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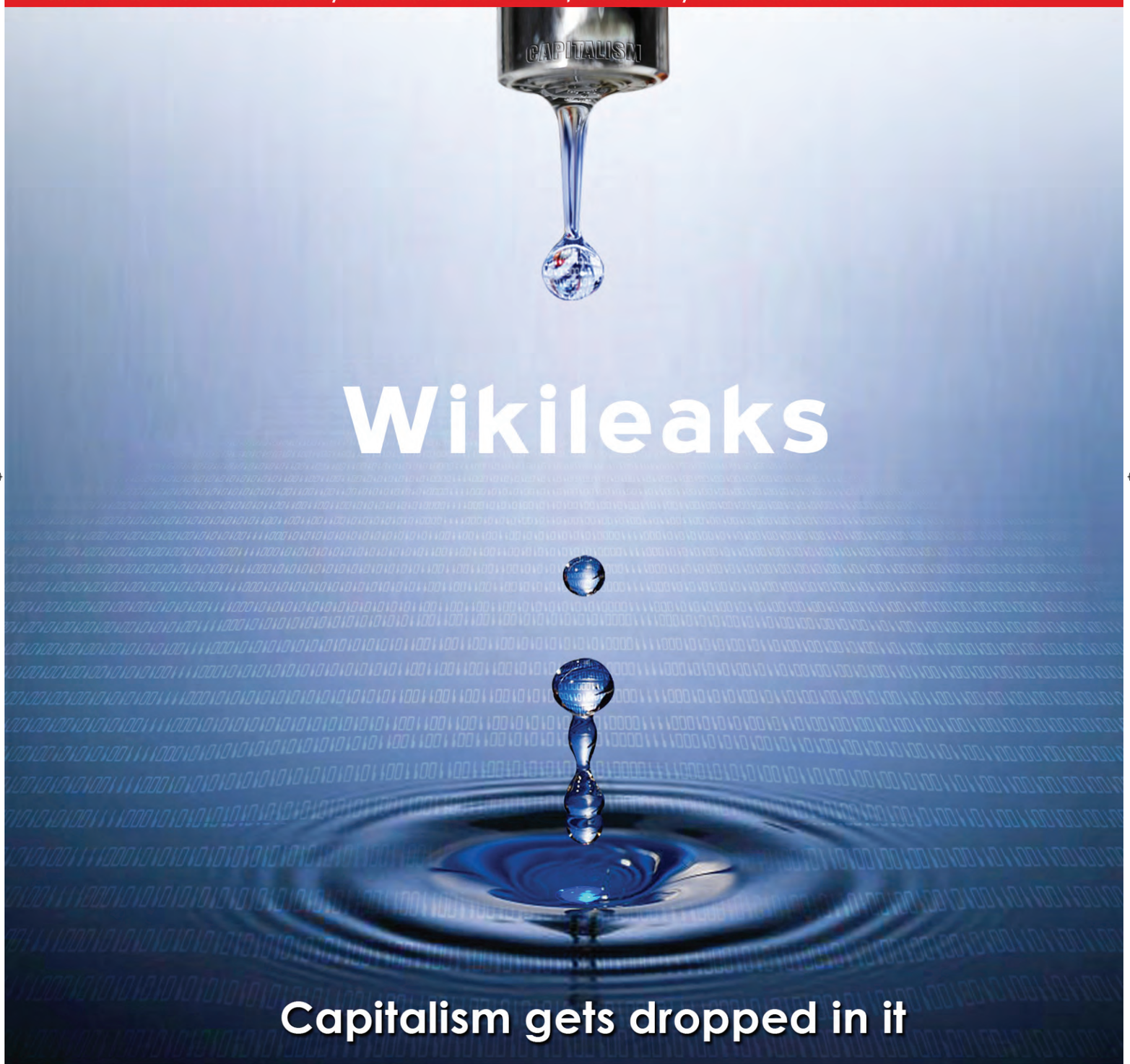

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The Socialist Party
52 Clapham High Street
London
SW4 7UN
Tel: 0207 622 3811
Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org
Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb
Blog: http://spgb.blogspot.com

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Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

London

Central London branch. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).
Enfield and Haringey branch. Thurs Jan. 13 and 27, 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, NI8.
Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.
Email:julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk
South London branch. 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811
West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues.8pm, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4.
Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

Midlands

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

Northeast

Northeast branch. Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690.
Email: 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: rewcbr13@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. Kephas 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

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.

If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.

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JANUARY 2011

Editorial

The cold reality of state power

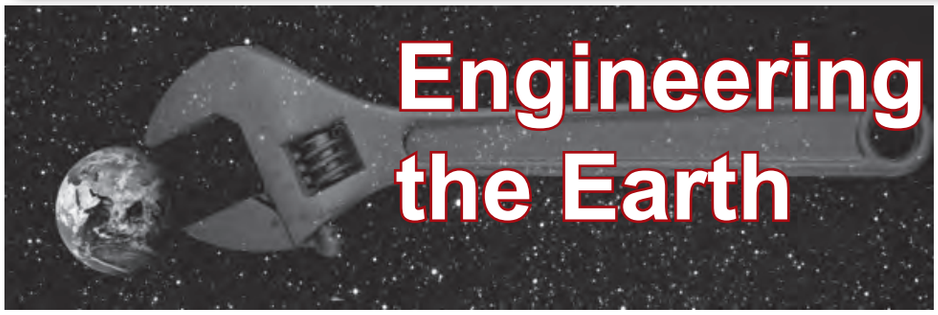
THERE ARE plenty of reasons for socialists to be cheerful as we go into the New Year. Our class is once again on the move, fighting to protect its interests, and talking about its future. This is a very good thing. But New Year optimism always gives way in the end to the gloomy realism of a bleak January morning. It is in this spirit that we point to some worrying counter-developments.

On 3 December, Spanish air-traffic controllers walked off the job and called in sick en masse in protest at the imposition of worse working conditions and longer hours. The right of workers to take collective action to protect their interests, including withdrawing their labour, would be considered by most to be a fundamental human right. But under capitalism, the right of capital accumulation to proceed uninhibited is also a fundamental right. Between equal rights, force decides. So the Spanish state declared martial law, sent in the military, and armed police forced the workers back to their desks under threat of a six-year prison sentence. That's the freedom of labour for you.

Meanwhile, the newspapers have been dominated over the past couple of months with revelations from the WikiLeaks website, which leaked secret communications between US diplomats and their seniors, and earlier posted evidence of atrocities by Western armed forces against civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. The real significance of these leaks is not so much their content – informed opinion was already aware of most of what was going on. It is that the leaks threaten to make 'informed opinion' available to more people. This is, from the point of view of the ruling class and its state, a disaster. First you give people information about what's going on in the world. The next thing you know they'll be wanting a say in it. That's not conducive to flexible labour markets. And so the more extreme sections of the US commentariat called for the murder of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange; the website has been under continuous attack ever since from hackers and businesses; and Assange has been threatened with extradition to the US to face espionage charges. That's the freedom of information for you.

Finally, a growing protest movement in the UK against the cuts in state spending on education and other vital social services, led for now by students and university lecturers' unions, is facing increased state repression. Demonstrators, mostly young adults and children, have been provoked and terrorised by armed police, 'kettled' for hours on freezing cold streets without access to food, water or toilet facilities, and then savagely beaten with truncheons. No one is spared this state thuggery: a disabled man with cerebral palsy was beaten by the police and dragged from his wheelchair across a road, and one young man had to have emergency brain surgery after a beating. A death at the hands of the state thugs cannot be very far away. And yet all the talk from the media and the police is of *increasing* the repression – snatch squads, targeted searches and water cannons have all been mooted. That's the freedom to protest for you.

What we're facing is the simple fact that our class enemies hold state power, and will use it, ruthlessly to protect their interests and defend themselves from the threat of democracy. Which is why the Socialist Party argues for the prime importance of taking state power out of their hands.



Engineering the Earth

A NEW theme has recently emerged in the debate on climate change – geoengineering. This newly coined word – literally, "engineering the Earth" – refers to the prospect of deliberate large-scale human intervention in the climate system to counter global warming. The Royal Society has a useful report online: *Geoengineering the Climate* (2009); popular accounts include James Fleming's book *Fixing the Sky* (2010). Opponents of geoengineering have responded with a counter-report: *Geopiracy: The Case Against Geoengineering* (ETC Group, 2010).

Geoengineering schemes

Geoengineering schemes are numerous and diverse, but almost all fall into two broad categories.

(1) Schemes to *remove CO_2 (carbon dioxide) from the atmosphere*. Special installations ("scrubbers") might suck air through a spray of lye – an alkali that binds with the acidic CO_2 in the air, producing washing soda. Or the oceans could be "fertilized" with iron particles to foster the growth of CO_2-absorbing plankton. Another idea is to use carbon-eating microbes. Planting forests also falls into this category.

(2) Schemes to *redirect solar radiation* – either to reflect it off the Earth's surface or atmosphere or to deflect it away from the Earth altogether. These schemes are of three types:

(2a) *Reflection from the surface*. The albedo (reflectivity) of the Earth's surface would be enhanced by such means as painting roofs and roads white, genetically engineering crops and grasses with more reflective foliage, and covering deserts with reflective polyethylene-aluminium sheeting.

(2b) *Reflection from the atmosphere*. One scheme of this type is "cloud bleaching", in which an armada of robot ships equipped with giant fans plough the seas and propel water aloft to make clouds more reflective. Another popular scheme has spaceplanes continuously injecting aerosols, probably masses of tiny sulphate particles, into the stratosphere. This would mimic the dimming and cooling effect of large volcanic eruptions.

(2c) *Deflection away from Earth*. Light-scattering material – say, aluminium threads or small disks – would be placed in Earth orbit or further out toward the Sun, shielding the Earth from part of the solar radiation. Another idea is to use locally available glass to build a huge mirror on the Moon.

These schemes vary widely in terms of likely effectiveness, lead time, risks and costs. Many would counter global warming but create or exacerbate other serious environmental problems. Aerosols may harm the ozone layer and further disrupt the monsoon cycle – also a likely effect of covering deserts or bleaching clouds. Where would all that CO_2 removed from the atmosphere go? Stored underground, it would be bound to leak; dumped in the oceans, it would soon turn them into a vast lifeless acid bath. And what if a space-based system to deflect solar radiation suddenly broke down for unknown technical reasons?

Politics of geoengineering

The most active promoters of geoengineering are corporate-funded American think-tanks. These are the same think tanks that churn out propaganda denying that global warming exists! But the contradiction is only apparent. While logically inconsistent, both these positions make it possible to argue that there is no need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby safeguarding the immediate profit interests of the corporate sponsors.

Largely in reaction to such exploitation of the theme, some environmentalists reject geoengineering altogether, rightly arguing that technological fixes cannot solve what is at root a social problem. The *Geopiracy* report quotes Albert Einstein as saying: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Nevertheless, scientists make a cogent case when they argue that it is necessary to combine sharp cuts in greenhouse gas emissions with carefully selected geoengineering measures. Global warming has been even more rapid in recent years than predicted by the most alarming past projections. The process now has such powerful momentum that even if emissions were to cease completely and immediately – a hypothetical achievement beyond the capacity even of world socialism, supposing it magically conjured into being – geoengineering might turn out to be the only way to avert or at least minimise the catastrophes in store for us.

Cheap, quick and scary

The twin priorities of a socialist world community, if it existed, might have to be to move as quickly as possible to a technological structure with near-zero greenhouse gas emissions and to embark on a diverse and environmentally acceptable geoengineering program, if indeed such a programme could ever be found. Such a programme might comprise various Earth- and space-based elements as insurance against particular elements proving less feasible or effective than expected.

Assuming the continued existence of capitalism, the crucial criteria in selecting schemes for implementation, whether at the national or the international level, will be financial cost and lead time. Capitalists always hate spending more than they absolutely have to, even if it is for the purpose of saving the planet. A short lead time is essential because they will delay even that minimal expenditure until forced to respond to serious threats to the stable functioning of their system – the inundation of London and New York, perhaps. But then they will demand quick results.

Indeed, some analysts have already guessed what this (relatively) cheap and quick fix is likely to be – the "doping" of the stratosphere with sulphate aerosols. Unfortunately, this scheme is also one of the scariest. Besides the threats to ozone and the monsoon cycle, the filtering of sunlight will have a homogenizing impact on the regional and seasonal climatic pattern. Writers speculate about the psychological impact of the day sky never being blue, only a dull greyish white – although by way of compensation we are promised redder sunsets.

STEFAN

Measuring General Well Being – how and why?

Capitalism sells GNP and some of its supporters now want to measure GWB. Socialism will promote only GWB.

STUDIES OF happiness have a long history. Aristotle wrote about happiness as human flourishing and purpose to life, as opposed to the modern concept of hedonism as the simple pursuit of pleasure.

Prime minister Cameron is trying to get the concept of general wellbeing up and running even in the midst of public service cuts and soaring living costs. He is sticking to a policy commitment he made while still in opposition in 2006: 'It's time we admitted that there is more to life than money and it's time we focused not just on GDP but in GWB – general wellbeing', adding 'Wellbeing can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture and, above all, the strength of our relationships. Improving our society's sense of wellbeing is, I believe, the central political challenge of our times' (*Times*, 22 May 2006).

The Office for National Statistics will decide on the wording of the questions to be put in the General Household Survey starting in April. Its head, Lil Matheson, said in a BBC Radio 4 interview that she preferred the wider concept of wellbeing to that of happiness. Writing in the *Guardian* (15 November), Allegra Stratton thought that, in addition to questions on happiness, the survey is likely to include 'How much purpose does your life have?' and 'Are men and women treated fairly in the workplace and home?'

We have good reason to be suspicious about why the government should put money into measuring people's wellbeing in circumstances that are far from improving their actual wellbeing. We may recall the line of crucified men in *Monty Python*'s *Life of Brian* happily singing 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life!'

It would be no surprise to find many members of the general public expressing fairly high levels of wellbeing. But any such survey results would need to be interpreted with care. Studies of job satisfaction have found that up to 80 percent of workers say they are very or fairly satisfied with their job. But their 'satisfaction' is often based on a belief that their chances of finding something better are small or nil, so it's a good idea to make the best of the job they've got.

In socialism there may well be surveys of public opinion, including questions on wellbeing. Such research would be part of organising production and distribution of goods and services only for need, not profit. Questions on wellbeing would emphasise making things better for people, not making people feel better about things.

STAN PARKER

A sideways glance at capitalism through some of its products. This month: the Dyson Cyclone vacuum cleaner

FAR FROM being a revolutionary invention, the inventor of the Dyson Cyclone vacuum cleaner (James Dyson) made no attempt to hide that the idea behind the invention he patented was nicked from seeing dust extraction equipment in a sawmill, a technology that has been around for the best part of a century.

The product however almost never got made due to the enormous costs of licencing and patenting. This forced Dyson to look for investment from major manufacturers. The market-leader—Hoover—was one company that was offered the option of investing. They declined as the product (which doesn't need filter bags) kind of challenged their basic business model (which relies on the ongoing sale of replacement filter bags worth 100s of millions of dollars each year). Hoover's vice-president regretted in hindsight that "Hoover as a company did not take the product technology off Dyson". And what would they have done with it ? —"it would have lain on the shelf and not been used" (tinyurl.com/3x92wtc).

Needless to say, now that it has established itself, the Dyson company is hardly acting like a "new broom" (for want of a better phrase) —instead they have been particularly quick to use patent law to protect against anyone coming close to copying their supposedly "original" design.

Portrayed endlessly as a society which incentivises invention and rewards risk, capitalism arguably often does the very opposite. Despite the rags to riches storylines, the best way of getting very rich is usually to make sure you are pretty rich to start with.

Rather than a testament to the creativity of the individual, let alone the magic of the market system, next time you hoover (or perhaps, "Dyson") the carpet, think of all the useful products that never made it because of the artificial hurdle that is the patenting system that capitalism requires. All the talk of the lifeblood of capitalism being the plucky little entrepreneur with a great new idea is nonsense: the last thing capitalists want is another capitalist joining them to share out the spoils of the class war—even if it means a great invention for gathering dust just has to (apologies) gather dust.

NEXT MONTH: we take a look at that modern must-have accessory, bottled water.

BG

MATERIAL WORLD

Business is Everything
...and Everything is Business

Capitalism's priority is to protect business opportunities not the environment

LATE LAST year three huge conferences took place, one in Nagoya, Japan and one in Rome, both ostensibly focussed on protecting the 'rights', the wellbeing and viability of the livelihoods of people who live on and from the land and on protecting the land and its biodiversity, whilst offering business opportunities to eager participants. The third, possibly the most widely covered, was that at Cancun aimed at further negotiations to slow down climate change.

First Rome

It was reported that the CFS – the United Nations Committee on Food Security has failed to back the UN voluntary code of conduct on foreign land investment. (See *Socialist Standard* August 2010, 'Land Grab, win-win or win-lose'). The Rome meeting 'dragged on into the early hours' but ended failing to endorse the seven principles promoted for 'responsible agricultural investment.' Again Olivier De Schutter, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, found it 'terribly disappointing'. Countries such as China, Egypt and South Africa opposed endorsing the principles because they were not involved in the original consultations.

A World Bank report released in September revealed that 45 million hectares worth of large scale farmland deals had been announced in 2009 (land populated with people not worth consideration) – a ten-fold increase over previous years. A spokesperson for FAO – the Food and Agriculture Organisation – claimed that 'one of the reasons why there was this rush to overseas investments is that governments and the private sector lost faith in international markets as a reliable source of food supply'. Governments and the private sector losing faith in the capitalist way of doing business?! Or could it be that the capitalist way sees the competition and forges ahead pressing to gain maximum advantage? Anyway, now another year will pass before the next meeting will take place, backstepping to alternative 'ill-defined voluntary guidelines' first discussed in 2008. Meanwhile, putting aside any consideration of 'rights', wellbeing, livelihoods, etc, who will place a bet on the percentage increase in this round of landgrab while we wait for the next meeting?

Second Nagoya, Japan

This was COP-10, the tenth bi-annual meeting of the Conference Of the Parties, involving 193 countries with between 15-16,000 participants including activists, NGOs and indigenous peoples from around the world 'to ensure that these strategies created to supposedly protect biodiversity focus on enhancing the rights of peoples with biodiversity-rich lands and do not impact negatively on biodiversity or these peoples by forcing them into the free market' (Anne Petermann, Executive Director, Global Justice Ecology Project).

Negotiations were focussed on a 'new Strategic Plan on diversity for 2011-2020 with a biodiversity vision for 2050', 2010 being the International Year of Biodiversity. There was a 'Business and Biodiversity Initiative' with corporate leaders from more than 500 companies from 13 countries meeting 150 environment ministers from the 159 countries and the EU which have ratified the protocol. On the table was a discussion on TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity), cousin to REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation). The REDD initiative has been highly contentious because it has transferred large swathes of forest into the hands of corporations seeking profit from carbon trading, (i.e. trading in carbon dioxide emissions) disenfranchising the previous caretakers of those forests. TEEB will undoubtedly raise similar alarm bells for millions living in or near forest, mountains, coastline, estuaries, steppe, savannah, marginal land, meadow, farmland etc, because the overall aim is to make biodiversity a commodity just as carbon became one a few short years ago. To commodify biodiversity means to own the back garden of someone who lives half a world away, to control another's fishing ground or grazing land.

The new Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP) says it all. Meant to operate like the UN Climate Convention Clean Development Mechanism it is simply a way to allow the destruction of biodiversity in one place by drilling, mining, planting monocrops etc in exchange for purchasing offsets elsewhere. Shell, Chevron and Rio Tinto mining are just three of the companies ready to commit themselves to conserving biodiversity in this way. (See *Socialist Standard*, January 2010 'Climate Change, Business as Usual'). Business is everything and *everything* is available for business.

Third Cancun

The climate summit at Copenhagen failed miserably to address the issues. Cochabamba brought many (mostly representatives of poorer nations) together to try to change the direction in favour of the planet. Then came Cancun, widely expected to be a failure even before it convened. Two weeks of talking and jockeying for position brought no hard and fast agreements on any appreciable level. The final days and hours became a scramble for individual nations to cobble together fine words of appeasement to take home as positive offerings even as the war of words continued. The blame game – China and the US, the world's two largest emitters, unable to compromise over their relative positions; China believing that the US should embrace the Kyoto Protocol while they would enter into voluntary limits on emissions; US suspicious of China's sincerity and unwilling to do anything before anyone else commits to more. Kyoto anyway, as it stands, is woefully inadequate as without US, China and India the current signatories account for only about a third of world carbon emissions. On the final day, Friday, 10 December, Achim Steiner, head of the UN Environment Programme told reporters:

"We all will leave Cancun knowing very clearly that we have not significantly changed the time window in which the world will be able to address climate change. That challenge remains.'

And Associated Press reported:

"It was clear in the final hours of the 193 nation congress that delegates were looking for creative language to finesse irreconcilable views and buy another year until the next major conclave in Durban, South Africa."

All in all a serious deficit of progress as it is apparent again that the economy and GDP are far more important than sea levels, rising temperatures, falling water tables, melting glaciers and millions with neither land nor livelihood.

Outcomes and expectations

What should we have expected and can we expect anything different? Expect more big business deals, expect more loss of habitat and species, expect increased CO2 emissions and worsening climate conditions, expect more communities to be made homeless and landless, expect governments to fall in with whatever business demands, expect a lot of disappointed activists, expect a wringing of hands and feeble excuses.

JANET SURMAN

Muddle class

"'TRIPLE CRUNCH' will see lower middle classes £720 a year worse off" read the headline in the *Guardian* (25 November) reporting on a study about the prospects over the next few years of those currently earning between £12,000 and £30,000 a year. Economics Editor Larry Elliott commented "once upon a time this group would have been dubbed lower middle class". No, it wouldn't. They'd have been called "working class" and most of them today would still regard themselves as this.

You can of course define class in any way you like, and sociologists have come up with all sorts of ways – by occupation, by income, by leisure activities, by dress, by accent. George Orwell once described his family of origin as "lower-upper middle class". The term "middle class" is in everyday use but generally to refer to occupation rather than, as in the *Guardian* report, income. Even we socialists sometimes use it in this way in conversation, but the correct Marxian position is that classes are defined by their relationship to the means of production.

If you don't own any means of production yourself you are working class because you are dependent for a living on going out onto the labour market and trying to find an employer to buy your working skills. This, whatever your occupation or income (so the working class is not confined to manual workers in industry, as some leftwing political groups mistakenly think). In a country like Britain that's the vast majority of the population. If you own enough means of production to employ others without having to work yourself (even if you choose to) you are a member of the capitalist class.

So what about the middle class? Who are they? Or, rather, who were they? Historically, in Britain, they were rich people who were not landed aristocrats and whose income derived from the profits of industry and trade rather than the rent of land. In the 19th century they were a group that was conscious of their class interest and waged a class struggle against the landed aristocracy to further it, achieving success with 1832 Reform Act which gave them more political power and the Repeal of the Corn Laws from 1848.

When Marx was examining capitalism there really were three distinct classes defined by their relationship to the means of production: the big landowners (the "upper" class), pure parasites whose income was derived from being in a position to extort a payment from land-users: the capitalist class (the "middle" class) who invested in production for profit; and the working class (the "lower" class), who produced the wealth on which the other two classes lived.

In other words, the middle class was the capitalist class as the class between the upper, landowning class and the lower, working class.

Since Marx's time the "upper" class and the "middle" class have merged into a single, capitalist class. So, far from us being "all middle class now", there is no longer any middle class (the middle class of yesteryear having become the upper class). It's rather the case that "we are all working class now" – including most doctors, lawyers and scientists. As Marx and Engels pointed out already in 1848:

"The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with revered awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers" (*Communist Manifesto*).

Halo Halo!

Born with a silver spoon in your mouth or born in Sin?

READERS OF the *Standard* are probably not too bothered about the notion of being 'born in sin'. To others though this can be a problem. Not least, you might suppose, because even those who warn us about the dangers of it – the various priests, parsons, rabbis and mullahs etc, have never been able to reach an agreement about the precise nature of sin. The various Gods, apparently, are offended by anything from people eating the wrong food or dressing in the wrong way to facing the wrong compass point when saying their prayers. Fortunately Iain Duncan Smith has now been able to step in to clarify matters and explain to us what sin is.

Duncan Smith is not only the Work and Pensions Secretary, he is also a practicing Roman Catholic and has previously informed us that "religion is integral to everything I do". He also holds the view that many of the problems of poverty have a "spiritual base". Now either this man is just talking out of his 'spiritual base', or he knows something the rest of us don't.

During a BBC radio *Today* programme in November, commenting on Tory plans to take away benefits to the unemployed who fail to accept a job offer, he explained the problem of people refusing to take unsuitable, or poorly paid work. "Surely," he said, "that's a sin."

If he's right that's good news. Well um, sort of. It depends on whether you hold the same religious beliefs as Iain Duncan Smith. Look at it this way. The penalty for failing to accept a job offer will be the loss of the £64 a week Jobseeker's Allowance for three months. If you do it again you will lose it for six months. And for a third offence you lose it for three years.

Now if you compare that with what Christianity previously told us was the penalty for sin you can see how beneficial and merciful the Tory plans will be. According to the Pope, the Born Again mob and numerous other fundamentalists, the penalty for sin is to spend eternity in Hell, screaming in agony and being prodded back into the brimstone by the Devil.

Be honest now, Three years starvation for you and your family in this life, or eternity in hell in the next. Which would you prefer?

Whether Iain Duncan Smith has done his theological homework on this though is perhaps questionable. A quick check of catholic theology on Google throws up a few more sins that are so serious that they "cry to heaven for vengeance". They include the oppression of the poor (Exodus 2:23) and defrauding workers of their wages (James 5:4). Are the Tories moving in mysterious ways here?

NW

Tiny Tips

Billionaire Stanley Ho, the casino king of Macau, spent $330,000 on two white truffles, the pricey fungi popular with foodies around the world at a London auction last month. According to a truffle expert, the large, aged Italian specimens Ho bought—'grand champions' — were mostly or entirely unusable for culinary concerns":
http://tinyurl.com/2w68f2m

As speculators and increasing demand drive up Beijing's real estate prices, those who cannot afford the rent are going underground—literally. Hundreds of cellars and air-raid shelters are being rented out as living spaces in the Chinese capital:
http://tinyurl.com/35gwuo9

A fifth of all homeless people have committed a crime to get off the streets. A survey also finds that 28 percent of rough-sleeping women have taken an 'unwanted sexual partner' in order to find shelter:
http://tinyurl.com/2625aq4

An Iraq War veteran serving five life terms for raping and killing a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and killing her parents and sister says he didn't think of Iraqi civilians as humans after being exposed to extreme warzone violence. "I was crazy," Green said in the exclusive telephone interview, "I didn't think I was going to live":
http://tinyurl.com/2wly89u

MEPs will next year take home £91,000 in tax free expenses without having to provide any proof of expenditure as part of an increased pay and perks package:
http://tinyurl.com/26ugq29

Cable unconnected?

IN THOSE heady post-election days last May Cameron and Clegg, smirking at the media assembled in Number Ten's garden, assured the nation that Coalition would be the only remedy to the maladies which Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling had so cruelly brought down on our innocent heads. One of the most conspicuous advantages sprouting from this venture into the New Politics (a phrase with implications rather more menacing than they were ready to acknowledge) would be the governmental presence of Vince Cable, influencing official policy on the economy. With all that what could possibly go wrong?

Well just a little over six months later the answer is that an awful lot is going wrong – and not only with what are called the ordinary people who fear for their chances of surviving the cuts but also for the Coalition itself, which can hardly be described as stable and united. For one thing there is the Alternative Vote, suspected by Tories nervously sitting on wafer-thin majorities as a convenient back-door into Parliament for any thrusting LibDem. And then, more calamitous, there has been the schism within LibDem ranks over their surrender to raising university tuition fees after they had in the mass signed that pledge not to do any such thing. Even worse – leading for them on this issue has been the hitherto saintly, all-knowing, all-wise Vince Cable who had the job of working out the details of the policy and then trying to persuade the rest to go along with it.

Joke

Cable rocketted to national prominence in December 2007 when, as stand-in leader while the LibDems were electing a successor to Ming Campbell, he drew attention to the new Premier Gordon Brown's "…remarkable transformation in the last few weeks from Stalin to Mr Bean, creating chaos out of order rather than order out of chaos". (We should not be misled by the consequent rapturous laughter into rating this feeble effort at a joke as historically amusing – MPs are irritatingly liable to relieve their boredom in that way. Even if it had the effect of giving Cable some much needed publicity). Cable's leader Nick Clegg is not famous for making jokes – perhaps because of his sensitivity in the matter after David Cameron said he was one. But he does display a kind of infant passion to develop the necessary political cunning. Looked at in that way it is not difficult to detect a possible strategy involving Cable's allocation to defend the rise in tuition fees.

Train Wreck

It is, after all, not so long ago that Cable was a serious contender for the leadership and – after the Mr. Bean joke and Clegg's first fumbling among the front bench there was expressed regret among the LibDems that he had been so easily allowed to drop out. It could not have helped his case to have to defend the official party line in what Clegg expected to be a "train wreck" of a debate – before which Cable behaved like someone suffering from a serious head injury, apparently unable to decide whether to oppose, or support, or abstain on the increase according to whether he was talking about keeping a pledge or defending Coalition unity or what he called the national interest. In the end, of course, he gave in to blatant, self-interested ambition and held on to his wretched job by going along to the Commons where, professorial spectacles clinging perilously to the end of his nose, he mounted an emphatic defence of the policy which he was supposed to have grave doubts about.

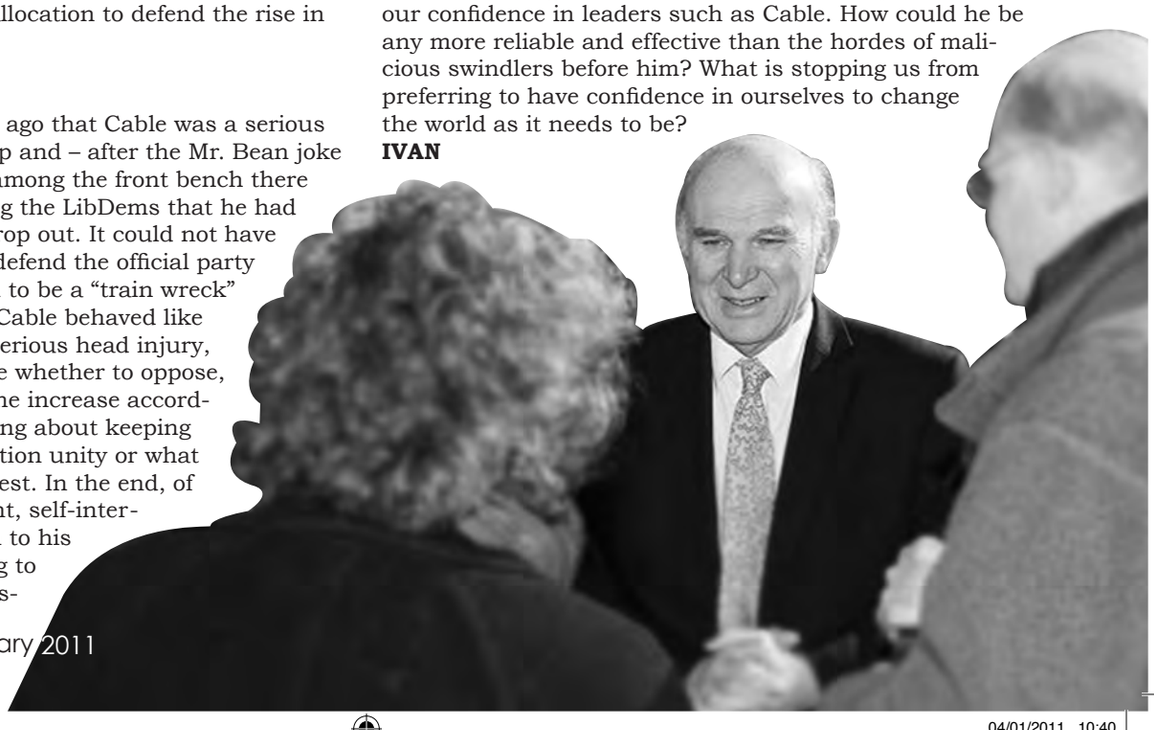
Shell Oil

It is clear from Cable's record that he is no stranger to doubt and confusion. Beginning as a Liberal he moved to Labour then the SDP before returning to what had been re-invented as the LibDems. During this journey he experienced what must have been a seriously instructive spell in the 1970s Scottish Labour Party, including a period as a Glasgow councillor. Eventually his multiple attempts to get into Parliament yielded him the verdant, pricey seat of Twickenham. Heavily qualified as an economist, he was a university lecturer and a Treasury Finance Officer in Kenya. From 1995 to 1997 he was Chief Economist to the oil giant Royal Dutch Shell. During that period the suppression of the people of Nigeria whose lives had been devastated by the Shell operations became an international scandal as the murderous military dictatorship of Sani Abacha developed in intensity and barbarism. In an abrupt loss of his famous powers of grasping a situation, Cable denied any responsibility in, or knowledge of, those calamitous events: an interviewing journalist found him "deeply evasive and avoiding all questions", another who later asked a spokeswoman for a comment was told "…he does not feel that he knows enough about the latest developments to be able to comment".

Confidence

This kind of record is important in sizing up a political ruler who, with an eye to winning high office, is touting for our support. In the case of Vince Cable we have to consider his reputation for unwavering prescience about capitalism's endemic crises which enabled him to sprout into prominence with his (distinctly unoriginal) forecast of the doom which would follow the credit boom. But how usefully did he apply this? In fact he allowed his insights to languish unattended, unspoken. Asked whether he had publicised the disastrous image in his book *The Storm* he lamely replied: "No, I didn't. That's quite true… But you're quite right…I haven't been to the States for years and years, so I wouldn't claim to have any feel for what's been going on there." This unconvincing blather leads us to question what gain there is for human society in putting our confidence in leaders such as Cable. How could he be any more reliable and effective than the hordes of malicious swindlers before him? What is stopping us from preferring to have confidence in ourselves to change the world as it needs to be?

IVAN



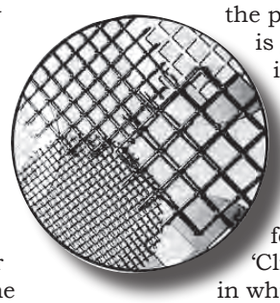
"Wikileaks is currently under heavy attack.

In order to make it impossible to ever fully remove Wikileaks from the Internet Wikileaks is currently mirrored on 1426 up-to-date sites..."
(from WikiLeaks website)

Wikid Games

Once upon a time, if you wanted to keep a secret, you locked it in a drawer and held the only key. When states wanted to keep secrets, they used huge underground warehouses with security locks and armed guards to store the vast quantity of information compiled by their spies, spooks and secret police. Most of this information was useless, and most of it never saw the light of day. Then the information revolution happened.

A very large wired information network looks exactly like a sieve, and that's essentially what it is. Information leaks out of it in any number of ways, on purpose or by accident. When you can hold the personal details of 50,000 people on a pen-drive no larger than a cigarette lighter and when these can fall out of pockets on the tube train home, the potential for leakage is gigantic. Then there is email, which is not secure and which has become the preferred mode of communication for all businesses and public services. Just a few emails brought about 'Climategate' in 2009, in which careless phrases by researchers at the University of East Anglia fatally undermined the authority of the Independent Panel on Climate Change.



The recent WikiLeaks' exposure of the private lives and opinions of the world's movers and shakers has been so prodigiously covered in the press that the details are scarcely worth covering again, yet from a socialist standpoint the furore deserves to be set within a wider context that the conventional media never discusses. The capitalist class, as indeed all hitherto ruling classes, owes its power not only to its private ownership and control of wealth but also its private ownership and control of information, and inevitably socialists must ask themselves to what extent the overthrow of the latter is likely to lead to the overthrow of the former.

While controlled leaks have always been a tool of government, or internecine feuds within government, it was rare until recently for damaging information ever to escape and when it did, retribution was punitive. When in the 1970s Philip Agee, a CIA agent working in the UK, published an exposé of CIA operations including names of operatives, the US authorities reacted with fury, had him deported and mounted a smear campaign against him involving sex allegations and alcoholism that ran to 18,000 pages (*Guardian*, 19 December). In 1971 Richard Nixon was tape-recorded speaking thus of Daniel Ellsberg, another Pentagon mole gone public: "Let's get the son of a bitch into jail... Don't worry about his trial. Try him in the press."

Mud, glorious mud

The founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, has made no secret of his involvement in the leaks, so one would be astonished not to see governments trying to fling whatever mud they could at him. And sure enough, he is currently on bail in the UK and facing possible extradition to Sweden to answer sex crime allegations, followed by a possible further rendition to the US to face a lifetime wearing an orange jumpsuit in a certain Cuban seaside resort.

That these allegations are a frame-up is a conclusion that many people have leapt to with a conviction thus far unsupported by the known facts,

however it is undeniable that the whole business looks damned fishy. If the UK or Swedish authorities go one step further and allow the Americans to get their hands on him, the affair may well blow up to become the Dreyfus case of the 21st century.

But how to you try a website? WikiLeaks is a game-changer for state security forces and radicals alike, challenging the whole notion of secrecy and calling into question what if anything can be kept secret. The universal state condemnation of WikiLeaks rings increasingly hollow and comical when one looks at the massive public support for it. The vast number of mirroring sites—sites that duplicate WikiLeaks—means that WikiLeaks could not realistically be shut down without shutting down the internet.

It isn't only source websites which pose a problem for state security, it's also destination sites. If you wanted to leak a confidential document in 1950, there would only be a few newspapers or small printing presses to leak it to, most of whom would not risk touching it. Conventional media tend to have a symbiotic, back-scratching relationship with government which ensures that newspapers are self-regulating so direct news bans—D notices—are rarely invoked. Media bosses are capitalists themselves and have no interest in rocking the boat. But the other side of the information equation is publication and distribution, and the internet has created unlimited scope for both.

Thus Wikileaks can sidestep conventional media and leak to anywhere, even to the *Socialist Standard* if it chose to, which means that the capitalist class has for all practical purposes lost control of the mass media. It cannot hope to strike mutually agreeable deals with every media outlet, especially not those avowedly hostile to it, and any attempt to coerce or threaten such outlets would be likely to blow up in its face and make matters worse.

Off with their heads

Aside from the allegations against Julian Assange, Wikileaks itself is not however above criticism. Its foundation in 2006 is shrouded in some mystery. Founders allegedly include Chinese dissidents, mathematicians, technologists and journalists, yet none has been identified. There is supposedly an advisory board of 9 members, yet one 'board member' has said that his involvement is minimal and that the board is merely 'window dressing'. One volunteer told *Wired Magazine* that Assange considers himself "the heart and soul of this organisation, its founder, philosopher, spokesperson, original coder, organiser, financier, and all the rest". Indeed, WikiLeaks is not even a Wiki anymore because Assange has removed public editing access to it, and has moved away from being a mere whistleblowers' conduit to a full publisher in his own right. Whether or not he set out to do so, Assange does seem to be going for personal glory but in doing so is drawing down all the fire on himself. One-man-bands don't play well when they're playing against the state. One way or another, American and European state agencies are out to get WikiLeaks which is why the obvious move is to go for a decapitation strike against Assange himself.

Even if they succeed in bringing down Assange, there is no stopping what he started. This month a former Wikileaks advisor is set to found a new website called OpenLeaks, which aims to avoid the problems WikiLeaks has encountered, specifically by being governed democratically and by remaining as a conduit for anonymous information rather than empire-building into a publishing enterprise. At heart is the open source philosophy which holds that cooperative and transparent endeavour is more productive and progressive than the secretive and territorial ethos which underpins most capitalist activity: "Our long term goal is to build a strong, transparent platform to support whistleblowers—both in terms of technology and politics—while at the same time encouraging others to start similar projects" (*Wikipedia*, OpenLeaks). There is a parallel here with file-sharing sites, which started as centrally controlled databases (Napster) that were easy to target and kill, before evolving into distributed peer-to-peer systems which had no centre and could never be nailed down and neutralised. There is a further parallel to be made here with democratic models in politics. Socialists oppose leaders and vanguardist leadership-based groups on the left, not only in fact but also in theory, because top-down hierarchy structures are too easy to neutralise. In fact, as a distributed, egalitarian and transparent organisation, we could lay claim to being the original political Open Source movement.

All of a Twitter

There is a momentum of workers' disgust at capitalism at the moment, at least in the western countries, starting with the sub-prime collapse which exposed nonsensical business logic, then massive bail-outs and bankers bonuses, together with squalid parliamentary expense fiddles, followed by the most savage cuts in living memory and attacks on the poor and those on benefits. Anyone who thought 'the yoof of today' could never be motivated by politics is having to eat their words as students pour onto the streets, camcorders in hand to record and upload police cavalry charges onto YouTube just as the police attempt to deny them. Meanwhile 'hacktivists' attack banks with massive Denial of Service offensives and the spontaneously organised UK-Uncut group occupy and picket the stores and offices of banks, mobile phone companies and high street stores accused of large scale tax avoidance. Though one could always quibble with these activists' grasp of the bigger picture over tax, or their tactics in singling out individual companies when, after all, they're all at it, you've got to admire how the digital native generation are mobilising their opposition in ways that the ruling class has not anticipated and is ill-prepared for.

The wicked game that is capitalism is being exposed as never before in its history, and more people are getting to know about it every day. The genie is out of the bottle, and there's no putting it back in. These are interesting times for socialists.

PADDY SHANNON

Marching orders

Are the student demonstrators really demanding higher education for everyone?

A great deal of ink has been spilt in the last couple of months over student protest – marches, occupations, invading Tory HQ, police cavalry charges, and police detaining thousands of people under armed guard for hours in the freezing cold and using exposure to the elements as a deterrent to protest (sorry, kettling). Notably, a sharp distinction was drawn between peaceful, well scrubbed demonstrators, and the ugly head of the anarchist unwashed. Notably also, the children of privilege were represented on both sides, as interns in Tory HQ: the fresh and inexperienced Oxbridge faces of both the Tory/Liberal front bench and those latter-day Gracchi, the Milibands of New-new Labour; and the liberal elite having a day on the wild side, most notably Charlie Gilmour swinging from a flagpole.

All this should be ironic – coverage of a protest dedicated in principle to the universal provision of an important resource being reduced to an elite discourse in the media by which most people in the country will learn about it and try to make sense of it. However, university education is an elite issue: less than 20 percent of the UK population had a degree in the 2001 census.

In our society education is the means whereby status and earning potential are transferred from parents to children: extending this privilege increases the pool of technically trained workers such as scientists and engineers, and increases social stability by giving at least the illusion of participation to these same technical workers. The simple fact is that education structures expectations in society as well as providing the tools for participation – if you want an unequal but stable society you follow Mao's dictum and "keep the peasants poor and blank". University education buys in a section of the working class and co-opts them to the status quo: the same state that subsidises their training then gives many of them employment directly in the civil service or other state projects, stable and defined pensions, in short an internment from the class struggle; others find, if they are fortunate, professional roles which may use their training directly but just as often are interested in their three year training in writing reports.

It is this section of the working class, trained and co-opted, that is often referred to as the "middle class". Economically the working class is defined by its universal dispossession from the means of production and thus its need to work for an employer to survive: but sociologically there are fracture points, and the classically defined "workers" - blue overall, spanner in hand - continue to dwindle in numbers in the industrial West. We are paid for the value of our labour power, or rather the cost of reproducing it: those workers who have received this training investment receive better reimbursement in the private sector, and protected benefits in the public sector. This and other institutionalised divisions in our class are the bane of socialist organisation: as in the ancient world, and the antebellum American South to a lesser extent, there are two kinds of slaves, house and field, and the twain tend to loathe each other more than they do their masters. And yet all seem to admire models and footballers who rise from our ranks on the strength of natural advantage, charging extra rent for their services much as a landlord charging quadruple for fertile land than for swamp. For most of us, the only route out of wage slavery, if not the lottery, is the lottery of birth.

Heaping irony on irony, then, the Tories have the better of this argument. New Labour draws support from and now consciously seeks to represent this educated, "middle", class: they have come to calculate that political power lies in these "chattering" - i.e. politically engaged – classes, not the great unwashed. They are defending not a universal franchise but its extension to their power base, which means that a moderate income bar is quite acceptable – the state should fund their constituents, who can and are prepared to leap this bar, to compete to attend Oxbridge or other prestigious institutions

without further financial impediment. The Tories have no such scruples: in lieu of political necessity, money and influence should buy future earning potential and status, in strict measure, and that means withdrawing state subsidy. If wealth buys education then wealth buys citizenship.

When we say that we live in a democracy we tend to assume that, in addition to there being a formal vote mechanism regulating the state, additional benefits automatically accrue such as a guaranteed minimal standard of living. In short, we think of it as social democracy, where the state supposedly works for us. In particular, the state reproduces democracy, by fashioning its subjects into citizens and making sufficient provision that they can function as citizens – even to the extent of taking a mass stroll to Trafalgar Square on a Sunday afternoon without being killed by the state's armed force or the hired gangs of the wealthy, and having the time off and the health to participate in meaningful debate. But this does not have to be the case: the state is, as they say, the executive committee of the ruling class, and dispensation of favours or participation to other orders is a matter of occasional largesse or, more commonly, buying off unrest. It is no accident that universal suffrage was granted across Europe in 1918, as the survivors of mass butchery returned to the states that had sent them.

An exact parallel can be found in the "forty shilling freeholders" of medieval England. Whilst in previous centuries the decisive force in war was the knights themselves, political power mailed and armed, now the English longbowman was the backbone of military victory, and had to be given a place at the foot of the table: it cost forty shillings to support such a combatant, so forty shillings became the property qualification. They were needed: they had power: they were involved. The post-WW2 Labour government, that great reforming force, was no happy liberal accident but again a similar calculation of expanding access to the state to a large returning military until they were both militarily and socially demobilised.

"We do not have rights or privileges, but we do have demands, and we must stand together if we are to make them"

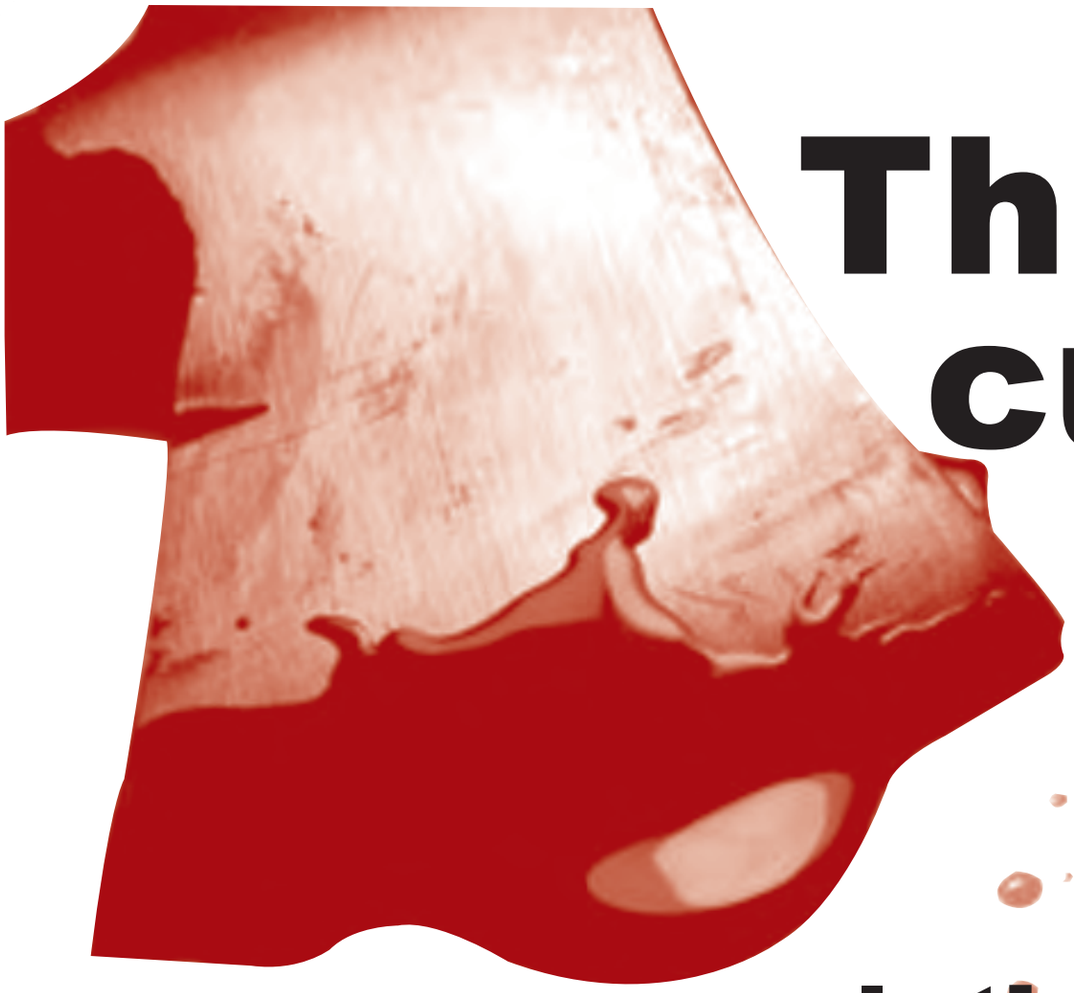
Changes in these provisions are very painful and difficult: once the ruling class has invited us as house guests it is hard for them to get us to leave and graciously resume our lower places. But hard times bring hard calculations – the fiction that education and other social provision is universal will soon be over. The "heroes" that the welfare provisions were made for are all but dead, and the concessions that brought them and a ruined economy back into a stable state have died with them. Education, in that it provides the tools of citizenship, will be based on a property qualification: in that it provides trained professionals for industry, the industry will pay for them just as they would pay for any other piece of equipment, either with compensatory higher wages or with bursaries.

Education under capitalism is not a right: nor is it a privilege. It is a weapon, and a careful state only arms its friends and its carefully disciplined house slaves. It is a costly tool to be placed in the hands of a grateful journeyman. It is an essential precondition of political action, which the unions have long recognised in sponsoring the education of their own members and officials. For revolutionaries of our, properly democratic creed – that revolution is the work of the working class itself which we make as equals, house and field slaves together – it is more fundamental than the democratic process itself: that process is only open to the powerful, and in a complex society without understanding there can be no power.

Does this mean that all of our class must have a university education? Of course not, any more than all of us must be able to program computers, make cars, fly planes, nurse the ill and care for the young. Intellectual labour is just that, labour. But collectively, our class needs to be able to perform all of these roles and in principle our class members have to have universal access to all of these roles, not segregated in feudal producer castes on the basis of parentage as we have in effect been in the past and still are, though to a lesser extent than previous centuries. Regardless of their birth or history, all of our class members should have universal access to the same education. This allows us to make a democratic revolution on the basis of class solidarity, rather than being in the laughable situation once articulated by the SWP of forcing technical workers to labour, if necessary, "with guns to their heads". It is our boast that we already run society from top to bottom: that boast becomes hollow if our class is lobotomised, with higher state posts and the associated training being reserved to a minority of the elite and their co-opted trusties.

In short, we should have no illusions about what we are owed. This is the language of that section of our class who expect to be co-opted and are merely discussing the terms of their future co-option. The state rules for the rulers: for the rest of us access to it is based on either necessity or force. Demonstrations are displays of necessity, in that the state is reminded that it needs the support of those who are demonstrating, and are thus by and large well-regarded by the co-opted section of our class. The way to demand a universal provision would be to identify a provision that the state has to make and then universalise it: this means class solidarity. Talk of "middle classes" is corrosive, and so-called revolutionaries that use this language – the same found on these marches – are working against us all. As a subject class we do not have rights or privileges, but we do have demands, and we must stand together if we are to make them. Education is not a moral issue: it is a class issue.

SJW



The cuts- let's make capitalism redundant

We have been forewarned. It is going to get worse; worse than it was – and for most it was never good; worse than it is now.

A deep unease haunts the land; a sense of foreboding as politicians, the media and the man next door talk of The Cuts and the impending cuts. Something is drastically wrong. Tens of thousands of people who thought they had secure employment have been made redundant and more going every day. The houses that people have on hire-purchase from building societies are in many cases worth less than what is owed on them. The state 'benefits' that guaranteed a mean living are being eroded, and the authoritative voices solemnly proclaim that it is going to get progressively worse.

Predictions

Some two decades ago the gurus of capitalism, its politicians, and its experts, were telling us that capitalism reigned supreme. Dr Francis Fukuyama, for example, who backed Obama for the US Presidency and earlier advised the Bush administration, put it thus:

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy and the final form of human government."

Victims of their own propaganda, people like Fukuyama saw the ending of state capitalism in the totalitarian Russian empire as clearing the way for the untrammelled hegemony of American style neo-liberalism. The benign attempts of the European Left to economically sanitise capitalism by political regulation had failed; the flawed conception of the state as the national capitalist, as in so-called communist countries, was in disarray. The savants of capitalist wisdom could confidently predict that history had played its final hand and that the future was a vibrant, prosperous capitalism where 'boom' and 'bust' would be words of the past and we'd all live happily ever after.

Now that future has come crashing down, as it does periodically and inevitably since the inception of capitalism. If there is a quality unique to the present crisis it must be the clarity in which it exposes the system itself as being fatally defective and incapable of furthering human development. There can be no doubt about the awful realities of the crisis. They are

Dr Francis Fukuyama - saw the ending of state capitalism in the USSR as clearing the way for American style neo-liberalism.

grim and terrible and they are now the stuff of politics across the board. There is absolutely no escape within the economic imperatives of capitalism from the problems that the current crisis will impose on the working class into the future. Nor is there any audible voice from within the main political parties suggesting even consideration of an alternative way of organising the vital affairs of society. On the contrary, the largely illusionary differences between Left and Right is simply now about the degree of pain that should be inflicted over time on the working class. The Tories and the power-lusting leadership of the Lib-Dems would concentrate the pain into a short period while the Labour Party would impose the pain over a longer period of time

The "nation's" debt

So political debate is now about the amount of time the alleged recovery should take, otherwise there is unanimity about the inevitability of the need for 'cuts'. The suggestion is that 'we' as a 'nation' are living on borrowed money. That every fourth pound that the 'nation' now spends has to be borrowed from international investment agencies which will become exponentially richer on the proceeds of 'our' accelerating poverty. That the 'nation's' debt has got out of hand and we will all have to restrict our spending for the foreseeable future.

There can be no argument about it. Given the way our political and economic system works 'the nation' – whether the UK, Ireland, Germany, the US, et al – is in grave financial difficulty. The various 'nations' are the component parts of an intricate world economic system and those living within each of the component parts are going to be adversely affected one way or the other.

For members of the working class that means that generally they will be expected to do without more than they were doing without previously; a more restricted standard of living, a financially crippled health service and the ending of access to third level education. The lot of members of the capitalist class is less predictable; for some the crisis will provide opportunities to acquire bargain assets from the economic causalities of their less-fortunate class brethren; for others it might impact on the rate of their wealth accumulation; and there will be those who will be joining the working class and become impoverished celebrities.

Whereas, in the past, politics was about politicians and their parties telling us how they were going to improve our living standards, today politics is about the pace and duration of the cuts that are going to bite into our lives in the future: the political Right, abetted by the craven Centre, thinks the pain of economic retrenchment should be fully applied now; the Left argues that less pain over an extended period is preferable. But the ubiquitous watchword is that it is going to be painful!

Endorsing capitalism

There can be no doubting that the immediate future is perilous for the working class and requires a serious approach. Getting the placards out, shouting slogans and having a futile punch-up with cops divides us and gives succour to our enemies – especially so when the slogans offer no real alternatives to the system that gave rise to our problem in the first place.

We have to recognise that it is the working class that politically endorses capitalism in elections and it is only the working class that can abolish that system in conditions that will allow for the establishment of socialism. That statement requires recognition of the limitations of bourgeois democracy but such limitations do not alter the fact that without the conscious democratic consent of the working class real social democracy is out of the question.

The cuts are not the result of any change in our potential to produce wealth and there is plainly urgent human need for vibrant wealth production. That such wealth production in any form of society is the result of human mental and physical labour power being applied to nature-given resources is clearly obvious and both these factors remain as they were before the advent of the present crisis. Unfortunately capitalism adds another predominating factor into the simple wealth-producing equation: capital investment on the promise of profit. Today capitalism controls our means of life by its ownership of those means and only allows production of our human needs in conditions likely to produce profit for the owning class. Socialism will make our means of life the common property of society as a whole thus abolishing ownership and that factor in the present wealth-producing equation that puts greed before need. Political reformers on the Left might protest that immediate organising for Socialism does nothing to alleviate the current problems of capitalism but if they accept that these problems are an effect of capitalism they must surely accept that the logical way to remove an effect is to remove its cause.

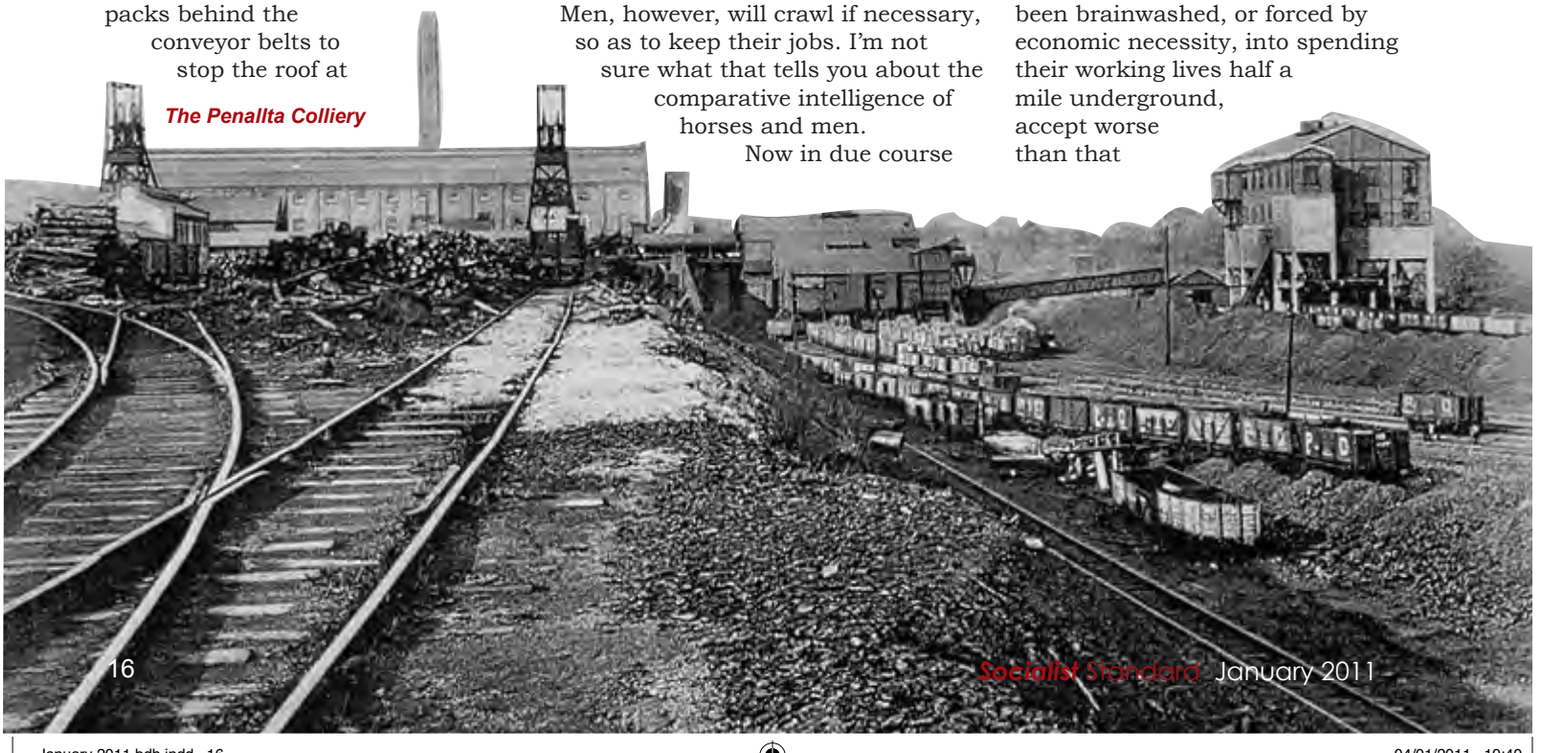
RICHARD MONTAGUE

A mining incident

Mining accidents are frequent such as the recent ones in Equador, Columbia, China, New Zealand. Many without the coverage nor with the happy outcome of the Chilean incident. A socialist who worked in the mines as a Bevin Boy in the 1940s recalls conditions there and the fear miners have of rockfalls.

In a coalmine the roof is held up – when the coal is extracted from beneath it – by posts made out of H-section steel. In the mine where I worked, Penallta Colliery in the Rhymney valley, near Ystrad Mynach in South Wales, most of the coal seams were something under five foot, so most of the posts were about 4ft 6in. They were expensive, and so were the flatter pieces of steel which went across the top of two of these posts. My lonely job was to go round and see that all these steel supports were retrieved as the coalface went forward, not merely left behind and lost. (Only about one employee in six in a coalmine is actually digging out the coal – they are called colliers; all the others are getting the coal back to the pit shaft, repairing the tunnels, moving the conveyor belts forward, building stone packs behind the conveyor belts to stop the roof at the coalface collapsing too quickly, looking after all the machinery, and doing all the other ancillary jobs.) I went most days into the "N" district (which was about two miles from the pit shaft) down the No.3 road, or tunnel. The tunnel roof was getting very unstable, as well as very low. With half a mile of rock and earth above it, the roof of each tunnel gradually sinks, until it is "repaired", that is hacked out again to a reasonable height. In the old days, when the tubs of coal were pulled out along the rail tracks by horses (and they were horses, though they were always called pit ponies), the tunnels had to be repaired as soon as they got below about seven feet, because horses won't crawl on their knees. You could explain how necessary it was to maintain profitability, but a horse pretends not to understand. Men, however, will crawl if necessary, so as to keep their jobs. I'm not sure what that tells you about the comparative intelligence of horses and men.

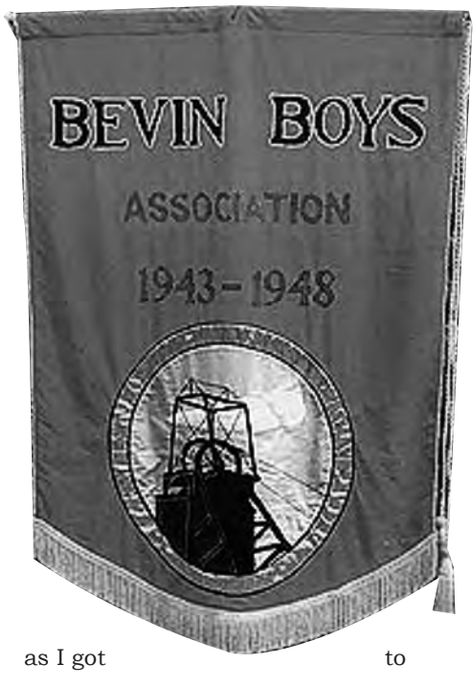
Now in due course horses were replaced by engines. Every so often along each tunnel they would build an engine, which pulls a long thick steel cable (winding it round a rotating drum like a barrel), fastened to the front of a train of tubs; when the train arrives at the engine, the cable is unhitched, and another cable, running along to the next engine, is fastened to the front tub instead; and the train resumes its progress to the pit-head. (In South Wales the tub is called a tram or dram, and the train is called a journey.) But when horses were abandoned, you didn't have to repair the road (or tunnel) so often; it could go down to about four foot high, or just high enough to let the tubs, loaded with coal, pass underneath. Men, naturally, are prepared to walk long distances bent over almost double. Human beings who have been brainwashed, or forced by economic necessity, into spending their working lives half a mile underground, accept worse than that



The Penallta Colliery

without complaining.

If a road is not repaired in time, the great pressure (from both above and below) to squeeze it flat will take over, and the tunnel collapses. Every time I made my solitary trek along the No.3 road, the roof was more and more unstable. Little bits would fall out of the roof as you passed, and you wondered if your steel-capped boots were going to create enough disturbance to make the whole thing cave in on top of you. When a roof is on the point of collapse, any little agitation might be enough to bring it down. As you went along, bent down to get under the low roof, you would squint sideways to try and see what was happening. Shakespeare says that cowards die many times before their deaths: that was me, all right, every time I went down the No.3 road. One day I made my usual fearful way along this tunnel, and I could see it couldn't hold up much longer. Little runs of dust or small stones were falling from the cracks. But luck was on my side, and I got through the bad bit of the road, perhaps a couple of hundred yards, to the next engine. At an engine, of course, you were safe. If an engine is destroyed it costs money to replace, while if a man dies you just get another one free of charge; so when a roof over an engine got a bit dodgy, it was made secure immediately. (An ordinary bit of tunnel is allowed to get worse and worse before the mine management finally has to take men from other work in order to repair it; you might lose money doing that too soon.) This particular day, as soon



as I got to the engine, and sank trembling on the bench to wipe the nervous sweat from my brow, a great roar came from behind me, an overwhelming noise. A huge cloud of dust billowed past. I felt a great sense of relief: I almost laughed. It had missed me! Now they would have to repair the road, to allow the miners to get in and the coal to get out. I would never have to walk under that rotten roof again. Almost certainly, my progress along the tunnel, with boots kicking against the rocks and the rails that made up the tunnel floor, had been enough to tip the crumbling roof over the edge.

When the noise subsided, I took a few tentative steps back along the tunnel, and stared up at the great hole in the roof which had been opened up by the fall. Then I resumed my walk towards the coalface. Not far along, I met one of the No.3 district firemen (the name in South Wales for foremen – besides their electric head-lamps they had a little Davy lamp, with an open flame, to test for gas) coming back to see what the noise was. I showed him, so he said, "Well we're cut off. There's been a fall in the face between the No.3 and No.2 roads." This sounds much worse than it was. The colliers in the face were already working to clear the fall there, and a couple of hours later you could get along the face and out of the district that way. It took them longer to clear the fall on the No.3 road, and when it was repaired, it became (comparatively) almost a pleasure to walk along it – if you can fancy strolling along a hole eight hundred metres deep in the earth, where only your cap-lamp stands between you and absolute, total, blackness.

Alwyn Edgar

Horse Voices

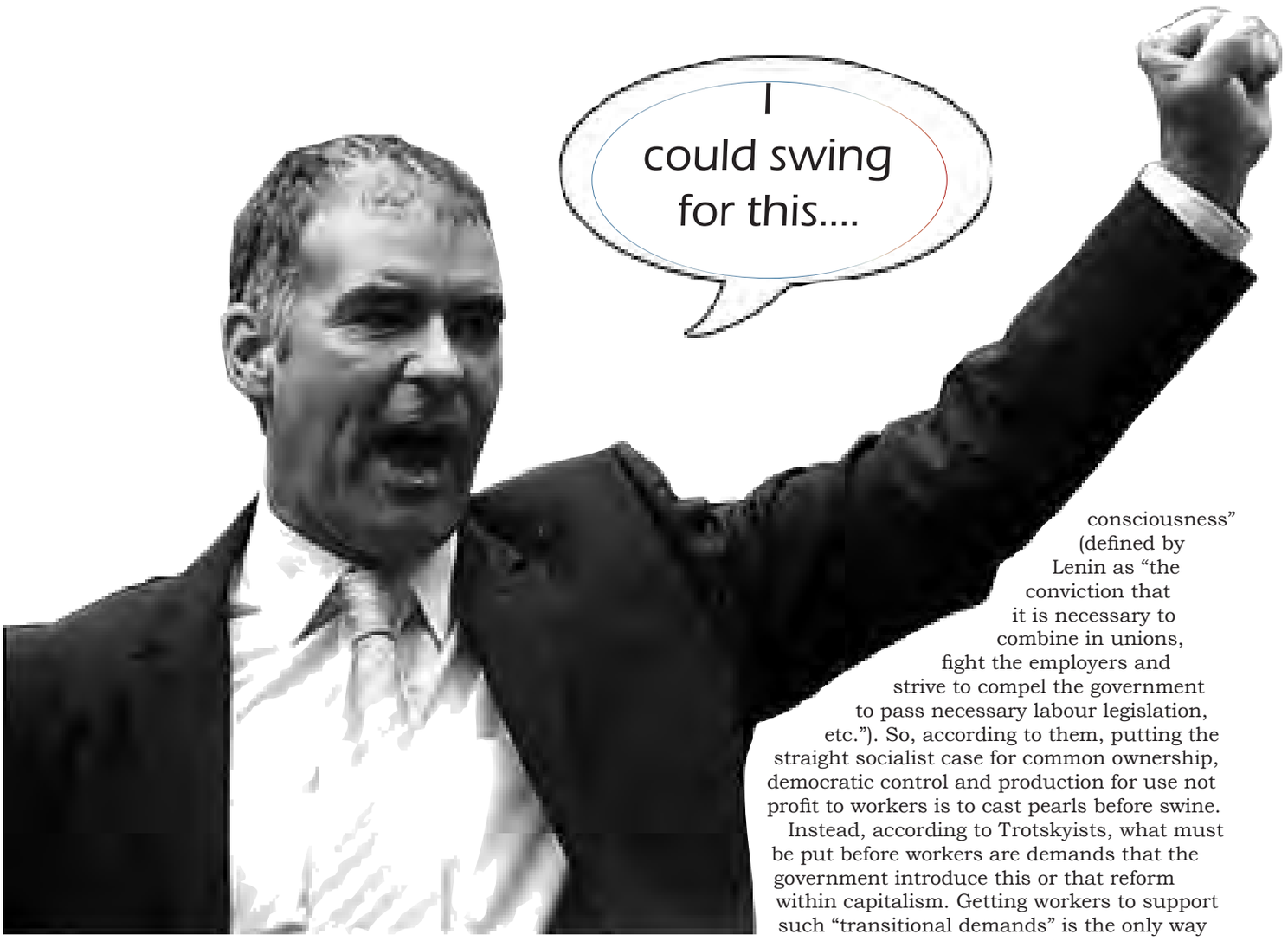
All is not well in the Sport of Kings. The owners and trainers want more money for 2011–12 from the bookmakers, via the levy or tax on their profits, but the bookies are unwilling to pay up. Consequently the government will have to make a decision, in the person of Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport.

Of course there is a lot more to this than just a squabble about how much is paid over. Attendance at race meetings is more or less holding up, but otherwise racing is feeling the force of the recession. Trainers are going out of business regularly, and one prediction is that barely a quarter of the 85 who currently train at Newmarket will survive. The owners are in most cases wealthy individuals who see racing as a hobby that can sometimes make money but is mainly indulged in for fun. This hasn't stopped them threatening to strike in order to get their way in this squabble, though.

Then there are the bookies, who maintain that horse racing is becoming less and less important as a source of income for them, with it now contributing less than one quarter of the money they get from punters. Moreover, racing paraphernalia take up a lot of space in betting shops, and TV coverage has increased in price. But in particular it's on-line betting that has caused the problems. If people can bet on roulette, bingo and football over the Internet (including while a football match is being played), there is less left over for the gee-gees. The traditional bookmakers have in some cases moved their operations offshore to avoid paying the levy.

One bookie said, in a nice phrase, that the top owners and trainers, were 'shooting themselves in both fetlocks'. But really it's a typical row between groups of rich individuals that will see many workers in the racing industry suffer as the powers-that-be argue among themselves and the whole industry struggles to cope with economic and technological changes.

PB



Sheridan no socialist

"Sheridan told he faces years in prison for lies about sex and socialism", so ran one newspaper headline the day after a jury found the former MSP guilty of perjury (*Times*, 24 December).

We don't know, or care, if he told lies about his sex life to get at a scandal rag that was trying to entrap him. It's only the political aspect of the case that interests us, and it's true that, as a reformist politician, he had certainly told lies about socialism. But this is the first time we have heard of this being a crime punishable by imprisonment. If it was, the prisons would be full of journalists, politicians and academics. Of course the *Times*—like the *News of the World*, owned by media tycoon Rupert Murdoch—was merely trying to discredit socialism.

Sheridan was a Trotskyist, originally of the Militant Tendency variety, and although he could no doubt explain why the USSR had been a "degenerate workers state" or why some common or garden reform was a "transitional demand" and so a stepping stone to "socialism", he was not that kind of Trotskyist.

Trotskyists, being Leninists, hold that workers are incapable of evolving beyond a "trade union consciousness" (defined by Lenin as "the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc."). So, according to them, putting the straight socialist case for common ownership, democratic control and production for use not profit to workers is to cast pearls before swine.

Instead, according to Trotskyists, what must be put before workers are demands that the government introduce this or that reform within capitalism. Getting workers to support such "transitional demands" is the only way they calculate they can get the mass support which, when the government fails to respond, can be used to catapult their vanguard party to power. But this requires people on the ground who are capable of winning a personal following. Normally, the Trotskyist gurus who direct their organisation from the shadows, are not up to this. They require front men. As it happens, Militant has been rather successful in this, with Derek Hatton in Liverpool, Joe Higgins at the moment in Dublin, and Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow.

Sheridan first came to prominence in the anti-Poll Tax campaign of the 1980s when he, along with the rest of the Militant Tendency, was still boring from within the Labour Party. Sheridan earned a reputation for being an indefatigable fighter, defending non-payers before the courts and himself getting a six-month sentence for contempt of court.

The trouble, from the point of view of the Trotskyist gurus in the background, is that such front men have, because of their following, a degree of independence and can prove difficult to control. Which is what happened in Sheridan's case. When Kinnock clamped down on Militant—Sheridan himself was expelled from the Labour Party in 1989—the group's leaders didn't want to change their tactics. They wanted to continue boring from within the Labour Party, in accordance with the argument they had used for years, that when the workers began to move against capitalism this would begin as a swing to the left by the Labour Party, so that's where the vanguard cadres should be. Sheridan and most others disagreed. They wanted to form an independent party, opposed to Labour. They won out and a new party called "Militant Labour" was formed (the minority are still somewhere in the Labour Party, so deeply buried as to be invisible). In Scotland this became, in 1998, the "Scottish

"Socialism is not about the redistribution of wealth within capitalism but about the common ownership of the means of wealth production"

Socialist Party" with Sheridan as leader. It departed from traditional Trotskyism by embracing the idea of Scottish independence which of course is quite irrelevant from a working class and socialist perspective.

In 1999 Sheridan was elected a member of the Scottish Parliament. He was re-elected in 2003 with 5 other SSP members. This was the heyday of "Scottish socialism" (more properly, Tartan leftwing reformism). Under other circumstances they might have held the balance of power and given parliamentary support in exchange for some reforms to an SNP government. But it was not to be. In 2004 the *News of the World* published allegations about Sheridan's sex life. He (apparently) told the SSP executive that there was some truth in them but that he was going to deny them. A majority disagreed and he eventually resigned as leader and, after winning a libel case against the Murdoch scandal-rag, left the SSP to form a new party, "Solidarity Scotland's Socialist Movement". In the 2007 elections to the Scottish Parliament both parties were wiped out,

Neither of them stood for socialism, only for reforms of capitalism and an independent Scotland (i.e. an independent capitalist republic like southern Ireland). Solidarity's founding statement, for instance, declared that it was "a socialist movement that fights for the redistribution of wealth from big business and the millionaires to working class people and their families". It does do this, but this has nothing to do with socialism, which is not about the redistribution of wealth within capitalism but about the common ownership of the means of wealth production.

Following the end of his career as an MSP Sheridan has only been involved in minor-league reformist politics, standing for Bob Crow's petty nationalist "No2 Europe" list in the 2009 European elections and for the Militant/SWP TUSC in last year's general election (the Militant and SWP Trotskyists, despite reservations about his views on Scottish independence, had followed him out of the SSP into Solidarity). On both occasions he stood on a reformist platform, a series of demands that the government must do this or not to do that which would have left capitalism, and its problems, intact.

ALB

The great debt swindle

CHANNEL 4'S sponsorship of right-wing propaganda masquerading as objective journalism hit a new low in November last year. The storm surrounding the broadcast of the widely condemned *Great Global Warming Swindle* had barely settled when the channel issued a new swindle, *Britain's Trillion Pound Horror Story,* made by the same people. The previous programme was a propaganda offensive on behalf of those who deny (and profit from) climate change. This new programme aimed to achieve a similar victory (for the rich) on the economic front.

That the programme *was* propaganda and not journalism was signalled to the alert viewer early on when the presenter, Martin Durkin, said he wanted to put the size of Britain's accumulated debt, £4.8 trillion, into perspective – supposedly the whole point of the documentary. How did he go about achieving this?

Well, firstly, he quite rightly drew attention to the fact that many people struggle to make proper sense of very large numbers (how many zeros are there in a trillion?). A brief explanation and a moment's thought will end this struggle. But we'd be no nearer understanding. Is four trillion a big number? When compared to the number of digits on our hands or pounds in our bank accounts, well, yes. But when we're talking about state debt? If so, just how big?

To answer that, it would be necessary to put the number in a comparative context. Is the British debt a big one in comparison to other Western countries? In comparison to GDP? Is it big compared with what it has been historically? Who is the debt owed to and why? How much does it cost to service the debt? What would be the consequences of restructuring or defaulting? Five minutes with Google will turn up the answers to these questions. But Durkin tried a different tack. He put the size of the debt into context by telling us how big a pile of banknotes it would make (helpfully reminding his audience that a banknote is very thin indeed) and how long it would take to chuck the debt out of a window. A puzzling strategy, until you understand that the aim of the programme was not enlightenment, but ideological justification for slashing state spending (most of the debt is made up of future liabilities for the state pension and pensions for public-sector workers).

Durkin's key, unchallenged dogma was the idea that the private sector creates all the wealth in society, and the public sector is a parasite that damages economic health by sucking up that wealth to line the pockets of pampered bureaucrats. This was smugly presented as an unquestionable truth and used to batter opponents. But it's rubbish. The truth is that wealth – the totality of a country's useful things and services – is socially produced by workers in both the public and private sectors. What's not so obvious is why so much of this wealth flows into a small handful of private pockets in the form of money, some of which then ends up in the state's coffers.

This is indeed something of a mystery. But it's not an impenetrable one. Getting to the bottom of it would require the kind of popular documentary we desperately need. But we'd do best not to rely on Martin Durkin ever making it.

Film Review

Between hands and heart

***Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927, re-release 2010)**

Since its 1927 release, we have only been able to see an abridged version of *Metropolis*, one of cinema's definitive visions of the future. The scenes cut, largely because they were thought to confuse American audiences, have since become a film holy grail. So the discovery of a near-complete copy of *Metropolis* in an Argentine archive was met with justified excitement.

Metropolis is a city of skyscrapers, crowded roads and hedonistic dance halls. Underground, its workers power the city in long, painful shifts. They are given hope by Maria, a preacher, and Freder, the ruler's son who is sympathetic to their predicament. Metropolis' ruler orders the creation of a robot replica of Maria so it can impersonate her and cause discord among the workers. Instead, it leads the workers to revolt and attack the city's power station.

There is almost half an hour of 'new' material, including a sub-plot which expands the reasons behind the robot's appearance. The rediscovered scenes are easy to spot, as even restoration hasn't been able to improve their picture quality. Despite this, *Metropolis*' design work still looks stunning, even when competing against modern computer-generated imagery. But although we get a good look at the city, we don't learn enough about how this society is arranged. A class struggle is evident, with the elite enjoying the products of the workers' labour. But the system is criticised because its rulers indulge in the seven deadly sins, rather than because they exploit the workers. And these workers are only portrayed as obedient, whether they're carrying out their monotonous jobs, listening to Maria's soppy sermons, or, as a mob following the robot. It turns out these workers don't really want revolution or even reform, just 'mediation' with their bosses. The film's message – stated very explicitly – is "the mediator between head and hands must be the heart", with 'head' representing the ruling class and 'hands' being the workers. The 'heart' turns out to be the ruler's son. So, the film doesn't even advocate a 'trade union consciousness', just a more amiable figurehead for the elite.

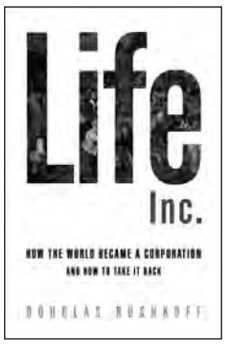
Director Lang thought *Metropolis* was "silly and stupid", and the blame for its patronising story is now placed on his then-wife, Thea von Harbou. Her views were made clearer by her later enthusiastic support for the Nazis. So, watch Metropolis for its amazing visuals, not its politics.

Mike Foster

Book Reviews

Allotments are not enough

***Life Inc.* Douglas Rushkoff. Vintage Books 2010, £9.99.**



One Christmas Eve, the media theorist and author Douglas Rushkoff was mugged outside his apartment in Brooklyn, New York, but when he warned his neighbours about the crime via a community website, he received not thanks nor sympathy but a tirade of abuse. His neighbours were angry that reports of crime in the neighbourhood would drive down property prices. How did it come to this? How did our neighbours come to be more concerned with the market price of their house than with the wellbeing of the community they live in? How did people come to act more like corporations – concerned only with the value of their assets – than like human beings? Those are the questions Rushkoff sets out to answer.

The problem, according to Rushkoff, is 'corporatism'. By this he means the rise then global dominance of big corporations, and the suppression of every aspect of life that comes into conflict with the need of those corporations to make profits. This dominance then became so total that we internalised corporate values and came to treat life itself as if it were a corporation, with no right to exist or say anything unless whatever it was doing or saying brought home the dollars. Rushkoff's argument is wide-ranging and detailed, sweeping from the origin of the corporation in the 16th century to modern-day consumerism, the globalisation of finance, individualism, New Age spirituality and the cult of home ownership. The book is full of arguments socialists will perhaps already be aware of, but with plenty of new and interesting details, including some entertaining journalistic investigations into the attitudes of those who run corporations, and the delusions of those who are their most desperate victims. Rushkoff gives an excellent account of how the world went mad, and is particularly good at showing how an abstract-sounding historical analysis actually plays out at the level of individual human lives.

He even touches upon the concept that would have made his book better still – capital. But because he does not define or develop or investigate this key concept, his book all but ignores the most important part of the story. Like so many utopian thinkers before him, he proposes to lop off the bits of society he doesn't like, without considering whether these might be socially necessary aspects of the normal functioning of capital – the functioning of which is to be left intact while the reformer goes about his business. In other words, Rushkoff does not consider whether the real cause of our problems might not be the corporation as such, but the circulation and accumulation of capital, of which the corporation is merely a form that has proved to be particularly useful. To use Rushkoff's own words from a slightly different context, our problems are "everything to do with excess capital's need for a place to grow", with "the needs of capital". The corporation meets those needs perfectly. Just not human needs.

This may seem like nitpicking, but the full political importance of the criticism emerges when Rushkoff comes to his proposed solutions. He says he has no problem at all with 'commerce', for example, and if he has a problem with the circulation of money as capital, then he doesn't mention it. (His analysis of money in the book doesn't make it entirely clear, but he seems to associate the circulation of capital with 'saving', which he sees as necessary and good, but in need of being separated from money's role as means of circulation.) But these are the key forces that give rise to the corporation and to the problems Rushkoff quite rightly wants us to rebel against. He is therefore urging us to swim against the tide, when it might be more sensible instead to climb out of the water.

There is a strange contradiction in Rushkoff's argument. He insists that he is not interested in building

a 'utopian' nor a centralised, political movement for social change. Resistance to the system is, he says, 'futile', because the flexibility, ingenuity and sheer power of corporations will always defeat any opposition. This certainly has some truth to it: any oppositional movement must take extremely seriously the power of capital to flee – or better, incorporate and sell – rebellion. But Rushkoff proposes instead a series of measures that are equally doomed. He says we must take the power back by buying from local organic shops, patronising local cafes, growing our own veg, making our own local money, using less petrol in our cars, coaching our own children for the local football team, and so on. Every one of these acts, according to Rushkoff, is "another nail in the coffin" of the system. But he's already shown us in the rest of the book that the wealth and power in society is concentrated in a very few hands, and defended by the state.

It's not at all clear why the all-powerful corporations that can brush off mass movements for social change as a minor irritant should tremble and topple if we plough what little spare time we have into an allotment. Nor does he seem to realise that the very enterprises he wants us to support rely on working-class wages – wages that are earned almost entirely from working all day in big corporations or for the state – to survive at all. Never mind the clever green sales pitch: small business enterprises are as dependent on big capitalism and big corporations and state subsidy as the rest of us.

The problems we face as a society are too big and too systemic for these kind of small-scale, easy answers, and any proposed solutions must be as inevitably political as they are social and economic. The fact that even brilliant, big thinkers such as Rushkoff fight shy of these obvious facts, even while they are forced by the reality of their investigations into all but admitting them, reveals a great deal about the ideological victories of the past thirty years – and of where the most important political battles remain to be fought.
SPW

Human development

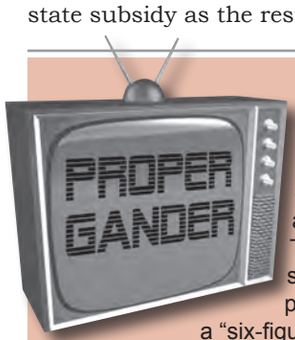
***The Path to Human Development: capitalism or socialism?* Michael Lebowitz, from the Socialist Interventions Pamphlet Series. Monthly Review Press., April 2009 (Free download from http://monthlyreview.org/090223lebowitz.php)**

This pamphlet, written to support educational and political discussions in trade unions, communal councils and political formations, particularly in Venezuela, was prepared for collective rather than individual readers with the specific purpose of 'encouraging collective struggle against capitalism and for socialism'.

Lebowitz lays down some of the basics of the whats and whys of human development. The obvious prerequisites to any human development are the satisfaction of basic needs and the recognition that each individual's self-development should be self-defined.

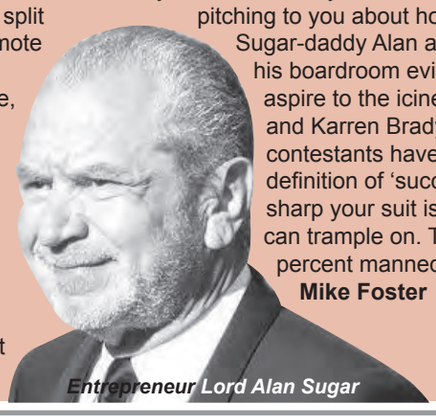
He compares the 'vicious circle of capitalism' with the 'virtuous circle of socialism.' Capitalism – people separated from the means of production with needs to be fulfilled having to sell their labour power in competition with others, thereby entering into capitalist production which gives them the need to consume but limited means to do so, locking them into a never-ending vicious circle. A vicious circle that is expanding all the while because capitalism requires growth and must generate new needs for consumption.

Socialism – in which producers enter into an association to produce for the needs of society and in so doing expand their capacities as rich human beings. So here we have producers who recognise the value of unity, cooperation and interdependence increasing the circle voluntarily, driven by the logic of human development with no limits – 'except the full development of all human potential'. The pamphlet is an attempt to raise socialist consciousness and, in Lebowitz's own words, "It is important that we live the revolutionary process as a great organism and not as a vanguard atop a complacent mass". Our hope is that workers around the world, and not just in Venezuela, take this advice seriously. If they did, a useful next step might be to remove populist reformists such as Chavez from office, and replace him with recallable delegates from their own ranks.
JS



"Success and money motivate me. My first word wasn't 'Mummy' – it was 'money'". This came from the deluded mouth of Shibby Robati, one of the latest bunch of wannabes to appear on *The Apprentice* (BBC1). The programme brings together sixteen of "Britain's brightest business prospects" to compete for a job with a "six-figure salary" working for entrepreneur Lord Alan Sugar. Each week, the contestants are split into teams who compete to win a task, usually to promote and sell a product. Someone from the team which makes less money is 'fired' at the end of each episode, until Lord Sugar is left with his new apprentice. Contestants fall into two categories: those whose ego outweighs their talent, and those whose talent is outweighed by their ego. Take, for example, Stuart Baggs, presumably an eight-year old who's sneaked onto the show, who boasted that "everything I touch turns to sold". Or Melissa Cohen who, with all the self-awareness of concrete, said "I'm charismatic. I'm intelligent. I'm a damned good businesswoman. I'm at the top of my game and I'm unbeatable", before she got fired in week four.

Laying into these charm-vacuums is easy because they put themselves forward and are therefore 'fair game'. But any criticisms should be accompanied by a little guilt, because there's something sad about how those taking part in *The Apprentice* have been shaped by the business world. Even allowing for the selective editing to emphasise their faults, none of the contestants are likeable. There's hardly any warmth on display – you wouldn't want to go for a pint with any of them. And if you did, instead of a chat they would start pitching to you about how they would market Guinness. Sugar-daddy Alan at least has some wit to lighten his boardroom eviscerations, but who would aspire to the iciness of his co-judges Nick Hewer and Karren Brady? Unfortunately, the young contestants have fallen for a narrow, corporate definition of 'success', which hinges on how sharp your suit is and how many people you can trample on. The result? A winner who is 20 percent mannequin and 80 percent smugness.
Mike Foster


Entrepreneur Lord Alan Sugar

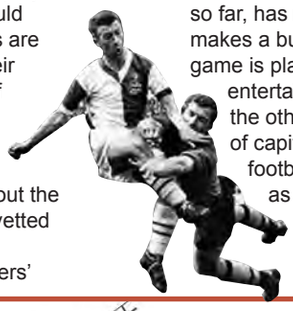
Footballers' Strike

TO MANY of the schoolboys who scuff out the toes of their shoes kicking an old tennis ball around a council school playground, the life of a professional footballer is a glamorous dream.

In fact, there is of course room at the top for only a very few, very good, footballers. These men can make a sumptuous living at the game. The rest have a hard time of it, on unremarkable pay and often under conditions of employment which an industrial trade union would not tolerate. Most footballers are looking for another job in their thirties, with little prospect of doing much better than a salesman or a shopkeeper. No professional player may publish a statement about the game without first having it vetted by his club—his employer.

The Professional Footballers' Association has asked to have the "slave" transfer system changed to abolish the ceiling on wages and to secure a share of a transfer fee for the player involved in the deal. To enforce these demands, the P.F.A. have threatened to call a strike. The bigger clubs can more easily afford to grant the players' demands, and foresee that to do so would help to defend their high position at the expense of the dingier clubs, many of which are already in deficit. It is, therefore, in the lower divisions that resistance to the P.F.A. is strongest.

Indignant fans, outraged players, angry club officials, have all had their say. Nobody, so far, has regretted that capitalist society makes a business of football and that the game is played, not for amusement and entertainment, but for investment. Like all the other superficially plausible criticisms of capitalism, the grumblings about the footballers' lot are as wide of the mark as a fourth division centre forward.



(From News in Review, *Socialist Standard*, January 1961).

The Socialist Party Summer School

Fircroft College, Birmingham

details on www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

22nd - 24th July 2011

Meetings

Manchester

Monday **24 January** 8.30pm
'The Spirit Level'
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre.

London

Film Evenings,Sundays 6pm
16 January: "It Happened Here"
- Introduction by Simon Wigley.
30 January: "The Battle of Orgreave"
- Introduction by Adam Buick.
13 February: "They Live"
- Introduction by Bill Martin.
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN (nearest tube: Clapham North)

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/

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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1.That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

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

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

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

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

We all love that time just before midnight when we cuddle our sweethearts and friends and wish each other a happy new year. We ignore reality. For one time in our life inside capitalism we celebrate just being alive. One of the reasons that we cannot be too joyful is that we remember what a shitty society we all live in. "Millions of families are struggling to pay their bills – and the number is likely to increase in the new year, according to a new analysis from the Bank of England. The report published today shows that two fifths of households have difficulty from time to time or constantly in meeting their monthly bills, compared with a third last year, and more than a half regard their overdrafts or credit cards as a burden" (*Times*, 13 December). Behind the dry statistics what we are talking about is human misery and anxiety. Fellow workers, let's face it capitalism sucks.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

One of the illusions beloved of supporter of capitalism is that while the progress of equality may be painfully slow in Africa or Asia, in the USA you can see an example of developed capitalism and its many benefits. The reality is much different. "Almost 15% of US households experienced a food shortage at some point in 2009, a government report has found. US authorities say that figure is the highest they have seen since they began collecting data in the 1990s, and a slight increase over 2008 levels. Single mothers are among the hardest hit: About 3.5 million said they were at times unable to put sufficient food on the table. Hispanics and African Americans also suffer disproportionately. The food security report is the result of an annual survey conducted by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)" (BBC News, 15 November). It would seem that for many people in the USA The American Dream has turned out to be The American Nightmare.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS?

Hundreds of thousands of leaflets produced by Crisis UK were pushed through letterboxes last December appealing for donations. They painted a horrible picture of what Christmas meant for the homeless. "Hidden homeless people live in hostels, squats, bed and breakfasts or sleep on friends' floors. They often lead miserable, isolated lives and suffer from debilitating mental and physical health problems. Crisis wants to open nine centres between 23 and 30 December offering homeless people companionship, care, hot food and warm clothing at a time of year which can be particularly lonely for those without a home or a family." These well-meaning people are obviously sincere in their attempts to alleviate the plight of the homeless, but what happens after the 30 December? Charity cannot solve the problems of poverty, homelessness or alienation. Only a complete transformation of society from the profit motive to world socialism can accomplish that. Wake up fellow workers charity doesn't work. It never has.

THE PROFIT MOTIVE AND CANCER

The notion that the medical world is devoted to the prevention of killer diseases is a widespread one, but often research is devoted more to treatments rather than cures, as can be seen from the following news item. "The pharmaceutical industry will always fund projects when it is in its best interests to do so. Cancer prevention is not currently one of these, and so Cancer Research UK, the Medical Research Council and the Department of Health have to fund early detection, screening and prevention studies. It is amazing that less than 2 per cent of the total cancer research budget is spent on prevention. We live in a commercial world where nobody is willing to pay very much for vague prevention information – it has to be made more precise and more individual. People value treatment more than prevention, so that's where the profit now lies" (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 December). Less than 2 percent of research spent on prevention because treatment is more profitable – truly capitalism is a cancerous society.

"The government believes that people needing care deserve to be treated with dignity and respect" - Conservative Manifesto 2010

Leon Kuhn/Chris Bird
Apologies to Amnesty

Free Lunch

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