years ago Frederick Engels wrote in the *Housing Question*: "This shortage is not something peculiar to the present; it is not even one of the sufferings peculiar to the modern proletariat in contradistinction to all earlier oppressed classes. On the contrary, all oppressed classes in all periods suffered more or less uniformly from it."

And then Engels gave an answer to this age old problem. He said, and I repeat, to end the housing shortage there is only one means: to abolish altogether the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the ruling class.

**NL**

### Late January 2010 *Standard*

Because of the Christmas and New Year holiday, the *Socialist Standard* for January, 2010, will be later than usual.

# Capitalism and food security – an oxymoron

*Food security for all the people of the world will only be possible when the profit motive is taken out of food supply.*

It's official! Now more than one billion people are hungry and in desperate need of food aid according to the World Food Programme. To meet this need \$6.7 billion will be required this year alone (of which less than half has been raised so far). \$6.7 billion equates to less than 0.01 percent of that heaped on the needy banks and corporations during the recent and ongoing financial crisis. But help is at hand, at least for Africa's hungry millions, in the form of a New Green Revolution courtesy of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Or is it? According to Raj Patel, Eric Holt-Gimenez and Annie Shattuck in 'Ending Africa's Hunger' (*The Nation*, September 21), "the conventional wisdom is wrong. Food output per person is as high as it has ever been, suggesting that hunger isn't a problem of production so much as one of distribution." A leaked internal strategy document statement from the Gates Foundation stated, "over time this (strategy) will require some degree of mobility and a lower percentage of total employment involved in direct agricultural production." The foundation claims that peasants will head for the cities "because there are a lot of them who don't want to be farmers" and "people make their own choices." The translation from Newspeak reads like this: agribusiness will expand and drive more peasant farmers from the land, disenfranchising them and forcing them to seek employment elsewhere for economic reasons.

Outlining proposals which are largely in opposition to the development strategies of the Gates foundation is the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) whose 2500 page report was completed after 400 scientists spent four years researching the subject. They concluded that the present system of food production and the way food is traded round the world has led to a highly unequal distribution of benefits and serious adverse ecological effects and was now contributing to climate change. Science and technology should be targeted towards raising yields but also protecting soils, waters and

forests. Robert Watson, director of the IAASTD and chief scientist at the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said, "Business as usual will hurt the poor. It will not work." More of their conclusions found that there was little role for GM foods as it is practised now, that the

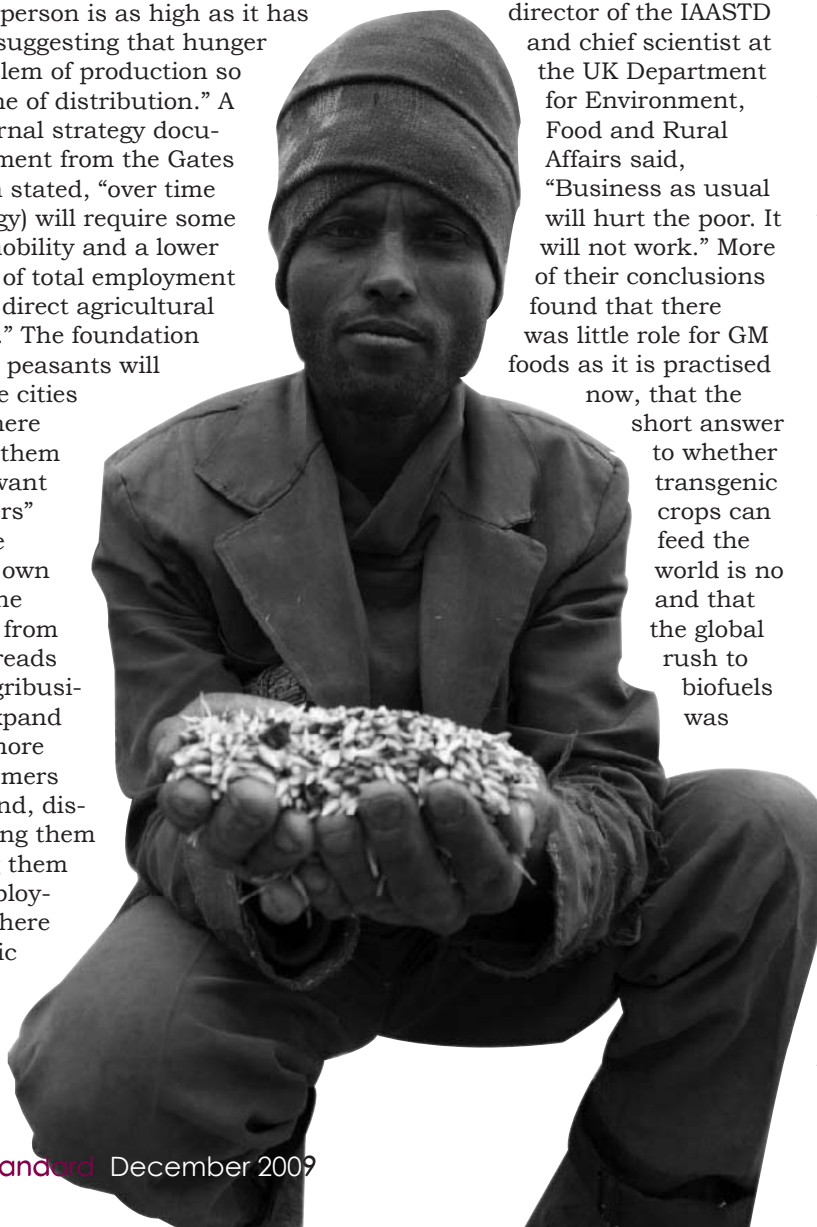
short answer to whether transgenic crops can feed the world is no and that the global rush to biofuels was

not sustainable. One response to this report from a group of eight international environmental and consumer groups was, "this is a sobering account of the failure of industrial farming. Small-scale farmers and ecological methods provide the way forward to avert the current food crisis and meet the needs of communities."

Some of the negative aspects and results of current farming practices widely available in the public domain and cited in this international group's response include bio-energy, bio-technology, climate change and trade and markets. One argument could be that some uses of bio-energy and some applications of bio-technology may be useful, however trade and markets only take into consideration profit and, therefore, climate change will continue unabated.

The big question is how to move from a model in which everyone recognises the profit imperative whether they love it or hate it; profit on a large scale or small, profit from agribusiness or market stall, from pure accumulation to simple survival, from the greedy to the needy, profit which favours minority over majority in all areas. Everyone recognises it but far fewer question the possibility, the sense, the imperative of implementing a different model, not a few reforms here and there to give temporary help to this sector or that, but one which takes into consideration the needs, aspirations, ideas and ideals of the many rather than the few.

Who produces the food anyway? Farmers do. And what are farmers saying about their position, as middlemen between consumers and profiteers? La Via Campesina is a "peasants' international" movement, politically pluralist and non-aligned, in 56 countries across 5 continents which came about in response to the global offensive against the countryside. Farmers from North and South united to confront agribusiness whose industrialisation removed the link of consumer to farmer. More



than simply trying to defend their economic interests they advocate the right of people to define their own agricultural and food policy. Their list of demands includes safe, nutritious food in sufficient quantity for all, opposition to WTO, World Bank and IMF policies, opposition to displacement and urbanisation of small farmers and guaranteed input into formulating agricultural policies.

Farmers around the world tell of plummeting incomes and higher overheads in both rich and poor world, of farm closures, bankruptcies and suicides whilst financial pages boast of bigger and better profits for the industrial agricultural corporations. Farmers seek a solution which allows them to continue farming with input and policies emanating from them, the producers, not to the dictates of large corporations. This aim is understandable but, generally what they demand is increased subsidies or a watering-down of aggressive policies and trade deals,

a redressing of their situation into one which is more economically viable and favourable to them.

Who does the consuming and what are they saying? Dave Murphy, founder of Food Democracy Now! speaks for many when he writes that “people are realising over the last 60 years that the ownership of our food supply

has been consolidated into the hands of a few powerful multinational corporations,” that “the abundance of ‘cheap’ food comes at a high cost to society, to individual rights and to our collective future. The industrialisation of food in America has had fundamental health, environmental and economic consequences that can no longer be ignored. By placing a high value on cheap food Americans have unwittingly allowed corporate agribusiness to outsource the true cost of production onto society. The result has been the pollution of our nation’s rivers and streams, damage to citizens’ health and a severe breakdown in our nation’s rural communities where small farmers have been pushed off the land.”

Food production should be about meeting the self-defined needs of people, not a profit-motivated venture for corporations, agribusinesses and their boards and shareholders. Food security is about meeting the dietary needs of all people, at all times, enabling them to live a healthy life and not to be constantly in fear of the vagaries of the market. Only by addressing the monetary element, by coming to terms with the absolute necessity of removing it and any profit motive from the food supply will farmers, consumers and all the peoples of the world have the security of knowing that sufficient food is available to all, at all times and in all situations. Food security for all the world’s citizens is just not possible in a capitalist system. Prove me otherwise.

**JANET SURMAN**



## HOW I GOT TO BE A SOCIALIST

*“... I came to know about ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ but always preferred ‘our’.”*

AT THE age of 5 I had never heard the word “socialist”, but something happened on my first day at school that suggested I was one. My mother sent me off with a packed lunch. “How was your lunch?” she asked. “I liked the sandwich but I have the banana to Greta.” “Why on earth did you do that? It was *your* banana.” Puzzled, I said that she had asked for it, so her need must have been greater than mine. After that episode I came to know about ‘mine’ and ‘thine’, but always preferred ‘our’.

I first met the Socialist Party at its platform at Speakers’ Corner, Hyde Park. The socialist message was powerful stuff, erudite but put across in a controversial way. It was 1945, the year the war ended and Labour won the election. It did so on a programme of reforms, and because of a widespread feeling that it was time for a change, of administration but not of the system.

I remember questioning a Labour candidate at the 1950 election about his attitude to socialism. Anticipating Sir Humphrey waffle by a couple of decades, the candidate said something like: “Socialism? Yes, in the fullness of time, when conditions are ripe, at the appropriate moment, all things considered—but first we must elect a Labour government.”

There were two main things that attracted me to what the Socialist Party—or the SPGB as it was then widely known—was saying. One was that it presented incontrovertible evidence that the Labour Party, in or out of power, supported capitalism in more or less the same way that the Conservative Party did. The other was that capitalism, with all its problems of inequality, boom and bust, war, the priority of profit over need is not inevitable. It can be replaced by a better system—socialism—when a majority of people decide to do so.

Revolution isn’t just a matter of destroying capitalism—the new system has to be put in its place. This poses a problem for the Socialist Party. Socialism isn’t something that can be promised to be introduced after the next election. All the other parties don’t want electors to understand and want revolutionary change—they offer only minor revisions of the same basic system and insist that if you don’t choose one of them you are wasting your vote. You are not. You don’t have to choose the least of two or more evils. You can take the long view and choose to help build the kind of world you really want.

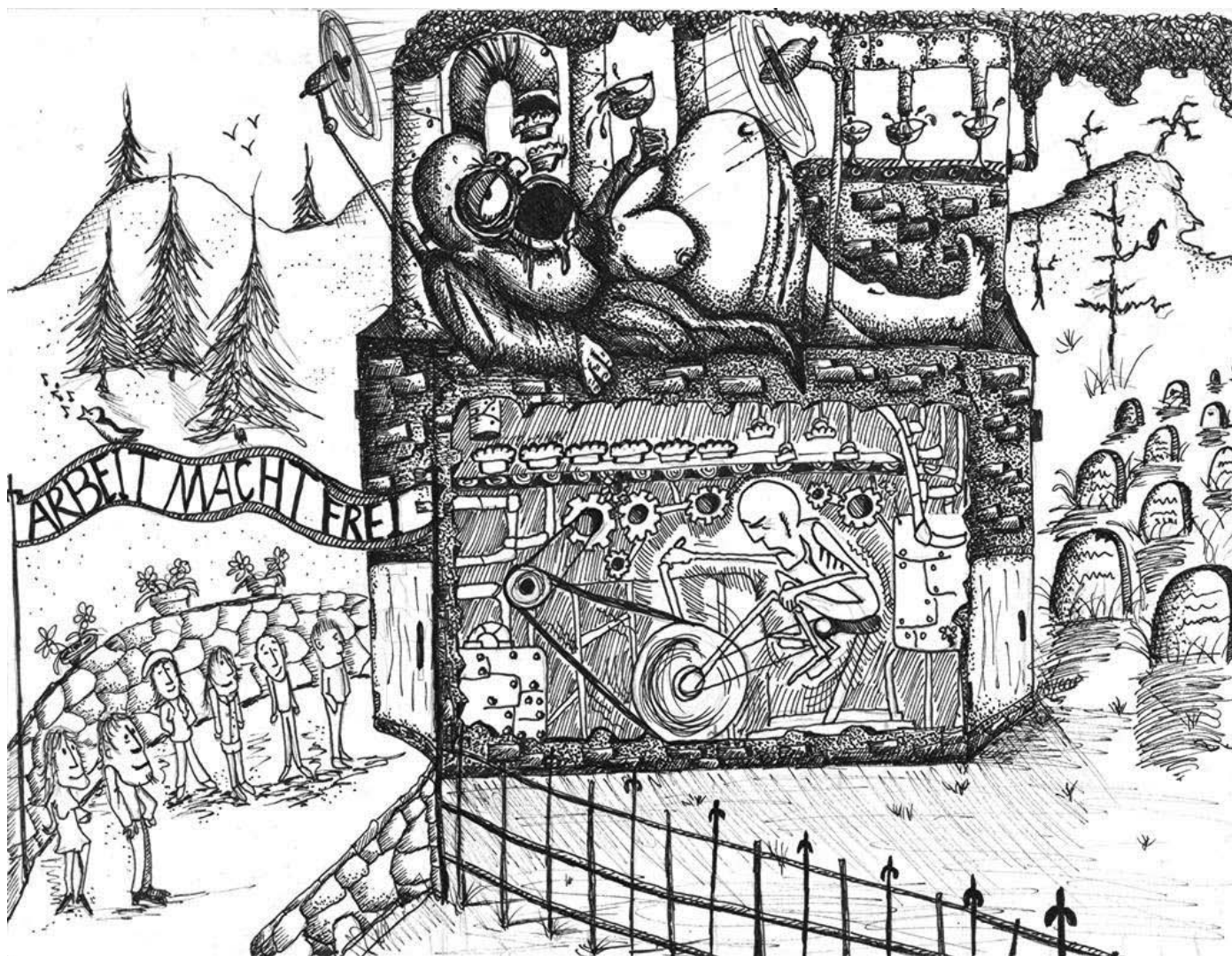
My introduction to socialist ideas included trying to get to grips with the writings of classic socialists. Frankly, I found much of Marx hard going, though I liked his inspirational “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (despite its sexist language).

For me the outstanding socialist book was and is William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. I don’t agree with everything in it. I’m no fan of 14th-century costume, and I certainly don’t think his forecast of “How the change came” is remotely likely (a Trafalgar Square massacre, a Committee of Public Safety, general strike, etc.).

However, *Nowhere* is of great value in painting a picture of what the future can be in terms of how people treat and relate to each other. Today there is giving and taking, but only within our economic and political system based on buying and selling. Morris shows how changing that system to socialism will extend the scope of giving and taking from family and small-group life to society as a whole.

**STAN PARKER**

# The World Around You



*Someone employs you, and you work for them, and they control a big part of your waking hours.*

Look around you at the world you live in. You may live in a scenic but desperately dull village, or in a lively but overcrowded city. You travel to your work, which is a mixture of routine and interest, and you enjoy a drink and a laugh with your work colleagues. Or you stay at home, concentrating on housework and childcare. Or you wish you could find a job but there are far more people searching for work than there are jobs. Most of the time you have enough money to keep your head above water and take a holiday once a year. But you know that your job is not all that secure, and a couple of your neighbours have been sacked in the last few months, as a result of the recession, and you realise that the same fate might await you or your partner.

You read the paper and watch the TV news, so you are well aware of the problems in the outside world. In fact, there seems to be little other than problems, from companies going bust and workers being laid off, to wars and riots and floods and electoral chicanery. At least, you think to yourself, it's not as bad here as it is there

(where 'there' might be any number of countries). You know that things are bad, but you're too busy with work and family to do much about it, and in any case you don't really have much idea as to what can be done. Putting a different political party in power doesn't appear to make much difference, and maybe none at all. Some of the people you work with blame immigrants, or Muslims, or scroungers, or the unions, but you appreciate that these are just scapegoats, latched on to by those who want a simple fix but have no real clue what's going on.

One weekend you have the chance to reflect a bit on your life, and to consider what's wrong with the world. There are many good things in your life, especially your partner and the rest of your family, and you value your friends. Yet you're worried about your future: will you still have a job in five or ten years' time, will you still be able to afford a holiday and new clothes and furniture, might you even lose your home if things really take a turn for the worse? The internet, cheap flights, high-definition TV, these are all very well, but they aren't really what make

someone happy, because you just don't feel in control of your life and your future.

Then you start to look at things in a wider perspective. You come to realise that most people manage to battle through the day, to get through their dull jobs and accept what their boss says while silently telling him or her to get lost. They look forward to their two weeks' holiday and their time off at Christmas, in the knowledge that job cuts and a pay freeze may be round the corner. You soon accept that most people are unhappy with a great deal about their lives, and you start to wonder why this might be.

First you think about work and employment, and you discover that these aren't quite the same. You enjoy the voluntary work you do at a local sports club, and get a lot of satisfaction from it, yet you don't feel the same way about the job that brings in your wages. That's basically what it is, a job to earn money. Once you had visions of a worthwhile career, but now you see that it just means working ever harder and accepting more responsibility and never truly being in charge of your work time. Others may have it worse – in jobs that are physically unpleasant and even dangerous – but yours is unrewarding except in financial terms, and even the pay isn't as good as you were promised. Someone employs you, and you work *for* them, and they control so much of your waking hours. It's not so much your manager as the big boss and other shareholders who own the company and take the profits. They, you decide, are the people who benefit from your labours.

Then you start thinking about your time outside the hours of work, where you spend the money you've worked so hard for. You're still paying off your mortgage and it takes a big chunk of your monthly cheque, but at least you aren't in negative equity or about to have your home repossessed. It would only take a month or two of unemployment, though, to leave you and your family in a very difficult situation. You become aware, too, that many people have real housing problems: their place is overcrowded or unsanitary, or they are homeless or sleeping on a friend's sofa. But on your journey into work you see building sites that have closed down, as there is no way the houses and flats will be sold in the recession. And you realise that there is something drastically wrong when people are homeless or living in slums yet others who could be building homes for them are on the dole. The idea of profit rears its head again, and you see that houses and flats are built to make a profit for someone, rather than to provide places to live.

And profits seem to govern many other areas of life too. Cheap food at the supermarket is there not because

anyone wants to buy it but because that's all some can afford to buy and cheap stuff is the only way that a profit can be made by selling to the poorest. A light begins to go on in your head, and you can see that much of what is produced is poor quality, intended to be sold cheaply and still bring in a profit, so it's often dangerous as well as shoddy.

Then you start to wonder about who benefits from the profits made as a result of all this labour and production. You already know about millionaires and heiresses and the landed aristocracy, and now you see that they are the ones who benefit. With their multi-room mansions, private jets and luxury yachts, they don't suffer from the same problems that you and your friends and relations do. You haven't quite worked out how they got rich, but you're sure that it didn't happen through their own hard work: nobody can work that hard, and your own parents worked hard all their lives and ended up with very little.

And other countries are no different, not in important respects anyway. Things vary a bit of course, but there are still problems of poverty and homelessness, while a few live very nicely, thank you. On your holidays abroad you've seen that the same problems as here exist more or less everywhere. And some parts of the world are far worse off, with famines and wars and heaven knows what. You aren't sure of all the facts, but you've heard that even famine-stricken countries usually produce plenty of food, it's just that the poor can't afford to buy it, so it's mostly exported. And wars often seem to be fought in areas with rich or potentially rich natural resources, and you wonder if that's the real reason for them taking place.

All in all, you have come to see that the world is dominated by profit, and that a relatively small number of people, the owners, benefit in terms of wealth and power. The way things are run, you decide, needs to be changed. You think about it a bit and, while you don't have anything like a full-scale plan in your mind, you do have some general ideas about how things should be arranged. There shouldn't be this division into the rich and everyone else, and people should not have to be employed by others. It might even be like the sports club where you help out: everybody mucks in and contributes in their own way, without there being a boss or wages. You still don't have a proper notion of what should replace what exists now, but the more you think about it, the more you become convinced that some new way of organising the world would be a big step forward.

Then one day, outside your local library, you see someone selling the *Socialist Standard* ...

**PAUL BENNETT**

## Too good to be true

*We are conditioned to accept the absurdities and contradictions that capitalism throws up.*

It is possible now to build a world where every single human being is adequately provided with the material means of a full and happy life in a truly meaningful democratic society; where there is no such thing as world hunger; where wars and armaments no longer exist; where all have access to the knowledge and information they desire and where the system of rich and poor, the brutal class system that alienates human beings from one another, is a historical memory.

Actually that statement is not correct. It is not possible to create such a world now because *one feature* essential in its creation does not exist. In order to

discern the missing element in a world of such promise it would be useful to examine the components that would be required to make a reality of what, from our present perspective, must seem like a dream world.

First we might look at the physical requirements of the world we are considering; is there the means, real or potential, to create the enormous quantities of food and other materials to provide sufficiency for all? To answer that question we must look at how wealth is produced now and how it would be produced in the world we are considering.

One thing is common to the



**“The terrible effects of breakdowns in the productive and distributive process clearly show that neither national identity or political labelling offers protection from global capitalism’s trade cycles.”**

production of wealth in whatever form of society we live in: it is produced from the resources of nature by human labour power whether, as in the past, by a human hand or, as now or in the future, by the most advanced technological means. However, the factors that currently determine what is produced and how it is distributed would differ fundamentally in the society we are considering from those that obtain today.

**Current economic crisis**

We could not make this point more graphically than by referring to the current chapter in the cyclic crisis which our present mode of production has thrown up.

These crises, which cause an intensification of poverty through unemployment and most often the restricting or slashing of vital public services, are an inevitable result of the *normal* capitalist way of organising the production and distribution of wealth. The terrible effects of these breakdowns in the productive and distributive process of what is increasingly a globally integrated system are usually, as now, world-wide and, given that the countries affected are governed by parties right across the political spectrum, from Right to Left clearly shows that neither national identity or political labelling offers protection from global capitalism’s trade cycles.

By looking briefly at ‘the Credit

Crunch’ – the media’s sobriquet for the latest in slumps – we can discern why millions of people have lost their jobs, why political parties are making policies out of which set of politicians will be least savage in cutting social welfare ‘benefits’ including health care and education. The wealth-producing equation (the providence of nature plus human labour power) is the same now as it was three or four years ago when, in capitalist terms, the economy was flourishing. As then, both the human factor and the material potential of nature remain available; there is no *physical* bar to full production not only to its previous levels but to the levels required to provide adequately for every human being on the planet within the system we are contemplating. Why then is there such a dramatic slowdown in the production of human needs which, in turn is expressed in massive increases of unemployment and poverty within the working class?

**Legal right**

The answer clearly is the motive currently underpinning the production of goods and services and that motive arises from the fact of ownership. Legally the great majority of the world’s

population have no right to the food, clothing and shelter they need in order to continue to exist as human beings. That sounds an utterly outrageous statement to make but it is quite clearly demonstrated by the fact that the means of life, the resources of nature, and the tools of production and distribution are legally owned by a relatively small minority class of people who generally enjoy rich lives of wealth and privilege based on the profits they extract from their ownership.

If you lived in an area of the world where death frequently occurs from malnutrition of lack of necessary

medication you would *know* that what is said in the foregoing is true. You would know that the victims of hunger and preventable disease are people who are unable to get the food or medicine they desperately need to sustain their lives not because the means to satisfy these needs are

not available but because they do not have the money to buy them.

In more politically and economically sophisticated countries such evidence is less evident. Nevertheless, the things that people need are directly or indirectly the property of the capitalist class and are released by way of sale with a view to profit. In other words, goods and services are produced in the form of commodities for the market and, generally, will not be produced if a viable market does not exist.

Obviously minority ownership of our means of life, either directly or through the state, could *not* form the basis of the politically and economically free society mooted at the beginning of this article. To achieve that it is necessary to abolish the legal framework on which minority ownership of our means of life is based; which means we need to bring about a democratic social revolution to get control of the law-making process vested in government.

Achieving control of government throughout the world for the purpose of establishing a system of common ownership in which everyone has the freedom to contribute their physical and mental skills to the production of the needs of their society and all have the right to freely avail of their individual needs will be a monumental task of

**“Legally the great majority of the world’s population have no right to food, clothing and shelter.”**



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political and social organisation. Its achievement will require a vast and willing effort in social co-operation on the part of humanity and yet looked at against our collective skills and wisdom it is a relatively simply job – always provided that we have the collective will to bring it about.

That collective will is the single factor we referred to at the commencement of this article; the single prevailing condition that stands between us and a world where civilised history will begin. A world without the greed and savage competition that breeds conflict, alienation and war; a world where our collective energies are directed to the nurture of ourselves and our planet. That collective will is the political consciousness that will bring about what we clearly define as Socialism.

#### The really hard bit

Most people today do not question the organisation and value systems behind the way we live. From an early age we learn that when we need something we have to pay for it either directly or indirectly or else, however

essential it is to our health or happiness, we have to do without it. At an early age we commence our 'education', a process orientated towards inculcating the beliefs and values of the world we live in; its morality, its inflexible system of social organisation and how to compete for a place in the pecking order.

Effectively we are conditioned to accept the absurdities and contradictions that capitalism throws up. In our daily relations with one another we can identify and condemn those contradictions but when, as we are now doing, it is suggested that we should consider another way of organising the affairs of humanity the armour of rejection too often comes into play; the belief that we who run the world for the capitalists cannot run a considerably less complicated and rational alternative world society for ourselves.

**“Collective will is the single factor that stands between us and a world where civilised history will begin.”**

The really hard bit is the beginning: simply considering that it might not be too good to be true.

**RICHARD MONTAGUE**



## Free is good

Journalist, broadcaster and author Libby Purves chose the day that the London *Evening Standard* became a free, give-away paper to launch an attack on the whole idea of people having free access to things. Under the headline “If the future’s worth having, it won’t be free”, she laid into the “internet generation” which “has grown up believing it can enjoy other people’s hard work for nothing. This has got to stop” (*Times*, 12 October).

We socialists would say that, on the contrary, “if we’re going to have to pay for everything, the future is not worth having”. The resources exist today to produce enough food, clothes, housing, transport and health care so that no one on the planet needs to starve or be malnourished, or go without clean water, or live in slums, or not have access to the medicines and treatment they need. Society could go over to the principle of “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs”, with everybody having access to what they need without having to pay in return for contributing what they can to the work of producing what is needed.

This, surely, is a better future than the continued application of the opposite principle of “can’t pay, can’t have”? Which means that in some parts of the world people die from starvation or easily preventable disease, or exist in shanty towns on the outskirts of big cities. And that, all over the world, most people are deprived of something which would improve their lives and which could easily be provided. Where we can’t build adequate public infrastructures or install anti-pollution technologies because it would “cost too much”.

And what is wrong with the “internet generation” taking for granted that “music, films, news, photographs, cartoons and carefully researched or creative prose” should be available for free? Isn’t this a sign that the money-wages-profit system that is capitalism has outlived its usefulness and perhaps also a sign of the beginning of a consciousness that it needs to be replaced by a system in which people have free access to what they need?

Purves is defending her vested interest as a royalty-reaping author. That’s understandable as, under capitalism, people need money to live and that’s how she gets hers. It might be thought, though, that as a public intellectual she’d be more broad-minded than to judge an economic system by whether or not it ensures her her chosen source of income.

In pleading her cause she goes back to the labour theory of property first put forward by John Locke in the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

“Content is not cost free. Writing is work. Musicianship involves cost and labour, art is not innately free, nor the infrastructure of news reporting. Until food, clothes, housing and transport are doled out free, content-makers need to be paid”.

And, according to her, the way to ensure this is through “intellectual property rights”, even if these are difficult, not to say impossible, to enforce in some cases.

But she does at least concede that if “food, clothes, housing and transport” were free - which will be the case in socialism - so should watching films or listening to music or reading a book, on the internet. As these will be too in socialism. The future is free.



# Debating the “S-Word”

*Is any word more over-used and misunderstood today than “socialism”?*

In the United States, the “S-word” appears in almost every other sentence uttered by Republicans, who depict the Democratic Party as marching – or at least creeping – towards socialism.

“Socialist” has replaced “liberal” in their vocabulary as an insult to hurl at political opponents, while the meaning remains unchanged as a term to indicate an advocate of government intervention in production and the social infrastructure.

Everything from Keynesianism to Communism (= state capitalism) falls under this blanket definition, which means that Republicans must feel terribly outnumbered by their socialist foes. If Republicans didn't seem to relish that paranoid feeling, which certainly helps to rally the Party faithful, we could point out to them that socialists are in fact a rather rare breed at this point in time. Although that would also require explaining how our concept of socialism has nothing in common with their understanding of the term.

Of course, if the distortion of socialism were limited to the world of Republican ideologues it would hardly matter – as their ideas are not taken all that seriously, even by themselves. But the fact is that many of the supposed proponents of socialism share that same mistaken view of what socialism means.

The controversy between the pro- and anti-socialists is just a sterile debate over the extent to which the government should “intervene” in the capitalist economy – with neither side advocating or even fathoming a *post-capitalist* society.

One recent example of how both sides share a common misassumption was a debate on the website of the *New York Times* regarding the topic: “What

is Socialism in 2009?” This mouthpiece of the capitalist class solicited the opinions of a small number of supposed experts, for the most part university professors.

Without exception, these reputable figures shared the notion that “socialism” fundamentally concerns an economic system in which the government plays a key role in production. Following this line of thought, any aspect of society involving government intervention, regulation or management can be described as “socialistic”. This allowed those experts to attach that adjective to everything from public health care and education to highways and the armed forces. Stretched to this point, the concept of socialism loses all meaning – it is used to describe too much and ends up elucidating nothing.

Some participants in the on-line debate did try to offer a more essential definition of socialism as “public ownership and/or control of the major means of production (mines, mills, factories, etc.) for the benefit of the public at large” or “central economic planning and public ownership of the means of production”. But even those more precise definitions are basically descriptions of state capitalist systems – not any sort of post-capitalist society that exists beyond production for profit.

None of the debate participants describe socialism as a money-free society where production is democratically organised to meet human needs, displacing today's production for the market. Nor did anyone even suggest that the state would have no room to exist in that class-free society of the future.

There are simply no points in common between our conception of socialism and the view of socialism that currently prevails – and with regard to the role of the state the views are in fact polar opposites.

Some might argue, then, that we should let the reformists and reactionaries twist around the word “socialism” to their heart's content, while choosing a different term to describe the new society we are aiming to realise – some word less marked by confusion.

Karl Marx used the word “Association” to indicate the society he envisaged as replacing capitalism. And this term is useful in terms of emphasizing how the members of that society will freely enter into production relations with each other to produce social wealth. One obvious drawback, not to be overlooked, is that it would be rather awkward to describe oneself as “Associator” or “Associatist”.

But even if the World Socialist Movement comes up with the perfect word to replace “socialism” it would not necessarily bring us any closer to our ultimate goal, for our task as socialists is to convince our fellow workers that capitalism has got to go and that there is in fact an alternative. One word alone, no matter how well chosen, cannot accomplish all of that. The key point is the concept or content of the future society as the solution to the social problems we face under capitalism, not the word used to indicate that new mode of production.

It may very well happen that a word other than socialism emerges out of the movement for the new money-free society. And it would be absurd in that situation to be a word-fetishist who clings to the word “socialism” as if it were the principle or concept itself.

But it is also quite possible that the growth of the revolutionary movement will breathe new life into the word socialism, freeing it from the connotations it has been burdened with by those who cannot see beyond capitalism.

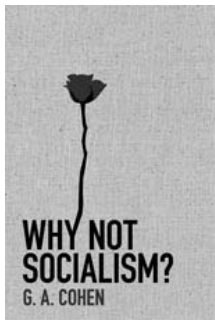
The task is the same in either case: revealing the limits and contradictions of capitalism and explaining how socialism (or whatever it may one day be called) resolves the problems that are irresolvable as long as that capitalist system prevails.

It is certainly annoying that the word “socialism” is almost invariably misused today, but the current over-use of the term may bring unexpected results, even encouraging the curious to begin pondering what a truly post-capitalist society could look like.

**MICHAEL SCHAUERTE**

**Market analyst**

**Why not socialism?** By G. A. Cohen. Princeton University Press, 2009.



This pocket-size 83-page book is easy to read and it's easy to agree with some of what the author writes. But it's hard to see him as he no doubt saw himself (he died in August just before

the book came out): someone who understands the different between capitalism and socialism.

First the positive things in the book. These mostly centre around Cohen's critical remarks about some aspects of capitalism: "I give as little service as I can in exchange for as much service as I can get: I want to buy cheap and sell dear". And although he favours market 'socialism' he does recognise how similar it is to market capitalism: "exchange under market socialism is no less market exchange than it is under capitalism".

Now the longer list of things to disagree with: "it is a familiar socialist policy to insist on equality of both income and hours of work". No, that isn't a socialist policy. In socialism there won't be (money) incomes or insistence that we all work the same hours.

Cohen claims that socialism is infeasible "even if people are, or could become, in the right culture, sufficiently generous, we do not know how to harness that generosity: we do not know how, through appropriate rules and stimuli, to make generosity turn the wheels of the economy". In socialism we shall treat each other as fellow humans not as commodities. It has nothing to do with harnessing generosity or turning the wheels of the economy.

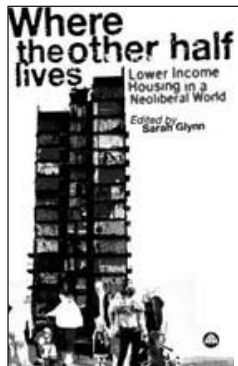
"Market socialism does not fully satisfy socialist standards of distributive justice, but it scores far better by those standards than market capitalism does, and is therefore an eminently worthwhile project, from a socialist point of view." No, it isn't.

To sum up, Cohen writes of "We socialists." But he should really say "We 'market socialists' who muddy the water about what socialism means..."

**SRP**

**Full House**

**Where the Other Half Lives: Lower Income Housing in a Neoliberal World.** Sarah Glynn, ed. Pluto Press £16.99.



Social housing (also known by various other names, especially council housing) has generally been aimed at workers on below-average incomes, though its

extent has varied from country to country. This book studies the effects on social housing of the implementation of 'neoliberal' policies, which involve the partial dismantling of the welfare state and of Keynesian government initiatives. Its particular strength is its coverage of developments in a number of countries.

In the UK the 1890 Housing Act made it easier for local authorities to build and manage houses, though these were still expected to make a profit. A further act of 1919 allowed for government subsidies but was seen as a temporary measure in the immediate post-war period. It was not until the mid-twenties that a major programme of building council houses began. Social housing has generally been regarded as subordinate to the private sector, and as too expensive for the very poorest, who were forced into privately-rented slums. Housing associations may have started as self-help organisations, but are now just part of the whole housing industry.

Social housing has been more widespread in Scotland than in England, and once housed over half the population. Stock transfers and demolitions, however, have drastically reduced this figure. A chapter on the recent situation in Dundee notes that only one-fifth of houses there are currently council-owned, there is a backlog of over six thousand homes, and only two hundred new council homes are built each year.

The proportion of home ownership in France is considerably lower than in Britain. In 2008, more than one million French people were classed as homeless and over two million as poorly housed, with six million

at risk of losing their homes for one reason or another. As might be expected, the US has never had more than a marginal role for social housing. Under neoliberalism, even this has been scaled back, with houses demolished and tenants given vouchers that can be accepted by private landlords, but inevitably private rents are driven up and people are forced to live further out in cities.

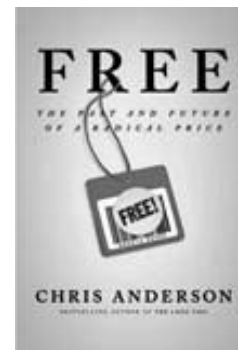
Of course there have been various forms of resistance, such as rent strikes and the tent cities set up in Paris and other French towns. Sadly, these can do little to alter the fact that under capitalism, whatever the role of social housing and the state, decent and secure housing is unavailable to large numbers of workers. Neither Keynesian nor neoliberal policies can deliver good-quality affordable homes. And a lot of council housing is shoddy and badly-designed.

In our review copy one batch of pages was bound upside-down. Possibly an unintended comment on the topsy-turvy priorities of housing under capitalism.

**PB**

**Free**

**Free. The Future of a Radical Price.** By Chris Anderson. Random House. 2009. £18.99.



"What happens when advances in technology allow many things to be produced for more or less nothing? And what happens when those things are then made available

to the consumer for free?" asks the publicity for this (paying) book by the editor of *Wired*. His answer is not that this is the beginning of some sort of transition towards a system where eventually all goods and services will be available free of charge (which it isn't anyway). It's that profit-seeking enterprises involved in these things have to adopt, have adopted and will increasingly adopt, a different marketing strategy.

Thus, enterprises in that line of business can choose to give away free DVDs and charge for DVD-players or they can give away free DVD-players

and charge for DVDs, in either case covering their costs and making a profit.

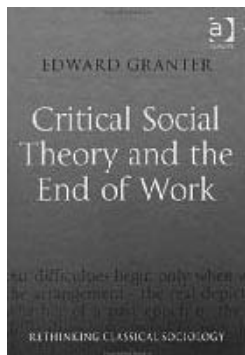
It is, as Anderson explains, a modern version of the strategy adopted by saloon owners in New Orleans in the 1880s. They offered customers free lunches banking on them buying drinks priced so as to cover the cost of the lunches. Hence the saying “there’s no such thing as a free lunch”. Today – and it will be the case as long as capitalism lasts – there’s no such thing either as a free DVD or a free paper or a free mobile. Those giving them away will be recuperating the cost from something else that they are selling.

Still, it can’t be bad that there are books discussing things being free.

**ALB**

## End of work?

**Critical Social Theory and the End of Work. By Edward Granter. Ashgate, 2009. £55.**



The main theme of this book (adapted from a PhD thesis) is that work is being eliminated through the use of advanced production technology.

The Critical Social Theory in the title refers to the publications of the Frankfurt School (notably Adorno, Horkheimer, Lowenthal and Marcuse) but the views on work of other critical social theorists such as Marx and Gorz are also included.

Sensibly Granter devotes a few pages to definitions of work, but the results are disappointing. The author wastes space telling us that someone thinks work is “picking something up and putting it down somewhere else because you have to”. Gorz is more helpful in pointing out that “work’ nowadays refers almost exclusively to activities carried out for a wage”. Curiously Granter writes of work hundreds of times but hardly mentions employment. He doesn’t seem at all clear that although all employment involves work, not all work is employment.

The chapter on utopians and the end of work summarises what More, Fourier and the little-known Etzber had to say on the subject. Apparently Etzber though that the

‘powers in nature’ (wind, solar, tidal energy) could be developed to replace all human labour. The two pages devoted to William Morris correctly note that his *News From Nowhere* was a reaction to Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, but the fail to convey much of the richness of Morris’s imagination about what work will be like in socialist society.

Granter’s discussion of Marx quotes from no less than 14 of his works and the author believes there are “many Marxisms”. He confuses the issue by referring to “the erstwhile superpower that many saw as operating on Marxist principles...” It is also misleading to say that “The idea of the end of work is at the centre of Marx’s vision of a future society...” Granter is however on stronger ground when he writes that Marx was not in any way against work and did advocate its “radical transformation”.

Prior to a short concluding section, the final chapter is about globalisation and work. This is by far the most opinionated and forceful chapter, offering the most devastating critique of capitalism. Starting with Marx’s “It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connection everywhere,” Granter goes on to show that the impetus for globalisation “comes primarily from the need of the expanding capitalist system to maximise profit”. The worst victims are Britain’s underpaid, easy to sack, second class workforce of migrant labour, ‘a world of gangmasters, zero hour contracts, the minimum wage [or less] and eventually no employment rights.’

**SRP**

## Workers’ education

**Plebs. By Colin Waugh, Post-16 Educator. 221 Firth Park Road, Sheffield S5 6WW. £3**

This large-size pamphlet is misleadingly subtitled ‘The lost legacy of independent working-class education’, giving the impression that it deals with a larger subject than it actually does. As an account of the Ruskin strike of 1909, it is a useful summary, giving extensive background to the decision of the highly politicised Ruskin students to boycott lectures in defence of Dennis Hird, the Principal dismissed in the struggle to extend University control over the college. There is a section on the influence of Daniel De Leon

on some of the students and on the choice of the word “Plebs” (from his pamphlet *Two Pages of Roman History*).

However, rather more information would have been appreciated as to the results of the strike – namely the establishment of the Central Labour College as a radical alternative to Ruskin and what became the National Council of Labour Colleges as a riposte to the Workers Education Association. The fate of these organisations, namely withdrawal of funds by the trade unions, is particularly important because the author asserts a need for ‘independent working class education’ in the present day. We in the Socialist Party agree that it is necessary to understand all aspects of capitalism in order to bring about social change but point out that such education cannot be the work of defensive organisations such as trade unions but must be part and parcel of the work of the offensive political organisation of the working class.

**KAZ**

## Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



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## Meetings

### London Winter Film Programme

Sundays at 6pm at 52 Clapham High St. London SW4

13 December: *Earthlings* (Animals and economic interests - 95 mins)

17 January: *Manufacturing Consent* (part one) (Noam Chomsky & the Media)

31 January: *Manufacturing Consent* (part two)

### London

Tuesday 15 December, 8pm  
CAPITALISM AND THE ARCTIC  
DVD of talk by Glen Morris of Arctic Voice  
Committee room, Chiswick Town Hall,  
Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube:  
Chiswick Park).

Tuesday 22 December, 7.30pm  
WEST LONDON BRANCH SEASONAL  
SOCIAL

Barley Mow, Chiswick High Road, W4  
(opposite Boots).

EAST ANGLIA

Saturday 12 December. 12noon to 4pm  
Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec St.

Norwich.

#### ADVANCE NOTICE:

Debate with Dr Eamonn Butler of the Adam  
Smith Institute

Thursday, 4th February, 2010 at 7.00pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

WC1

#### Picture Credits

p2: Bill and Melinda Gates - www.  
houstonwehaveproblems.com

p5: Fromm - www.makara.us

p10: Tramp sketch: Marie Chesham (SPGB)

p11: Rough sleeper - www.mungos.org

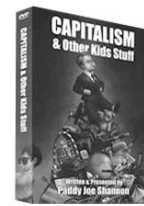
p12: Homeless woman - bestredunderthebed.  
wordpress.com

p13: Man with food - www.uncdf.org

p15: Arbeit macht frei - Jim Haygood (WSPUS)

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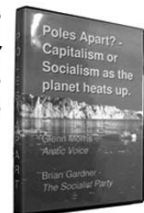
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## Second thoughts



"Yesterday's Enemy" is a recently-produced British film about the British army fighting the Japanese in Burma during the last war. A review in the *Daily Herald* (14.9.59) describes a sequence in it: —

"A British captain . . . has captured an informer who, he believes, has vital knowledge of a forthcoming Japanese attack. He threatens the informer with death, but the informer thinks the captain is bluffing and refuses to talk. The captain picks two villagers at random and orders them to be shot. The informer still refuses to talk. The villagers are shot—and then the informer breaks down. The captain has his information."

The captain follows up his murder of two innocent villagers by having the informer shot, as well.

Remembering the propoganda with which we were spoon-fed in the last war, about how we were fighting for decency and humanity against the brutality of the other side, you might think

that nothing like this could ever have been done by anyone in the British army. But not a bit of it. Major-General A. J. H. Snelling, who was with the 14th Army in Burma said: "I believe incidents like this did happen during the grim retreat." General Sir Douglas Gracey said: "I heard of similar incidents . . . These awkward situations did arise." Major-General H. L. Davies said: "This film is absolutely real and authentic." A fourth high-ranking officer, General Sir Robert Mansergh, was due to speak the film's praises at its New York premiere.

Very honest of them, now, fourteen years after the war has ended. And no one alleges that war can be fought with clean hands. But why did the politicians and generals tell us throughout the war that all the brutality was on the other side?

(From "The Passing Show" by Alwyn Edgar, *Socialist Standard*, December 1959.)

## 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.



# BNP – Question Time Without Answers

WE WERE promised that it would be as entertaining and as cleansing as a mediaeval execution, with the prisoner ritually humiliated then swiftly finished off by the muscular man with the axe. But the BBC's *Question Time* on 29 October last was less watchable than that because, while condemned man Nick Griffin of the British National Party was surprisingly unprepared for the predictable lines of attack on him, his appointed tormentors on the panel – like Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Jack Straw and Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman Chris Huhne – were similarly feeble. The announcement that the BBC had invited Griffin to take part in the programme provoked a storm of protest avowedly because the BNP, for its racism and nostalgia for the Holocaust, is in the line of descent from the Nazis. If that argument had been sustained, it would have provided ammunition enough to liquidate Griffin but in the event what was substituted was little more than a sample of mob hysteria. Perhaps that suited the purposes of the BBC, embarrassed by the protests and anxious to validate their anti-fascist credentials. It would also explain why Question Master David Dimbleby ran the event with no pretence at being impartial; indeed, by confronting Griffin with inconvenient quotes and facts he emerged as something like the BNP's most effective opponent. Which means that, as an example of the frustration of rabble politics, the programme left us with some unanswered questions.

## Fascism

The programme was not at all helpful in answering questions about the nature of the BNP. To begin with, Griffin denies that it is fascist – just as groups like the Union for British Freedom and the British League of Ex-Servicemen, which in the immediate post-war years sprang from the ruins of Mosley's British Union of Fascists, argued that fascism was out of date when their concept of the future lay with European Union. Griffin also shows symptoms – in public at any rate – of an unclear attitude to racism. In 1993 the BNP Deputy Leader agreed that "We are 100 percent racist, yes" but this policy has been somewhat modified by Griffin into "ethno nationalism" – which in other circumstances, bearing in mind the reputation of some BNP members, could be as menacing as a "final solution". Discussing the Holocaust, Griffin is on record as concluding that "...the 'extermination' tale is a mixture of Allied wartime propaganda, extremely profitable lie, and latter witch-hysteria" – the kind of statement the origins of which, under pressure from Dimbleby, he said he could not understand. The common thread in all this apparent confusion is Griffin's policy of trying to improve the BNP's electoral prospects by modifying their more extreme tendencies, for example the policy of enforced repatriation has become voluntary incentives for

**Andrew Brons and Nick Griffin**

immigrants and their descendants to return home" .

## Elections

As things stand, he can claim some success. The BNP has the organisation to nominate hundreds of candidates in local elections; in 2007 there were 754 of them and at the end of that year after resignations, expulsions and the like, they held 42 seats. In May 2008 they won a seat in the London Assembly and in last year's Euro Elections Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons polled enough votes to see them elected – which apart from other things led to Griffin being invited to take part in *Any Questions*. Unsurprisingly, the BNP gained from the Westminster expenses scandal, which encouraged outraged voters to look outside the established parties in the unsupported belief that somewhere, somehow there were others who would behave differently if they were in power. And that goes some way to explain the appeal of the BNP and to what success they have so far had – the impression they promote that, among the turmoil and cupidity of the other parties they alone make themselves aware of the complaints and concerns in the everyday, persistent struggles of the working class. In April 2006 Margaret Hodge, MP for Barking (a paid-up, devoted member of the New Labour Islington Tony Blair Fan Club) told the *Sunday Telegraph* that 8 out of ten white workers in her constituency may be tempted to vote for the BNP in the coming local elections – because "no one else is listening to them" about unemployment, high house prices and the like. She was strongly criticised for these remarks, which may have been linked to her helpful advice to some sacked MG Rover workers to look for jobs at the local Tesco. Meanwhile the BNP saluted their success in winning 12 of the 13 seats they contested by gratefully delivering her a bunch of roses. The only valid response to this evidence of the poisonous results of combining political confusion with prejudice was that the last thing needed by workers in their struggles is advice or sympathy from politicians.

## Lies

The other members of the *Question Time* panel – and a clear majority of the audience – seemed to have proceeded from the assumption that if the BNP had a case it was too feeble – ill-constructed, chaotically developed, driven by malice – to be worth any serious attention. Instead, their comments were moulded from a mix of sweeping assertions and straightforward abuse, on the lines of the BNP being "...filthy, disgusting..." Perhaps this was their method of evading the truth that organisations like the BNP – discriminatory, repressive, as brutal as they wished to be – appeal to voters who are in despair at the manipulative impotence and deceit of the other parties. So Jack Straw sat blathering before the cameras in denial of his government's miserable failure to deal with the social scars of recession, poverty, crime and capitalism's persistent waste of human talents. He did not acknowledge that their making war on Iraq and Afghanistan was based on purposive lies. Their wretched failure invalidates the claims of all capitalism's political parties to be an effective opposition against the likes of the BNP. We have heard enough of such questions; we need some answers.

IVAN

# Voice from the Back

## End Of A Dream

Ever since the publication of his *Unsafe at Any Speed* in 1965 Ralph Nader has been the darling of radical circles in the USA. Here was a man who dared to question the power of such capitalist concerns as General Motors. He went on to found scores of progressive non-profit organisations. He even ran as a Green Party and later an Independent candidate for the President of the USA. On one occasion he even polled almost 3 million votes. Capitalism however is a resilient social system and his attempt at reforming capitalism has ended up with him looking to the capitalists to solve the problems. He is on tour at present to promote his first fictional book entitled *Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us*. This has led some of his former supporters to doubt his reasoning. "There is a poignancy in listening to Ralph Nader these days. Here is a man who, for the last 45 years, has hurled his body at the engine of corporate power. He's dented it more than anyone else in America. But he knows it's still chugging, even more strongly than ever. Nader understands that he's losing. He understands that we're losing—we who believe in democracy, we who care about justice. But if our only hope is with a handful of billionaires, we're in a lot worse shape than I thought." (*The Progressive*, 28 September)

## How About Socialism?

As the social problems of capitalism mount up its administrators have to be seen to be doing something. The usual drill in the past has been for world leaders to meet together usually in some splendid hotel or other, make pious noises about "something has to be done", pat each other on the back

and fly home first class in a glow of self-satisfaction. The most recent crisis of world hunger has occasioned another useless backscratching summit. "With food prices remaining high in developing countries, the United Nations estimates that the number of hungry people around the world could increase by 100 million in 2009 and pass the one billion mark. A summit of world leaders in Rome scheduled for November will set an agenda for ways to reduce hunger and increase investment in agriculture development in poor countries. What will drive the next Green Revolution? Is genetically modified food an answer to world hunger? Are there other factors that will make a difference in food production?" (*New York Times*,



26 October) The one factor that they have not taken in to consideration is not yet another summit at a higher and higher level, but a sump level meeting of the world's working class. Only by such a movement as the World Socialist Movement can men and women abolish for ever the madness of millions starving to keep a system of robbery and exploitation intact. The journalist asks the question "Are there other factors that will make a difference in food production?" Yes there is - world socialism and production solely for use! That is one issue that won't be discussed in Rome.

## Capitalism Is Gangsterism

Politicians and clergymen and even well-paid TV personalities will claim that the Middle East conflict has something to do with morality and justice and that it has nothing to do with crass consideration such as "making a couple of bucks" as Al Capone once famously said. "The British oil giant BP will today take control of Iraq's biggest oilfield in the first important energy deal since the 2003 invasion. The move has created uproar among local politicians invoking resentful memories of their nation's colonial past. The agreement to develop the Rumaila field, near the southern city of Basra, will potentially put Iraq on the path to rivalling the riches of Saudi Arabia within a decade — if the Government can fend off corrupt officials, continuing terrorist attacks on pipelines and political uncertainty." (*Times*, 3 November) Hey, Iraq workers may continue to live in poverty, so what, we can make a couple of bucks. That is how capitalism works, isn't it Al Capone?

## The New Gangsters

It used to be popular for supporters of the so-called Communist Party to decry Imperialism. They would point out how Britain had exploited Africa and India during their colonial conquests. Later on they would concentrate on the role of the USA in Central and South America. Changed days now with China investing heavily in all sorts of corrupt regimes throughout Asia and Africa. "Barely a fortnight after soldiers loyal to Guinea's military junta butchered at least 150 demonstrators calling for civilian rule, a deal for oil and mineral rights worth about \$7 billion has been struck between China and Guinea. ...It seems that China's commercial march across Africa will continue unabated, however vile the human-rights record of the government it seeks to befriend." (*Economist*, 17 October)

## Free Lunch

by Rigg

