

socialist standard



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August 2010
Vol. 106 No. 1272
£1.50

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

Sink or Swim



Tories 'liberate' the NHS



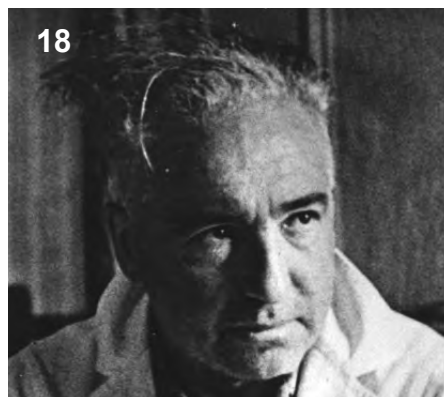
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One year subscription (normal rate) £15
One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10
Europe rate £20 (Air mail)
Rest of world £25 (Air mail)
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 September** 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.
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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

Is unemployment really the problem?

DON'T GET us wrong. We don't want to play down the misery of those who have lost their jobs – or the many more who are going to lose their jobs – in the current slump. We know very well what losing your job so often means. Losing your home (well, you thought it was yours!). Even losing your family.

But think. If not being employed was really the problem, wouldn't you expect everyone without a job to be in misery? But there are many people who don't have jobs and yet live well enough. People who don't need jobs.

Native people in the Amazon rainforest, for so long as they manage to preserve their old way of life, don't need jobs. They have access to land, food, wood, medicinal herbs, other resources they need – to their means of life. When the logging and mining companies move in, they lose access. Sure, then they need jobs.

Most of us in the "developed" countries lost access to the means of life long ago. They no longer belong to us. They were seized by a small minority who claim to own them. These owners allow us access to things we need only in exchange for money. If we can't pay, they would sooner have things go to waste – sooner leave houses empty, for instance, than shelter the homeless. They allow us access to productive resources only when they hire us to work for them. If we try to get access without their

permission, they call us criminals and send their police and jailors to punish us.

These people – the employers, the owners of the means of life – are unemployed, every one of them. But it doesn't bother them a bit! They live on the income from their property. They too don't need jobs.

So unemployment is a problem only for people who depend on being employed in order to live. That situation of dependence is what we mean by the real problem.

Some of us try to escape from the situation of dependence by going into business for ourselves. But chances of success are small – even in good times, let alone during a slump. Many don't seek escape at all but appeal to the government to create more jobs, hoping to go back to slaving away for others.

We socialists don't appeal for jobs. We don't want jobs. That doesn't mean we're lazy. We thirst for the opportunity to do useful work as free, equal, and dignified human beings – work to satisfy our needs and the needs of others. We want to be rid of an absurd system that artificially creates misery and wastes vast material, natural, and human resources. That is why we demand restoration of access to the means of life – their common ownership and democratic control by the whole community.

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Meat In-To Veg

STRANGE HOW cultural ideas evolve, or don't. As far back as records go, four thousand years ago in India, people were arguing about vegetarianism versus meat farming. How one should treat animals depended on how one saw them, and this in turn depended on one's practical experience of them. The pantheist view of them as sentient beings with 'souls' clashed directly with the more down-to-earth farmers' view of them as brainless kebabs on legs. With the rise of monotheism came an anthropocentric view of nature and animals which has persisted ever since. The Christians repudiated the notion that any non-human creature had a 'soul', thus suffering was impossible and any treatment was justifiable. Since then the debate has moved from 'souls' to 'intelligence' but science for all its advances has not really resolved the question how one should regard, and by implication treat, non-human species. If anything it has blurred whatever species distinctions did exist. Chimpanzees make and use tools, parrots can invent word-phrases, dogs can feel a sense of injustice, and rats can get depressed.

The debate is likely to re-heat. While many parts of today's developing world are rapidly increasing their meat consumption in aspiration of Western living standards, advanced capitalist countries are coming to just the opposite conclusion. After the success of the pan-European smoking ban, and imminent plans to tax sugar products in an effort to fight obesity, attention is now turning to another key ingredient of the power food and sedentary lifestyle equation responsible for so much pressure on health services.

As the global meat industry grows, the pressure is mounting. To feed the world's population on a western meat diet would take 5 planets because it is inherently such an inefficient use of land. It is also reportedly responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, prompting the UN to brand meat production as bad as fossil fuels. Following recommendations from the 2007 Stern report the UN is pushing for a wholesale dietary reduction ('UN urges global move to meat and dairy-free diet', *Guardian*, 2 June). There are already almost ten farm animals for every human alive and the figure is set to double by 2050 while the human population increases by a mere third (<http://www.vegsoc.org/environment>). Reaction against this blatantly unsustainable growth is surely not an *if* but a *when*.

One indicator of the force of the propaganda campaign now getting started is the tendency of some adherents or opponents to overstate or distort the arguments. Never shy of a controversial cover page, *New Scientist* clearly felt unable to resist doing so with a recent headline grabber 'What happens if we all quit meat? Why eating greens won't save the world' (17 July). But if readers were hoping for a vindication of the meat lifestyle they were in for a disappointment, because the magazine did nothing of the sort. Instead it provided the same damning statistics that it had done on many other occasions, with the rather paltry proviso that there might be a place for a few scrawny chickens living on kitchen scraps and perhaps a few goats here and there on small fractions of marginal land that could not be used for grain crops.

But what of this claim that 'eating greens' would save the world? Are there vegetarians so self-obsessed that they go around telling everyone that a soya chunk casserole is the road to earthly salvation? Well, it's possible. Lierre Keith, a dispirited ex-vegan, seems to

have been one of them. She describes the disillusion that drove her to become a born-again carnivore and write a book attacking the very 'earth-saving' ideas she had apparently subscribed to for 20 years: "... a desperate and all-encompassing longing to set the world right... to save the planet... to feed the hungry..." (introduction to *The Vegetarian Myth*, 2009). But more fool her for such grandiose illusions in the first place. Meat reduction could be part of the solution, but it's not *the* solution, as any veggie with their finger on the pulse would readily admit.

The Vegetarian Society (www.vegsoc.org) does argue that meat reduction would reduce carbon emissions, but does not claim that such a lifestyle will 'feed the hungry'. Just as well, because land freed from meat production would probably not be used for grain production but more likely for biofuels, since engines are owned by people with money while empty bellies are owned by people with no money and who are otherwise known as 'ineffective demand'. A meat-free diet can't change this. A capitalist-free diet could.

What will become of the meat and dairy industry in socialism? At present the socialist case focuses necessarily on the emancipation of the human species from capitalist-induced oppression and suffering, while the ethical question of how we should regard and treat animals remains as one of the iceberg of other issues submerged below the waterline. What is clear to socialists if to nobody else is that humanity's relationship to nature was never really anthropocentric but in fact 'oligocentric'. Nature and everything in it including the vast majority of the human species existed for the sole purpose, use and disposition of the few members of the ruling elites. In the view of those elites, we humans were simply clever animals. Once this highly destructive oligocentric principle is overthrown, a new ethical framework will inevitably emerge in relation to resource exploitation. Quite what this will be and whether it will become genuinely anthropocentric or alternatively expand to encompass considerations beyond the species barrier is at present an open question. If socialists expect a large-scale meat industry they will have to face the fact that there is no 'ethical' way to do this. The *New Scientist* article points out that free-range farming is the most inefficient method both in terms of land use and greenhouse gas emissions, and argues that intensive factory farming is the only logical choice.

No reasonable person today really questions the fact that animals, or at least farmed animals, are capable of fear and pain. Most people do not visit abattoirs nor do they really want to know what goes on in them, yet there is an unspoken knowledge behind the sterile and sanitized supermarket packaging. As the Nobel Prize winning writer Isaac Bashevis Singer put it in *The Letter Writer* (1968), speaking of factory farming: 'In relation to [animals], all people are Nazis; for the animals, it is an eternal Treblinka.' The rise in demand for 'cruelty-free' products in Western countries shows that, given the luxury of choice, people prefer not to be responsible for inflicting such suffering.

At all events, without a global revolution in the way society collectively owns and controls its resources people are never going to get the luxury of choice over this or any other resource question. Unless and until the welfare and humane treatment of humans is first attended to the question of the ethical treatment of animals must remain an issue waiting for its moment. They still shoot people, don't they?



Withering away of money?

Dear Editors,

Responding to Max Hess's article 'Capitalist Money Madness' (*Socialist Standard*, April) a suggestion. Perhaps, a way a Socialist government (if there ever was one) could bring about a moneyless economy is to print the stuff in abundance and pay it out in salaries and wages. Everyone would be employed in goods and services and use money to buy whatever they needed, or thought they needed. Meanwhile, everyone would be working to produce and provide the goods and services but no one would ever be without enough dosh to 'purchase' whatever they wanted because they would have access to as much of the stuff that they wanted.

Of course, in no time at all there'd be run-away inflation but it wouldn't matter if there were no money markets, exchange and financial institutions, there'd be no capitalist institutions because there would be nothing for them to do. As Max says, also no need for police, military, bankers, lawyers, prisons and prison officers...a whole swathe of jobs related to money, its use and misuse.

People would soon realize that money isn't necessary to maintain an economy. It's just a method used by a profit system that was perhaps necessary in times past but now no longer appropriate, needed or wanted. They'd only need to continue doing what they always did do...work and consume without the need to use paper and metal tokens to do it.

If other capitalist countries wanted to trade with Britain we'd provide them with goods and services in exchange for what we needed of theirs. Their workers would soon see what ours have got up to and would bring about the same change in their countries. When people see that they don't need money to maintain their standards of living and even raise them to heights only ever dreamed of they'd wonder why it was never thought of before.

Then they'd realize the great thievery that had been perpetrated upon them for centuries and resolve to never again allow capitalism to raise its fanged head again. Then, and only then, would a truly international common global economy evolve. Then, and only then, would mankind advance to the utopian world dreamt of by our ancestors.

Of course, things wouldn't run smoothly at first but society by its very nature is a moral system and just as today layabouts and petty thieves are disdained and rejected, so too in a sane socialist system dissenters would have no argument and find it hard going to feel self respect and acceptance.

Am I right or am I right ?

Leo Aliferis (by email)

Reply: You're right that when people realise they don't need money to maintain a very good standard of living, they'll wonder why it was never thought of before. But that awareness can't be achieved through a leftwing 'socialist government', which would have campaigned for, and been elected to, supervise capitalism — not abolish it.

In the highly unlikely event that such a government, led by a Trotskyist-style vanguard, sabotaged the profit-wages-money system by deliberately bringing about hyperinflation and economic chaos, the population would neither expect nor want this. All voters would then focus on is the ensuing financial turmoil and they'd be extremely alarmed by what was happening and they'd throw that government out of office at the earliest opportunity. Deliberately subjecting a pro-money population to economic chaos, as a means of supposedly leading them to socialist awareness, is doomed to fail.

Whereas, if a clear majority of the electorate vote for moneyless real socialism, because they have come to understand what it is and consciously want this system instead of capitalism, then there'd be no need to continue with a means of exchange. They would already "realize that money isn't necessary to maintain an economy". And after a clear majority of people have voted for real socialism in a general election, then plans and preparations to bring this about can be acted upon immediately without any widespread rejection and resistance that would be associated with trying to impose it on an unready and averse population from above.

Given the dire condition clapped-out capitalism is now in, and that we're heading for a prolonged period of additional working class suffering and misery, mainstream party politicians will be trying harder than ever to dupe people into believing that money management offers the answer to alleviating and solving these capitalism-caused problems. They'll want people submissively

accepting worsening state-funded services. They'll want those without jobs submissively accepting any low-paid work they are offered. They'll want those with jobs submissively accepting pay restraint and cuts. They'll want people turning against supposedly less-deserving recipients of welfare benefits.

We need to get people to completely reject this bogus capitalist agenda that managing money better is in our best interests. It isn't. Abolishing money, and the capitalist system that requires it, is in our best interests.

We are not "all in this together", as Cameron farcically states. Capitalists and their political stooges are in it for as much as they can get out of it. Everyone else is required to keep the pig trough as full as possible. — *Editors*.

Declining rate of profit?

Dear Editors

The July edition of your journal contains a brief review of my recently published book *Global Capitalism in Crisis: Karl Marx and the Decay of the Profit System*. Although the book treats a great many issues of interest to socialists, the reviewer chose to focus on just one theoretical issue that I treat at some length in the book, namely, the specification of the wage bill of socially necessary unproductive labour (SNUL – in commerce, finance and the state) as a component of "constant capital" rather than as a part of surplus value or variable capital.

The reviewer is right to suggest that this approach is important to my analysis of the current global slump as rooted in the on-going displacement of living, productive labour from production (what Marx called a rising "organic composition of capital"). However he or she implies that my empirical measurement of constant capital in the Marxian ratios for the average rate of profit and the organic composition of capital includes the costs associated with unproductive labour. This is not the case, as such costs are assimilated by me to the flow of constant capital rather than to the "capital advanced," i.e. to the constant capital stock. The magnitude of the constant capital flows does not enter into the measurement of either the average rate of profit or the organic composition of capital.

The main effect of treating SNUL

costs as a component of the constant capital flow is that it removes these costs from the measurement of either aggregate surplus-value or aggregate variable capital, thereby allowing for more accurate measurements of Marx's key quantitative ratios. In my view, the assimilation of SNUL costs to surplus value or to variable capital (or to both) has been a key stumbling block in empirically evaluating Marx's law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit and to recognizing the centrality of this law to the dynamics of capital accumulation in the era of capital's decay.

Murray E.G. Smith (by email)

Reply: We certainly accept that some of Marx's writings on productive and unproductive labour are open to interpretation and were not fully worked out (e.g. the treatment of this issue is rather different in the Appendix of Volume I of *Capital* called 'The Results of the Immediate Process of Production' compared to the chapter in Volume 2 on 'The Costs of Circulation').

However, we get a strong sense that you are effectively redefining the rate of profit formula so that it might more easily show what you seek to prove and what others have failed to prove before you (that there is a pronounced and statistically observable long-term tendency for the rate of profit to fall in capitalism that will lead to the system's demise).

This attempt seems divorced from some of the realities of capitalism and misses much of what has underpinned political and economic debate in recent decades: namely that it is the rate of profit after tax that is key for investment decisions and that governments have been in a desperate struggle to the reduce the tax-take from profits for years. Indeed, taxes themselves are ultimately a burden on capital - from surplus value - as therefore is the state machine funded by them, and this is the important point we seek to emphasise. - *Editors*.

Capital – difficult?

Dear Editors

I'm all for anything that widens the attention to Marx. But is *Capital* really difficult – “most give up by chapter 3”, these “undeniable difficulties” referred to (*Socialist Standard*, July, Book Reviews), have I missed something? Marx himself does indeed say in the introduction that, excepting the subsections of chapter 1, the reader will have no reason to complain that it is difficult

to understand – to learn anything new will have to be willing to do something on their own account.

After the materialist conception of history, commodity production, the source of profit or surplus value, the add-ons of absolute and relative surplus value and the simple relationships between constant capital, variable capital, surplus value, etc, *Capital* is a straightforward read and after about half way it broadens out into history, philosophy, sociology and wanders through all sorts of interesting perspectives.

I'm trying to think where the “difficulties” are, have I made assumptions where I should have found more meaning? To say that *Capital* is difficult must already put up a deterrent to would-be readers. But there are none that are not overcome by a few moments' thought. But maybe it's because today, if information is not transmitted by TV or DVDs and reading is only for trash newspapers and novels, that no one now simply lies back with a book, such as *Capital*, for just the sake of a good read. A good read is where you take your time, think about what's on the page, even leave it for a while, come back to it, read it through, then read in parts picked either at random or of particular interest.

With a book like *Capital*, you can play with it, pick up on the secret of primary accumulation or the swindle of the national debt or the conditions of the working class in medieval times or contemporary times and so on.

I've just returned to *Capital* after thinking again about “most give up before chapter 3”. Well, even if that's true, having got that far the basics are covered and the rest expands on that basis.

Please don't continue this idea that Marx is difficult, it's less difficult than a cookery recipe or flat-pack instructions. It's a good read just taken as that but the explanations and ideas that come off the page are even now mind-blowing and change your own conception and perspective of the world around you. It applies not only to its time but to current events and explains these.

And if I want to know how much land the “free” peasants were entitled to, and how even that and the common was thieved off them in later times, it's a history book in its own right. So where's the problem, please explain.

Stuart Gibson, Dorset

Reply: The “undeniable difficulties” of the early chapters of *Capital* are

so undeniable that, as you say, Marx felt it necessary to warn his readers of them in the introduction to his great work. William Morris, hardly an intellectual sluggard, said the book caused him “agonies of confusion of the brain”. But the difficulties are mostly over by the end of the third chapter, and the rest of *Capital* is, we agree, fairly straightforward but rewarding reading - *Editors*.

Dear Editors

In the March issue, Andrew Armitage described the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in the US as a “good cause” (in quotation marks). In the June issue, Roy Beat called this attitude “sectarian” because the CRM was “more than just a good cause”. Andrew Armitage responded in July that “socialists recognize the serious limitations” of the CRM in “at best only aspiring to parity” with white workers.

In the decades between Reconstruction and the CRM black people in the South were helpless in the face of constant humiliation and terror. Any who might have taken an interest in revolutionary ideas would have been tarred and feathered or lynched as “uppity niggers”. So the “limitations” of the CRM were real but could hardly have been avoided.

This exemplifies the point that the struggle for democratic rights is an essential precondition of the struggle for socialism. In broad historical perspective, they are two stages in a single struggle for social equality. From this point of view, it is indeed sectarian to belittle the progress achieved by the Civil Rights Movement

Stephen Shenfield, USA

New Socialist Party Pamphlet What's Wrong With Using Parliament? The Cases For And Against The Revolutionary Use Of Parliament



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IN HIS famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (Chapter 25), John Steinbeck described how food was destroyed during the Great Depression:

“Carloads of oranges dumped on the ground. The people come for miles to take the fruit, but this could not be. How would they buy oranges if they could drive out and pick them up? And men with hoses squirt kerosene on the oranges... A million people hungry, needing the fruit – and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains.

And the smell of rot fills the country.

Burn coffee for fuel in the ships... Dump potatoes in the rivers and place guards along the banks to keep the hungry people from fishing them out [with nets]. Slaughter the pigs and bury them...

And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange. And coroners must fill in the certificates – died of malnutrition – because the food must be forced to rot.”

A few more facts. In 1933 alone, the US federal government bought 6 million hogs and destroyed them. Vast quantities of milk were poured down the sewers. 25 million acres of crops (the area of a square with sides 200 miles long) were ploughed under. In Brazil, 69 million bags of coffee, equivalent to two years’ output, were destroyed. All to keep up prices.

What about this time round?

The current depression is the deepest since that of the 1930s, and its end is not yet in sight. As real wages continue to fall and austerity measures bite harder, more and more goods will remain unsold. Falling prices and profits are already leading to scenes reminiscent of those portrayed by Steinbeck.

Leaving strawberries to rot

In March reports appeared that Florida strawberry growers, faced with a flooded market and a sharp collapse in wholesale prices, were leaving huge tracts to rot in the fields. Most of these farmers did not allow people in to pick fruit for themselves. They were afraid that cucumbers and other new crops they were planting between the rows might be harmed.

Not only the strawberries went to waste but also the water used to grow them. Cultivation of the wasted strawberries drained the groundwater and caused local water shortages.

Bulldozing houses

There have been reports from around the United States of the destruction of houses, many of them newly built. Most foreclosed houses can no longer be sold at auction, even for prices as low as \$500. They end up in the hands of banks that see no medium-term prospect of reselling them and conclude that the cheapest solution is to tear them down. This happens not only to individual houses but often to whole streets. In May 2009, a bank decided to bulldoze an almost finished housing complex in California rather than spend the few hundred thousand dol-

lars needed to complete it.

Meanwhile the ranks of the homeless continue to swell. They are in desperate need of housing but generate no “effective demand”.

Slashing clothes and shoes

In early January, *The New York Times* ran a story about two major retail chains, H&M and Wal-Mart, throwing out unsold clothes in trash bags. First they are made unwearable: employees are told to slash garments, slice holes in shoes, cut sleeves off coats, fingers off gloves, etc..

The response to this article included internet testimony from ex-employees of other large stores, revealing how widespread these practices now are.

Cheryl: “I worked at Dillards for several years. They do the same thing. Their logic was that if they donated it [to charity] people would try to bring it back to exchange for other merchandise.”

Martha: “Yeah, I used to work at a store where they would rip the bed sheets, blankets and pillow cases if they couldn’t sell them, then throw them away... I thought it was dumb. I wanted to take it and donate it, but they didn’t let me.”

Nat: “I used to work for H&M and hated to cut the clothing [that] I knew we could have given away to those who needed it. We destroyed EVERYTHING and I found it so stupid. It was such a waste and sad!”

Maryliz: “This just makes me sick. How terrible, especially right now with people freezing to death. They could have been saved if they had sufficient warm clothing. Shame on the companies that do this.”

Maggie: “I got so mad that my managers wouldn’t box up [unsold food] and take it to shelters that I called corporate headquarters... They wouldn’t let the food be donated! Some blather about how that would devalue the brand, because people would just go to that shelter to eat the food instead of coming and paying for it.”

The vintage

Steinbeck finishes Chapter 25 with the passage that gives his book its title:

“In the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage.”

There is ample cause for wrath. But wrath is not enough. The managers who got Maggie so angry have to act as they do. (Otherwise they won’t remain managers.) They have to pursue the commercial logic of maximising profit or minimising loss. The idea of giving people what they need, simply because they need it, is inconsistent with this logic. It expresses a different, human logic, which will come into its own once we reorganize society on a different, human basis.

STEFAN



A scene from the film version of ‘The Grapes of Wrath’



Pieces together

A LOST TRIBE INDEED

"Northern Ireland's born-again Christian culture minister has called on the Ulster Museum to put on exhibits reflecting the view that the world was made by God only several thousand years ago. Nelson McCausland, who believes that Ulster Protestants are one of the lost tribes of Israel, has written to the museum's board of trustees urging them to reflect creationist and intelligent design theories of the

universe's origins. The Democratic Unionist minister said the inclusion of anti-Darwinian theories in the museum was 'a human rights issue'. McCausland defended a letter he wrote to the trustees calling for anti-evolution exhibitions at the museum. He claimed that around one third of Northern Ireland's population believed either in intelligent design or the creationist view that the universe was created about 6,000 years ago." (*Guardian*, 26 May)

CAPITALISM IN ACTION

"A boy aged seven has been found working 98 hours a week to produce decorative Christmas goods for the British high street. He is employed from 9am to 11pm, seven days a week, earning 7p an hour for his widowed mother. The boy, known only as Ravi, not only works but sleeps in a Delhi sweatshop that produces items for Poundland, the cut-price chain store." (*Sunday Times*, 11 July)

PROFITABLE CARNAGE

"Russia has exported \$5.3 billion worth of weapons-related production in the first six months of 2010, the head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) said on Wednesday. 'With a plan for \$9.5 billion, we have delivered \$5.3 billion in [weapons-related] production in the first six months [of 2010], which constitutes 56% of the plan,' Mikhail Dmitriyev told the Engineering Technologies International Forum 2010 in the town of Zhukovsky near Moscow. In 2009, the figure was \$8.5 billion." (*Ria Novosti*, 30 June)

WORKERS WAKING UP

"Zhongshan, China – Striking workers at a auto parts plant here are demanding the right to form their own labor union, something officially forbidden in China, and held a protest march Friday morning. Meanwhile, other scattered strikes have begun to ripple into Chinese provinces previously untouched by the labor unrest. A near doubling of wages is the primary goal of the approximately 1,700 Honda workers on strike here in this southeastern China city, at the third Honda auto parts factory to face a work stoppage in the last two weeks." (*New York Times*, 10 June)

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Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. Email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Tues.

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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

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Northeast branch. Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690. Email: davejewell@bushinternet.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

Carlisle. Robert Whitfield.

Email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365

Southeast Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Skipton. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ.

Tel: 01756 752621

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

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

South West Regional branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

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

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

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

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglian Regional branch.

Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com
David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

Tel: 01692 582533.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD.

Tel: 01603 814343.

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

IRELAND

Cork. Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427.

Email: mariekev@eircom.net

Newtownabbey. Nigel McCullough.

Tel: 028 90852062.

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm.

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995. JIMMY@jmoir29.freeserve.co.uk

Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow.

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

Email: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX.

Tel: 01328 541643

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

Email: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm,

Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: 01792 643624

Cardiff and District. John James, 67

Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR.

Tel: 01446 405636

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Latin America. J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

AFRICA

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105, Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

Zambia. Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

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

Japan. Michael. Email: worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com.

EUROPE

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

Germany. Norbert. E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Gian Maria Freddi, Casella Postale n. 28., c/o Ag. PT VR 17, 37131 Verona

Spain. Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200

Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

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

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada.

Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

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

World Socialist Party of the United States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA

02144 USA.

Email: wspboston@covad.net



cooking the books

The problem with capitalism

“THE PROBLEM with capitalism”, former Canadian Prime Minister (1993-2003) Jean Chrétien told the *Times* (29 June), “is the capitalists. They don’t know when to stop. They want more and more.”

This is an astute observation from someone with considerable experience in running the political affairs of capitalism. Capitalists do behave in this way. They are always aiming to make as much money as they can for their business, and when they’re on a profit-making spree they don’t know when to stop. Which causes problems from time to time, notably crises of overproduction or overspeculation.

But why is this? Is it because capitalists are just greedy people? Marx offered an alternative explanation: that capitalists are “personifications of capital” and that, as units of capital are driven to expand, this is reflected in their behaviour:

“The simple circulation of commodities – selling in order to buy – is a means of carrying out a purpose unconnected with circulation, namely, the appropriation of use-values, the satisfaction of wants. The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself, for the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has therefore no limits. As the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or mainspring of the circulation M-C-M, becomes his subjective aim, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract becomes the sole motive of his operations, that he functions as a capitalist, that is, as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use-values must therefore never be looked upon as the real aim of the capitalist; neither must the profit on any single transaction. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at.” (*Capital*, Vol 1, ch 4).

In other words, capitalists are greedy because they are in charge of units of capital. They can’t help it as capital accumulation is what capitalism is all about. Some internalise this and will be nasty people, especially the “self-made man” variety. But others behave like this only when running their business and outside working hours are just like everyone else.

Chrétien sees one of the roles of governments as to restrain capitalists from time to time in the best interest of all of them. As he put it, “You live with it, and you regulate them” (extended interview, *Times*, 1 July).

Capitalists and capitalist firms don’t like being regulated and spend huge sums of money lobbying to prevent this. They want a free hand to make profits in any way they can, without restrictions, or “red tape” as they call it. In the 19th century, as Marx pointed out in *Capital*, they so ruthlessly exploited the workforce by imposing long hours of work, that they risked the reproduction of future workers to make profits for them. The state had to intervene in the general capitalist interest and bring in the Factory Acts to restrain them.

What sort of society is it where those in charge of production are driven to be greedy and need restraining to stop them causing too much damage to their workers and to the environment?

“This is a system of the elite, by the elite and for the elite,” said Riyaz Hussain Naqvi, a retired government official who worked in tax collection for 38 years. “It is a skewed system in which the poor man subsidizes the rich man.” The problem starts at the top. The average worth of Pakistani members of Parliament is \$900,000, with its richest member topping \$37 million. “It’s a very good country for the rich man. Chauffeurs, servants, big houses. The question is, who is suffering? The common man.” :

<http://tinyurl.com/3axvwj3>

The anti-Muslim politician Geert Wilders, whose Freedom party (PVV) won 24 seats and third place in the Dutch national election last month, says he is forming international alliances to launch branches of his Islamophobic party across the Western world. Almost 1.5m Dutch people voted for the PVV in June. “The message, ‘stop Islam, defend freedom’, is a message that’s not only important for the Netherlands but for the whole free Western world.”

<http://tinyurl.com/38t7elg>

The United Nations estimates that each year 5,000 mostly Muslim women and girls are shot, stoned, strangled, stabled, burned, or smothered by family members with the intention of cleansing shame from the family’s name. While most of these crimes occur in the Middle East and South Asia, immigration is taking them around the globe:

<http://tinyurl.com/27mmq6d>

Fears are growing for the fate of thousands of young girls in rural Mauritania, where campaigners say the cruel practice of force-feeding young girls for marriage is making a significant comeback since a military junta took over the West African country. Aminetou Mint Ely, a women’s rights campaigner, said girls as young as five were still being subjected to the tradition of leblouh every year. The practice sees them tortured into swallowing gargantuan amounts of food and liquid - and consuming their vomit if they reject it:

<http://tinyurl.com/ctoyjd>

As 14-year-old Nguyen Hoang Anh was being branded with hot irons, had solvents poured in his wounds and had his teeth pulled out with pliers, those who heard him ignored his cries. In most countries, suspicions of any kind of child abuse, let alone such a horrific case, would rouse a small army of social workers and police. Vietnam, however, has no such public system and only loose laws protecting children and other vulnerable people. “We don’t consider beating a child to be violence against children,” concedes Nguyen Hai Huu, director of the Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs’ child-protection unit.

<http://tinyurl.com/2vpuhqv>

An Indian court has ruled that Hindu gods cannot deal in stocks and shares, reports said Saturday, after an application for trading accounts to be set up in their names. Two judges at the Bombay High Court on Friday rejected a petition from a private religious trust to open accounts in the names of five deities, including the revered elephant-headed god, Ganesha. “Trading in shares on the stock market requires certain skills and expertise and to expect this from deities would not be proper,” judges P.B. Majumdar and Rajendra Sawant said, according to Indian newspapers:

<http://tinyurl.com/338skdn>



Tiny Tips



NHS: short-term prescriptions

*For Tories, liberty means the freedom first
and foremost to make money.*

The new Tory government has been quick to establish its credentials in the cause of liberty – first, we had the Free Schools, as opposed to the Tyranny Schools that previously existed, ground under heel by the dark forces of elected councillors. Now, we have the liberation of general practitioner doctors in the NHS, with commissioning of treatment and budgeting being handed to them, rather than the dark forces of professional bureaucracy. It is now to be composed of independent and competing hospitals and services working in an internal market, with the state playing the role of merely being an insurance provider that provides the ultimate source of funds.

As many critics have been quick to point out, doctors have spent years training in medicine, and not public administration, and so it is more than likely that in fact their liberation from public bureaucracy will take the form of hiring the services of private bureaucracies to run their funds for them. Indeed, the despicable bureaucrats who will be run out of state employment will probably find themselves being re-hired as shiny and virtuous bureaucrats by the private companies that will provide GP consortia with administrative capacities.

Profitable opportunities

The amount of economic activity in the NHS is immense, and the opportunity to turn that into

profitable activity for private capitalists – especially in straightened economic times – is as alluring as an oasis to a thirsty desert traveller. For Tories, liberty means the freedom first and foremost to make money. They regard economic activity taken on by the state as ‘crowding out’ the private sector, a private sector they think is inevitably more efficient and cost effective than government bureaucracy. Of course, part of that ‘effectiveness’ would require hospitals, etc., to go bankrupt if they don’t manage their budget effectively. It would also mean that different management teams would have to be able to take over weaker organisations. This creates its own chaos and inefficiency; and it may not be possible to fully replicate a market within the NHS, because mergers to achieve economies of scale would simply see a return to one large provider – this time in private rather than state hands, which would be politically difficult.

The new NHS organisations will try and save money, and that will mostly come from the terms and conditions of their staff – sweating them, as Marx termed it: providing a service at the same or less cost as before overall, but making their profit out of paying their staff less. Outsourcing NHS administration means breaking up the national pay bargaining mechanisms. Each hospital will be an independent employer, free to negotiate its own terms with staff. Some staff will



He comes not to bury hospitals, but to set them free!

inevitably do very well out of this, and the Tories would see that as ‘rewarding excellence’ – although, in reality, often enough it will mean merely rewarding those who are in a lucky enough market position to bargain up their position. As has been seen with the banking crisis, monetary incentives aren’t sufficient to obtain good management.

Under trade union law, because they will be separate employers, it will mean that strikes across the sector will be illegal, and union power may be weakened. The example though, of the railways, where nationally solid unions were able to pick off fragmented employers may haunt the nightmares of the new government, and may be part of the reason why there is talk of further restrictions on the right to strike, by setting further conditions – such as requiring a majority of those eligible to vote, rather than simply of those voting, before a strike ballot is valid. Clearly, their love of liberty does not extend to the liberty of workers to organise to defend and advance their bargaining power in the market place.

We have the examples of other attempts to use this model of the state as a commissioning buyer. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was used extensively under Labour to fund public projects, for much the same reason. The problem with this is that it means the state has to behave like a private business person, rather than as a taxing power in the land. It becomes bound by its contracts, and as *Private Eye* has been pointing out for years, PFI contracts are locked-in spending, which cannot be altered in the same way as directly run activities can be. Providers have penalty clauses or the option of suing should the government try and reduce their payments. This

means that the current round of cuts will have to come disproportionately from the directly administered part of the state sector.

Tax or borrow?

Those cuts themselves derive from the fact that over the years it has been easier to pay for state spending by borrowing from private capitalists rather than taxing them. Borrowing by the government increases capital’s revenue whereas taxing reduces it overall. The power relation is also different, with interest rates going up if lenders are not happy with a government’s policies providing a powerful tool for disciplining the state. What this means in practice is that far from the division between Labour and Tories being one of public versus private provision, but about different capitalists who gain their revenue via state or private capitalism.

Those elements of the state, such as health, education, social benefits that represent an insurance function could also be provided by the private sector. Health costs have to be paid for by someone. Unemployment must be paid for somehow. This is demonstrated in the United States, where the Obama administration has created compulsory health insurance (much as in the UK compulsory motor insurance pays for medical costs arising from traffic accidents, which are not covered by general NHS spending). Compulsory insurance is a tax by any other name, except it must be paid to competing private insurers who will ensure they make their profit from it. Of course, once the NHS has been transformed into an internal commissioning market, it would only be a small step for the government to transfer to a US style compulsory insurance scheme, and cut the state’s role down to providing a subsidy for those who cannot afford

“love of liberty does not extend to the liberty of workers to organise to defend and advance their bargaining power in the market place.”

insurance. The same end result occurs as now, except that the formal ‘liberty’ and ‘responsibility’ of buying insurance care moves from the state to individual. The difference is more ideological than practical, saving that with private insurers there is profit to be made.

Of course, the NHS has always had a massive private element – staff in certain sectors have been able to accrue large wage packets from the NHS labour market; pharmaceutical companies and other providers have always been paid through the market. Doubtless, though, a huge campaign to ‘Save the NHS’ will emerge, led by such unions as Unison which remain committed to keeping a large public sector.

Ultimately, whatever way it works out in the wash, the provision of health and social insurance within capitalism depends on the capacity of the workers as a class to wring payment out of the owners of the world. So long as the wages system exists the fight is on to secure the means of living, no matter how the owners squabble among themselves about how to pay us our due.

PIK SMEET

Communist Camp

What happens when you swap your wage-slavery for a rucksack? You get communism. That, at least, was the argument of Aditya Chakraborty in a column for the *Guardian* (13 July), drawing on the arguments of the late Marxist philosopher GA Cohen. Camping and caravan trips last year were up 27 percent on the previous year and sales of tents and other equipment continue to climb, as workers cut back on holiday spending due to the recession, according to a report in the same newspaper. But camping, says Chakraborty, is not just a bit of fun (or a horrific trial comparable to fleeing a war zone with your belongings strapped to your back, depending on taste): it's also a "socio-political experiment" demonstrating the feasibility of communism.

How so? Well, on a camping trip, "adult hierarchy is flattened, utensils and resources are pooled. Tasks are performed as a unit: you may lay on the food, but your friend is a better cook, and her boyfriend will clean the dishes. There is no question of people being paid differently for different tasks. Nor [can you claim a] 'banjo bonus' for providing a highly-valued service enjoyed by less-talented souls." And the objections to this communist picture? What if someone on your camping trip demands more room in the tent than everyone else? Or a greater share of the food? Or dominates the decision-making about what to do? In real, everyday life, we would just say, "For heaven's sake, don't be such a schmuck". But in political discourse, especially in the wilderness of the camp of public opinion, where passions run as high as the bog roll is

scarce, and the odd real insight blows by unremarked like tumbleweed, such objections are taken to be the stuff of profound criticism. Chakraborty will have discovered this for himself if he ever went to read the comments section on his article when it was posted on the *Guardian* website (see www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/13/camping-for-communists-brain-food). To be fair, although the noise of the screeching in the chimp enclosure was at levels you'd expect from internet discussion forums, all the important issues were also raised, and the comments reflected genuine concerns about the socialist project – concerns that very rarely get a hearing in Camp Public Opinion.

The chief objection was that, as far as *Guardian* readers could see, there was very little resemblance between a camping trip and a labour camp in Siberia (or alternatively a very great resemblance, again depending on taste). In other words, 'socialism' and 'communism' are still associated in the public mind with the state-capitalist tyrannies of the former Soviet Union and China and so on. These arguments are very frustrating to socialists, but actually they make a fair point. To the vast majority of people, the words 'communism' and 'socialism' refer to realities that they are quite right to reject – indeed, to regimes and practices that genuine socialists have always rejected on principle. That's why we in the Socialist Party are always careful to explain exactly what we mean by socialism (or

communism, by which is meant the same thing): a moneyless, stateless, classless society, where the means of producing and distributing wealth are held in common and controlled democratically by the whole community. This is a different proposition to state ownership. State ownership and control of capitalist industry is just that – an inevitable and necessary aspect of the

normal functioning of capitalist society, resorted to as freely by 'free market' ideologues as 'communist' demagogues. Socialism, on the other hand, is a total change in human relationships; the realisation of the liberal dream of democracy. It means democracy everywhere, from the home to the

"It's not as if camping is the only situation where the normal rules of pay-as-you-go market exchange are suspended"

workplace to the global administration of production, not just the right to choose different management teams every five years.

A related objection is that communism only ever comes about if forced on a country against the will of its people. Again, this is an idea that it is quite right to reject, and the exact opposite of the truth: genuine communism is impossible unless a majority of the population consciously chooses it and expresses its choice democratically, at the ballot box; and not just in one country, but globally.

Another predictable objection, given the example



Chakraborty chose, was that people like living in the modern world and do not want to give up their homes or their hard-won comforts to live in a field or wash in a bucket. Again, the hecklers have a point. Living in a mud hut may appeal to a small handful of romantics, but socialism is all about building on what capitalism has bequeathed us, not razing it all to the ground and heading back to the trees. It will often be conceded that communism is possible among small groups – it can hardly be denied now thanks to the popularisation of anthropology on some very good television programmes, such as Bruce Parry’s *Tribe* on the BBC – but the idea that it can also take place on a larger scale is dismissed as obvious rubbish. This is false on both levels – hunter-gatherer egalitarianism could be and was organised with millions of people and over vast continents; and if there’s a reason why a postal system, or an airline,

Equality - not sameness

or a world-wide industrial system, couldn’t be organised on similar principles, then it has yet to be demonstrated exactly why not.

Of course, Chakraborty’s specific arguments about camping shouldn’t be taken too seriously. As he says later in the same article, “it’s not as if camping is the only situation where the normal rules of pay-as-you-go market exchange are suspended”. He cites the example of libraries and blood donation, but the examples could be massively extended. As Marx pointed out, even within a

capitalist factory or workplace the basic organizational principle is still largely communist internally: if someone wants to use your stapler, you hand it over, you don’t charge by the hour. Within the family, too, the principle “from each according to ability, to each according to need” applies: parents do not generally need to put padlocks on the fridge door. Indeed, as Marx shows in *Capital*, capitalism is actually parasitic on this form of communism – it takes the natural gains of human cooperation and nature

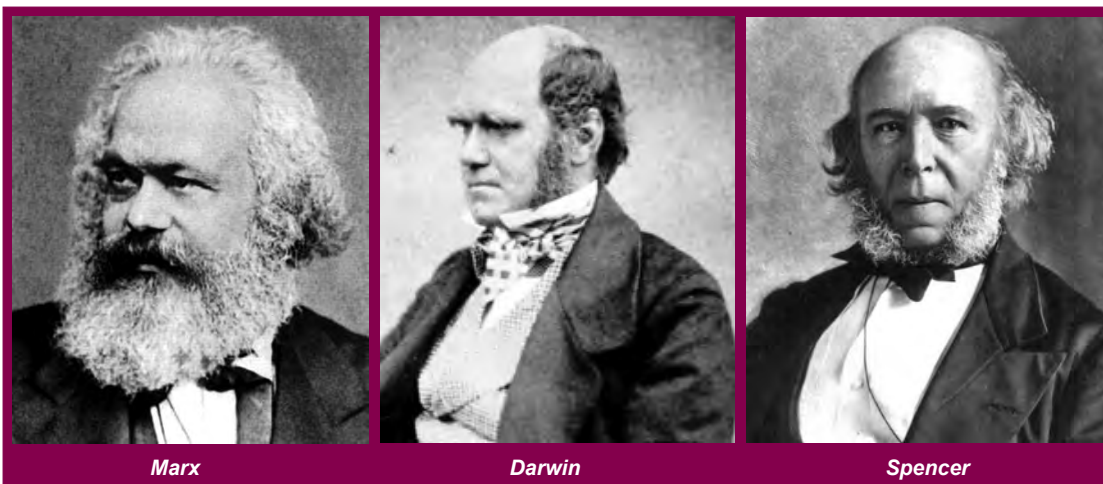
as a free gift, then pours them into the pockets of private individuals.

When we go camping, the usual, normal organizational principle of human life – i.e., communism – naturally takes over. The question is, as Chakraborty says, “if people choose to live like this for a few weeks each year, what’s to stop them doing so all the time”? What indeed? Our answer is nothing at all apart from the political will and the kind of dedicated organization needed to see it ushered in. “The argument then becomes not whether to have socialism but how to have it,” says Chakraborty. When the argument progresses to this level, assuming it ever does, then indeed socialists will be able to say that they have scaled the north face of the Eiger. And camping will be optional.

STUART WATKINS

Camping... the Soviet Gulag style.





Marx admired Darwin's work but was critical of some of the conclusions drawn from it. The second of our three-part article on Marx and Engels and Darwin .

Marx and the Ideology of Darwinism

In Marx's initial enthusiastic reading of *The Origin of Species* he had written to both Engels (19 December 1860) and Lassalle (16 January 1861) that it "contains the natural-history foundation of our viewpoint" and that "it provides a basis in natural science for the historical class struggle." What could he have meant by these comments? He was certainly not saying that the Darwinian process applied to human society. After all, Marx had spent nigh on 20 years grappling with trying to understand social processes and arriving at the "guiding thread" of his materialist conception. It is unlikely that in the 18 months separating what he wrote in the famous 1859 Preface and his reading of Darwin's *Origin* that he would have jettisoned his own hard won approach and replaced it with Darwin's. So what was the connection with Darwin? It is unlikely to have been Darwin's Malthusianism, as anything smacking of Malthus would have been contemptible to Marx. Perhaps a closer look at what Darwin meant by the phrase "struggle for existence" may help.

Darwin made clear in *The Origin* that he used this phrase in a metaphoric sense to cover a wide range of situations:

"I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphoric sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals in time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get the food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle for life against the drought, though more properly it should be said to be dependent on the moisture." (Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1859; Penguin edition 1968, p.116.)

And:

"Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life." (ibid., p.117.)

This "large and metaphoric" meaning of the phrase "struggle for existence" includes more than the Hobbesian "war of all against all" or of "nature red in tooth and claw" of Tennyson, and refers to the necessity of all biological species to obtain their means of survival and reproduction from their interaction with the environment

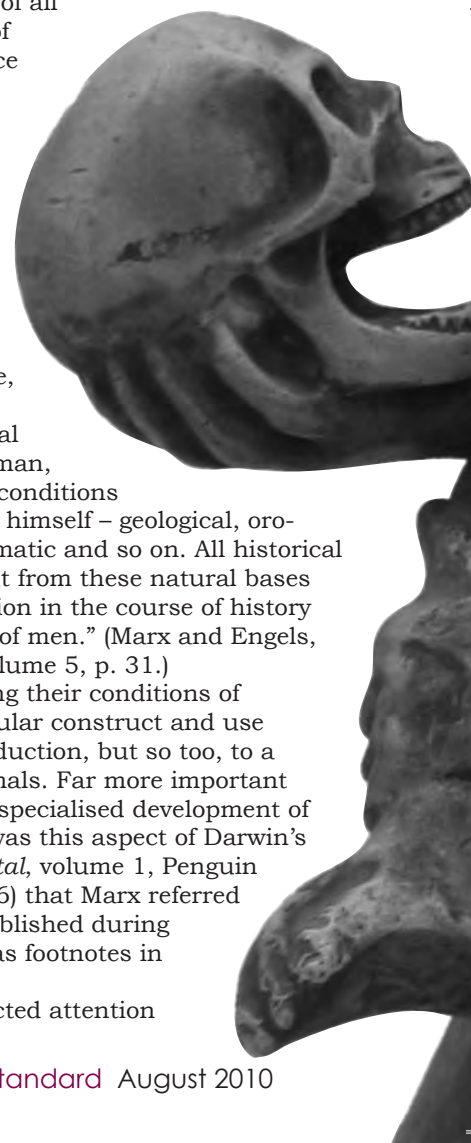
they inhabit, and that different biological forms have different kinds of interaction with their surroundings. Human beings, too, have to confront this problem of obtaining their conditions of existence. Indeed, in *The German Ideology* (1845) in which Marx and Engels first formulated their materialist conception, they state:

"The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus, the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself – geological, orographical, climatic and so on. All historical writing must set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men." (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, volume 5, p. 31.)

In this process of obtaining their conditions of existence humans in particular construct and use tools as instruments of production, but so too, to a lesser degree, do other animals. Far more important for animals in this was the specialised development of parts of their body. And it was this aspect of Darwin's "epoch-making work" (*Capital*, volume 1, Penguin edition, 1976, p. 461, note 6) that Marx referred to in the only comments published during his lifetime, and then only as footnotes in *Capital*, volume 1:

"Darwin has directed attention



to the history of natural technology, i.e., the formation of organs of plants and animals, which serve as the instruments of production for sustaining their life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man in society, of organs that are the material basis of every particular organisation of society, deserve equal attention? And would not such a history be easier to compile, since, as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in that we have made the former, but not the latter. Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations. . . . The weaknesses of the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism

which excludes the historical process, are immediately evident from the abstract and

ideological conceptions expressed by their spokesmen whenever they venture beyond the bounds of their own speciality.” (*Capital*, volume 1, Penguin edition, 1976, pp. 493-494, note 4.)

Throughout his work, Marx always made a distinction between natural history and human history, and the difference between animals and humans in their relationship to their conditions of existence. Again in the *German Ideology*, he and Engels had written of this:

“[Men] themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.” (p. 31.)

As soon as human beings start to produce their means of subsistence they must enter into certain kinds of relations of production, and these are not nature-determined as they are with other species. The earliest humans may have started out with nature given conditions, but the evolution of their biological structures made it both possible and necessary for them to move beyond this. This aspect of human beings was beyond Darwin’s viewpoint; he could not move beyond natural history.

Although Marx appreciated the scientific significance of *The Origin*, his critical perspective brought to the fore some of Darwin’s ideological assumptions, especially when applied to human society and the use made to justify capitalism as “natural.” In one of his last letters in which he mentions Darwin, writing to Laura and Paul Lafargue (15 February 1869) he wrote:

“Darwin is led by the struggle for life in English society – the competition of all with all, bellum omnium contra omnes – to discover competition [...] as the ruling law of bestial and vegetative life. The Darwinian, conversely, considers this a conclusive reason for human society never to emancipate itself from its bestiality.”

Marx’s interest in Darwin did not extend beyond *The Origin*, and there is no evidence that he read *The Descent of Man* or any other of Darwin’s works. However, there is no doubt that he appreciated Darwin’s “epoch-making work” and held Darwin in high regard. This is made clear when he sent Darwin, on 25 September 1873, an inscribed copy of the second German edition of *Capital*: “Mr Charles Darwin on the part of his sincere admirer Karl Marx.” Darwin (1 October 1873) sent a typically courteous but non-committal reply, and the majority of the pages remain uncut in Darwin’s library. And since the mid-1970s the myth that Marx wished to dedicate volume 2 of *Capital* to Darwin has been laid to rest.

On the same day he sent his inscribed copy to Darwin, Marx also sent one to Herbert Spencer, another giant of 19th century thought, perhaps even more widely read by others than even Darwin. But apart from the long forgotten Italian criminologist, Enrico Ferri, who wrote *Socialism and Positivism* (1894; English edition 1905), who else has attempted a Darwin-Spencer-Marx link up?

ED BLEWITT

*Next month (concluding article): Had Engels read Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*? The first part appeared in the June issue.*

Land Grab: win-win or win-lose?

Corporate self-regulation or total system change?



Following the recent growing interest in land acquisition and investment in land around the world for which there are no binding regulations and also, apparently, no agreement by private industry as to whether or how to adopt voluntary self-regulation, the World Bank with the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Institute for Food and Development, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) convened a meeting to discuss this issue. Titled *'Principles for responsible agricultural investment that respects rights, livelihoods and resources'* the discussion notes from the September/October 2009 meeting were published in January.

A set of seven principles was drawn up highlighting the main risks, which were perceived to be displacement of populations and undermining or negating existing rights. The first two principles were concerned mainly with not jeopardising existing land rights and ensuring that food security would not be threatened in the targeted areas.

Two more principles were focussed on transparency at all stages of the process when accessing land or other resources, to ensure that all stakeholders would be kept within the information loop. Consultation and participation were to be such that all those materially affected should be consulted and agreements from consultations would be recorded and enforced. The remaining principles were concerned with 'responsible' investing, respect for rule of law, use of industry best practice and to balance returns for shareholders with significant positive outcomes for the host nation. Both social and environmental sustainability were considered important, with the need for environmental impact studies written in and the recognition that there should be no negative impacts on local populations.

In conclusion it was noted that agreement had been reached that a set of principles was necessary and that the seven drawn up were the right ones.

Response by UN Special Rapporteur

This proposed voluntary code was responded to on 26 April at a high level session of UNCTAD and the Commission on Investment Enterprise and Development in Geneva by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter. He is independent of any government or organisation and reports to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. His response was lengthy and apprehensive especially with regard to item five on the agenda – *Investment in the agricultural sector with a view to building productive capacities* – concerning the seven principles above. 'I am worried,' he began before going on to expound his many reasons. In a number of areas he felt that the focus was wrong, that it should be on rural development and increased incomes, not on boosting production. He referred to the 'Green Revolution' of the 1970s when food production increased per capita by 9 percent in South Asia 1970-1990 but the increase of hungry people was also 9 percent and in South America in the same period food production per capita increased 8 percent but the hungry increased by 19 percent.

Another concern was that with agricultural investment there was a tendency to antagonise groups of farmers who are involved in different kinds of farming, especially the small land owners who, although generally more



Olivier De Schutter

productive, can in no way compete with the bigger mechanised farms. A further worry came from knowledge of earlier projects when land rights had been violated in investments in plantations for fuel crops, dams, tourism and large scale infrastructure projects.

His conclusion: 'We cannot afford more dispossessed, greater inequalities, more leaving the land because it has become

unviable – pastoralists to lose access to grazing, fishers cut off from their fishing grounds, forest destruction or fencing in for carbon sequestration.’

The World Bank’s and their associates’ statement and principles all sound quite reasonable if we are able to lay aside cynicism for a fleeting moment. However, if it is as trustworthy and dependable as it appears to be – transparent, fair, considerate of all parties etc etc – why does Olivier De Schutter feel the need to report that he is worried and to further expand on the principles and explain where they can go wrong? Remember the original principles were an attempt to provide merely a voluntary code to which De Schutter was compelled to call for added regulation or more careful wording, discerning the probability of win-lose scenarios.

Note there was no discussion of binding the principles in law, merely a suggestion that respecting any current laws would be favourable. The very fact that it is considered necessary to implement a (voluntary) code of conduct implies that previously (and currently as this code of conduct has not yet been agreed) dubious practices have been rife. We have to conclude that it is not the need for voluntary or mandatory regulations to protect what may be vulnerable, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, that are required but the removal of each and every agent that causes these vulnerabilities.

Few people are naïve enough in the 21st century to believe that investor agencies, corporate, financial or whatever, are altruistic in their dealings with the (mostly) developing countries being discussed in their absence. We recognise that their first consideration will be the timescale of the profit potential. Maybe the following response can throw some light onto a better way to deal with this matter if we are to be serious about focussing on benefits rather than profits. The way to make it possible for all possible third parties to benefit materially in exchange for a signature is to eliminate the profit motive. This is also the sure fire way to ensure that any outside agencies are there to assist positively rather than to profit personally. The guarantee that all communities around the world will be empowered to organise their own affairs according to their own self-determined aspirations will come from the rejection of the capitalist system in favour of a world socialist system; from the democratic decision of a majority world population desirous of a world of free association and access.

(World Bank guidelines and De Schutter’s response originally sourced from www.farmlandgrab.org)

JANET SURMAN

Politics in Zambia

DEMOCRACY IS an all-encompassing word used to describe the political state of modern times. More or less democracy describes a political state in which fully fledged parliamentary legality flourishes and political parties come to power through the ballot box. The art of constitutional government as we know and practice it in Zambia is derived from British colonialism (parliamentary democracy). But parliamentary democracy is not a static condition – political constitutions have been revised in Africa day in and day out to suit respective political parties that may happen to be in power. In Zambia the ruling MMD has been experimenting to revise the current political constitution, in a move aimed to make it impossible for opposition leader Michael Sala to stand for the 2011 presidential election.

It is the case in Zambia today that the methods of political change are fraught with many difficulties – chief among these is the regional fragmentation of voting patterns, i.e. people still vote on tribal allegiances. Zambian politics is heavily influenced by political charisma. The first president Dr. Kenneth Kaunda was a charismatic leader and still remained a flamboyant personality. Charismatic politicians have a propensity to capture public worship either through making articulate speeches or wearing fine suits. Both Kaunda and Chiluba had a gift of making inspiring speeches and a flair for clean and smart clothes. Chiluba is said to have possessed two hundred pairs of shoes worth hundreds of dollars per pair.

Both Kaunda and Chiluba had the gift to foresee what the masses’ feelings were and used to take advantage of a given moment by seemingly voicing those feelings. And it became very problematic for many ordinary Zambians to rally behind the late president Levy Mwanawasa, who lacked a magnetic personality and was a poor speech-maker. Indeed, the current president, Rupiah Banda lacks a political flair for publicity and lacks a flair for speech making.

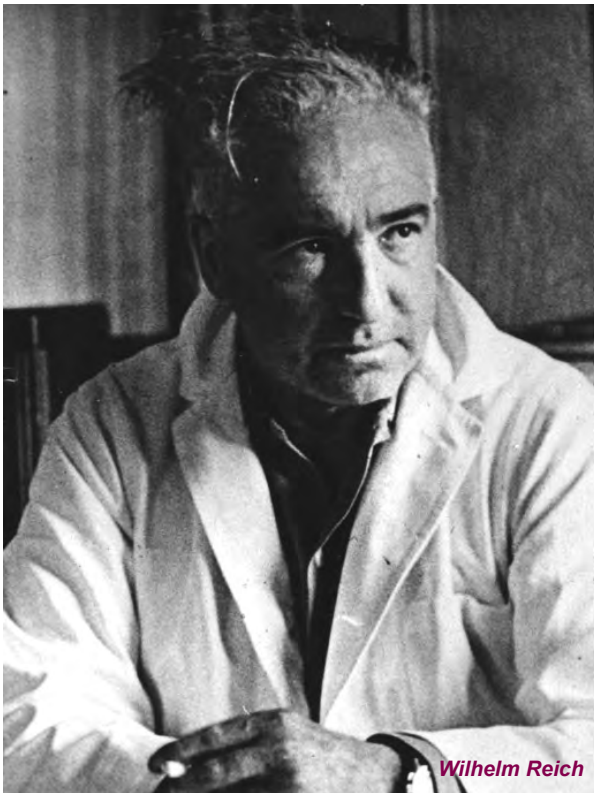
Freedom of expression in Zambia has been conceived in wrong terms. It has meant incessant political criticism of ruling government in methods likely to provoke political violence. We in the WSM abhor the methods of political criticism that is spearheaded by the PF and UPND because they border on intimidating certain individuals instead of offering an alternative system against the existing status quo (capitalism). Political demagoguery by itself is not an antidote to unemployment and inflation. The problems of human rights, gender equality and freedom of expression will not exist in socialism because a socialist will entail the actual embodiment of political and gender emancipation.

The failure of any political party in England to win an outright parliamentary majority during the May general election was resolved in an amicable manner with the Conservatives and Liberals forming a coalition government. In most African countries such an election result would have given rise to political violence.

KEPHAS MULENGA



Election violence in Zambia



Wilhelm Reich

Conversation with a hairdresser's assistant

In the 1930s Wilhelm Reich, perhaps best known as the author of *The Sexual Revolution*, developed the theory that it was possible to explain the basic concepts of Marxian economics without employing complicated economic terms and arguments. As an example of his attempt at this, we publish below, for the first time in English translation, an article he wrote in 1935 under his pseudonym of Ernst Parell for the *Zeitschrift für politische Psychologie und Sexualökonomie* (vol 2, No 1) he published in exile in Denmark.

Assistant: Style or a simple haircut?
Customer: A haircut please but square not round.
(Pause)
Assistant: What do you think of present times?
Customer: Terrible. Where will it lead to?
Assistant: The hooligans are going to cut each other's throats and we'll get the worst of it whoever wins, whether the Communists or the Nazis. They're as bad as each other.
Customer: Perhaps you're right. I can't understand politics.
Assistant: I'm glad I've got a job and am making ends meet. As for the rest, all I want is to live in peace.
Customer: May I ask how much you in fact earn?
Assistant: 100 marks a month.
Customer: Can you live on that?
Assistant: Just about. I'd like to get married but it'll take a long time until my fiancée and me have saved up enough to be able to rent a flat. I've been working ten years in this place and I've not saved up enough yet.
Customer: What's your boss like?
Assistant: He's a very nice person. Sometimes he's a bit moody, but I get on fairly well with him.
Customer: How many customers do you deal with a day?
Assistant: 10 to 15. On Saturdays it's more.
Customer: So that means that 15 customers pay 15 marks into the business. OK, but you only get 3.50 marks a day. What happens to the rest?
Assistant: You've not taken into account the expenses of *our* business. Lighting, telephone, insurance, instruments, rent, they eat up quite a bit.

Customer: I'd be interested how much.
Assistant: (thinks awhile) Well I suppose at least 8 marks.
Customer: OK, but that still leaves about 9-10 marks.
Assistant: Yes, but the business must make a surplus since the boss takes a great risk. For example, on some days there are fewer customers, or in bad times.
Customer: Does that mean that you get more when business is booming?
Assistant: No, why should I? I'm on a regular income.
Customer: I don't understand. When you work more you don't get paid more? And of the amount you earn on average for the boss keeps a fund for bad times?
Assistant: You're quite right.
Customer: If I understand you correctly, you produce after subtracting all costs about 10 to 12 marks for him per day and of this you receive 3 to 3.50 marks. And if times become permanently bad for the business he'll sack you, in which case the reserve fund is of no use to you. So what in fact does he use this money for?
Assistant: Well, for example the boss has to acquire modern machines. At present we're replacing the hand clippers by electric ones.
Customer: What does that mean?
Assistant (surprised): What, you don't understand that? It's quite simple. Now I can deal with 10 customers a day, afterwards I'll be able to deal with 20 because the cutting will be much faster.
Customer: And each one of these 20 will be paying 1 mark as before. And you, how much will you get then?
Assistant (even more surprised): Naturally, I'll continue to get my 100 marks.
Customer: Excuse my being so inquisitive, I'm getting

a bit lost and am rather amazed. With the new improved machines you'll be earning 20 marks for, him but you yourself will continue to receive only 3.50. That means the surplus has grown from 8 to about 13? Where does the money go?

Assistant: (scratches his head) Actually, you're right. That's a good question but, you know, I get so tired from working that I don't have much energy to think. I'm happy if I can rest and keep my job. You know next week 2 out of my 5 workmates are being made redundant and I have to ensure that I'm not sacked too.

Customer: It must be pretty bad to stand 10 hours a day in the shop – what about holidays?

Assistant: Oh yes. I get a fortnight every year, but the others also go on holiday and when they do I have to do more work. And now the boss is going away for 2 months.

Customer: Where does he get the money to stay away for so long?

Assistant: He has a villa in Dahlen.

Customer: Oh. How come?

Assistant: Well he's owned this business for 30 years now.

Customer: I see. Does he work?

Assistant: Oh no, only sometimes he helps out. *But it's a successful business.*

Customer: Listen. I don't understand anything about such things but it seems to me that his villa and his summer holidays are paid by the 8 or 13 marks which you earn for his "business surplus".

Assistant: Oh I don't think so. But perhaps you're right, it is odd. I'd like to talk to you sometime about this. You talk a lot of common sense.

In this conversation no political word has been mentioned, but this hairdresser's assistant has developed the theory of surplus value, rationalisation and unemployment from the experiences of his own life. And over and above this he has developed a confidence in the "customer". You don't need to teach him about what rationalisation or exploitation is, he has described these himself. What he lacks is the understanding of the link between his knowledge about his work and surplus labour with the villa of the entrepreneur. Nor is he at all conscious of the fact that he identifies with his boss. And he is completely unable to see the connection between politics, which he is against and afraid of, and his everyday life. At this point it will be easy to make him conscious of this because it is contained in what he himself has said and experienced; all that has to be done is to develop it.

Ernst Parell

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Economic soothsaying

ONE BIT of window-dressing George Osborne did on taking over as Chancellor was to set up a supposedly independent "Office for Budget Responsibility" (OBR) to calculate by how much the economy can be expected to grow, for the government to take into account when drawing up its budget.

Economic forecasting is no more reliable than the weather forecast. It is based on assumptions derived from past experiences and only "forecasts" what is likely to happen, not what will happen. Thus, when, on the budget, the OBR forecast that the economy (GDP) will grow by 2.3 percent in 2011 all they are really saying is that it is more likely than not that something like this will happen. Other economic soothsayers are saying that 2.3 percent is over-optimistic. The Business Secretary, Vince Cable, is saying that there is a one in four chance of a double-dip recession (*Times*, 9 July), i.e., of the economy shrinking next year. Basically, it's just guesswork.

The OBR prediction of growth next year is based on the key assumption that business investment will recover:

"Business investment is forecast to pick up during 2010, though in the year as a whole by only 1½ per cent. The recovery is maintained in 2011, although it takes until 2013 before investment returns to its pre-recession peak . . . The measures to reform corporation tax, which are estimated to reduce the cost of capital faced by firms by about 3 per cent, should have a positive effect on investment . . . Business investment also strengthens as resources released from the government sector flow into the private sector."

They are right to see any growth as arising from a revival of business investment since capital accumulation is what drives the capitalist economy. But that business investment will resume just because government spending is reduced is an ideological assumption; which is shared by the new government (so much for the independence of the OBR). As the *Times* (23 June) put it, that the economy will grow next year "derives from Osborne's belief that public spending has been 'crowding out private endeavour' and is a big economic judgment."

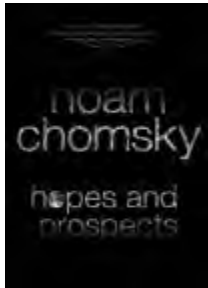
The theory is that, as taxes on profits are being reduced, capitalist firms will invest more. But it is by no means as simple as that. If businesses judge there is no prospect of making a profit from expanding production they won't do it. They will simply hoard their extra profits and build up cash mountains. There are plenty of examples of this happening in the past. Japan's decade of stagnation in the 1990s, for example. You can bring a horse to water but you can't make it drink.

Long-term predictions are even less reliable. Even so, the OBR has indulged in this, predicting (and we record the figures for future reference) that in 2012 growth will be 2.8 percent, in 2013 2.9 percent, and 2.7 percent in 2014 and 2015. This is not worth the paper it's written on. It's like the Met Office predicting a barbecue summer in two years time. After all, no economic soothsayer predicted in 2004 that in 2009 GDP would fall by 4.9 percent. They didn't in 2005, or 2006, or 2007, either.

The fact is that the way the capitalist economy is going to go is unpredictable. Governments can only navigate by sight within it, reacting to what it throws up.

“Common sense raised to genius”

Hopes and Prospects. Noam Chomsky, Hamish Hamilton, 2010, £18.99



Noam Chomsky, one of the world’s most important intellectual figures in both the sciences and the humanities, and one of the ten most quoted writers of all time, ranking with Marx, the

Bible and Shakespeare, has admitted that his speeches are very boring. But, he says, that’s the way he likes it. It means that, when people turn up to listen to him, and millions do, they’re doing so because they’re interested in the issues Chomsky is talking about, not in Chomsky himself as some kind of intellectual celebrity.

And seeing as many of Chomsky’s books are collections of his previous speeches, you might expect his books to be pretty boring too. You’d be right. Reading his books is like trying to sprint through a waist-high river to the opposite bank: it may not look like you’ve got far to go, but it will certainly take you much longer than you think. However, the real question is, is it worth getting to the other side? With Chomsky, the answer is always yes.

Doug Henwood once said that he set up his (excellent) *Left Business Observer* newsletter because he was convinced that what was needed was a “better empiricism” – in other words, if socialists could just get the facts out there, politics would sort itself out. He soon realised that things are not quite that simple, but still, “better empiricism” is a necessary if insufficient condition for a socialist education. I can think of no better way of acquiring this “better empiricism” than with a regular and constant diet of Chomsky, no matter how bland it might seem to your taste buds.

His latest book, *Hopes and Prospects*, a collection of recent speeches, is much like all his others. But yet again, this is not the criticism it might appear. Chomsky is always the same, yet he’s always armed with the most original details and devastating facts, the latest scholarly research and reports, and a common-sense analysis that leaves you thinking that you could have done it all yourself.

Indeed, it’s Chomsky’s firm belief that you could have done. His analysis is, as an introductory guide to him once put it, common sense elevated to genius.

Again like his other books, *Hopes and Prospects* is supposed to hang together on a theme: in this case, American foreign policy and popular struggles in Latin America. But in fact, the essays range effortlessly, perhaps even eccentrically, over the whole world, ranging from the dawn of human history to current affairs, from what was in *The New York Times* last month to the history of economic thought, from the Nuremberg trials to those who today commit Nazi-style crimes and yet are praised as altruistic idealists by liberal intellectuals. He is a one-man scholarly resource, an always-reliable first port of call for socialists and anti-capitalists who want to back up their arguments with facts.

The main criticism to level at Chomsky, although he would not see it as a criticism at all, is that he is insufficiently Marxian. He understands, as he puts it in the book, that many of the crimes he documents are “rooted in deeper features of prevailing socioeconomic and political systems”. But he is unconvinced of the power of Marxist theory. Elsewhere, he questions whether it even is a theory (he means he is doubtful that it can serve anything like the same role as theory in the natural sciences). To go into this is beyond the scope of this review, but it means that Chomsky is able to applaud efforts to democratise capitalist commodity production, without having anything much to say about whether it might be necessary to go beyond this if humanity is ever to achieve a truly free society.

SPW

Bottom of the heap

Chinese Whispers. Hsiao-Hung Pai. Penguin £8.99.



The changes in Chinese capitalism over the last few decades – privatisation, sackings, factories producing for multinational companies – have led to vast numbers of workers moving to the biggest cities in search of work. Many have also felt they had little choice but to try their luck abroad, if only to earn enough to pay

for their children’s education. It is these, usually undocumented and ‘illegal’ migrant workers, numbering perhaps 200,000 in the UK, whose story is told in this revealing book.

Most Chinese workers who move to Britain in search of work borrow money to pay the ‘snakeheads’ who smuggle them here. They also have to pay the gangmasters who find jobs for them (and if they are sacked or leave their jobs, they have to pay again to get another). Pai, a journalist who sometimes went underground as a pretend undocumented worker herself to gather information, shows the kind of work they do and the conditions in which they labour.

From assembling Samsung microwaves in Hartlepool to chopping up pork in Suffolk, from picking vegetables in Selsey to washing up in London’s Chinatown, they do the hardest and dirtiest jobs, with little if any training and no health and safety instruction. Typical wages may be £3.20 an hour, well below the legal minimum wage and further below what British workers doing similar work might earn. The hours are long, there are no paid holidays, and there may be compulsory and unpaid overtime when more output is wanted. Pai even manages to speak to some of the three thousand or so undocumented Chinese women who work in the sex trade.

Being undocumented, the workers have no access to health care or the few protections that capitalist laws provide. Nor can they join a trade union. Most speak little English, which further limits their links to anyone who might help them and opens them to even worse exploitation. They are, however, sometimes able to strike up a camaraderie with other migrant workers, such as Ukrainians.

The British government has occasionally cracked down on illegal workers and those who employ them, but this just makes the workers’ position even more precarious. Policies on asylum seekers and those denied refugee status contribute to the existence of an army of people desperate for any job they can get. British capitalism makes the most of their cheap and flexible labour power, but even that may not be enough to keep the factories here. In 2005 some of the Hartlepool factories relocated to Slovakia for access to even cheaper labour power. And no wonder many Chinese employers in Britain support the Chinese government’s policies which give rise to all these migrant workers.

Pai’s book gives a vivid picture of those at the very bottom of capital-

ism's heap, and also fills in some of the background in terms of the global nature of production and of the sourcing of labour power under capitalism.

PB

Descent into barbarism?

***Socialism or Barbarism. From the 'American Century' to the Crossroads.* Istvan Meszaros. 2001 Monthly Review Press.**



In the forward to this book it is stated that in 1992 Meszaros expressed his conviction that 'the future of socialism will be decided in the US' and that it – socialism – has to

assert itself universally and in a way that embraces all areas or it won't succeed. As the title suggests the emphasis is on his violent antagonism to capitalism, imperialism and globalisation US-style. He denounces the 'free political choice' of multiparty democracy for what it is – an ever-narrowing political consensus, and points to the increasing downward pressure on pay and conditions worldwide which is having negative impact right across the board. The fact that capitalism is failing in all aspects for most citizens worldwide as, for one instance cited, in India and China where capitalism occurs in enclaves with vast 'non-capitalist hinterlands' and in which populations outside the legitimate economy have to find their own ways to make a living.

Meszaros views the current phase of US imperialism as 'potentially the deadliest phase' because of the self-stated aims of achieving world domination through policies of 100 percent self-interest, imposing arbitrary decisions on the rest of the world whilst accusing others who attempt to do likewise of nationalism. Its willingness to break international laws and enter into war or invasion to protect its own interests is well known. Regarding the structural crisis of capital he details examples of worsening conditions in the US and the UK such as the ever-increasing numbers of children in poverty and the widening gap between the top one percent and the multitude at the bottom.

In a section on the challenges facing the socialist movement he calls for international solidarity oriented towards the creation of an 'order of substantive equality' – especially in these times of 'extraordinary environmental threat'. Labour cannot share power with capital (that has been proved time and again) which has to be a top-down authoritarian management of business.

Part II titled Marxism, The Capital System and Social Revolution is an interview for a quarterly Iranian journal in which he gives his version of globalisation as 'total social capital' and 'totality of labour'. The capitalist system logically has to be global to complete itself. Global labour, on the other hand, is forced to fight amongst itself to stay afloat within the system, and so competes instead of confronting capital. Capital's dependence on labour is absolute; however, labour's dependence on capital was created and is surmountable even if the conditions are not currently favourable. The only way to overcome capital and institute an alternative, socialist system is with the 'totality of labour' as the 'irreconcilable antagonist of capital' through a process of 'profound social transformation'.

There is a short section in the interview on the hows and whys of a social revolution but overall the emphasis throughout the book is on it being an all-embracing and truly social revolution, with which we can agree. In the few years since the book was published, as general conditions of employment have continued to deteriorate, capitalism has again shown itself to be indifferent to the impacts of its policies. It would seem, however, that, if we were to rely solely or even largely on US labour to be the catalyst then we might be waiting too long and societal breakdown and barbarism may well win out.

JS

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OBITUARY

Friedrich Vogt

WE WERE sad to learn of the sudden death, at the age of 88, of Comrade Friedrich Vogt in Vienna. He was one of a group of trade unionists and former members of the Austrian Social Democratic party that broke away in 1959 and eventually, in 1966, through contact with Comrade Rudolf Frank there, came to accept the object and declaration of principles of the World Socialist Movement.

As there was already a registered "Socialist Party" in Austria, the new group was named Bund Demokratischer Sozialisten (League of Democratic Socialists). Members addressed each other as "Genosse/Genossin" rather than as "Kamerad" as this was associated with the Austrian Communist Party.

Although they held informal discussion meetings, the members' main activity was the production and distribution of their newspaper format journal *Internationales Freie Wort* (International Free Word). Although they had a list of subscribers, canvassing was by far the main method of sale. On my only visit I took part in this. Up and down the stairs of apartment blocks was certainly amongst the hardest work I have done for Socialism!

Unfortunately, as members aged and became physically less able they could not keep up with this strenuous work and publication of the IFW ceased.

During the war Friedrich was conscripted into the German Army to fight on the Russian Front but was soon sent back as unsuitable because of his behaviour. He attended our Conference just once and told me how much he enjoyed meeting members here, some of whom kept in touch. We have lost a friend as well as a comrade and the companion parties a staunch and tireless worker for Socialism.

EG

Socialist Standard index for 2009

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Meetings

East Anglia

Saturday, 14 August 2pm - 5pm

FILM SHOWING

Theme - "Do You Feel Exploited?"
(3 of 3)

A short (approx. 20 min.) film by Brendan Mcooney will be shown in the basement of The Workshop, 53 Earlham Road, Norwich NR1 3SP

As you can see from the length of these films their will be plenty of opportunity for discussion. All welcome.

London

Saturday 11 September 6pm

"Hunter, Fisherman, Shepherd, Critic: Karl Marx's Vision of the Free Individual".

Speaker: Stuart Watkins

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN (nearest tube: Clapham North)

London Day School

Saturday 25 September 12.00noon

"CAN YOU BUY HAPPINESS?"

Speakers: Ed Blewitt, Peter Rigg, Brian Johnson

Ed Blewitt - 'Happy shopping'.

Peter Rigg - 'Consumerism on the couch'.

Brian Johnson - 'The family and consumerism'.

Each talk will last about 20 to 30 minutes followed by discussion.

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Rigg.

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Poles Apart? Capitalism or Socialism as the planet heats up



with contributions from Glenn Morris, Arctic Voice

£5.00 per copy + £1.25 P & P, from the Audio-Visual Department (rest of address and details as above).

The Passing of a Labour Leader



IT IS not our purpose here to attempt an analysis of the career of Aneurin Bevan, but only to put one or two aspects of his progress from being a working class rebel against the tyranny and sordidness of capitalism to his occupancy of high office in the post-war Labour Government (...).

Throughout the years after he had begun to make a name in the Labour Party he was torn between the desire to be a rebel espousing certain ideals and the necessity of working out concessions to meet the needs of practical politics. Nobody can suppose that Bevan was happy about finding himself supporting war, supporting re-armament and making his belated decision to press for the retention of the H-bomb as a bargaining counter in the Labour Party's plan to work for all-round disarmament.

But was he ever clear about what was happening and why it happened? Did he ever realise that his dilemma is one that necessarily faces all who take on the task of governing a capitalist country in a capitalist world? With or without seeing it clearly he,



Aneurin Bevan

like the other leaders of the Labour Government, had come down on the side of the belief that as a present practical policy a Labour Government must face the workers as an administration trying to keep the British economy functioning and must face the world as guardian of British interests which necessarily meant in both spheres of action accepting and working within the framework of the capitalist social system. That he did so with some reluctance and occasional rebellious withdrawals show his resentment of the dilemma, but he never succeeded in resolving the problem. He would have argued, no doubt, that there was no alternative, and here we as Socialists insist that there was, and is, the alternative of leaving the running of capitalism to those who believe in it and of devoting efforts to building up an international Socialist working class with the consciously-held aim of putting Socialism in the place of capitalist society.

(Editorial, *Socialist Standard*, August 1960)

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.



You're Nicked

UNTIL RECENTLY we were required to know him as plain, unthreatening, monosyllabic Nick Clegg – even if his ancestors were aristocrats in Imperial Russia and he was educated at appropriately expensive schools, which may explain his fluency in four foreign languages but not, perhaps, a perceived problem with maths which, when asked by the odious Piers Morgan to enumerate the women he had had sex with, prevented his reply being more exact than “no more than” thirty. But he has moved on, to the point of surviving the unnerving experience of hearing both Gordon Brown and David Cameron declare in public that they “agreed with” him. Now he is Nicholas William Peter “Nick” Clegg MP, PC, Deputy Prime Minister, Lord President of the Council, Minister for Constitutional and Political Reform, with duties extending beyond robotically nodding at David Cameron’s back during Prime Minister’s questions. Clegg now has the job of finding out what people think about changing the law – abolishing some laws, making others. In this matter, he says, “...it is people, not policy-makers, who know best...It is a radically different approach. One based on trust. Because it isn’t up to government to tell people how to live their lives”. This will have come as a surprise to a lot of people who are losing their jobs while Clegg’s government orders them to run their lives to an intensity of poverty incurred by trying to exist on the dole, or on reduced benefit or pension. But there is more to him than that.

Responses

To begin with there is the matter of Clegg’s persistent self-concept as a statesman rare enough to be changing the face of British politics: “What I find especially exciting about this project is that, now we have got the ball rolling, the debate is totally out of government’s control”. But like most conceits this was unhelpful and distorting. Closer to reality were the responses to a website provided by the *Telegraph*:

“Start with the prisons! Criminals are invited into luxury, paid for by the tax payer...”

“I would dilute Scottish input here in the UK!...”

“I would repeal the hunting act, and also criminalise any hunt protest activities that sabotages the hunt...”

“...the legislation we want repealed is the European Communities Act 1972...”

A more useful suggestion, was: “Hey! Don’t you guys trust Clegg & Co. I voted for them and they’ve sold out their principles for a handful of government...”

Crucially, Clegg’s “debate” is based on the misconception that laws can be changed by popular demand because they are laid down to protect the safety and well-being of the majority of people. In truth the whole massive, overbearing, legal and judicial system with its intimidating institutions, its uniforms, its wigs and gowns and its impenetrable precedents composed in archaic verbiage, was conceived and developed in order to perpetuate the standing and privileges of the dominant minority class in society. Politically organisations like the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties (and any combinations between them) exist to promote that outrage through their propaganda – their lies, distortions and false promises.

A Tory Past

Buried in Clegg’s past is his membership, while at Cambridge, of the University Conservative Association. In spite of the written evidence, Clegg has denied all knowledge of this, perhaps through embarrassment after those fervent denunciations of the Tories in the TV election debates. Then there is the fact that among his jobs after leaving university he worked in the private office as a speech-writer for the Vice President of the European Commission – Leon Brittan who, apart from other achievements in an infamous career, assured himself a reputation as a Home Secretary to satisfy the Tories’ most passionate advocates of harsh sentencing.

But by 1998 Clegg had changed his mind – if that is what happened – enough to be a Liberal Democrat candidate for the European Parliament. By 2005, already spoken of as a future party leader, he was informing Brittan that while he fancied Kenneth Clarke in that year’s contest for the Conservative leadership – he was “quite a personal fan of Ken” – he had reservations; the Lib Dems should be on their guard against Clarke moving the Tories into traditional Lib Dem territory – “this big bruiser ...somehow muscling in on our territory”. (Now that Clegg and Clarke sit beside each other on the same Front Bench it is fair to ask what Clarke thinks of the Tories being “muscle in on”). And Clegg was once opposed to a formal alliance with the Tories because “...the deeply illiberal bent of the Conservative Party over the last 10 years” had made co-operation between the two parties “genuinely impossible”. But diplomatically keeping his options open, he did not rule out joining a coalition in principle “if a more liberal Tory philosophy emerged”. Was he just being cautious? Or confused? Or cunningly ambitious?

Expenses

All these characteristics would have been useful to a political leader trying to defuse the recent crisis over MPs and their expenses; true to form, Clegg played to outbid the others. Shouting at an interviewing TV camera, he threatened to “come down like a ton of bricks” on anyone found to be fiddling the system. Among these brave words there was no mention of the Lib Dem MPs who were exposed as having overclaimed. And Clegg did not promise to bury himself beneath some conveniently loose bricks because of his own claims, which included monthly interest payments of £1,018 on his constituency home mortgage, £2,600 for a new kitchen, £680 for gardening, £760 to repair a path, £2.49 for a cake tin and £1.50 for paper napkins. Neither did he say whether he was talking about himself when he raged that “People will simply just despair that all politicians look either ridiculous at best or corrupt at worst.” Take your pick. And while you are about it you can contribute to Clegg’s “consultation” by asking what penalties there are for politicians who are repeatedly and blatantly dishonest. But don’t wait for an answer.

IVAN



Voice from the Back

The Arrogance Of The Capitalist Class

In a society wherein children are trying to survive on a dollar a day the obscene wealth of the owning class and their flaunting of their riches has recently shown a particularly obnoxious example. "A bidder has agreed to pay \$2.63 million for a steak lunch with the billionaire investor Warren Buffett in a charity



failing to stop records being broken at the Impressionist/Modern evening sales at both Sotheby's (22 June) and Christie's (23 June)" (*Observer*, 27 June) A Picasso went for over £34 million, a Manet for over £22 million and a Klimt for just under £19 million. It is nice to see that our betters are not letting an economic downturn affect their appreciation of artistic merit.

Let 'Em Fly Copters

The arrogance of the Russian ruling elite is prodigious but even by their standards this takes a bit of beating. "As Moscow residents sweltered in an unprecedented traffic snarl-up, the governor of the region around Moscow offered an unusual solution on Friday: buy a helicopter. 'I fly in a helicopter. (You) should also buy helicopters instead of cars – then you do not need roads,' Moscow Region governor Boris

amount spilled in the region over nearly 50 years totals 10.5 million barrels. That is more than five times the worst estimate of the spillage so far from the Deepwater Horizon leak in the Gulf. Yet despite the pollution, illness and poverty caused by the ongoing leaks in Nigeria, they rarely make the international headlines. And there has been no high-profile effort to correct the situation." (*First Post*, 17 June) The spillage on the USA's shores may be more news-worthy but the pollution in Nigeria is just as deadly. It is just another example of how in its quest for more and more profits the capitalist system pays little regard to human health or happiness. *Oil spill in the Niger delta*



auction held on eBay Inc's website. The highest bid in the 11th annual auction topped the previous record \$2.11 million paid in 2008 by Zhao Danyang, a Hong Kong investor. Wealth manager Salida Capital Corp of Toronto won with a \$1.68 million bid in 2009." (*Reuters*, 11 June) Millions of dollars spent on lunching with a billionaire while millions of children starve, do you need any other reason to get rid of capitalism?

Gromov told journalists, the RIA Novosti news agency reported." (*Yahoo News*, 2 July) This crass statement brings to mind Marie Antoinette's reputed statement on hearing that the lower orders were rioting because of the lack of bread "Let them eat cake". In Marie's defence she probably never said such a thing, but Boris did and he should remember Marie's fate.

Stop Moaning. Work Harder

Next time you complain to your boss about being exploited let us hope he doesn't read this piece of nonsense. "People who make their colleagues miserable by constantly moaning at work may actually be suffering from a mental illness, a study suggests. According to researchers in Germany, they are suffering from a new condition called post-traumatic embitterment disorder. ...The findings are based on a two-year study of 21 people by researchers at the University of Berlin." (*BBC News*, 20 June) Presumably the "researchers" didn't moan or complain and no one mentioned to them that research that only used 21 people is hardly convincing. Here's to the day when more and more of us "suffer" from post traumatic embitterment disorder. The researchers may call it a mental disorder – we call it good sense.

What Recession?

As the British government announces massive cuts to deal with the economic recession it is interesting to note that recession or not the owning class still manage to spare a few coppers for their art collections. "Last week was one of the biggest ever in the world of London's art auctions, with the recession

The Silent Spillage

The Press and TV have given great prominence to the oil spillage in the Gulf of Mexico but very little has been reported about the oil disasters that continue to plague Nigeria." A series of spills, some of them the responsibility of the American multinational ExxonMobil, have been polluting the Niger delta for five decades. One estimate says the

Free Lunch by Rigg

