

# socialist standard



April 2010  
Vol. 106 No. 1268  
£1.50

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



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One year subscription (normal rate) £15  
One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10  
Europe rate £20 (Air mail)  
Rest of world £25 (Air mail)  
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### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 10 April** 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

### Who are 'we'?

LISTEN TO almost anyone talking on the radio or television and when pontificating on the troubles and problems of the world, they all, without exception seem to default to the 'we' word.

Recently Gordon Brown, although frankly it could have been any of the party leaders, explaining how 'we' must make sacrifices and enter a new era of austerity if 'we' are to resolve the current economic crisis. On another programme, probably Sunday Worship or a similar few minutes of escapist ministry, it appeared again as the minister chastised his congregation saying how 'we' must not be selfish and how 'we' must think of others. It is astonishingly conveniently how the term 'we' can be substituted for the word that seems to have escaped all those who turn the ills of the world inward on themselves or their fellow men or women. The correct word is, of course, society; or probably, to be more precise, the existing society.

We human beings are not inherently selfish; we are not inherently warlike; we would not in a natural state of affairs allow children to starve, even singly, let alone in their thousands. We would not pollute and damage our oceans in the full knowledge that with-

in the next 30-40 years they would be almost devoid of edible fish. We would not cut down vast tracts of primary rain forests knowing that the loss of this forest will detrimentally affect the very planet we live on. We would not expend vast amounts of material and energy on the manufacture of devices whose sole purpose is to kill and maim other human beings, other 'we's'. It is so convenient to ascribe the hard-to-face, awful and terrifying things that are perpetrated throughout the world to an abstract 'we'. 'We' are not, as individuals, responsible for these ills and the sooner, when referring to what is wrong with this system, the word 'we' is dropped and replaced with 'this society' then perhaps all those poor people who after slogging hard at work all day and who are made to feel wretched and guilty and who are accused of contributing, through their avarice, greed and selfishness, to almost every shortcoming of this obsolete and dangerous society, the better.

If 'we' can be used to good effect it will be when 'we' realize the wonderful and great future humanity could achieve if 'we' united and stopped voting for left or right politics and voted for a new politics, straight ahead politics – true world socialism.



# FREE

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## All Quiet in the Western Front Room

Pathfinders, in defiance of its own dire warnings against making predictions, predicts that watching too much BBC iPlayer will lead directly to a net fall in wages. Oh yeah, how come? Well, see if you can fault this logic. Currently, according to Microsoft's own possibly somewhat self-serving trends analysis (*EUROPE LOGS ON. European Internet Trends of Today and Tomorrow*, [Microsoft.com/documents/uk](http://Microsoft.com/documents/uk), April 2009), while all patterns of media consumption are flat or, in the case of DVDs, declining, internet use is climbing inexorably. TV consumption at 11.5 hrs pw is set to be outstripped by internet use at 14.2 hrs pw by June 2010. There are of course a variety of reasons for this, among them people's mania for buying and selling mostly useless tat (eBay) and reading and writing mostly useless tittle-tattle (blogs, Facebook etc).

Still, one can't be too curmudgeonly about a social trend that connects people more than they've ever been connected in living memory, especially if it gets them off the front room sofa too. People are eschewing the traditional sit-down-and-slurp-it-up TV diet in favour of an a-la-carte and on the move eclecticism. Microsoft estimates that one in seven in the digital native age range 18-24 watch no live TV at all.

This is affecting not only the pattern of what is being watched and when, but where. Increasingly the viewing audience is lounging in its bedroom with a laptop, so what does this mean for the lonely and neglected TV in the now rarely occupied front room? Do the householders succumb to the blandishments of TV manufacturers and buy yet more and bigger flat-screens, and soon to be had 3D TVs? Maybe, but probably not in this economic climate. Instead, the TV goes on eBay with the rest of the junk and the front room stands ready for other purposes. The creative householder, mindful of the high cost of housing and the consequent demand for rented rooms, now decides to turn the vacant room to good account by sub-letting it. Thus, cyberspace turns TV space into living space.

What happens? The sudden availability of rented accommodation creates a downward pressure on rents and also on housing demand and house prices. Seeing that workers are now paying less to live under a roof and therefore are being paid just that little bit too much, employers will put the squeeze on wages until they in turn show a net fall.

Dare one go on? Increased friction between workers and employers, together with all this networking, media choosiness and increased domestic sociability will lead directly to an upsurge in political class consciousness and the emergence of a new revolutionary – oh, but wait, it's time for the pills again....

All this tireless internet activity has also, of course, raised the hypothetical question: what if somebody sabotages it? The House of Lords EU Home Affairs sub-committee, charged with the task of investigating this question, has

reported that the UK is very well placed to withstand a cyber-attack from persons unknown (China) or rogue states (China) or criminal masterminds (China). "Last year the UK government staged a simulation of a catastrophic nationwide failure of the phone network, codenamed operation White Noise" ('UK can cope with cyber attack, says Lords committee', *BBC Online*, 18 March). The phone networks promptly fell over each other's feet in a straggly attempt to recover from this, however the fact that the UK did this experiment before the EU is what entitled the sub-committee to claim that the UK is 'ahead' in its war against non-specific cyber-crime (China) and thus claim a victory rather than a sprawling mess for Operation White Noise (Yellow Peril). Why all this paranoia? you ask. What evidence is there to suggest that persons unknown (China) are really expending every effort to bring down western civilisation, especially given that they already own most of its financial institutions? Well, the

evidence is cold-war logic: our spooks are doing it to them, so they must be doing it back.

Meanwhile, once again fortified with reality pills, Pathfinders wonders whether the odd internet shut-down would be so terrible anyway. According to Microsoft only 30 percent of internet traffic involves commerce while 65 percent is instant messaging and social networking. If nobody could text their friends for 24 hours they might regain all feeling in their thumbs and rediscover the art of conversations longer than four sentences but may otherwise be entirely unharmed.

It seems barely a moment since the capitalist state fretted over the internet's ability to undermine its power, and now here it is fretting over somebody's ability to pull the plug. Among the several measures being suggested for emergency communications during a cyber shut-down the boffins seem to have overlooked a tried and tested system that would get us all out in the open air and partying – bonfire beacons on every hillside from coast to city, just in case the Chinese send over a gunboat. Instant messaging plus roasted chestnuts. Well, it made Napoleon think twice.



## Climate sceptics pass ID test

Those who think there is an element of doubt about human-caused climate change are of course correct, because there is always an element of doubt in science, and always will be. This does not mean, however, that there is an evenly balanced controversy or an equal weight of evidence on both sides. In all sciences apart from mathematics it is usually impossible to provide categorical proof of anything. Pseudoscientists exploit this lack of certainty to insinuate their own bogus ideas into the public consciousness, demanding in the name of free speech the right to air these 'controversies'.

This underhand tactic is familiar in the evolution versus intelligent design battle, and lately is becoming depressingly common in the climate change debate too, as the circle of professional (oil-company-backed) deniers becomes steadily more isolated and desperate. Coincidental then that in Texas the pro-ID lobby are now moving to align ID with climate change denial, in order to shoehorn the former back into school text books on the basis of the supposedly more respectable latter ('Battle over climate science now spreads to US schoolrooms', *New Scientist*, 13 March). Socialists must be on their guard against the misrepresentation of supposed controversies. Just because there is a Flat Earth Society doesn't mean there is legitimate doubt about the shape of the planet. Pseudoscience isn't just cranky, it's downright dangerous. The MMR scare persuaded parents to disregard the scientific consensus and refuse to vaccinate their children, exposing them to risk, while tourists to Asia returned suffering from malaria because they believed their homeopathic remedies would protect them. Pseudoscience is an unscrupulous and dishonest fast-buck industry, and reacts to defeat by changing its argument, as with the recent MMR class action in the US. "They keep moving the goalposts", remarks one scientist, "It's the hallmark of pseudoscience" ('Victory for vaccines', *New Scientist*, 20 March). Workers need their wits about them, because capitalism is always finding ingenious ways to stitch them up.

## Opportunity

Dear Editors

I am writing to you because never in my lifetime has there been as great an opportunity for Socialism to win the hearts and minds of the people than exists today - thanks mainly to the blundering ineptitudes of our crypto Fascist prime minister and his government.

I suggest below a message you might consider sending out by email as well as being given out in pamphlet form on street corners - not just in the poor deprived areas but in the university towns and up-market suburbs.

**"THIS IS NEW LABOUR BRITAIN TODAY**

An immovable head of state.

A media that can be controlled and manipulated on all and any matters of state.

A massive police force, especially a secret police force which is given almost unlimited powers. Where every resident is registered on a police computer and where one either is, or can be, watched by a multitude of cameras: where police are allowed to secretly plant listening devices and micro TV cameras in one's home. Where the police can smash your door down, arrest you and hold you in prison for 28 days without any explanation or charge.

An effectively one party state, achieved by having three parties to give the appearance of choice, but which, given even the most cursory investigation, proves that all have the same basic political agenda - a capitalist, class-ridden, monarchy.

A method of taxation favouring indirect taxation (VAT) over income tax thus creating a situation where the tax raised as a percentage of income is greater for the poorer classes than it is for the wealthier. A system which will also allow generous tax escapes for the very wealthy by legalising off-shore trusts, blind trusts etc.

A country run primarily for and on behalf of the banks and major international financial conglomerates.

Rule being maintained by a small cabal presided over by a leader who is in fact, in total and dictatorial control due to a Parliament whose sole duty is to be a smokescreen to cover the real truth of where governmental power resides and to 'rubber stamp' through the decisions of the ruling junta.

The maintenance of statutes forbidding any Parliamentary or other serious discussion as to any

change to the automatic placement of royalty as the head of state, thus maintaining the status quo which in turn blocks any improvement to our political structure.

The blocking of minority political groups to gain access to any section of the mass media, thereby not allowing the general public any proper knowledge of alternative political systems and structures.

The lack of independence of the judiciary from the administration: a clear sign of Fascism.

In summary, a system of government which by covert manipulation of all media outlets, and misleading the public into believing it is ruled by a democratic system, when in fact it is a monolithic government of, for, and by the wealthy and powerful, is to all practical intents and purposes, a description of a government run on Fascist lines. That is New Labour under Gordon Brown

For real, democratic change  
**DEMAND A SOCIALIST  
GOVERNMENT"**

**David Lee (by email)**

**Reply:** We agree that the present political setup is undemocratic in the ways you describe but don't think "fascist" is the right word as it is not as bad as in the pre-war Fascist countries. We are, for instance, allowed to publish this journal - and others theirs -, hold meetings and contest elections even if the odds are stacked against us. What exists in Britain is a limited and distorted political democracy where, as you say, the government does indeed act in the interests of the wealthy few.

We agree too that this should be a good time to get across the point that capitalism is obviously failing to meet people's needs. Which is what we are doing all the time and will be stepping up during the elections, especially in the constituency we're contesting (Vauxhall in London). The leaflets we will be distributing are published elsewhere in this issue.

We don't use the term "socialist government" since governments exists to run capitalism and a

government composed of our members would be no more able to make capitalism serve the common good than can New Labour, the Tories, the Lib Dems, the Greens or Old Labour. We prefer to talk simply of socialism - the common ownership and the democratic administration of the means of production. And, given the international nature of capitalism - as the current world economic crisis has underlined - we don't think socialism can be established in just one country but has to be worldwide - *Editors.*

## Not just technical

Dear Editors

I agree with Pathfinders (February issue) that 'socialists should applaud and encourage the efforts of Peter Joseph and Zeitgeist activists everywhere to popularise the ideas of non-market production for use...'

But there are some differences, as Pathfinders point out. Zeitgeisters believe that 'Technology is the fundamental catalyst for progress and change.' Socialists argue that 'technology doesn't determine change but is both determined by and pro-active on underlying material conditions'.

In an 83-page publication, *The Zeitgeist Movement: Observations and Responses*, it is stated that 'The valued goals of the Zeitgeist Movement and hence the Venus Project are to redesign society for the benefit of all humanity, making sure (there is enough of everything for everyone, maximizing personal freedom and happiness, while constantly reducing offensive social behaviour or crime.' Nice sentiments for nice people! But not too strong on clarity of meaning, and not much help in telling the difference between a market society (capitalism) and a non-market society (socialism).

It is worrying that the word 'democracy' appears nowhere in the publication quoted. Instead we read 'When we understand that our problems on this planet are *technical*, we then see that if any group of people were to be considered as qualified to make decisions about anything, they would naturally *technically and thus objectively focused...*' (emphasis in original). 'Now the rôle humans will play within the high-tech, cybernetic, automated industrial phase of the future will be that of *supervisors* and nothing more.' Socialists who like the kind of high-tech, complex (dare I say inhuman?) life may drink to that picture of the future. But I don't and

**Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory**



**The Socialist Standard  
examines their case**



# Socialism: A Class Interest or a Human Interest?

SOMETIMES SOCIALISTS argue for socialism as being in the interest of the working class. Sometimes socialists say that socialism is in the interest of humanity as a whole. Surely there is a logical contradiction here? What about the capitalist class? Is socialism in their interest too, or is it not?

I see no real contradiction. After all, what is an “interest”? The dictionaries, rather unhelpfully, tell us that an interest is a benefit or advantage. Short-term benefit or long-term? Self-perceived advantage or advantage in some objective sense? How we understand all these words depends on how we view human beings, on what we think makes them happy or miserable.

Clearly, the great majority of capitalists do consider it in their interest to preserve – and, indeed, expand – their wealth and all the privileges that go with it. What many of them value is not so much a life of luxury and indulgence (some prefer to live modestly) as power and superior status, the sensation of towering way above the common herd (see: “Why they keep piling up manure: the psychology of wealth accumulation,” *Material World, Socialist Standard*, October 2009).

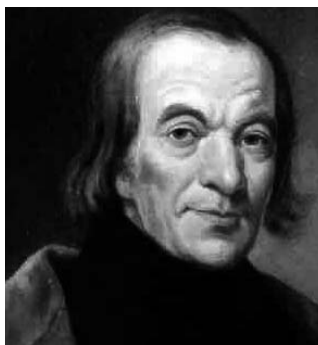
## Socialist capitalists

However, a minority of capitalists have been socialists. Some have made important contributions to the socialist movement. The best known is Friedrich Engels, the friend and collaborator of Karl Marx. Before Marx and Engels there was Robert Owen, whose ideas had enormous influence on socialist thinking and are still relevant today. There are quite a few others.

Did these socialist capitalists see themselves as altruists sacrificing their own interests for the sake of higher ideals? Or did they think that socialism *was* in some sense in their own interest? No doubt the answer varies from case to case.

For the writer and artist William Morris, or the writer and playwright Oscar Wilde (who inherited substantial property though he died in abject poverty), the most important things in life were beauty and creativity. From this point of view, they regarded the replacement of capitalism by socialism as being in the interest of everyone, regardless of class. In his essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), Oscar Wilde wrote:

“The possession of private property is very often extremely demoralising... In fact, property is really a nuisance. It involves ... endless attention to business, endless bother... In the interest of the rich we must get rid of it... [Under socialism] nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things.”



all dead.” In other words, the fate of future generations counts for nothing.  
**Left and below left: ‘socialist capitalists’ Friedrich Engels and Robert Owen; above: Oscar Wilde and William Morris; below: John Maynard Keynes**

## The interest in human survival

The emergence of weapons of mass destruction and the ecological crisis have radically changed the calculus of interests. There is now a very material sense in which all people and classes have a common interest in socialism as the sole means of ensuring the survival of the human race.

Unfortunately, the common interest in human survival does not eliminate the difference between the real interest of humanity and the working class and the perceived interest of the capitalist class. The interest in human survival is a relatively long-term interest, while capitalists tend to focus on the short term. This tendency was reflected in a famous riposte that the economist John Maynard Keynes once made to an argument about the long term: “In the long run we are

all dead.” In other words, the fate of future generations counts for nothing. In the short term the working class bear the brunt of environmental degradation, while those who are the most responsible for causing it are the best protected from its effects. It is working class areas that are exposed to chemical and radioactive pollution from mining operations, factories, toxic waste dumps and other sources. The capitalists maintain their country estates in idyllic, unspoilt surroundings – although even they cannot escape the ultraviolet rays that penetrate through holes in the ozone layer. In the imaginary future world of Alexander Zinoviev’s *The Human Anthill*, nature survives only in small enclaves that people must pay to enter, the price being such as to exclude all but the wealthy.

## Interests and interests

So there are interests and interests. In several very important senses, socialism is certainly in the interest of every human being. In other senses socialism remains above all in the interest of the working class. Both aspects of the matter require emphasis. There is no conflict between them.

**STEFAN**

## Q What is Common Ownership?

Quite simply, the common ownership of the world's resources and productive capacity is the basis for a reorganisation of society that would ensure plenty of the necessities of life for everyone on the planet – no more starving, malnourished people, no wandering homeless, no senseless deaths for the want of easily affordable medical care and medicine, no more poverty, unemployment, or inequality. How can this be so? Surely, if it were possible to eliminate these scourges we would have done it long ago. Aren't we working on these problems anyway?

At present we live in a world where the resources of the Earth and the products made from them, the processes needed to make them, and the transportation systems to get them to you, are all owned by private individuals. A company proposes to extract resources or manufacture commodities. It needs money in order to do this. Wealthy people loan the company the necessary capital, but they don't do it for nothing. They will expect a healthy return on their money every year of say, 10 percent, or £100 000 on every million pounds loaned. If this return is below expectations, then the lenders will withdraw their funds and look somewhere else to invest.

This puts every enterprise in a competition for capital to fund their operations and for expansion. Thus all companies must compete and strive to do whatever is necessary to create profit to pay dividends to lenders. If a company fails in this, capital will dry up and production will stop, rendering its physical assets as junk or sold at a fraction of their value, and its employees will be out of work. In other words, commodities are only produced for the purpose of profit or they are not produced at all.

The profits go to a tiny minority of big investors of capital to enhance their already vast fortunes that allow them to live in luxury while contributing no work whatsoever.

We believe that the Earth's resources are the common heritage of all mankind and should be managed for the benefit of all. Those resources are easily abundant enough to feed, clothe, and house everyone on earth and provide medical care, education and everything else necessary to ensure a full and happy life for every one.

The establishment of common ownership would eliminate the competition for resources and for capital. It would eliminate production for profit. It would eliminate the need for states and their central governments that exist to serve today's competitive system. It would even eliminate the need for money and trading as goods and services would be produced solely to meet the needs of humans who would have free access to those goods and services, taking them as needed. Competition would be replaced by cooperation, eliminating conflict and war and because everybody and therefore no one person or group would own the means of producing wealth, everyone would stand equal to the powers of production – no owners and non-owners, no exploiters and exploited, no employers and employed, and therefore, no classes.

Today, this is quite obviously not the case. We have constant conflict and war, vast inequality, poverty, malnutrition, starvation and deprivation amid wealth and plenty. Workers produce all the wealth in the world and perform all the work, yet are only allowed to take home a small share of that wealth to enable them to exist so they can show up at work the next day to produce more profit that goes to the already wealthy. And they are only allowed to do so at the whim of that tiny minority of owners.

Today, nobody starves or goes hungry because we lack food. Nobody is homeless because we lack building materials or builders, nobody lives in poverty because we lack wealth. People suffer these scourges because they are unable to pay and thus realize a profit for some enterprise or other. In one fell swoop, in one simple action, production for profit could be replaced with production to satisfy the needs of all.



## Tiny Tips

Most of today's African fighters are not rebels with a cause; they're predators. That's why we see stunning atrocities like eastern Congo's rape epidemic, where armed groups in recent years have sexually assaulted hundreds of thousands of women, often so sadistically that the victims are left incontinent for life. What is the military or political objective of ramming an assault rifle inside a woman and pulling the trigger? Terror has become an end, not just a means:

<http://tinyurl.com/yj6jbqr>

Megamansions With an estimated billion-dollar cost, Mukesh Ambani's under-construction 27-story Mumbai skyscraper eclipses previous records for the world's most expensive homes. No two floor plans for the inside of the lavish tower -- known as Antilla--are alike and each space uses different materials, such as one bathroom's Ginkgo-leaf sinks with stems guiding the running water into their leaf basins. In the U.K., Russian-Israeli diamond magnate Lev Leviev owns the Palladio, an extravagant 17,000-square-foot manor outside London, which he bought for \$65 million in January 2008. (That works out to \$3,824 per square foot.) The home has a bulletproof front door, a gold-plated pool, an indoor cinema and a hair salon for good measure:

<http://tinyurl.com/yzfax25>

It takes more than 4,000 gallons of water to make a \$20 bag of pet food. Researchers predict the end of cheap water around the corner:

<http://tinyurl.com/ycp2ym4>

A record number of people contacted a debt charity last year but about 160,000 of them were so poor they could not be helped:

<http://tinyurl.com/ygkqvlw>

It is no exaggeration to call this gendercide. Women are missing in their millions—aborted, killed, neglected to death. In 1990 an Indian economist, Amartya Sen, put the number at 100m; the toll is higher now.

<http://tinyurl.com/yl7glm5>

The World Health Organisation has estimated that around the globe up to 2.6 billion people – or a third of the world's population – do not have access to proper toilet facilities. More than half live in China and India. The UN's target for providing proper facilities for all people is 2015. Up to half a million people in India are engaged in what is termed "manual scavenging": cleaning toilets that have no sewage system and carrying away waste or "night soil" on their heads or in carts. The practice has been officially outlawed but persists because in many places there are no alternatives:

<http://tinyurl.com/ykqts65>

20+ African countries are selling or leasing land for intensive agriculture on a shocking scale in what may be the greatest change of ownership since the colonial era:

<http://tinyurl.com/yjd4b6d>



# Pieces together

## ALL RIGHT FOR SOME

"The Mexican telecoms magnate Carlos Slim Helu has been named the world's richest man, with a net worth of \$53.5 billion (£36 billion), the first time since 1994 that the top spot has been held by a non-American. The annual billionaires list published by Forbes magazine shows that the number of billionaires increased from 793 to 1,011" (*Times*, 11 March).

## DOUBLE EXPLOITATION

"More workers are taking on a second job to make ends meet. A survey for the law firm Peninsula suggested that the proportion having two jobs had risen from 26 to 28 per cent in the past year" (*Times*, 1 March).

## THE PRICE OF GARMENTS

"Several hundred people protested in Dhaka and Gazipur yesterday after locked gates were blamed for the death of 21 people in a fire at a Bangladeshi factory that made sweaters for H and M. Most of the victims of the blaze were women who suffocated on the top floor of the seven-storey Garib and Garib factory. The nephew of one of the victims said that the gates had been locked, trapping them. The National Garment Workers' Federation said: 'These workers were killed by the factory's blatant disregard for worker safety'" (*Times*, 27 February).

## THE INCOME GULF

"The President of Azerbaijan suffered embarrassment yesterday when it was reported that nine luxury mansions in Dubai worth millions of pounds had been bought in the name of his 11-year-old son. ... The Washington Post newspaper reported that they were bought in a two-week shopping spree last year for about \$44 million (£29 million) - 10,000 times the average annual salary in Azerbaijan" (*Times*, 6 March).

## CONSPICIOUS CONSUMPTION

"One of the many stresses of being a billionaire is the difficulty in choosing between purchasing a yacht or an island. Happily, designers this week unveiled plans for a 'moving island' that renders the conundrum redundant. Designs for WHY 58x38 were unveiled at the Abu Dhabi yacht show this week. ... The motor yacht is, as the name suggests, 58 metres long and 38 metres wide, providing a total guest area of 3,400 square metres, and weighs in at 2,400 tonnes. It boasts a maximum speed of 14 knots, and a price tag, when built, of \$160 million" (*Guardian*, 3 March).

## 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 8th and 22nd April, 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 (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

#### MIDLANDS

#### West Midlands Regional branch.

Meets every two months on a Sunday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615. Email: tonygluck111@btinternet.com

#### NORTHEAST

**Northeast branch.** Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690. Email 3491@bbarry.f2s.com

#### NORTHWEST

**Lancaster branch.** Meets every Monday 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380

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

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

**Cumbria.** Brendan Cummings, 19

Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

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Email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07906 373975

**Rochdale.** Tel: R. Chadwick.

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**West Lothian.** 2nd and 4th Weds in

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commonownership@yahoo.com.au

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**Socialiste du Canada.** Box 4280,

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Zealand.

**World Socialist Party of the United**

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02144 USA.

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# cooking the books

## More pain ahead?

“THE TRUE engine of job creation will always be America’s businesses”, declared President Obama in his State of the Union message (*Times*, 29 January). We don’t know about the “always” but will let him off because he presumably thinks that capitalism will always exist and, on this assumption, he is right. As long as capitalism lasts the engine of job creation will be business, not just in America but everywhere.

Not that the aim of businesses is to create jobs. That’s only incidental to their aim of making profits. Since profits arise out of the unpaid labour of those who actually provide wealth, making profits involves employing workers. In short, job creation is a by-product of profit-creation.

When business is booming, i.e. when good profits are being made, more jobs are created. But it works both ways. When business is not booming then jobs are destroyed and unemployment grows, as has been happening for the past couple of years. In recent months the economy (as measured by GDP) has begun to grow again slowly in the major capitalist countries, so employment should increase too. But will it? In America there’s talk of a ‘jobless recovery’

“in which GDP growth is not matched by a larger workforce as employers extract more labour from their existing employees rather than take on new recruits.” (*Times* 12 February).

That’s one way of describing increased exploitation for those with a job.

Obama went on “but government can create the conditions necessary for businesses to expand and hire more workers.” This in fact is the economic role of governments under modern capitalism: to try to create and maintain conditions for businesses to expand, i.e. to make more profits from which to accumulate more capital. It doesn’t always work and it brings governments into conflict with the majority wage and salary working class as it means giving priority to profit-making over meeting people’s needs. So, governments oppose strikes, urge (and sometimes impose) wage restraint, and cut back services to keep taxes down.

But can’t governments also “create jobs”? Yes. They can either directly by themselves taking on more workers or indirectly by increasing their spending on goods produced by businesses. This has eventually to be financed out of the wealth created in the business sector and so has its limits (if carried too far it reduces profit creation and so job creation too). In this sense government jobs are ultimately dependent on business activity.

In the present crisis the government has borrowed extensively to bail out the bankers. Sooner or later this borrowed money will have to be repaid. Given the limits as to how far taxes can be raised, this means the government cutting back on its spending. Already observers are suggesting that this could mean a ‘jobless recovery’ in Britain too, with GDP going up without unemployment going down. A report in February by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development “indicated a worsening outlook for workers and jobseekers, despite tentative growth in the economy”, and “said that there was more pain ahead for workers as savage cuts start in the public sector” (*Times*, 15 February).

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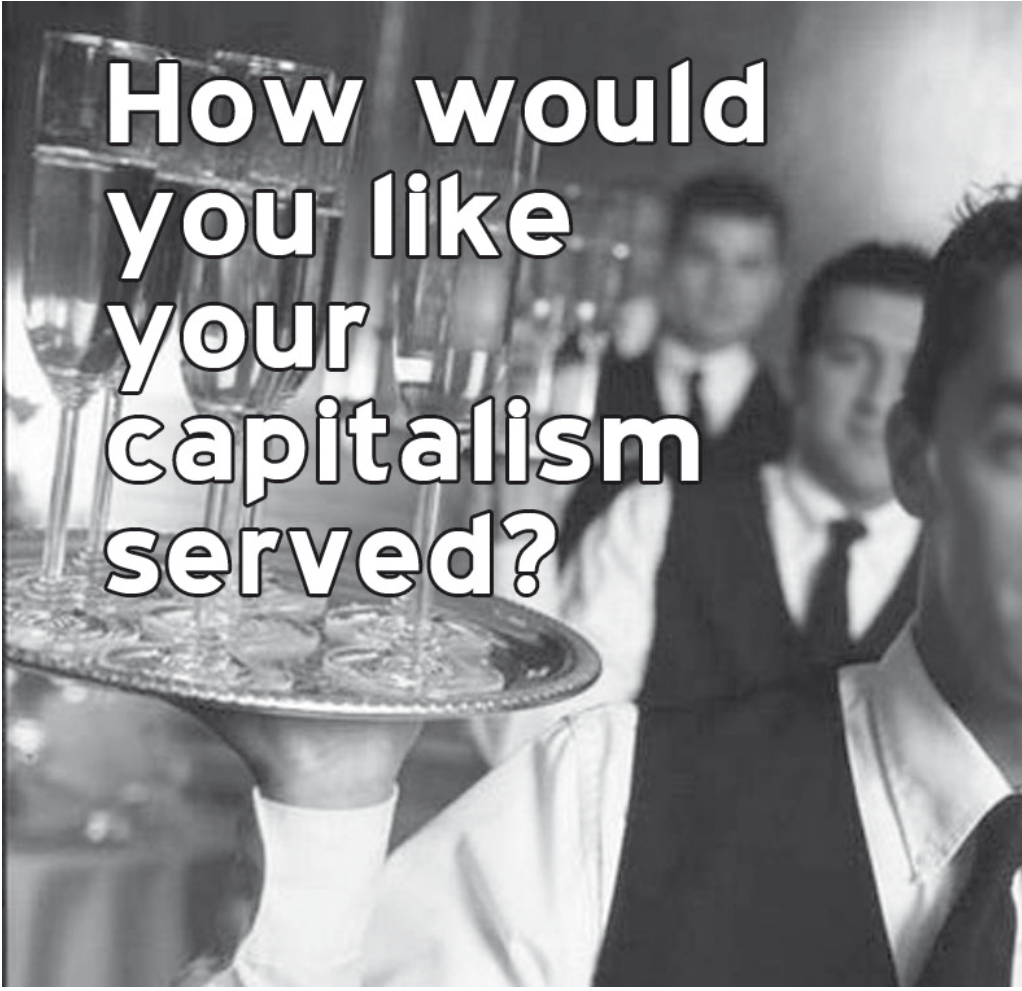
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# How would you like your capitalism served?



*That's the "choice" the main and minor parties are offering at the general election.*

**T**he basic global political, social and economic problems, such as inequality, poverty, homelessness, hunger, wars, and pollution have, as their root cause, capitalism. This system is founded upon production for profit to benefit only a very small, rich minority of the planet's population, at the expense of the majority.

In order to solve these problems, in the interests of the majority and in fact, ultimately in those of all the people, we need collectively and democratically to abolish capitalism and to replace it with the positive alternative of genuine socialism. That is to say, production for human need, with ownership and democratic control of the productive forces in the hands of the whole community.

At the General Election, the electorate will be confronted by a large number of political organisations seeking votes. Almost all of them will be the parties of capitalism's centre, right and left wings. These include the following: Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, UKIP, the Greens, BNP, Plaid Cymru, Scottish Nationalists, the Trade Union & so-called "Socialist" Coalition (TUSC).

Many other organisations will be fielding candidates, but this sample is large enough for our purposes

here. The range of views of these parties is wide, but although they mostly do not realise it, more unites them than separates them. They all support the capitalist system. Some openly admit this while others, on the Left, usually deny this reality. Upon closer inspection, we see that all their policies amount to is a list of reforms, generally in a vain attempt to make the existing system function "more efficiently" and in a more socially responsible way.



## **Labour**

At its inception, many of its members believed that they were

working for a quite different type of society which some would have described as being "socialist". Even now, despite the experience of past Labour governments and, especially this present one, there are still members who advocate what they describe as "socialism", but which, in reality amounts to a form of nationalisation, government intervention, in other words, state capitalism. The people who matter within the Labour Party, the leadership, want nothing to do with this. Their desire is to continue to run capitalism, under the utterly false notion that it can be controlled

and made to work in the interests of the majority. The experiences of the recent Credit Crunch and recession are the latest in a long list of examples of the falseness of Labour's position.

What is Labour now offering? It proposes: "investing now so we are best placed to take advantage of the upturn." This overlooks the deficit problem which the government faces. Private investment will only take place if a significant profit can be made. Like many apologists for the status quo, Labour talks of the "upturn". What they never mention is the next downturn. The reality of the market system is a natural trade cycle of booms and slumps, which cannot be effectively controlled by governments of any political colour.

As regards the military, Labour wishes to "ensure that forces personnel receive state of the art medical care when they are injured on operations" and to "proceed with the construction of two new aircraft carriers". Not surprisingly, Labour wishes to continue with its war mongering policies. Nearly a century ago, the Coalition government (mainly composed of Tories and Liberals) in Britain during the first World War, erroneously claimed that the war would be a "war to end all wars". Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Labour which sometimes pretends to be "radical" to its own supporters, can offer nothing more than capitalism's familiar cycle of warfare.



## **Liberal "Democrats"**

The Liberal "Democrats" are rival warmongers to Labour and the Tories since they

wish at least to "maintain the size of the UK's armed forces". They claim that they would "put British values of decency and the rule of law back at the heart of our foreign policy". Where were the British values of "decency" during the days of the British Empire and its slave trade, the bombing of thousands of civilians in Hamburg and Dresden in the second World War and, where was the "decency" in numerous other wars in which the U.K. has been involved, such as Suez, the Falklands, the Gulf War, as well as Afghanistan and Iraq? Such is the naivety of the Liberal "Democrats" that they do not recognise that "decency" on the one hand and "maintaining armed forces" (inevitably involving preparedness for war), on the other, are incompatibles.



## Conservative Party

The

Conservatives have never made any secret of their support for the market system. More recently, they have been adopting slogans emphasising “change”, such as “vote for change” and “year for change”. The fact that being conservative and wanting change is a contradiction in terms, appears lost on them. That is until you realise that the only significant change that they really want is the opportunity to take over the running of capitalism, to their own advantage and that of their business friends. They advocate familiar policies of cutbacks in social expenditure, which will inevitably hit the working class hardest. All in the cause of reducing the economic deficit, much of which was caused by bailing out the banks, which will continue to profiteer out the demand for credit, fuelled by the relative poverty of the working class.



## The Left

The TUSC has the following policy: “Bringing privatised public

services and utilities back into public ownership under democratic control.”

This is a typical illusion of the left-wing of capitalism that services or industries owned and run by the government or local councils are supposedly “owned by the public”. The reality is that this is state and municipal capitalism. Pricing policies in order to raise revenue, and expenditure cutbacks, restrict access to these services, particularly for the poor. The people do not own these services, as they find out when they have not got enough money to pay for them. They also discover this when the employees in them, face reductions in the real value of their wages/salaries, a deterioration in their employment conditions and/or are made redundant, just as in private industry.

“Affordable housing” is a familiar slogan of the Left. However, it does not appear to realise that housing, just like other products under the market system, is produced for profit. Since demand for housing is high in many parts of the U.K., the idea of low priced housing on any significant scale is a pipe dream. For example, in a fairly ordinary London suburb, like Palmers Green, the average price of a modest two bedroom property is now around £273,000, nearly ten times the average annual wage/salary in outer London of about £29,000, (bearing in mind the fact that many

people, who are employed, receive a lot less). Incidentally, by way of comparison, in the early 1960’s, a similar type of property would have cost £3,250, with an average annual wage/salary of around £1,000. Capitalism has brought people even further away from “affordable housing” than 50 years ago.

The TUSC defines “socialism” in the following way: “A society run in the interests of the people not the millionaires. For democratic public ownership of the major companies and banks that dominate the economy”.

For them apparently, there would still be millionaires and banks in their so-called “socialist” society. This is not socialism at all, it is state capitalism, which has been tried on many occasions before by governments of differing political colours, and adopted on a larger scale in the former Soviet Union. In the end, it failed. Thus, the re-emergence of widespread privatisation.

The Left should remind themselves of the thousands of workers in the past, in the nationalised coal, steel and railway industries who had to go on strike in an attempt to protect their living standards, and indeed of the thousands of these workers who were eventually sacked, just as would have happened under private ownership. That is the way capitalism works, whether it is run privately or by the state.



## UKIP

UKIP stands on the right wing of capitalism and advocates a form of British nationalism.

Like all the nationalist parties, such as the BNP, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish Nationalists, Ulster Unionists and Sinn Féin, it is out of touch with the trends in modern, globalised capitalism, which has spread way beyond the boundaries of nation states into much larger political and economic power blocs.

According to UKIP, Britishness can be defined by “belief in fair play, as well as traits such as politeness.” So, if we are to believe these clowns, “fair play and politeness” begin at Dover and end in Calais. What nonsense! UKIP asserts that it believes in democracy and yet goes on to say that also supports the monarchy. The reality is that any type of genuine democracy is totally incompatible with monarchy.

## Green Party

As regards the Green Party, it



supports a market economy and would continue with the military, if the Greens ever participated in government. Their naivety is exposed

by advocacy of a British military “only to be used in self defence”, and by their support of “binding global agreements against all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.” This cannot be achieved under the present system which engenders political, economic and military rivalries.

The Greens fail to recognise that since the economy is based primarily on profit making, then the needs of the environment, just as those of the majority of people, always come in a very poor second place.



## Abolish Capitalism

Capitalism, with its anti-environmental and anti-social policies, is what needs to be replaced. None

of the mainstream parties is aware of this very basic fact. Limited sections of the Left have a partial awareness of it but are thoroughly committed to the idea of reforming the system and not to creating a genuine alternative. All the Left can offer are the old failed policies of state capitalism.

There are the three options facing the people at all political elections.

1). To continue to vote for one of the numerous parties whose policies are limited by the narrow parameters of capitalism, the very system responsible for the vast majority of society’s problems.

2). Not to vote at all and to become politically apathetic, which contributes to the continuation of capitalism.

3). In complete contrast to the above two, to support the World Socialist Movement which proposes the genuine, democratic sharing of resources amongst all the people, with production of goods and services for human need. In such a society, each individual would be of equal value and status, and would be able to make their own contribution, voluntarily towards producing the wealth of the new society. The people would then have free access to goods and services. In real socialism, since profit making and money will be abolished, it is all the people and the environment which will come first.

VINCENT OTTER

# Socialists are working for a different and better world

The Socialist Party is contesting both the general election and local elections in London.

This is a message to those who are fed up –

- Fed up with the failures of this dreary system
- Fed up with leaders and the false promises of career politicians
- Fed up with poor hospitals, poor schools, poor housing and an unhealthy environment
- Fed up with having to live on a wage that struggles to pay the endless bills
- Fed up with serving the profit system and seeing poverty amidst luxury

What happens in any local council depends mainly on what happens in the country and even in the world. That is why socialists are working for a different world. But it can't happen unless you join us. The job of making a better world must be the work of all of us.

The world we want is a one where we all work together. We can all do this. Co-operation is in our own interests and this is how a socialist community would be organised – through democracy and through working with each other.

To co-operate we need democratic control not only in our own area but by people everywhere. This means that all places of industry and manufacture, all the land, transport, the shops and means of distribution, should be owned in common by the whole community. With common ownership we would not produce goods for profit. The profit system exploits us. Without it we could easily produce enough quality things for everyone. We could all enjoy free access to what we need without the barriers of buying and selling.

Most politicians blame our problems on lack of money, but this is not true. Money doesn't build hospitals, schools, decent housing and a healthy environment. The things that make a good community can only be created by the work of the people. We have an abundance of skills and energy. If we were free from having to work for the profits of employers we would be able to work for the needs of everyone.

The profit system is oppressive; it dominates our lives. It plagues us with bills. The rent and mortgage payments, the food bills, the rates, gas, electricity, water and telephone bills. Money is used to screw us for the profits of business. If we don't pay, we don't get the goods. Without the capitalist system, a socialist community would easily provide for all of its members..

The challenge now is to build a world-wide movement whose job will be to break with the failures of the past. It won't be for power or money or careers. It will work for the things that matter to people everywhere – peace, material security and the enjoyment of life through cooperation.

This is the challenge that could link all people in a common cause without distinction of nationality, race or culture.

We in the Socialist Party reject the view that things will always stay the same. We can change the world. Nothing could stop a majority of socialists building a new society run for the benefit of everyone. We all have the ability to work together in each other's interests. All it takes is the right ideas and a willingness to make it happen.

If you agree with this you can show it by voting for our candidates.

The socialist General Election candidate in Vauxhall is: **Daniel Lambert**

The socialist candidates in the London borough elections are:

**Ferndale ward (Lambeth): Daniel Lambert, John Lee, Jacqueline Shodeke**

**Larkhill ward (Lambeth): Oliver Bond, Adam Buick, Stanley Parker**

**Kentish Town ward (Camden): William Martin**

Offers of help, donations and enquiries to the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Meet at our offices every Saturday before the election (April 10, 17 and 24 and May 1) to leaflet and run a stall from 11 am on.

**Socialist** Standard April 2010

Follow the campaign on our election blog at <http://spgb.blogspot.com/>

# Election Madness

*If we simply moan and complain from our armchairs what will change?*

**M**ention politics and you'll probably get a shrug of the shoulders, a huff of contempt or a rebuff that tells you they're just not interested. And why would they be? World politics of any colour, as currently structured, equates to lies, corruption and furtherance of the aims of a minority. Think of any country from A to Z and someone will come up with an example of corruption, cronyism, nepotism or deceit somewhere on the scale from petty and fairly insignificant (in comparison), to in-your-face, downright perversion whether for money or power.

Likewise all countries from A to Z are organised on the capitalist system, from China to Venezuela, as it is impossible to exist as a socialist entity in isolation – whatever the aims may be for the future. The system has developed as intended and has been shaped to be ideally suited to advantage the few at the expense of the vast majority so we really shouldn't be surprised to discover politicians scrambling for their piece of the pie. It's just part of the logic of capitalism.

Personal enrichment or the quest for ongoing power and access to what that brings, whether of elected representatives and their cronies or of self-imposed dictators, can be achieved in many different ways: profitable deals with arms corporations; involvement in or control of drugs smuggling; siphoning off aid donations; accusations, imprisonment or execution of opponents (on home or foreign turf); fact-rigging (e.g. about reasons for invading other countries); rigged elections; removal of opposition from candidate or ballot lists; conflict of interest as with advisory posts to companies or seats on boards of corporations whilst supposedly representing their constituents' interests. In some countries the electorate can't even criticise, lampoon or caricature the elected without risking arrest, a court case, imprisonment or disappearance.

Why do these different degrees of lack of openness or downright oppression result in some of the electorate thinking that "theirs" isn't that bad after all? So what that I can use our flag as a floor cloth without reprisal or ridicule the prime minister in print? It may release frustration and tension but it doesn't improve the democratic content of my daily life. How ludicrous the lengthy list of UK representatives

found to have had their snouts in troughs – the 'expenses scandal'. This simply made them a laughing stock in the US and various other countries around the world where their 'false accounting' antics were seen as small fry. But not so by many of the British electorate who had expected better.

An electorate, many of which were scandalised by the unwanted invasion and occupation of Iraq, and which will probably also be bitterly let down and disappointed at the likely outcome of the Chilcott enquiry.

Is there anyone left out there who seriously believes these people are working in our best collective interest?

With a general election coming up soon what exactly will be on offer from the main contenders? No doubt more of the same but couched in terms intended to give us confidence that this time promises will be kept, regulations will be tightened and adhered to, unemployment will be tackled and reduced (figures can be manipulated). A minor change here, a cosmetic tweak there, but the status quo will endure regardless. As for the fringe parties, they will have strictly limited agenda; get out of the EU, ban immigration, make some concessions to cleaning up industry and creating greener jobs but what else they will want for us will remain a mystery.

When reading or listening to the pre-election promises and then thinking back rationally to other, similar pledges by previous candidates and recalling the reality of U-turns, excuses and failure to deliver over the years, how could anyone doubt the absolute imperative of addressing the question of what's gone wrong with politics with the utmost seriousness? If we simply moan and complain from our armchairs what will change? A compliant, too passive electorate is repeatedly defrauded. At the other end of the scale we have seen that, en masse, out on the streets campaigning for peace or an end to global hunger or action on climate change, dissenting heads get cracked by the armour of the state.

At this time of election madness if you think you've been cheated over the years you're right; capitalism is nothing but a racket. The proof of the failure of the world capitalist system to meet the needs and aspirations of the majority of the population of every country of the world is there for all to see, clear and manifest, if only they will open their eyes wide and acknowledge the overwhelming evidence.

Politics, the activities associated with how a country or an area is run, is something which should engage the interest and activity of every citizen world-wide as it bears directly on all aspects of life. The reason for contempt or indifference towards politics comes from a history of being excluded,

the expectation of being excluded. To be heard,

to be considered, to

be represented

honestly we

need to be

involved

in the

decision-

making

processes, not

to be told what is

in our best interest

by such as those

described above. We

need a system that works

for us all, of which we're

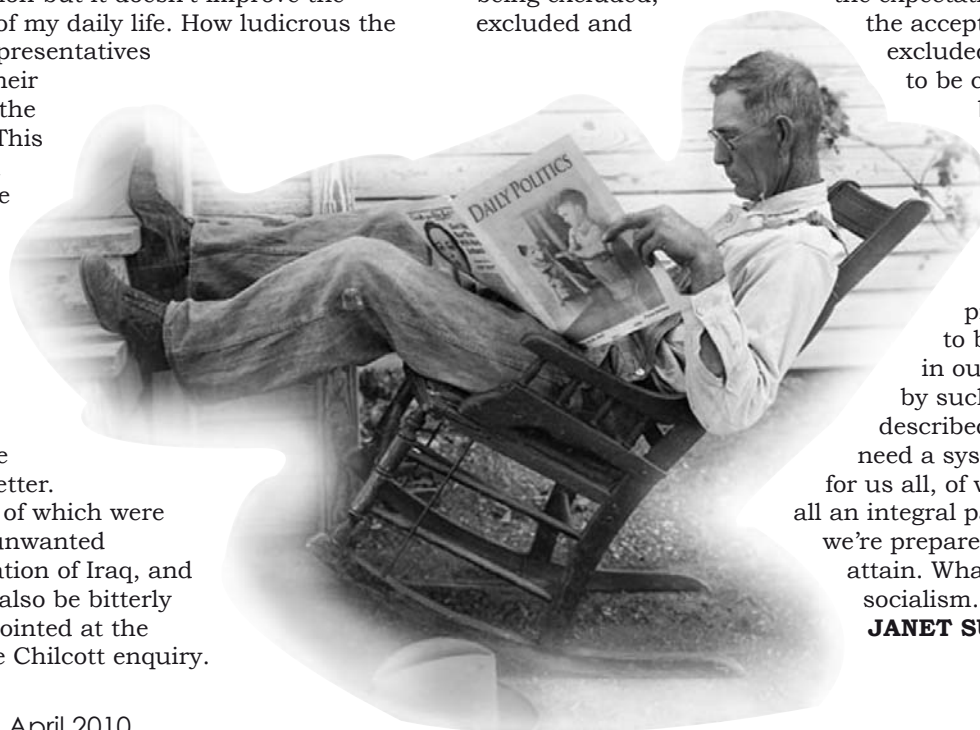
all an integral part, a system

we're prepared to work to

attain. What we need is

socialism.

**JANET SURMAN**



# Bigotry - as good as gold

*One MP who won't be going back to Westminster is the Reverend Paisley.*

**A** month off his eighty-fourth birthday, Ian Paisley announced his impending retirement as the Member of Parliament for North Antrim in the British House of Commons. If he has not retired a very rich man he must have been exceedingly profligate for during much of his political career he was one of Europe's biggest political earners on salary and expenses simultaneously from the European Parliament, the British Parliament, the various Northern Ireland Assemblies. Additionally, of course, he had invented the Free Presbyterian route to heaven, incorporated it into an established religion catering for anti-Papist bigotry where he enjoyed the paradoxical role of 'Moderator'.

For Paisley it has been a Rags-to-Riches career but whereas some parents leave their children riches in the form of money or property, the wealth that Paisley inherited was of a different coin. It was the vulgar, religious fundamentalism of both his parents. Ironically, in a place where history has injected religious bigotry deep into the culture of the working class it was an inheritance with the potential to be as good as gold.

In the late 1950's and early sixties Ian Kyle Paisley surfaced in the media breathing fire and brimstone, proclaiming the Pope to be the anti-Christ and distilling a malignant politico-religious gospel of separateness and division. For most his bellowing exhortations made him a figure of fun, a religious clown; but the media which would have ignored him if he had been talking sense gave him space and Paisley

had an acknowledged genius for manipulating the clever dicks of the press.

His behaviour was so outrageous his bellowed vapourings about 'old red socks' - Paisley humour for the Chief Executive Officer of the Catholic Church - were absurd and his buffoonery initially embarrassed middle class and aspiring middle-class Protestants. But in the acres of Protestant slumdom, where the ruling Unionist leadership spoke the same bigotry at election times, Paisley's taunts about the Unionist aristocracy - the Party leaders who then lived in the sort of house that Paisley now lives in - were being heard.

## **The basis of division**

The captains of Ulster industry in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had reacted violently to the idea of their political incorporation in an all-Ireland state where the IRA's political arm, Sinn Fein, proclaimed the 'first duty' of the state to be the build up of native capitalism behind tariff walls and import quotas. Such a policy would have been ruinous to the well-developed industrial capitalism of the north that had effectively been nurtured within the political structure of British capitalism and remained dependant for its market on what was then called Empire Preference.

This was the core issue that had created division between the two parts of Ireland. Ulster capitalism had developed with British capitalism after the Industrial Revolution, Throughout the rest of the country economic development had been inhibited by an especially restrictive type of landlordism. When a native bourgeoisie

did emerge in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century its political demand, articulated first by the Irish Parliamentary Party and later by Sinn Fein, was the legislative freedom to protect its fledgling capitalism from, in the words of Sinn Fein 'English and other foreign capitalists'.

The issue was a conflict of interests between the Ulster capitalists and their market requirements and a burgeoning southern capitalism but, inevitably, it was the working class that provided the foot soldiers and took the casualties. So truth and lies were mullied in a vile concoction of hatred to motivate the troops.

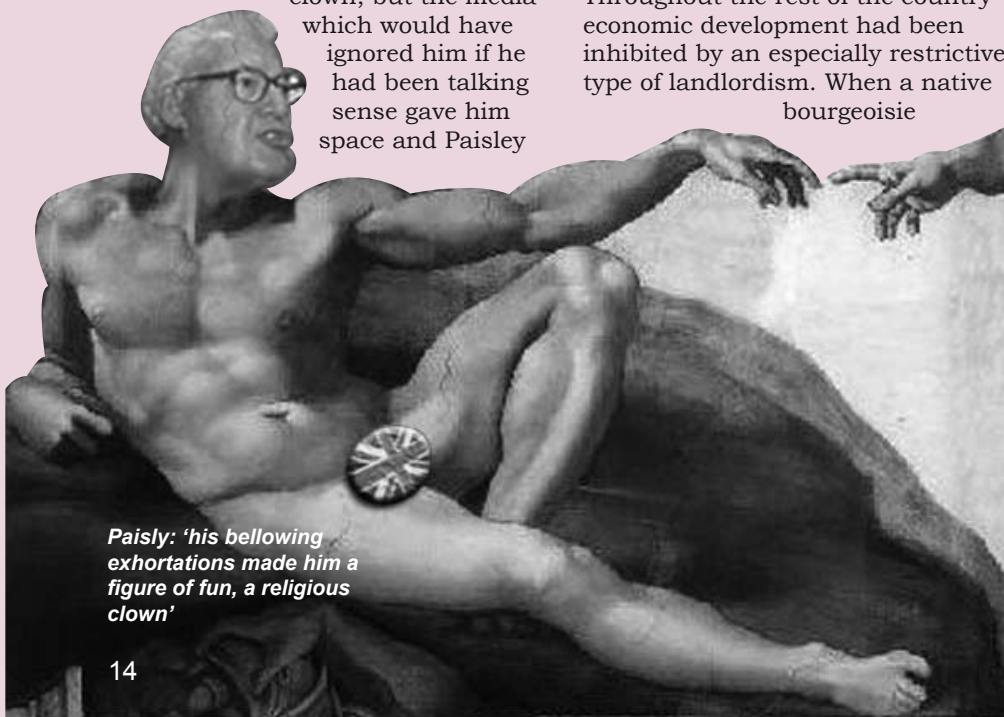
One side of that vile concoction represented Ian Paisley's knowledge of history which he welded onto a particularly virulent brand of religious fundamentalism as a tribal battle cry. It was not a new weapon; Lord Randolph Churchill, Edward Carson, Lord Craigavon and their political ilk had used it successfully.

## **Gutter politics**

But these were new times. The British Government had made known to the Unionist government its embarrassment when the architect of South Africa's Apartheid laws, Hendryk Frensch Verwoerd, responded to British government criticism by saying he would give up his restrictive legislation in exchange for the British tolerated Northern Ireland "Special Powers Act".

Paisley probably saw this as a compliment but in the higher echelons of Unionism religious sectarianism was becoming considerably less strident. The effects of the 1966 Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement, the post-war decline of heavy industry - severely felt in Northern Ireland - and the enticements of the impending European Union were reflected in a diminution of the old bigotries. Elements in the governing Unionist Party, like the Prime Minister, the aristocratic Captain O'Neill, were less inclined to don the gutter raiment of sectarian politics. But that gutter and its political opportunities were still there and gutter politics was a Paisley speciality.

The easing of the political climate between the two Governments in Ireland became manifest when Captain O'Neill invited his southern counterpart, Sean Lemass, to visit



*Paisley: 'his bellowing exhortations made him a figure of fun, a religious clown'*

Stormont. However, the delicacy of the rapprochement was pointed up by the fact that O'Neill's cabinet colleagues were not told about it beforehand,

Paisley got word of the impending visit, probably from elements within the police, and when Lemass's car arrived at Stormont he attacked it - with snowballs! That was the evening's main item of news!

He seemed impervious to embarrassment. On one occasion the courageous Methodist preacher, Dr Donald Soper, addressed an outdoor meeting in Northern Ireland. Paisley attended and threw a Bible at him. Soper, a graduate of Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park complimented Paisley for keeping his hat on as a protection against roving woodpeckers!

### **Border campaign and IRA surrender**

In 1956 the, then, Leninist-influenced IRA, under pressure from a new republican terrorist aspirant in Ulster, commenced a 'Border' campaign in a blaze of glory. IRA personnel raided a British Army barracks in Armagh and removed a substantial quantity of military ordnance under the noses of careless squaddies. It was the IRA's single victory in a desultory, attritional saga which continued until 1962

The end was inglorious and remarkable: the IRA virtually surrendered; it called the failure of the nationalist population to give it support 'selling its heritage for a mesh of pottage' - a reference to British 'welfare' capitalism - and announced the further pursuit of its aims by constitutional means. It should have been a momentous occasion for Ireland. Finally, after decades of intermittent warfare the gun was being removed from politics.

The IRA, pursuant of its undertaking to become a constitutional political organisation, established Republican Clubs pledged to fight constitutionally for universal suffrage in local government elections, as well as an end to gerrymandering of local government ward boundaries and religious discrimination in employment and housing.

Unionist control of an area of Ulster politically tailored to ensure that Protestant hegemony would be permanent in the new state of Northern Ireland had been established by the threat of terrorist violence in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Unionist overlords like Lord Craigavon and his political playmates at Stormont

showed a contempt for the working class irrespective of its religious identity. When protests about social conditions could be labelled 'Catholic' they were disregarded; if similar protests emanated from a 'Protestant' source it was countered by the argument that the protesters were disloyal and were playing into the hands of the IRA.

The government could handle the insignificant military threat of the IRA. It had the largely Protestant paramilitary police backed-up by the 'B' Specials, an armed Protestant militia. What it couldn't handle was any rational defence of its social deficiencies, its sectarian discrimination and its draconian laws. Without the threat of the IRA political debate could prove dangerous. The government's unstable Minister of Home Affairs responded to this new democratic challenge; he simply banned the Republican Clubs making them an illegal organisation.

But whereas there had been an insignificant response to the IRA's Border campaign from within the

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## **"like the Ku Klux Klan, Paisley and his fellow bigots used the tactic of the counter-demonstration"**

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northern nationalist community the campaign for Civil Rights found a ready response not only among nationalists but including the broad Left. O'Neill's attitude was conciliatory but he was a prisoner of reaction within and without his own Party and the most violent opposition to the demands for elementary democratic rights was orchestrated by Paisley and his cohorts who have the effrontery to pose as 'Democratic' Unionists.

In the fashion of the movement for black liberation in the US, the chosen weapon of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was the organisation of protest marches. Similarly, like the Ku Klux Klan and race bigots in the US, Paisley and his fellow bigots used the tactic of the counter-demonstration and the Home Affairs minister banned or restricted Civil Rights' demonstrations 'to prevent civil disturbance'.

But, of course, there was civil disturbance; the Civil Rights people could not allow themselves to be neutered by the threats and

the violence of Paisley, the mob or the clearly partial brutality of the police. Television brought its graphic pictures of violence to the capitals of the world; Paisley's violent ranting became a media export without embarrassment to him or his followers, and it was becoming incumbent on external agencies to 'do something' about Northern Ireland.

Almost single-handedly Paisley had let the genie of sectarian violence out of the bottle and, Ironically, created the material conditions for the re-emergence of the IRA, this time supported by the people who had previously rejected it and its political objective and who now saw it as a weapon of Catholic defence against loyalist pogroms.

### **A Pyrrhic victory**

Northern Ireland is governed today by a coalition of political parties organised within the D'Hondt system effectively devised to provide for norms of compromise within a power-sharing system. Effectively, however, power resides in the coalesced numbers of what was Paisley's DUP and the IRA's political arm, Sinn Fein. under the compulsion of the failure of each to achieve its primary purpose.

Together they stand as a memorial to the decades of violence they visited on the people; together - the cowards loading the guns and the fools firing them - they gave us the thousands of corpses, the tens of thousands of maimed. Together they built the 'Peace' walls and the ghettos where the coloured rags of opposing tribal identities mark brands of hatred and yesterday's foot soldiers draw their dole and envy the trappings of power which their leaders now share with their erstwhile enemies

For the socialist, Northern Ireland makes a good case study for those promulgating the notion that political violence is the ultimate weapon in the struggle for socialism; that 'revolutionary situations' can be created out of the political chaos of capitalism. But working class consensus, not division, must be the foundation of a socialist society in which the dynamic is human co-operation. Traditionally, socialists have responded to those who cite minority violence as a possible reaction to the achievement of socialism by saying 'peacefully if we may; forcefully if we must'. When we see the aftermath of political violence we must fervently hope that we never 'must'.

**RICHARD MONTAGUE**



# The Haitian Tragedy

*Haiti spent more, in 2008 servicing the country's debts than it did on health, education and the environment.*

In our February issue (Haiti—an un-natural disaster) we noted that the earthquake in Haiti, and similar disasters, are presented as unavoidable disasters; and that, to some extent, this is true. But we stated that it is not a coincidence that the number of victims is clearly related to the degree of their poverty. This was true regarding the Asian tsunami and the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans.

Seumas Milne also says (*Guardian*, 21 January) that “It is uncontested that poverty is the main cause of the horrific death toll: the product of teeming shacks, and the absence of health and public infrastructure.” In his view, this is the direct consequence of an uniquely brutal relationship with the outside world—notably the US, France and Britain, stretching back centuries. There is some truth in this, although not all Haitians were, or are, poor.

Says Milne:

“Punished for the success of its uprising against slavery and self-proclaimed first black republic of 1804 with invasion, blockade and a crushing burden of debt reparations, only finally paid off in 1947, Haiti was occupied by the US between the wars and squeezed mercilessly by multiple creditors.”

For decades, the US backed the dictatorships of the Duvaliers. Just 30 years ago Haiti was self-sufficient in its staple of rice. In the mid-1990s, however, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced it to slash tariffs, and the US dumped its subsidised surpluses on Haiti. Most of the peasant farmers were forced out of business, squatted in Port-au-Prince, and many will have died in the earthquake. The United States also imposed lending conditions on the country, forcing the government to privatise the already minimal health, education and public services, and cut back the minimum wage.

## **The Duvalier Dictatorships and the CIA**

From 1957 to 1971 Haiti was ruled by François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and, following his death, by his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc”, both “anointed” “President for Life”. The US trained and armed Haiti’s counter-insurgency force, although much American military aid was covertly channelled through Israel.

After “Baby Doc” was forced into exile to France in February 1986 (in a US Air Force jet), the United States continued, now quite openly, military aid, supplying the Haitian Army with trucks, communications gear etc. in order “to maintain order”. Between the departure of “Baby Doc” and the date scheduled for elections in November 1987, the administrations were responsible for the deaths of more civilians than “Baby Doc” managed in 15 years of dictatorship. Meanwhile, the CIA managed to “spring” from prison two of Duvalier’s notorious police chiefs, and send them into exile, saving them from certain execution.

Haiti has never had a mass, reformist working-class party. In 1930 two “intellectuals”, Max Hudicourt and Jacques Roumain, attempted to form a communist party, but it was largely stillborn. In 1946 a clergyman by the name of Félix d’Orléans Juste Constant, founded the Parti Communiste d’Haiti (PCH). It too disbanded the following year. Shortly after a rival quasi-communist party, the Parti Socialiste Populaire (PSP), was founded. It disintegrated rapidly by 1949. But in 1959 Roger Gaillard, a former member of the PSP, founded the Parti Populaire de Libération Nationale (PPLN), which claimed to be a mass, nationwide organisation; it was badly weakened by police harassment and repression by 1965. It was basically reformist, with much in common with Fidel Castro’s 26 July movement.

## **Aristide the Priest**

At the time of “Baby Doc”’s flight to France, there was one man who did have a mass following, particularly in Port-au-Prince. He was Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest and advocate of “liberation theology”; but



looked upon by opponents, both in Haiti and in America, as a revolutionary, but in fact a populist reformer. He denounced the upcoming military-dominated elections, and urged his followers to boycott the elections, saying "The army is our first enemy." He was condemned by the Vatican.

The elections were scheduled for the 29 November 1987—the CIA funded a number of candidates. In the event, the elections were postponed ostensibly because of unrest and violence in the country. According to William Blum in *Killing Hope*, "...the candidate favored by the military government was declared the winner in balloting widely perceived as rigged". Writing in 1994, Blum continued:

"There followed more than two years of regular political violence, coup attempts and repression, casting off the vestiges of the Duvalier dictatorship, and establishing a new one, until, in March 1990, the current military dictator, General Prosper Avril, was forced by widespread protests to abdicate, and was forced by a civilian government of sorts, but with the military still calling the shots." (p. 371)

Pressured by the United States, the Haitian government called an election later in the year. Reluctantly, Aristide became a candidate of a coalition of reformist organisations. Despite intimidation, Aristide was victorious with 67.5 percent of the vote. He took office in February 1991, after a coup attempt against him failed in January.

And so Jean-Bertrand Aristide became President of Haiti.

But he did not even get any reformist legislation enacted by Parliament. Nevertheless, the military was much concerned by the arrest of a number of para-military thugs, his policies against drug smuggling, and his attempts to depoliticise the army. Aristide was, however, not anti-business. He encouraged American capitalists, and to please the IMF, he fired 2,000 government workers.

It was all to no avail. In less than 8 months, on 29 September 1991, Aristide was successfully deposed by a military coup, in which hundreds of his supporters were massacred and thousands fled to the Dominican Republic. He was saved from being murdered by the French ambassador. The new military dictatorship was largely supported by the local bourgeoisie. And the Vatican immediately recognised the government. The Bush Sr administration unofficially gave its blessing. Haiti was back to "normal".

### **Aristide's Return**

In the summer of 1993 the United Nations mediated talks between Aristide, living in exile in Washington, and the Haitian military government; the leader of the junta, General Cédras, would step down by October, and Aristide would return as president. But October came and went without the military permitting Aristide to return. Indeed, they stepped up their repression of his supporters, including the assassination of his justice minister, Guy Malary. Meanwhile, the CIA spread rumours in Haiti that Aristide was mentally ill. It was not true.

An organisation of American States (OAS) human rights team accused the Haitian military regime of "murder, rape, kidnapping, detention and torture in a systematic campaign" to terrorise all those Haitians wanting a return to democracy. Amnesty International reported the same. The Clinton administration in Washington wanted the military out of power, but without actually having to do anything, including invading the country. Nevertheless, changing tactics, the CIA, with numerous agents in Haiti, launched a major covert operation to topple the military regime. It was not a success. But change was a'coming.

In September 1994, the Clinton administration told the Haitian military leaders they had just four weeks to resign. The US would have to take control. Yet again. So, on 19 September US forces began to arrive in Haiti. Initially, they were welcomed by the majority of the population; they first arrested, disarmed and also shot many of the former Haitian military; and permitted some of the leaders to escape into exile. And they sealed off, and protected the homes of many of the local capitalist élite, "Washington's natural allies" (*Los Angeles Times*, 1 October 1994).

Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to Haiti in mid-October, courtesy of the US army. He received, in the words of William Blum, a reception of "joyous celebration". But, unbeknown to a majority of his supporters, he was somewhat different Aristide who had, three years previously, been disposed and exiled to Washington. In the words of the *Los Angeles Times* (1 October 1994):

"Almost every aspect of Aristide's plans for resuming power—from taxing the rich to disarming the military—has been examined by the US officials with whom the Haitian President meets daily, and by officials of World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other aid organisations. The finished package clearly reflects their priorities. Aristide has obviously toned down the liberation theology and class-struggle rhetoric that was his signature before he was exiled to Washington."

Indeed, Aristide embraced market economics with zeal and enthusiasm. He also agreed to publicly announce that he would not attempt to stay in office to make up the time he had lost in exile. So much for the firebrand priest—even as a reformer.

### **Haiti—a Client State**

In *Killing Hope* William Blum claimed that Haiti's international function will be to serve "transnational corporations" by opening the country up to further investment and commerce, with minimum tariffs and other restrictions; and offering itself, primarily in assembly industries, and as a source of export labour. He added: "What appears to be certain is that the rich will grow richer, and the poor will remain at the very bottom of Latin America's heap." Under Aristide's successor, it can only get worse. As Seumas Milne observed, new IMF loans require Haiti to raise electricity prices, and to freeze all public sector pay, where the majority exist on less than two dollars a day.

Infant mortality rate is about 80 per 1,000 (neighbouring Cuba's rate is 5.8). Around 50 percent of Haiti's adults remain illiterate. Former president Bill Clinton wants to build up Haiti's export-processing zones. But, as Milne comments, "...more sweatshop assembly of products neither made nor sold in Haiti won't develop its economy nor provide a regular income for the majority". Haiti currently owes the IMF around a billion dollars. Gary Young, writing in the *Guardian* (1 February), reported that Haiti spent more, in 2008, servicing the country's debts than it did on health, education and the environment.

Meanwhile, the United States pours thousand of heavily-armed troops into the country (yet again). and "The Street", a US investment website, says that the earthquake provides such American corporations as General Electric, Jacobs Engineering and Flour, with the opportunity and potential to benefit. Of course.

Following the earthquake, a commentator on French television advised his viewers and listeners that "Haiti is not a suitable place to take a vacation." He can say that again.

**PETER E. NEWELL**

The market system failed long before the present crash.

# The poverty of

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It wasn't that long ago when the academic discipline of economics bestrode the world. Trying to grasp Adam Smith's invisible hand and understanding the workings of the market system was a respected profession. Economists moved even beyond markets, extending their empires laying claim to large parts of social science, as complex disciplines such as human psychology and sociology were reduced to little more than a matter of competing agents and game theory. There was a reason the recent bestseller *Freakonomics* was sub-titled the "hidden side of everything".

But like the cobbler's children, running around barefoot, recent events have exposed the poverty of the economists' understanding of their very own intellectual backyard, the capitalist economy. Their advice on human nature or politics carries somewhat less authority now that they appear incapable of explaining the credit crunch or why none of them saw it coming.

The assembled might of the London School of Economics – one of the intellectual powerhouses of capitalist ideology – was recently challenged on why the credit crunch occurred and why they weren't able to foresee it. Which intellectual giant issued the challenge? Who is it that so has their finger on the pulse of

everyday concerns of working people?

During a visit to the LSE recently, Her Royal Highness the Queen (for it was she) took time out from her busy schedule to wade into the debate. The fact that she might not be the best guide to the money system (given her reluctance to dirty her hands carrying money round with her), and is probably an unlikely candidate for repossession order (at least until we get a socialist majority) was not considered relevant.

Of course she does have her head on every coin, which demands some respect, so on that basis the response to the Queen's query of the LSE's "high policy forum of 22 economic heavyweights" appeared to involve them (metaphorically) lowering their collective heavyweight heads in shame and muttering under their breath "there are no simple answers" (m'am). The blame for missing the credit crunch was placed on "a failure of the collective imagination of many bright people" – the wording of which suggests that with the usual modesty, they still consider themselves members of that group.

No longer permitted to demand their heads on a sharp stick, as many of her loyal subjects would wish, the Queen instead settled for asking what they would recommend to prevent the financial crisis happening again. Doubtless she was not impressed with the World Socialist Movement's advice in this respect, (abolition of the wages system, your Majesty), unless of course this was accompanied by a full return to feudalism, in which case she might presumably be swayed.

It should be said that we claim no greater ability to predict economic crashes, than the self-proclaimed "bright minds" of capitalism. (Those of you who remember that Enron executives used to call themselves "the smartest guys in the room", and the whole banking sector seemed to consider themselves "masters of the universe" may see a pattern emerging in how capitalists have grossly inflated views of themselves, not just their investments). Our view is that crashes are inherent to the system and are inherently unpredictable. If they were predictable, investors would act accordingly and make it unpredictable again.

There is nothing wrong with trying to understand capitalism, as long as the intent is to get rid of it. If you want to study the economy to try and make it work, you might as well read tea-

**"If you want to study the economy to try and make it work, you might as well read tea-leaves"**



## “Economics is some way from even laying claim to being a science, dismal or otherwise”

leaves, or – better still perhaps – the scattered intestines of sacrificed investment bankers.

So what was the recommendation

of the economic intellectuals to this royal command? In a squirming, obsequious response they said they saw no merit in using existing policy mechanisms which had all clearly failed to contain the market (a revolutionary view world socialists would share). More disappointingly they instead made a tentative modest proposal of her royal highness: that it would help everyone if she were to ask her ministers for a monthly update.

They go on: “There is a need to develop a culture of questioning, in which no assumption is accepted without scepticism and a sufficiently broad array of outcomes is considered”. This is a pretty good summary of the scientific method. Economics has always resented the “dismal science” tag thrown its way. With the admission above from its highest priests, it could be argued that economics is some way from even laying claim to being a science, dismal or otherwise.

We would agree with the economists where they warn the Queen that “it is a dangerous conceit to believe that economic cycles can be eliminated”. But the wording suggests that this is some sort of human failing rather than the inherent flaw of a system that is – it should not be forgotten – just one option available to help humanity make its most critical decisions (that is production of things humanity needs). Indeed the economists continue “if you have a series of relatively buoyant years...not only do humans get flabby, also the feeling ‘we’ve cracked that’ is all too easy to spread. It is human nature”.

So there you have it. All of you who thought over the last 10 or 20 years that “you’d cracked it”, are to blame for getting “flabby”. And besides, it’s all conveniently in your genes anyway, didn’t you know? In future we can rest assured however – the Queen is on the case now.

Over the next few years of promised increased austerity – as hospitals close, schools fall apart and houses get repossessed – let us not forget that these hucksters, chancers and charlatans are the people who claim to be in charge of capitalism. But the market failed long before it crashed. Leave decision-making to others, we are told. Leave it to the bankers and the “bright minds”. Leave it to the economists and the politicians. Leave it to the capitalists and even our own royal relic of feudalism. They all still expect you to let them make the decisions.



### A Nobel Prize for Marx?

“If Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin were alive today, they would be leading contenders for the Nobel Prize in economics”, wrote Paul Craig Roberts, former editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Reagan, in an article on *Counterpunch* last year (<http://www.counterpunch.org/roberts10072009.htm>).

“Marx”, he added in explanation, “predicted the growing misery of working people, and Lenin foresaw the subordination of the production of goods to financial capital’s accumulation of profits based on the purchase and sale of paper instruments.”

Lenin first. He didn’t write much on economics but the two books he published on the subject are not too bad. Both rejected “underconsumptionism”. The first, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899) was a refutation of the Narodnik view that capitalism could not develop in Russia because of a lack of markets. The second, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), argued that the imperialism that characterised the thirty or so years till the WWI was caused by profits in colonies being higher than at home. (The nonsense about some workers in the imperialist countries sharing in the exploitation of the colonies was only added in the introduction to the 1920 French and German editions). It was heavily based on a work, *Finance Capital, A Study in the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (1910), by the Austrian Social Democrat Rudolf Hilferding. So, if anyone deserves a Nobel Prize for analysing financial capital (at least in continental Europe) it would be Hilferding rather than Lenin.

As to Marx, he did write of the “increasing immiseration” of the working class as capitalism developed, but he did not intend this to be understood as the whole class necessarily becoming worse off materially. “Misery” included the quality of life and work and social factors such as the gap between rich and poor and not just the quantity of goods consumed. So misery could increase along with increased consumption. If Marx had meant “increasing pauperisation” (a view long supported by the old Communist Party) then he would have been proved wrong and so be out of the running for a Nobel Prize.

Even so, Roberts wrote that the working class in America is now materially worse off than it was twenty years ago:

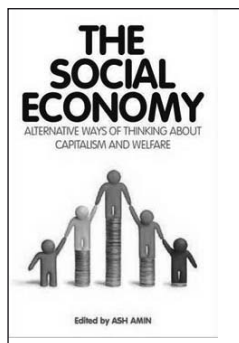
“In this first decade of the 21st century there has been no increase in the real incomes of working Americans. There has been a sharp decline in their wealth. In the 21st century Americans have suffered two major stock market crashes and the destruction of their real estate wealth. Some studies have concluded that the real incomes of Americans, except for the financial oligarchy of the super rich, are less today than in the 1980s and even the 1970s. I have not examined these studies of family income to determine whether they are biased by the rise in divorce and percentage of single parent households. However, for the last decade it is clear that real take-home pay has declined.”

The explanation he offers is “financial capital’s power to force the relocation of production for domestic markets to foreign shores. Wall Street’s pressures, including pressures from takeovers, forced American manufacturing firms to ‘increase shareholders’ earnings.’ This was done by substituting cheap foreign labor for American labor.”

There could be something in this but there’s no way of reversing it. Capital will always flow where the profits are highest. That’s its nature.

## Working together

*The Social Economy.* Ash Amin, ed: Zed Books £19.99.



The concept of social economy is a rather vague one, and is not helped by the use of other terminology (such as 'solidarity economy' or 'third sector') to refer to the same or

similar notions. Broadly, though, it describes the provision of goods and services by organisations which are neither profit-making and privately-owned nor run by the state, whether national governments or local authorities. It covers, then, at least workers' co-operatives and various voluntary groups.

Amin argues that the present recession is an opportune time to consider alternatives to the profit system. With case studies from Italy, Poland, the Philippines, the US, Canada, Argentina and Brazil, this volume presents a spectrum of different examples, from workers taking over bankrupt companies to housing co-ops and small farmers getting together to market their own produce. The question which arises, though, is the extent to which what is described here really does constitute a 'third way'.

It is a widespread finding that wages are lower in social enterprises than in others. A survey from Italy, however, suggests that employees in the social economy are on the whole more satisfied with their work than other workers, largely because of the importance they assign to social usefulness and helping disadvantaged people. On the other hand, social enterprises have to behave like ordinary capitalist concerns in many ways: there is still wage labour, those who arrive late for work can have their pay deducted, and enterprises may close if trading conditions are not favourable.

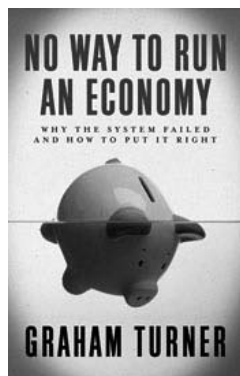
But many social enterprises do show that workers can organise themselves and run production without bosses and employers telling them what to do and ordering them around. It must be acknowledged, though, that this does not mean leaving capitalism behind, since they function within the capitalist economy and indeed are often

supported by governments. The editor writes of 'making money, markets and the productive system work for human development, ecological preservation, spatial equality and collective fellowship'. Noble goals, but only achievable without money and markets.

PB

## No Way To Save An Economy

*No Way To Run An Economy.* By Graham Turner, Pluto Press, 2009, £12.99



This is the sequel to Turner's *The Credit Crunch* reviewed in last April's *Socialist Standard*. The book is essentially a Keynesian tome advocating quantitative easing, low

interest rates and nationalisation of the banks as a way of dealing with the onset of financial crises like the most recent one.

Much that was both positive and negative about *The Credit Crunch* applies here too: there are some very useful graphs and statistics presented even though the general case for Keynesianism is necessarily weak. What is more interesting is that now there appears to be a partial and belated recognition of this that creeps into the analysis as the book develops. The chapter entitled 'Structural Causes of the Recession' in particular illustrates something of a shift in thinking to the effect that there may be something about capitalism that is fundamentally flawed in the way Marx had argued. Some of the discussion presented at this stage isn't bad; if there is a problem it is that too much emphasis is placed on the recent decline in the share of the national product going to labour in countries like the US, meaning that allegedly consumption and profits can only be maintained in these circumstances through the extension of credit. He hedges his bets somewhat but ultimately argues that in pursuit of profits:

'Companies are engaged in a competitive struggle, but the compression of wages will undermine the ability of consumers to buy and absorb the goods and services being

produced. The contradictions with capitalism will eventually be exposed when consumers can no longer buy all the goods being produced' (p114).

This neglects the fact that, as Marx pointed out, it is more typical for the share of wages relative to profits to rise as the boom nears its peak and that the inability of the working class to buy back all that is produced is not the cause of economic crises (if that was the case capitalism would be in permanent crisis). Ironically, Turner reproduces a key passage from Volume II of Marx's *Capital* to this effect in the Notes at the end of the book, but clearly hasn't applied or understood this point when formulating his own analysis.

Indeed, a fair part of his discussion of Marxian theories of economic crises seems to have been adapted from writers like the late Chris Harman of the SWP. This is not entirely surprising given the SWP's own attempts to integrate aspects of Keynesian ideas within a Marxist framework, such as with the permanent arms economy argument as an explanation of the post-war boom, one which Turner seems appreciative of.

In fairness, Turner is at least starting to ask the right sort of questions in this book, though a realisation that crises within capitalism are caused by the drive to accumulate profits in a competitive environment where there is no planning between enterprises but an *anarchy of production* instead, would lead him to a clearer and different conclusion. This is that no amount of Keynesian intervention, monetary reform or redistribution of income can prevent the market economy's periodic slide into chaos.

DAP

*Bourgeois Political Economy in Shambles.* By Stefan Engel. Verlag Neuer Weg, 2009

This is an English translation of a pamphlet originally published in Germany, with the subtitle "Some additions to the Marxist-Leninist crisis theory." 'Marxism-Leninism' was the official political theory of the former Soviet Union and was enforced throughout most of the former Eastern European satellite governments of the twentieth century. 'Marxism-Leninism' is often synonymous with Stalinism.

Engel gives a reasonable account of the current global crisis of capitalism, which began in September 2008. Crises are inevitable under capitalism

because, as Karl Marx pointed out, “a rift must continually ensue between the limited dimensions of consumption under capitalism and a production which forever tends to exceed this immanent barrier” (*Capital*, Vol. III). German chancellor Merkel, like politicians everywhere, blamed the “financial excesses with no sense of social responsibility, the abandonment of moderation and the middle course by a number of bankers and executives” which “steered the world into this crisis”. As Engel rightly says, this way of arguing “turns attention to the – undeniable – subjective failings of bankers and executives, and distracts attention from the essentials, from the laws of the capitalist mode of production. These laws compel every capitalist, whether factory owner or manager of a stock corporation, whether privately owned or state-owned company, to act, under penalty of ruin”.

But it is the ‘Marxism-Leninist’ understanding of the state, among other things, where it falls down. Engel quotes Engels on the state:

“The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers – proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head” (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch03.htm>).

This should have made Engels (and Marx’s) position abundantly clear, but Lenin stood this argument on its head and claimed that capitalism and the state could be made democratic and that this is what socialism means. Engel cites a passage from a pamphlet written by Lenin in 1917:

“... socialism is merely the next step forward from state-capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly *which is made to serve the interests of the whole people* and has to that extent *ceased* be capitalist monopoly” (original emphasis, [www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/ichtci/11.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/ichtci/11.htm)).

However, the whole thrust of Marx and Engels’s critique is that capitalism and the state, whatever form they take, can never be made to serve the interests of the whole people. For the same reason, the idea of a “socialist state” is a nonsensical contradiction in terms.

## OBITUARY

### VIC BRAIN

Vic Brain has died at the age of 95. He had been a member of the Socialist Party for nearly 60 years, having joined Swansea Group in 1952. In the following year he helped form a fully-fledged Swansea branch, of which he remained a member until his death in December 2009.

Vic had been a member of the Communist Party in the early years of the Cold War period but always said that he had never found it comfortable doing what CP members had to do – support Stalin and the Soviet Union. So when he came into contact with the SPGB, he quickly realised that the CP’s version of ‘socialism’ was effectively a form of capitalism – state capitalism – and that far more congenial to his optimistic hopes for the future of humanity was the classless, stateless, moneyless society of free access advocated by the Socialist Party but never mentioned in the CP.

From then on he never looked back. Over the next 30 years he was an active member of Swansea Branch, involving himself enthusiastically in local activity, fearlessly stating the socialist case wherever he went, writing articles for the *Socialist Standard*, and giving ebullient talks on subjects that especially interested him such as art and socialism, Welsh nationalism, and the nature of the Labour Party.

With very little formal education, Vic had trained later in life to become an art teacher and was a keen painter who would offer his excellent water colours as presents to branch members. He was a keen rambler and cyclist and, even in later life, thought nothing of cycling the 25 miles from Llanelli to Swansea and back to visit other members. As a first language Welsh speaker, he was also a keen enthusiast of the language but, rather than take the narrow view of minority language survival taken by nationalists, Vic’s take was that it was good for such languages to survive because of the cultural diversity they expressed. Such diversity – and this was a view that he was particularly keen to express to fellow socialists – was being eaten up by capitalism but, if it managed to survive the ravages of the current system, it would flourish and be a positive feature of a Socialist world.

In his later years, Vic’s activity inevitably diminished but he was always ready to talk to members who visited him about what was happening in the world and – the perennial question – when would we get socialism. He will be remembered with great affection by those who knew him. We offer our condolences to his wife Anne, his son Chris and his daughter Pat.

**Howard Moss**

## 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)

Lenin was never clear about the need for a “socialist state” as he knew it flouted the basics of Marxism, though it is implicit in some of his writings. Leninists have no such qualms and here we read of the need for a “socialist state of genuine democracy”. But Leninist states have an abysmal record on democracy, preferring instead a dictatorship *over* the proletariat as they grapple with the contradictions of managing capitalism. In theory and in practice, ‘Marxism-Leninism’ is a shambles.

**LEW**

## The Socialist Party Summer School



Fircroft College,  
Birmingham  
23rd - 25th July 2010

What kind of future do we want? For centuries, people have imagined technological utopias or nightmare dystopias. Meanwhile, how will capitalism adapt to ongoing economic and environmental concerns? And what kind of socialist society can we aim for as an antidote? Residential cost (inc accommodation and all meals) is £130, £80 conc. Non-residential cost (including meals) is £50. Please send a cheque for £10 (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. For more information, e-mail Mike Foster at [spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk)

## Meetings

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Good Friday **2 April**, 10.30 to 5pm.  
Easter Saturday **3 April**, 11am to 5pm.  
Open to public. All welcome.  
Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN.

### ELECTION FORUM

Saturday **17 April**, 6.00pm  
CAN POLITICIANS SAVE THE PLANET?  
Election Forum with Frank Simpkins, Vincent Otter, Glenn Morris and Danny Lambert.  
The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

### Newcastle

Saturday **17 April**, 1pm - 4pm  
THE ELECTION: WHICH WAY TO VOTE?  
Room 7, City Library, 33 New Bridge Street, NE1 8AX (two minutes walk from Monument Metro)

### Chiswick

Tuesday **20 April**, 8pm  
THE ELECTION: WHAT'S WRONG WITH POLITICS?  
Speaker: Adam Buick  
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4.

### Leeds

Saturday **24 April**, 1pm - 4pm  
ELECTIONS: DO THEY HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS?  
Albert Room, Victoria Hotel, Great George St, LS1 3DL

### East Anglia

Saturday, **8th May**, 12noon to 4.00pm  
12noon: informal chat / branch business  
1pm - 2pm: meal  
2pm - 4pm: continuation / agenda  
Venue: Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY  
(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar).  
All welcome.

## A Message for Aldermaston Marchers



WHEN THE first French atom bomb was exploded a few weeks back, General de Gaulle exclaimed, "Hurrah for France!" He knew that he was really saying hurrah for destruction and death, because that is what military power means. But military power is only necessary to modern states because in peace and war, they are struggling for economic advantage. This is a world where everything is produced with the intention of selling it profitably, which means that sellers compete for markets, manufacturers for plentiful raw material sources and transporters for trading routes. These are the disputes which, when everything else fails, are settled by force—by war (...)

In these conditions, national states are bound to maintain a military machine to fight for the interests of their ruling classes and to equip that machine with the most powerful—the most deadly— weapons possible. It is

futile to expect them to do otherwise. In 1917, it would have been suicidal for them to have thrown away their tanks, or in 1944 their bombers. In 1960 they are similarly reluctant to give up their nuclear bombs. There is only one way to deal effectively with this problem. Go to the roots. The capitalist system is the cause, from beginning to end, of modern war and the horrifying methods of its prosecution.

Marching from Aldermaston, sitting in the mud at Swaffham, or lying in jail, the nuclear campaigners deserve our respect for their concern with one of the horrors of modern society. But we can only regret that so much energy is wasted in such a topsy-turvy movement. If it is desirable to abolish one weapon of war, how much more so is it to get rid of them all? Or to get rid of war itself?

(from article by Ivan, *Socialist Standard*, April 1960)

### Socialist Standard

Bound volumes (2005-2007) for £25 plus postage, each, order from HO, cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain"

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## Declaration of Principles

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

### Object

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

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Michael Foot – An example of principles?

A HANDY tool for a balanced assessment of obituaries of the Great and the Good is to be aware that the more fanciful the praise for the deceased the greater the relief that they are no longer around to cause any trouble. Consider, for example, the tributes to Michael Foot on his death, at 96, last month. This is Gordon Brown, overlooking that during Foot's life he would have been one of his consistent opponents: "...a man of deep principle and great idealism...one of the most eloquent speakers the country has ever heard ... An indomitable figure who always stood up for his beliefs..." Here is Tony Blair, the intensity of whose antagonism towards Foot would have rivalled that of Brown: "...a giant of the Labour movement, a man of passion, principle and outstanding commitment..." Finally, still dealing with Prime Ministers, this is Margaret Thatcher "...a highly principled and cultivated man...if I did not think it would offend him, I would say he is a gentlemen..." Except that that was not a comment by Thatcher after Foot had died; it was what she thought at the time she had crushed him in the 1983 election. Principle? Idealism? Passion? The fantasies about Foot live on, like a virus infecting those who promote themselves as successors.

## Journalism

He was swept into Parliament in the Labour landslide of 1945, when the votes showed that the lies about a safer, healthier world emerging from that greatest ever human crisis had been gratefully absorbed. Foot's constituency was Devonport in Plymouth, where his comfortably powerful family (his father had been an MP, one brother was an MP, another became Governor of Cyprus) had their affluent home. Before that he had worked as a journalist on the *New Statesman* and *Tribune*. Aneurin Bevan, whose reputation as a viperous left-wing orator had not been an obstacle to him forming a close friendship with the Tory press baron Lord Beaverbrook, suggested that Foot ("...a young bloody knight-errant...") would be a useful employee for one of the unconventional lordship's newspapers. Perhaps because of Beaverbrook's seeming vulnerability to those he saw as fellow rebellious misfits Foot was placed in a job which refreshed him with regular pay rises until he became editor of the scandalously strident *Evening Standard*. In 1945 Foot transferred to the *Daily Herald*, part-owned by the TUC but later transmogrified into Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* with its Page Three girls and screeching headlines.

## Guilty Men

By that time Foot's reputation as a rebel had been cemented into place, although it was typically impulsive rather than consistent. In the 1940s one of his most successful projects had been as the co-author, with two other journalists, of the book *Guilty Men*. Published by the Left Book Club, this was a best-selling polemic against the Conservative government's apparent preference for negotiating about – or appeasing – Nazi Germany's expansionism instead of building up British forces. *Guilty Men* does not spare Foot's political allies: "Up to the arrival of Hitler on the scene, the Labour Party officially went through all the antic motions of 'resisting militarism'. This consisted of adopting pretty well every half-baked disarmament proposition that was drawn up, and annually voting against the Service estimates". But effective a rant though that is, it takes no account of the fact that Foot had not always opposed disarmament.

In 1933, when the Geneva talks, aiming at multilateral disarmament, broke down he came out in favour of unilateral disarmament. His election address in 1935, when he stood unsuccessfully for Monmouth, attacked the Tory Prime Minister Baldwin for his policy of re-armament, stating that "...the armaments race in Europe must be stopped now".

## Falklands

More recently, Foot has presented himself as "an incessant and inveterate peacemonger" – which was not taken seriously by anyone with so much as a passing acquaintance with his history. Among other attitudes, he supported the formation of the US dominated NATO military alliance and the American policy of propping up the dictatorship in South Korea before the war began there. The audacious cynicism demanded by this was starkly exposed over the Falklands war. In an emergency debate in the Commons on 3 April 1982 the rage of the Tory hawks left Thatcher, in the words of one observer, "humiliated" and of another "strangely halting and subdued". But Foot changed the course of the debate with a passionately belligerent speech demanding that there was "...a moral duty and political duty and every other kind of duty" to send in the task force to eject the Argentinian occupiers. This "peacemongering" was pleasing to a number of remarkable allies for Foot. Like Edward du Cann whose chairmanship of the Lonrho conglomerate was memorable for Ted Heath's description of it as "the unacceptable face of capitalism". Like Julian Amery, a leading light of the Monday Club. Like the late Alan Clark, an "historian" whose pitiless egocentricity and human aversion found expression in his excusing the wartime atrocities of the Waffen SS as "heroic cruelty". Later, in the controversy over the torpedoing of the Argentinian cruiser *Belgrano* when it was sailing away from the battle zone, Foot was in favour of the attack, even if it did cost hundreds of lives. And this was an opinion which he steadfastly held to.

## Principles

Was Foot trying to re-assure his admirers, as well as his antagonists, when he greeted his election as Labour Party leader in 1980 with the bold declaration "I am as strong in my socialist convictions as I have ever been"? He did not offer any clear definition of the word, which encouraged the assumption that his "socialism" was the kind of confused, panicky responses to capitalism's crises, notable for the depression of workers' life standards, which he had been closely involved in during his time as a minister under Callaghan. This had reached its nadir with the Winter of Discontent and, no matter how compulsively Foot wheedled and manipulated at resuscitation, the end of that government in 1979. Among other problems for the Labour Party then there was the exposure of the fact that Foot's "principles" were as worthlessly malleable as they needed to be in capitalism's abrasive politics.

IVAN

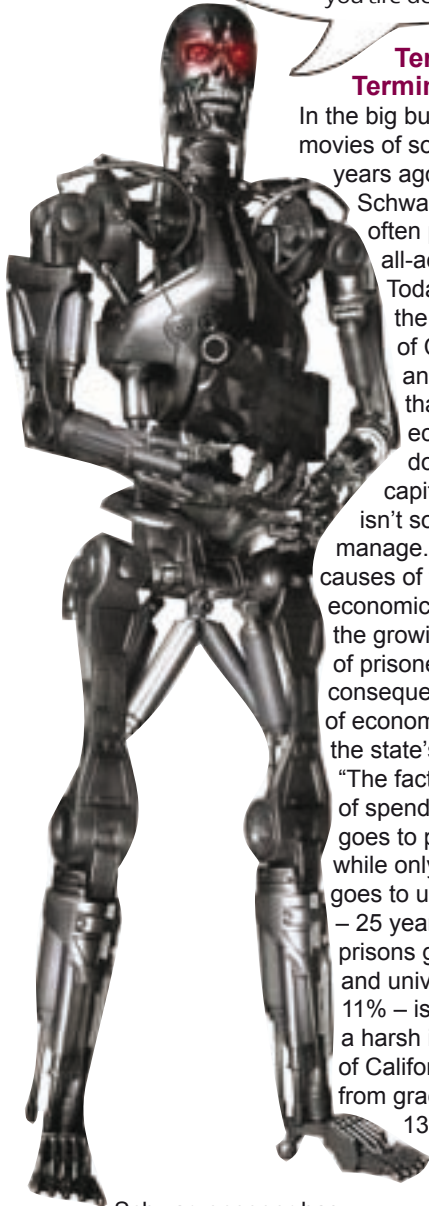


# Voice from the Back

Listen. And understand. **Capitalism** is out there. It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead.

## The Terminator Terminated?

In the big budget movies of some years ago Arnold Schwarzenegger often played the all-action hero. Today he is the governor of California and is finding that in an economic downturn capitalism isn't so easy to manage. One of the causes of that state's economic deficit is the growing number of prisoners and the consequent growth of economic deficit in the state's budget. "The fact that 9.5% of spending now goes to prisoners while only 5.7% goes to universities – 25 years ago, prisons got 4% and universities 11% – is indeed a harsh indication of California's fall from grace" (*Time*, 13 February).



Schwarzenegger has proposed three different ideas lately to deal with the problem. One is to pay Mexico to build prisons and have US prisoners in them, another is to spend more of the state's budget on prisons and finally he proposes to privatise prisons as a cheaper way of running things. Twist

and turn as they may capitalism's politicians are finding that capitalism throws up problems that are incapable of easy Hollywood solutions. Here is one though - Capitalism? Exterminate!

## Us Labour Pains

Barack Obama's election to the US presidency was supported by many American trade unionists, but as unemployment rises much of that support is evaporating. "Richard Trumka does not mince his words. The former miner now leads America's largest union body, the AFL - CIO, describes George Bush's language as: 'stolen elections, ruinous tax cuts for the rich, dishonest wars, financial scandal, government sponsored torture, flooded cities and finally economic collapse.'" Barack Obama is a huge improvement, of course, but unemployment is close to 10% and the government must do something, reckons Mr Trumka (*Time*, 13 February). Trumka like many supporters of capitalism thinks by government intervention of \$400 billion of what he calls "immediate job-creating investment" the problem of rising unemployment can be solved. He is living in cloud cuckoo land. Capitalism has periodic slumps and booms and governments know that getting the capitalist class to invest during a slump is near impossible.

## £23 Million And £1 A Day

We live in society full of inequalities. We see people starving and kids dying from lack of clean water, but surely the most hardhearted of us must scream at this news item when we realise that many members of the human race must survive on less than £1 a day. "This is a bauble that even a banker with an intact bonus would struggle to buy – the 507.5 carat, flawless white-coloured Cullinan Heritage Diamond which was sold to a Chinese buyer yesterday for \$35.3 million (£23 million). The sale to Chow Tai Fok Jewellery in Hong Kong highlights the growing importance of China in the global

diamond market" (*Times*, 27 February). It also highlights the madness of a society that allows some useless bastard in China to consume the equivalent in wealth of millions of kids staying alive.

## Demonic Drivel

In order to keep those collection plates full religious groups have to appear modern and "with it". The Roman Catholic Church is no exception to this rule and compared with some American fundamentalist Protestant churches with their opposition to evolution they may appear almost scientific. It is doubtful though if even those American bastions of superstitious nonsense could outdo the Vatican's chief exorcist. "The growing clerical sex abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church are proof that the Devil is at work inside the Vatican according to the Holy See's chief exorcist. Father Gabriele Amorth said that the Pope "fully believes in liberation from evil, because the Devil lodges in the Vatican" (*Times*, 11 March). In case you imagine that this

is just some crazy old priest who has been indulging in too much communion wine it should be pointed out that he has been the Vatican's chief exorcist for 25 years. One of his claims is that he has dealt with 70,000 cases of demonic possession. Like all supporters of private property society the religious zealots will go to any lengths to support the status quo even calling up demonic myths to explain social problems.



## Free Lunch

