

socialist standard



April 2011
Vol. 107 No. 1280
£1.50

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

Horizon politics

The revolution of consciousness
and the consciousness of revolution



Bowing out?
page 3



Banged up
and voting?
page 9



Chips with
everything
page 23

socialist standard

APRIL 2011

contents

FEATURES

Reflections on revolution 10

A brief history of Public Relations 12

Irish Election result: no change 14

Seeing the trees and the wood 16

Royal Welding 19

REGULARS

Pathfinders 4

Letters 5

Material World 6

Cooking the Books 1 7

Tiny Tips 8

Halo Halo 8

Greasy Pole 9

Cooking the Books 2 19

Reviews 20

Proper Gander 21

Meetings 22

Action Replay 23

50 Years Ago 23

Voice from the Back 24

Free Lunch 24

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://socialismoryourmoneyback.

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to the address above.

RATES: One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 7 May** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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 14 and 28 April, 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18.

Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

Email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Tues. 7.00pm.

Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4

7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4.

Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

MIDLANDS

West Midlands Regional branch. Meets last Sunday of the month in the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615.

Email: tonygluck111@btinternet.com

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690.

Email: davejewell@bushinternet.com

NORTHWEST

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

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

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

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

Carlisle: Robert Whitfield.

Email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick.

01706 522365

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

YORKSHIRE

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

Tel: 01756 752621

Todmorden: Keith Scholey, 1 Leevue Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ.

Tel: 01706 814 149

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

South West Regional branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon in Salisbury. 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 Napier 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. Kephias 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.



socialist standard

APRIL 2011

Editorial

Libya: brutality and hypocrisy

WHEN THE popular movements against long-standing despots in the Arab world spread from Tunisia and Egypt to Libya the Western powers thought that something they had long wanted – regime-change in Libya – was about to be handed them on a plate. But they didn't have the same control over Gaddafi as they did over Mubarak and Ben Ali and so could not arrange for him to bow out. His own man, and true to form, Gaddafi chose to try to brutally repress the movement. With the support of mercenaries and some sections of the population armed with superior military power, it was looking as if he might succeed.

Faced with this prospect, the Western capitalist powers have decided to play the military card too and have launched a series of bombing and missile raids against the armed forces loyal to Gaddafi. Since, under the UN charter, wars not authorised by the UN are "illegal", they have had to present their action as being to protect the civilian population against the very real exactions of the Gaddafi regime. Even so, when claiming that the military intervention is motivated by humanitarian concerns, British Prime Minister Cameron has always added that it was also in the "national interest".

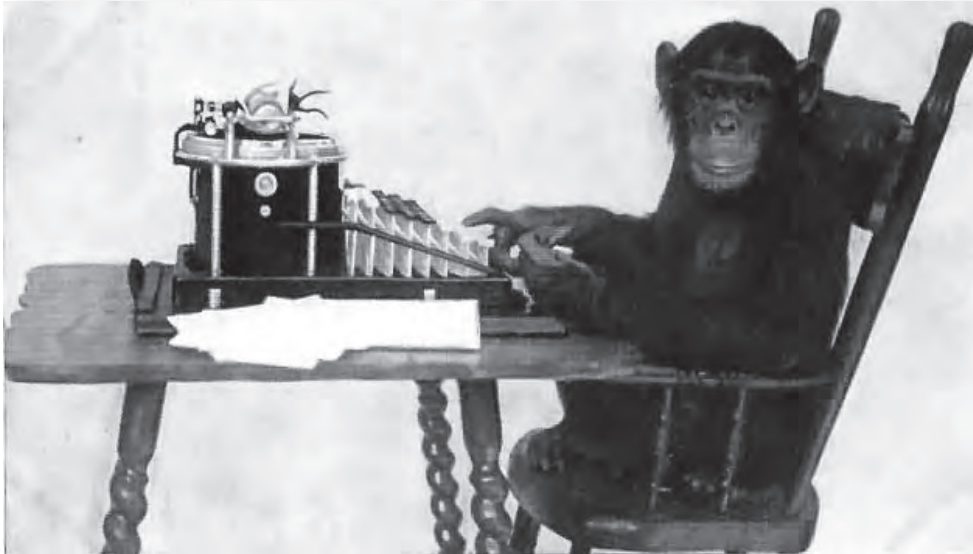
The "national interest" is in fact that the interest of the capitalist class of a country, not of its population. Their interest in this instance is, as in Iraq eight years ago, to have a friendly and reliable regime in an important oil-producing country. That's what the bombings are really about.

If a desire to protect civilians from being shot down by governments was the real motive, why are the Western capitalist powers not also intervening to stop the despots in Yemen, Bahrain and now Syria from doing this (as they have done)? And why did they not intervene to stop Israel slaughtering civilians in Gaza three years ago?

At least they haven't had the effrontery to claim that their aim is to bring political democracy. How could they when their bombing campaign is being partly funded by the despotic regime in Saudi Arabia? And in which war planes from the hereditary despots who rule Qatar are taking part?

It is not so much that the Western powers have double standards as that the foreign policy of capitalist states is not conducted according to any abstract standard. There is no such thing as an "ethical foreign policy". What motivates their diplomatic and military activity abroad is a desire to protect and promote the economic interests of their capitalist class.

Some are urging support for the Gaddafi regime on the ground that, despite everything else, it is "anti-imperialist". Not us. As Socialists, we naturally sympathise with workers anywhere struggling to get the added elbow-room to wage the class struggle that political democracy represents, but we denounce the hypocrisy and cynicism of the ruling classes of the Western powers in invoking humanitarianism to once again resort to killing and destruction in pursuit of their sordid "national" interests.



March). This will be no great news to people in marketing, of course, who know that the customer buys the salesman first and the product second, but it is of some concern to scientists hoping to communicate scientific ideas to the general public and in so doing to influence public policy. It is also of some concern to socialists hoping to achieve a similar level of communication. It is not just about the argument, it's how you dress it up and deliver it.

But are we talking about 'irrationality' or merely redefining the term 'rationality' with a little more finesse? Two plus two is always going to equal four, whatever your amygdala says about it. The fact that our thought processes may begin

Brain Strain

JUST RECENTLY a song by a 13 year old singer has been 'trending on Twitter' and 'going viral' with 16 million views on YouTube. Not the latest offering from Justin Bieber to his adoring teeny tribe of 'Beliebers', but something truly and insanely bad. So bad that many are calling it the worst song ever. Being so devoid of any merit has guaranteed the song's runaway success.

So what's the point of watching something when you already know it's dire and you're not going to like it one bit? Logically there shouldn't be any reason. But people find bad performances hilarious. We often do the opposite of reason. We're not predictably rational beings.

There's quite a lot of interest in 'irrationality' these days, with analysis from FMRI scans to show that our supposed act of free choice has already taken place down in the brain's scullery, moments before milord 'consciousness' rings the bell from the upstairs library. This is very worrying for those who like to feel in control and who obsess about the notion of 'free will'. If all our frontal lobe clever-clogness is really being primed and directed from below stairs by the witless emotions of the limbic system and the savage lusts and dreads of the amygdala, where does that leave the notion that humans are rational creatures?

Such an idea lies behind various theories to the effect that investors think they're being rational when in fact they're really responding to a herd instinct, or to emotional triggers. Economic trends and crises come about, it is argued, precisely because people do not always pursue their immediate self interests as they ought to, and this wild and woolly behaviour is what makes outcomes unpredictable and therefore financial disasters unforeseeable.

Here is classical determinism in disguise, the idea that the world is fundamentally mechanical and manageable, if only we could understand our own thought processes.

But financial crises are unforeseeable in any case, or they wouldn't be crises. As socialists are obliged to point out, capitalism would always be an unstable and unpredictable system even if the investors were androids with telephone number IQs. But there is something to the idea that we're not as rational as we think we are, though it doesn't take scans with giant magnets to show it. Let's not forget that we're animals, after all, and rationality is something of a new invention for us.

An interesting bit of research on climate change attitudes shows that different socio-political groups tend to believe evidence put forward by scientists who appear to be most like themselves, whereas they will reject the same arguments if made by someone they identify less with (*New Scientist*, 19

with primitive urges doesn't mean that they are enslaved by them, and that we simply can't make rational choices about our existence. The bigger problem facing socialists as well as scientists is not how we process information but how and from where we get it in the first place. The process of rationality may be more complicated than used to be thought, but it still relies heavily on the information available to it, and most decisions made by people today are likely to be poorly informed rather than fundamentally illogical. And being poorly informed is not the same as being stupid.

A recent survey from the Birmingham Science City suggests that 30 percent of the UK population, based on a sample of 3,000 respondents, believe that time travel is possible. 50 percent believe that memory-erasing technology exists, around 25 percent believe in teleportation and light sabres, while 18 percent apparently think they can 'see' gravity (www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk/news/time-to-turn-on-the-tardis).

It would be interesting to see the wording of this survey however, and it is not at all clear that the short quiz on the website bears any relation to the survey. Did the survey ask if humans could be teleported, which is impossible, or subatomic particles, which is debatable? Were the ones who believed in light sabres the youth end of the statistical distribution, who had all got broken ones in their toy cupboards, or perhaps adults who had heard all about military laser cannons? Did the question about time travel include a picture of a Tardis, which is fictional, or a wormhole, which is a hypothetical point in spacetime which might function as a shortcut for high energy particles? Were the ones who believed in mind-wiping reading too much Philip K Dick, or were they maybe recalling 20th century lobotomy techniques? In short, were the respondents really as thick as planks, or were they being ambushed? One question in the quiz runs thus: Can stars sing? The correct answer to this, apparently, is 'yes'. The explanation given is that stars oscillate, and that these oscillations when converted into sound waves can give an idea of the size and age of the star. A better response to the Birmingham quizmasters would be 'No, you dorks, because sound doesn't travel through space'.

People make bad investment decisions, not because they're stupid, but because they don't understand markets and they take bad advice from people who pretend to be experts but in reality are often crooks. People invest in capitalism too, even though it is fundamentally against their best interest. But that doesn't make them either irrational or stupid. 'It's not my fault, it's my brain wot done it' is just an excuse for not taking responsibility. There are always organisations and groups out there keen to show that workers are dumb brutes who need strong leaders to tell them what to do. When the cognitive sciences play into their hands, socialists need to cry foul.

John Maclean

Dear Editors

It was with interest that I recently read on the SPGB Blog that the SPGB recognised one positive achievement of Lenin in that he helped to get Russia out of the bloody capitalist First World War (<http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/2011/02/time-to-bury-leninism.html>).

Although I recognise that Scotland's John MacLean was not in the "Impossibilist" tradition (although he was once a member of the Social Democratic Federation), I write to ask if the SPGB recognised the vigorous anti-war work of John Maclean?

Harry McShane, of the CPGB, wrote in his book that John Maclean was persecuted to the extent of exhaustion and eventually dying of pneumonia. McShane wrote that "...The authorities hated him more than any other man. He was jailed five times; the first time was in 1915, and he spent four of his remaining eight years in prison. When he was out of jail he was followed everywhere by plain-clothes policemen. They were more frightened of his revolutionary stand than of the shop-stewards...." (Harry McShane, *No Mean Fighter*, page 151)

Just being curious, but did the *Socialist Standard* of the time make

any mention of John Maclean during the First World War?

J. MELROSE, Glasgow

Reply:

We can't find any mention of John Maclean in the *Socialist Standards* of the war period, but no doubt we would have respected him for the anti-war position he took up as that was what our members were doing and suffering from it too, also being sent to prison.

We did not think much of his Scottish republicanism and said so in an article on the party he founded in the October 1925 *Socialist Standard* from which here is an extract:

"A correspondent sends us the Manifesto of the Scottish Workers' Republican Party, and asks for our opinion of it. The object of the Party, founded by the late John Maclean, is a Workers' Republic for Scotland. The Manifesto sets out the slave position of the working class, and urges that the workers must carry through the Social Revolution.

The chief fallacy of their position is their insistence upon a Scottish Workers' Republic. This demand is both reactionary and Utopian. The struggle of the workers of the United Kingdom must be a united one. The workers are under the domination of a class who rule by the use of a political machine which is the chief governing instrument for

England, Scotland, Wales, etc. To appeal to the workers of Scotland for a Scottish Workers' Republic is to arouse and foster the narrow spirit of Nationalism, so well used by our masters. Economically the demand is Utopian, as the development of capitalism has made countries more and more dependent on each other, both through the specialisation of industry or agriculture, and also by the force controlled by the Great Powers to suppress or control the smaller nations.

The history of "independent" Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan States shows that the realisation of "political independence" by a country leaves the workers' conditions untouched and actually worsens them in many cases.

The appeal to the worker in this Manifesto to "rally to the cause of a Workers' Republic for Scotland" is made "so that we might win you away from the service of the imperialist gang who direct their activities from London" If the worker is to be won for Socialism, it is by getting him to understand the principles of Socialism, and not by appealing to him to concentrate on Scottish affairs. Socialism is international."

This is still our position in face of those today who seek to revive the idea of a "Scottish Workers' Republic"

- Editors.

more letters on page 18

Manufacturing gossip

IF SELF-PORTRAITS and liberal commonsense are any guide, we should be thankful for the press, and most particularly for the BBC. The purpose of news journalism is to present a neutral report of the relevant facts so that citizens in a democracy can make informed judgements and hold those in power to account. That's the theory. It's worth having a quick look at the gap between theory and practice.

On 2 March, on a page dedicated to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton that will take place on 29 April, and which excitedly and prominently displays how many days there are to go till the big day, the BBC website 'reported' that 'speculation has been rife about the bride's dress'. This was an introduction to a 'behind-the-scenes glimpse of the work involved in the creation of a couture wedding gown', and formed merely the start of a dedicated journalistic enterprise that brought us up-to-date information on what the happy couple did on pancake day, how Kate might deal with her first foreign trip, and a useful guide to 'five things we know about the wedding (and five we don't)'. (In case you're wondering, we know when and where the wedding will be held; we don't yet know whether William will 'fulfil' his 'destiny'.)

All of this is no doubt essential information for citizens of a democracy who need to make informed judgements. No doubt the journalists who wrote it are doing a marvellous job holding those in power to account. But there can only be one reaction to the news that 'speculation is rife' when it comes to the royal wedding. It's the reaction the late comedian Bill Hicks gave

when George Bush Snr solemnly informed us that the world is a dangerous place: "Yeah, thanks to you, you fucker." In other words, the sources of the 'speculation' are largely the very people who report on the speculation.

This brings us to another myth about the news media, which is that, if they can indeed be charged with filling their pages and programming with meaningless trivia and gossip, then this is only because that's what people want. But this is also false. In a survey of 1,006 British adults conducted by market research agency ComRes in November 2010, for example, a clear majority said they were 'not excited' by the wedding. Of the sample, some 31% said they 'couldn't care less' about the event and a further 28% described themselves as 'largely indifferent'. Clearly, speculation was not 'rife' everywhere.

So, given that the wedding is of no significance to democratic decision-making, nor in holding those in power to account, nor in responding to public demand, what can account for the press's blanket coverage? It's relatively simple. The government and the royal family spend millions of pounds on public relations – and that money brings results. The first task of a supine journalist is to rewrite press releases from the PR departments of corporations and government. (The fact that 'investigative journalism' needs a special name tells you all you need to know about the ordinary kind.) In short, what we are fed in the news is not news at all, but propaganda – it's what the people in power want us to know, what they want us to think, what they want us to be concerned with. Gossip about a royal wedding fits that purpose just fine.



Japan's *unnatural* disaster

EARTHQUAKES AND tsunamis are natural phenomena. But it is known where – if not when – they are going to strike. So in principle society could take action to minimise the human impact.

It was known that the seabed off the northeastern coast of Honshu (the main island of the Japanese archipelago) is prone to earthquakes. It was known that a sufficiently powerful offshore earthquake would generate a tsunami. So why not leave the endangered coastal area uninhabited?

Crammed into the danger zone

This earthquake and most of its aftershocks were offshore. However, the next major earthquake may well occur, as long predicted, on land. It is a matter of when, not whether.

The area at greatest risk is the southern coastal strip of Honshu that stretches west from Tokyo – a city already devastated by earthquakes in 1891 and 1923. And yet the eastern half of this strip, up to Osaka, covering a mere 6 percent of Japan's land area, is the country's industrial powerhouse, with 45 percent of its population of 127.5 million. Tokyo and its outlying cities alone contain 30 percent of the country's population. Would a rational society cram so many people and resources into the zone of maximum danger?

It is true that many modern buildings have been equipped to withstand seismic shocks. But most older buildings are much more poorly designed. For one glaring example, look at some photos of Tokyo street scenes and count the bulky signboards attached to storefronts at a single point, just waiting for a jolt to break free and fall on the heads of the people below.

To accommodate urban growth, about a quarter of Tokyo Bay (150 square miles) has been reclaimed from the sea. When the earth shakes, as it has recently, the loose soil of this reclaimed land undergoes liquefaction (becomes liquid). The shaking is also liable to spill and set ablaze the oil and toxic chemicals stored in the numerous tanks that line the shore of Tokyo Bay. Fires still rage up and down the coast, including a conflagration at the Cosmo oil refinery in Ichihara City.

Suicide bomber

The ultimate in insanity, however, is Japan's growing reliance on nuclear power, driven by the desire of its ruling class to overcome reliance on energy imports, especially oil from the Middle East. Nuclear power currently supplies 30 percent of the country's energy – a figure projected to rise to 50 percent by 2030. Fukushima, where a Chernobyl-type disaster is still unfolding, is one of a dozen nuclear plants located on the coastal strip of northeastern Honshu, in the path of tsunamis from offshore earthquakes. The Hamaoka plant, to the southwest of Tokyo, perches on an active fault line.

Katsuhiko Ishibashi of Kobe University, a seismologist who resigned from a committee setting safety guidelines

for nuclear reactors in 2005 when his concerns over building nuclear plants on earthquake fault lines were ignored, put it this way: "Japan is an earthquake-prone archipelago, and lining its waterfront are 54 nuclear plants. It's like a suicide bomber wearing grenades around his belt."

It is not only Japan that generates nuclear power in earthquake-prone areas. Some 20 percent of the world's 443 nuclear reactors are located in seismic zones. There are two nuclear power plants at risk from earthquakes in China's Fujian Province, one in Turkey, and one in Armenia. In the United States several nuclear power plants are in places that have experienced earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes. Another tsunami-triggered disaster like that at Fukushima is waiting to happen in San Diego, California, where a nuclear power plant stands right on the beach, facing an active fault line a few miles offshore.

There were also technical problems with the design and operation of the nuclear reactors at the Fukushima complex. The company that owns the complex, Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO), has a record of covering up safety issues. The complex was built by Toshiba, using a reduced-cost design by General Electric with a relatively small containment structure.



House floating in Sendai tsunami

Does it make sense?

From the perspective of a truly human community – that is, socialism – it makes no sense deliberately to court disaster in this manner. But does it make sense even from a capitalist point of view, considering the enormous losses borne by the companies most affected by the devastation? After all, capital craves its own expansion, not annihilation. It does not really share the death wish of the suicide bomber.

One answer is that most investors are concerned solely with expected short-term profits – and they never expect disaster, even though they must know it is always a possibility. Moreover, high-speed communications and data processing make it easy to move capital around almost instantaneously in search of maximum short-term profits. By giving priority to reducing risk, a company would have to accept higher costs and lower profits in the short term. It would soon find itself short of capital and might face hostile takeover or bankruptcy.

Another factor may be at work here – namely, the psychological mechanism called *denial*. Instead of carefully assessing risks and consciously accepting them, a capitalist may avoid stress by closing his mind in advance to considerations of risk that he fears will jeopardise his profits. He may persuade himself that those who draw attention to risks have a hidden political agenda. This applies especially to risks that are posed by nature. To take nature and its requirements seriously might jeopardise not only profits but the whole profit system.

STEFAN



Don't ask Jevons

LAST NOVEMBER'S *Monthly Review* carried an article by John Bellamy Foster, Robert Clark and Richard York on "Capitalism and the Curse of Energy Efficiency. The Return of the Jevons Paradox" (www.monthlyreview.org/101101foster-clark-york.php). They recounted how in his presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1863 the leading capitalist (and arms manufacturer) Sir William Armstrong raised the question "as to whether Britain's world supremacy in industrial production could be threatened in the long run by the exhaustion of readily available coal reserves". The authors went on:

"In response, William Stanley Jevons, who would become one of the founders of neoclassical economics, wrote, in only three months, a book entitled *The Coal Question: An Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation, and the Probable Exhaustion of Our Coal-Mines* (1865). Jevons argued that British industrial growth relied on cheap coal, and that the increasing cost of coal, as deeper seams were mined, would lead to the loss of 'commercial and manufacturing supremacy,' possibly 'within a lifetime,' and a check to economies growth, generating a 'stationary condition' of industry 'within a century'. Neither technology nor substitution of other energy sources for coal, he argued, could alter this."

Jevons (1835-1882) is known to students of Marxian economics but only as bit of a joke for his view that economic crises were caused by sunspots but also for his theory that prices were determined by their marginal utility to consumers.

H. M. Hyndman called his 1884 lecture defending the labour theory of value "The Final Futility of Final Utility" (www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1896/economics/7-futility.htm). In it he also took a sideswipe at Jevons's theory of crises saying that "Jevons' *Commercial Crises and Sun Spots* may be left to gather dust on its neglected shelf, until some writer, with nothing better to do, thinks it worth while to publish a monograph on 'the Strange Hallucinations of Professors of Political Economy'."

Jevons was of course just as wrong about coal becoming exhausted as he was about crises being caused by sunspots. Coal in Britain is not exhausted even today, only not mined as much as it once was, due to the relative cheapness of oil and gas as alternative sources of energy.

The "Jevons Paradox" that Foster and the others were interested in says that economies in the use of some material aimed at reducing its consumption will in fact, by making it cheaper to use, actually increase this. This is why they called energy efficiency a "curse" today. Economies in the use of oil and coal under capitalism, they said, will lead to more not less being consumed, and so not reduce the threat of global overwarming.

This is a problem only because under capitalism the competitive struggle for profits to accumulate as more capital that is built-in to it forces enterprises to use the cheapest methods and materials so as to keep the price of their products as low or lower than those of their rivals. It's called "being competitive" or "maintaining competitiveness".

In a socialist society energy efficiency would not have this perverse effect. It really would cut the consumption of coal and oil (and, similarly, for other non-renewable resources) as neither the imperative to accumulate capital, nor profit-seeking nor economic competition would operate.

PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

PAMPHLETS

Price and Qty

An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and the Environment.....	£2.00	x	_____
What's Wrong With Using Parliament?.....	£1.00	x	_____
Ecology and Socialism.....	£1.00	x	_____
From Capitalism to Socialism: how we live and how we could live....	£1.00	x	_____
Africa: A Marxian Analysis.....	£1.50	x	_____
Socialism as a Practical Alternative.....	£1.00	x	_____
Some aspects of Marxian Economics.....	£2.00	x	_____
How the Gods were Made.....	£1.50	x	_____
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek.....	£1.50	x	_____
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris.....	£1.50	x	_____
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue.....	£2.00	x	_____
Marxism Revisited.....	£2.00	x	_____
Socialist Principles Explained.....	£2.00	x	_____
The Market System must Go! Why Reformism doesn't work.....	£2.75	x	_____
All the above pamphlets (25% discount).....	£15.00	x	_____

BOOKS

A Socialist Life by Heather Ball.....	£3.75	x	_____
Are We Prisoners of our Genes?.....	£4.75	x	_____
Socialism or your Money Back.....	£1.00	x	_____
All the above books and pamphlets (25% discount).....	£20.00	x	_____

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff.....	£5.75	x	_____
Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up.....	£5.75	x	_____

TOTAL £ _____

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:
The Socialist Party of Great Britain, FREEPOST, London, SW4 7BR, United Kingdom.
 (No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

City.....

..... Postcode.....

County.....

PHONE (optional).....

E-MAIL (optional).....



A religious understanding

I LOVE being handed leaflets in the street. If I'd saved every one I've ever been given I'd have thousands. Come to think of it, I must have handed out a few thousand socialist leaflets myself over the years. But it's the more amateurish, home-made looking ones that fascinate me.

The brightly coloured ones on multi-folded squares of paper that were probably done on a 60's home printing kit are the best. And if the person distributing them seems to be slightly embarrassed about handing them out that's also a good sign. So when I was approached recently by a man in orange trousers with a fistful of leaflets and a large cross dangling from a piece of string, who had been standing next to a puddle in Luton town centre, I knew I was onto a winner.

"Just as Adam and Eve chose to believe in themselves so people since have been living and dying in exclusion from the tree of life" it started. Magic! Pure poetry. But that was just the beginning. I turned to the back and read on. *"then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the spirit gave them utterance"*. Wow, I thought. That's what you call utterance.

"What's this speaking in tongues all about?" I asked.

The man introduced himself as George. "If you'd like to experience communication with the holy spirit you can come to a meeting tonight," he explained excitedly.

"Will you be speaking in tongues?"

"Yes," he promised.

"What's the purpose of that?"

George thought for a moment and referred me to another passage in his leaflet. *"God wants us to identify with Jesus' death in our place by being baptised, and receiving his life. When you receive this God immediately leads you in an unlearned prayer language."*

"I see," but George knew I wasn't convinced. He scanned the leaflet for a more relevant passage.

"It's about our spiritual awakening," he eventually offered.

"Do you have to speak in tongues for that?"

"Of course not, it's a spiritual gift from God," he explained patiently.

"So if I come to the meeting and you speak in tongues how will I know what you're saying?"

He looked at me as if I were a bit dim. "The speaker himself won't know the meaning of his actual words," he explained. "So you won't. You might think it sounds a bit like Swahili."

"I don't speak Swahili," I confessed.

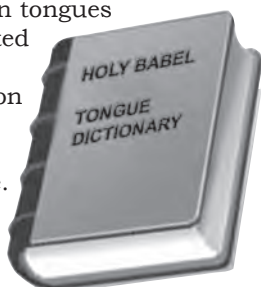
"No," admitted George, "nor do I."

"So it might be pointless," I suggested. "A bit like the conversation we're having now."

George could see I was a lost cause. He was a patient man but my spiritual awareness was obviously not up to the standard required. "That's it. The discussion's over," he snapped and stomped off back to his puddle.

So I'm no wiser about speaking in tongues than I was before. If you're interested in finding out more for yourself though the meetings are in Luton on Wednesday nights. 7.30. Bring an interpreter – on second thoughts, don't, that might confuse the issue.

NW



MEXICO CITY (AFP) – A 19-year-old Mexican woman was in the ninth day of a hunger strike in front of the British embassy, demanding an invitation to the wedding of Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton, she told AFP:

<http://tinyurl.com/6d6gpz4>

An American couple who have sailed the world with a yacht full of Bibles were hijacked by Somali pirates, and the U.S. said Saturday it is assessing possible options:

<http://tinyurl.com/69nomfy>

A record 5.26 million people worked unpaid overtime last year, clocking up an average of more than seven hours a week without pay, according to a new study. The TUC said workers were missing out on almost £5,500 a year, worth £29bn to the economy. One in five employees regularly put in extra unpaid hours last year, with public-sector workers most likely to work unpaid overtime, said the TUC:

<http://tinyurl.com/64gxcwu>

21-year-old Sacha Hall is facing trial for allegedly helping herself to food that had been thrown out and was awaiting disposal:

<http://tinyurl.com/667jut3>

"We must be prudent. We know what our political line is: We don't support invasions, or massacres, or anything like that no matter who does it. A campaign of lies is being spun together regarding Libya," said Chavez, in a televised speech. "I'm not going to condemn him (Gadafi)," he said. "I'd be a coward to condemn someone who has been my friend":

<http://tinyurl.com/4sgmujt>

Joseph Nye of Harvard's Kennedy School wrote in The New Republic in 2007 that Muammar Qaddafi was interested in discussing "direct democracy." Anthony Giddens of the London School of Economics wrote in the Guardian the same year that Libya under Qaddafi could become "the Norway of North Africa." Benjamin Barber of Rutgers University wrote in the Washington Post, also in 2007, that Libya under Gaddafi could become "the first Arab state to transition peacefully and without overt Western intervention to a stable, non-autocratic government." Great minds think alike? Actually, no: all were being paid by Libyan money, under a \$3 million per year contract with a consulting group which promised to "enhance the profile of Libya and Muammar Gadafi" in Britain and the US:

<http://tinyurl.com/6df36va>

Death threats from Muslim fundamentalists have forced a British imam to retract his claim that Islam is compatible with Darwin's theory of evolution.

<http://tinyurl.com/4uzm4oe>

'This week a report by government advisor Lord Hutton stating that public sector workers should work for ten years longer, for less pay, was released on the same day as the Forbes Rich list, which showed that the number of billionaires in the world has risen from 1011 to 1210 in one year. If you plotted a graph of the wealth of the richest people in the world it would be shooting off the charts, with loads of fat cats looking on, toasting each other and chuffing on cigars:

<http://tinyurl.com/6zec2rt>



Tiny Tips



Life, death or suicide?

THANKS TO New Labour's trumpeted policy of being "tough on crime" administered by the likes of Jack Straw and David Blunkett (they never actually got around to the other bit about tackling the cause of it all) there are something over 85,000 people in prison in this country (also, they never sorted out whether over-crowded prisons proved that they had succeeded, or failed, to beat crime). At present none of the prisoners is allowed to vote; in any case if they were not banned the fact that they come from homes all over means that the effect would be dispersed between many constituencies and so unlikely to affect any single result. Which has not lessened the interest, not to say at times passion, over whether anyone who has been locked up for offending against some of the accepted norms of property society, by theft or violence, should have a say in how that society is run day-to-day.

Europe

The controversy was brought up for wide public discussion by the case of one John Hirst. By no means an easy, attractive man – as a child he was abused after being placed in a Barnardos home and suffers from Asperger's syndrome – Hirst was sentenced to 15 years in prison for killing his landlady with an axe in what was described as a detached, callous manner. In the event he served 25 years and after release under supervision on licence he personified the campaign to overturn the ban on prisoners voting, on the grounds that it contravened the Human Rights Act, which became law in the UK in 2000. This Act, which was greeted in many a court room with derisive irritation, sprang from a guarantee in the European Convention on Human Rights of "free elections...by secret ballot under conditions which will ensure the free expression of the people in the choice of the legislature". But it was not all plain sailing thereafter. In April 2001 the High Court in Britain rejected an application for the enfranchisement of prisoners but three years later this decision was itself overturned by the European Court of Human Rights, leading the Council of Europe in December 2009 to question whether the general election due in May 2010 would be illegal. Which did not, of course, prevent that election going ahead even if some of the candidates were subsequently imprisoned for other criminal offences. In February last, the Commons emphatically opted to keep the ban although this flew in the face of the country's obligations as a signatory to the ECHR and could lead to prisoners suing for damages which might total as much as £160 million.

Civic Death

In terms of legislation the matter goes back to the Forfeiture Act of 1870, which moderated some of the consequences of "civic death" dating back to the 14th century. The present ban was imposed in law in 1983, 1985 and 2000, which placed the UK at variance with

most other European countries and in accord with the likes of Armenia, Bulgaria, Estonia and Hungary, so that a government which professes to staunchly respect the rule of law and the sanctity of its treaty obligations has persistently acted in an illegal and cynical way. Some prisoners – and others outside gaol – may have their own opinion about the motivation of those who preach endlessly about "right" and "wrong" but who are ready to apply their own, conveniently flexible, interpretation of these terms. Is this a problem to those who solemnly construct capitalism's regulations governing property and privilege? For one thing, the possibility of losing the right to vote through being sent to prison is unlikely to have deterred any of those 85,000 from their efforts to improve

their lot through the kind of theft or violence which capitalism rules as illegal. For example in the recent elections in the Irish Republic only 191 prisoners out of a total of 4,500 registered for a vote. So the ruling class can be reassured; from casual contact with some inmates of those grim monuments to futile punishment it is unlikely that if they had the vote they would use it in the only constructive possible way; rather,

after their own fashion they will support at the ballot box the whole society of class denial and exploitation – on the assumption that they can so re-arrange things as to be the exploiters.

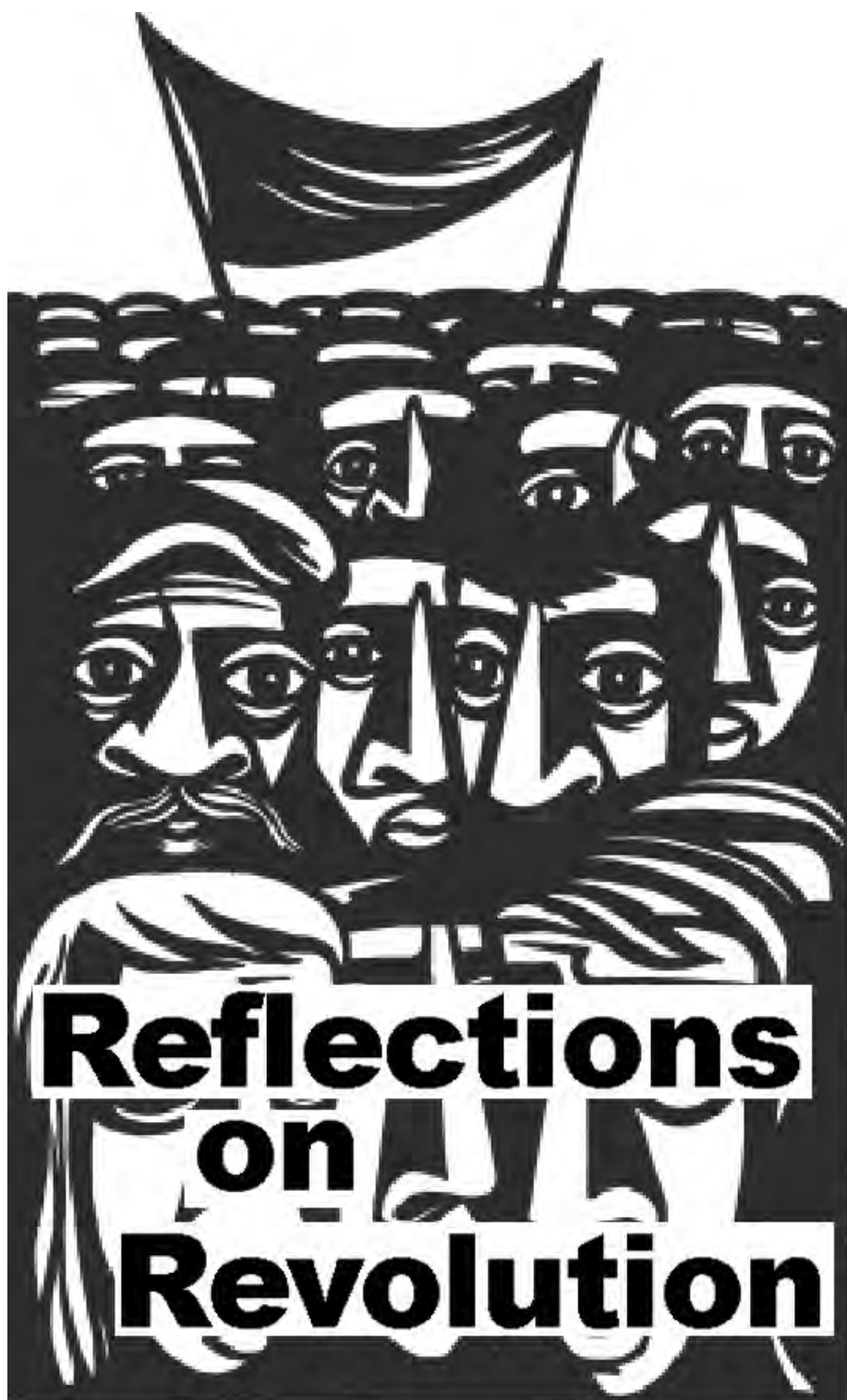
Cameron Is Ill

David Cameron has said that the very idea of prisoners being allowed to join the millions of misled, prejudiced, unthinking voters makes him "physically ill". It is difficult to believe that someone who has so ruthlessly scaled the greasy pole is so delicate. Is he not propelled into nausea at the evidence of capitalism's desolation? Famously reputed to be an affectionate family man, was he not repelled when Save the Children reported that 1.6 million children in the country he rules over are living in extreme poverty? Does he suffer sleepless nights when he hears of yet another incident of children being slaughtered under the guns and missiles in Afghanistan? Are his digestive processes affected when he is informed of the effect of his government's policies on benefits for the frail and elderly who, no longer a viable employment prospect, look on their future with fear? So what is the scale of the matter? Before it recently emerged into the news through the processes of the law, there was no apparent awareness of it among the electorate at large. It was not an issue during that last election. The entire dispute in this case is another irrelevance when the urgent need is to end a society under the rule of the likes of Cameron and his lies. To end, in other words, this present situation where those who can vote do so as a kind of civic suicide.

IVAN



Prisoners: suing for £160 million in damages?



What are the lessons of recent events in North Africa?

Revolution is in the air, or at least the word is. The media talked of a “Tunisian Revolution” in January and of an “Egyptian Revolution” in February. In a weak, narrow sense of the word this could be said to be true. In both countries a long-established dictator was overthrown as a first step towards establishing political democracy, the only kind of democracy that capitalism can offer.

Already some changes have been made, even though many of the personnel of the old regime are still in place. There is less arbitrary police repression. There is freedom of speech and to organise into trade

unions independent of employers and the government. If this is consolidated it will represent an advantage from a working-class and socialist viewpoint. Workers will have more elbow-room to fight the class struggle and it will be much easier for socialists to express their views.

But it is still only a political change, at most a political revolution, that leaves unchanged the capitalist basis of society. Any more representative government that emerges will be no more able to make capitalism work in the interests of all than can the elected governments of countries where political democracy has long existed.

Political revolution

In his 1970 book on Revolution in the “Key Concepts in Political Science” series Peter Calvert defined ‘revolution’ as “referring to events in which physical force (or the convincing threat of it) has actually been used successfully to overthrow a government or regime”. He concluded by advising political science to retain the word “as a political term covering all forms of violent change of government or regime originating internally”.

This fits in with the popular concept of revolution as a violent act. But it rules out calling a revolution the sort of non-violent overthrow of a government that occurred in Tunisia and Egypt. And not just the changes there but also those in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s where it was also determined but peaceful mass demonstrations that brought about a change of political system.

Calvert’s definition of political revolution would seem to need refining, to take into account such non-violent changes of political system. Not of course any non-violent change of government as the leader of the Fine Gael party in Ireland (now the Prime Minister) absurdly claimed when he described his party’s electoral victory in February as a “democratic revolution at the ballot box” in which “people didn’t take to the streets, they took to the ballot boxes”. The change of government in Ireland was not a revolution in any sense of the term, merely a change of capitalist government brought about through the normal constitutional procedures in a capitalist political democracy.

But even if the concept of political revolution is extended to include a change of government brought about by essentially peaceful but non-constitutional means this still limits the definition of revolution to a political change only.

Social revolution

Socialists too want a revolution but one involving much more than a change of political control. We want a social revolution, a revolution in the basis of society. In that sense our conception of revolution is nearer to that accepted by Martin Oppenheimer (as formulated by Chalmers Johnson) in his 1969 book *Urban Guerrilla*:

“A sweeping, fundamental change in political organization, social structure, economic property control, and the predominant myth of social order, thus indicating a major break in the continuity of development.”

On this definition there was no

revolution in Tunisia or Egypt, nor in Eastern Europe. But events there are still relevant to the concept of socialist revolution as we see the first step in this revolution as being a political revolution in the sense of a change in who controls the state. We also think that, in established political democracies, this could be done non-violently through the ballot box.

This has been challenged by others, who have argued that the entrenched ruling class would never allow this to happen and that the only way they can be dislodged is through civil war and violent insurrection. Faced with an impending socialist election victory, their argument goes, the capitalist ruling class would abolish political democracy and, even if they let things go so far as an actual socialist election victory, would not respect it and would carry on ruling regardless.

The overthrow of the democratically-elected Allende government in Chile by a military coup in 1973 always used to be cited as confirmation of this. Quite apart from the fact that Allende and his government were not socialist, they never had the electoral, let alone the active, support of a majority of the population – which in our view is an essential condition for the establishment and functioning of socialism.

This is a view our critics do not share. They are not thinking, as we are, in terms of a majoritarian revolution, one involving the active and democratic participation of a majority of the population. They envisage only a minority-led revolution, with an active minority leading a mass of merely discontented but not socialist-minded workers. It is quite true that, faced with such an attempted revolution, the ruling class is likely to resist violently, with a reasonable chance of success.

Even if such a revolution were to succeed it would not, and could not, lead to socialism. As Martin Oppenheimer pointed out, with regard to the majority class of industrial and white collar workers:

“The revolution rules in their name, but they do not rule. In their absence from effective participation in the revolution, the same thing happens that happens in a peasant-based revolution: gradually the leaders of a minority-led revolution become a new bureaucracy, a new class of rulers... Modern society is ripe for the domination of bureaucracy, in the absence of a revolutionary working class. Perhaps the leader of

a minority revolution is not himself irrevocably lost, but his revolution is.”

Unless a majority of industrial and white collar workers want socialism and organise themselves without leaders to get it then socialism is impossible. On the other hand, if they do want it, nothing can stop them getting it, not even a hypothetical abolition of political democracy by a recalcitrant capitalist government. It is this that the recent events in North Africa confirm. Capitalist political dictatorships there couldn't even stop a determined majority that wanted limited, political democracy. How much less would a capitalist political dictatorship be able to stop the more determined and more organised majority that one wanting socialism would be?

Pro-capitalist coup?

No government can continue to govern in the face of active opposition from those they govern. Answering a question from a correspondent who asked what we would do if, faced with a socialist election victory, the pro-capitalist government suspended the constitution and attempted to rule by decree, the *Socialist Standard* of November 1933 reformulated the question as “Can a capitalist minority which happens to have control of the machinery of Government continue indefinitely to govern and make capitalism function, in the face of the organised opposition of a majority of Socialists?” and answered:

“It is not possible for a minority

“The word Revolution, which we Socialists are so often forced to use, has a terrible sound in most people's ears, even when we have explained to them that it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power for the moment. Even when we explain that we use the word revolution in its etymological sense, and mean by it a change in the basis of society, people are scared at the idea of such a vast change, and beg that you will speak of reform and not revolution. As, however, we Socialists do not at all mean by our word revolution what these worthy people mean by their word reform, I can't help thinking that it would be a mistake to use it, whatever projects we might conceal beneath its harmless envelope. So we will stick to our word, which means a change of the basis of society...”

William Morris, *How We Live and How We Might Live* (1887).

to maintain its hold in those circumstances. Faced with the hostility of a majority of workers (including, of course, workers in the civil and armed forces, as well as workers in productive and distributive occupations), the capitalist minority would be unable, in the long run, to enforce its commands and the workers would be able to dislocate production and transport. In such circumstances the capitalists would themselves be divided. Not all of them would be disposed to provoke chaotic conditions in an heroic last-ditch struggle.”

The reply went on to make the point that “a look at the way in which governments do behave in face of a hostile majority under existing conditions will show how impossible it is for any minority to retain cohesion and to act decisively when it is conscious of being actively opposed by the majority”. And invited the correspondent “to name a single instance of a capitalist minority managing to maintain its hold on the machinery of government for any length of time in face of the organised and united opposition of a majority of the population”, adding “We know of no such instance.”

The recent events in North Africa, like those in Eastern Europe twenty or so years ago, confirm this. Faced with the active opposition of the population of their countries the Tunisian and Egyptian dictators quit. The governments there were divided and did at first try violent repression (hundreds were killed) but, faced with the continued courageous determination of the demonstrators, they were not prepared to provoke the chaos that violent repression would have entailed, especially not mutinies in the armed forces as their members refused to shoot down unarmed demonstrators. Ceausescu in Rumania and Gaddafi in Libya were exceptions that proved the rule. They did stage a last-ditch stand and duly provoked the mutinies and defections and chaos.

We take comfort from these events as they show that, once there is a socialist majority, socialism will be inevitable. Even if a pro-capitalist minority somewhere were to try to prevent a change of political control via the ballot box, the socialist majority will still be able to impose its will by other means, such as street demonstrations and strikes. But we doubt that it will come to that. But if it did, it wouldn't stop socialism being eventually established, one way or another.

ADAM BUICK

A brief history of Public Relations

Islands of Consciousness
by David R. Ingham

Are workers brainwashed by capitalism?

If you want to know the truth, you cannot rely on newspapers. We have that on good authority – in fact, on the authority of the more honest newspapers. (The more honest papers are those that are read mainly by capitalists who need reliable information about the world in order to make investment decisions, as opposed to those that are read mainly by workers.)

In a startlingly frank appraisal of the history and practice of the public relations (PR) industry, *The Economist* (18 December 2010) admits that PR was invented in the early 20th century to counter working-class struggles, and rising popular resentment against capitalism, by getting newspapers and journalists, until then sympathetic to the workers, on the side of the business class. American business was at the time worried by the rise of a new phenomenon: public opinion. The business elite feared this, especially as it was developing in an anti-capitalist direction, and were determined to take control of it and manipulate it for their own ends. PR's founding father, Edward Bernays, was quite explicit about the aim: 'the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised opinions and habits of the masses'.

That all this is true, and that the century-long and ongoing pro-capitalist PR campaign was and is a great success, to the extent that there are today no mainstream media outlets that are not pro-capitalist, is pretty much indisputable. This means that, today, newspapers and news programmes (those read and watched by the working class) are not what they appear and claim to be. Their role is not to enlighten and

inform, but to mould public opinion so that it reflects the interests of the capitalist class and the state. 'News' is propaganda, not genuine journalism.

The truth of this has, however, led to a logical but erroneous conclusion among many radical thinkers – that the working class accepts capitalism because it has been brainwashed into it by clever capitalist PR. The argument can even take a Marxian-sounding form: capitalist society, say some Marxists, maintains and reproduces itself through the dissemination of the 'ruling ideology' – i.e., the ideas, beliefs and values of the ruling capitalist class – and its acceptance by the working class. The working class, in accepting these ideas, as they learn them from newspapers and so on, is thereby integrated into capitalism and comes to accept its own subordination. This theory has the added appeal, for Marxists, of seeming to explain something that stands rather in need of explanation in Marxian theory – the failure of the class struggle to materialise into the revolution predicted by Marx.

The argument is compelling but mostly false, as shown in an excellent essay by Conrad Lodziak in the journal *Radical Philosophy* ('Dull Compulsion of the Economic: The Dominant Ideology and Social Reproduction.' No. 49, Summer 1988). The essay, and the empirical data and ethnographic studies it draws upon, is obviously now dated in some respects. But its arguments are still strikingly relevant and persuasive. This article will reprise Lodziak's argument and briefly consider its implications for socialist politics.

Dull compulsion versus brainwashing

The idea that working-class acceptance of capitalism can be ascribed to the workers' 'false consciousness', Lodziak calls 'the dominant ideology thesis', and it is, he says, 'taken as a self-evident truth amongst a majority of the left'. But is it true? It is, after all, a proposition capable of empirical proof or disproof. Do workers in fact believe and accept the ideas that make up the 'ruling ideology'? The answer, says Lodziak, is yes – and no.

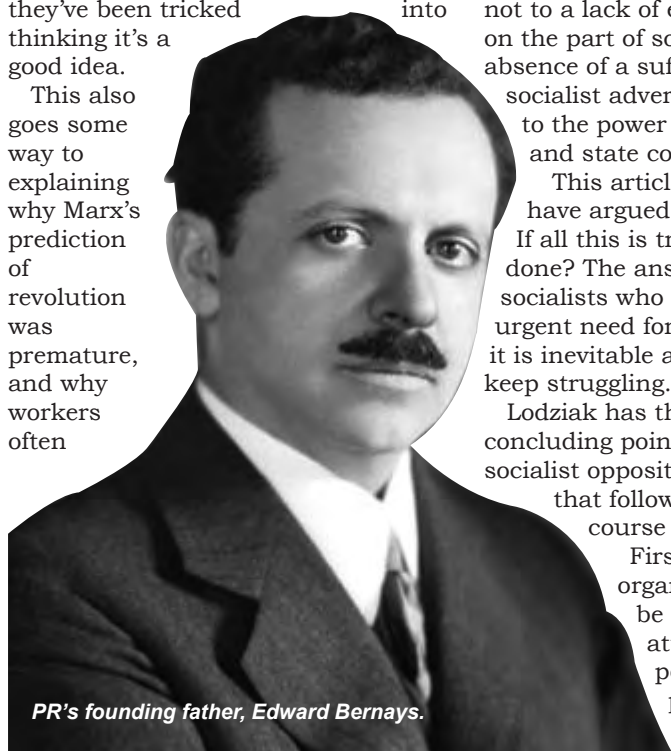
It is true that most workers accept certain key ideas that are essential to the continuation of capitalism – for example, they accept the justness of 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work', they accept meritocracy (the idea that it's OK for people to rise above them in the social hierarchy if the rise is based on merit and talent), they accept that most people should get a job or career and strive to 'get ahead', and so on. They do not, however, universally accept or agree with other aspects of the ruling ideology, such as property and inheritance rights, principles of capital accumulation and the right to a profit, state neutrality, occupational structure, distribution of incomes, the right to manage, and so on.

At this point, a Marxist might say, OK, the 'dominant ideology thesis' is then justified: the working class does accept the most important aspect of the ruling ideology, which is the acceptance of the inevitability of working for wages. But this is not so, says Lodziak. To prove the 'dominant ideology thesis', you must show not just that workers accept certain ideas, but that those ideas

are sufficiently important to them for them to commit to the ideas and act upon them. And this is where the thesis falls down: 'the required degree of ideological motivation appears to be absent amongst a majority of the populations of advanced capitalist societies'. Instead, what you find is 'an absence of belief': passivity, resignation, bewilderment, confusion, disorientation and marginalisation are all more important in determining working-class actions than so-called 'false consciousness'. And the explanation for this passivity is easier to find in 'largely publicly identifiable features of the social environment' than in 'some mysterious process of class brainwashing or collective hypnosis'.

The ideas which do dominate working-class thinking tend to be those 'directly relevant to the practical and immediate demands of the everyday life-world as experienced' – ideas related to things over which workers do have some control, such as deciding whether to resign and look for a new job, or wait for a promotion; whether to get married, or divorced; how to organise home life and what to do with free time, and so on. Workers' thinking is, quite understandably and sensibly, focused on finding security, and avoiding insecurity. This is impossible without building relations of dependence and subordination with an employer, the state, or a breadwinner. Workers are materially, not ideologically, subordinated; economic necessity and state coercion are more important than ideology. Workers do what they do because they must – not because they've been tricked into thinking it's a good idea.

This also goes some way to explaining why Marx's prediction of revolution was premature, and why workers often



PR's founding father, Edward Bernays.

eschew 'oppositional' politics. 'Workers rightly believe that opposition may lead to redundancies or closures, and that it may be impossible to get another job.' And the more intolerable the alternatives are, the worse the prospect of unemployment is, the worse pay and conditions workers will be prepared to accept – explaining the present government's determination to push through punitive benefit reform, even though unemployment is on the rise.

In short, the consciousness of the working class is best understood not in terms of ideology, but in terms of 'needs-based motivations'. By talking in terms of indoctrination, the left displays an 'insensitivity to the lived experience' of the working class.

Political conclusions

We in the Socialist Party are often accused by our opponents, and even sometimes by our supporters, of not having made any progress in our 100-year history. What the foregoing arguments should have made clear is that it is not within our power to make the kind of progress demanded of us. The working class generally is ideologically indifferent, and accepts capitalism because it must. The only thing that can disrupt this to the advantage of socialists is, says Lodziak, 'effective oppositional practices inscribed with oppositional viewpoints' – in other words, the development of the class struggle. We can contribute to the development of this struggle, and we do, but it is not within the power of a small party such as ours to determine its course. The failure of sufficiently large and powerful oppositions to arise is down not to a lack of energy or dedication on the part of socialists, nor the absence of a sufficiently clever socialist advertising campaign, but to the power of economic necessity and state coercion.

This article may seem to have argued itself into a corner. If all this is true, what can be done? The answer may not satisfy socialists who understand the urgent need for radical change, but it is inevitable all the same: we just keep struggling.

Lodziak has three other main concluding points of advice for any socialist opposition. (The commentary that follows the advice is of course ours, not Lodziak's.)

First, participation in organised politics must be made sufficiently attractive to entice people out of their privatised worlds.

This means that the

boring treadmill of reformist politics and the ridiculous sectarianism, authoritarianism and leadership-dominated activity of Leninist sects is out. Of course, the Socialist Party has not been wildly successful at attracting people, but it is a commonplace on the left that we have at least managed to be human and charming, make our meetings places of free and open discussion, and our activity the result of freely arrived at decisions and voluntary activity. Our members tend to join and remain members for life; most rival leftist outfits operate a 'revolving door' policy.

Second, 'effective opposition is, amongst other things, always an effective ideological opposition', which means engaging in a 'vigorous and continuous ideological contestation in the public sphere, not only in challenging the dominant, but also in the advocacy of oppositional alternatives'. Again, we cannot claim sufficient success in this area, but we have at least taken the challenge seriously, unlike the left generally, which is content to pander to prejudice rather than challenge it, propagate the ruling ideology rather than contest it, and mock the advocacy of alternatives as utopian. Credibility for socialism, says Lodziak, can only come from 'the relentless public display of commitment to oppositional alternatives, and from the unwillingness of agents of opposition to compromise principles'. Yet again, the Socialist Party, unlike the left, can lay claim to a proud history of doing just that.

Third, we need to demonstrate the relevance of socialism to the needs of the vast majority. Most people will not struggle or even vote for abstract things or ideas, says Lodziak, but will fight to win material benefits to improve the quality of their lives and guarantee the future of their children. This might seem to argue against the Socialist Party's case. Indeed, we are often accused by our leftwing opponents of doing nothing but try to win support for abstract ideas. This is not true: what we have tried to do is show that many of the material benefits people are fighting for are only possible of realisation in a socialist society. If what you want is a pay rise, then you can join a union. If you want to fill the lonely, empty nights, you can join an evening class or the local darts team. And so on – workers will need no advice from socialists on these counts. But what if you want a full and satisfying life for you and your children – with

continued page 22

Irish Election result: *no change*

This was an election about which set of politicians was to impose austerity. The Outs got the job.

There was a text doing the rounds in Ireland a few weeks ago which tried to capture the financial issue paralysing the country. 'American tourist goes into a hotel in a small Irish town and, requesting to view the room, leaves €100 deposit with the manger. The hotel owner runs across the road to the butchers to pay off €100 account owed, the butcher immediately goes to the pub to clear €100 bar tab, the barman goes next door to the town prostitute to pay €100 he owes her from the night before, she goes to the hotel to pay the €100 she owed in room rentals. Just as she leaves, the American tourist comes back to the reception saying he doesn't like the room and takes his €100 back. The tourist leaves town with everyone having cleared their debts'

The story illustrates nicely what socialists have always known; that the fiscal merry-go-round of capitalism is an illusion. However it is precisely that illusion that became the centre of the debate leading up to the recent general election in Ireland as the electorate became fixated by the apparent choices put before them by the main parties as to who could better manage the necessary negotiations with the EU and the IMF on the countries €85bn debt and who was best able to fill the gapping €15bn deficit in the nation's budget.

This was the first general election since the Celtic Tiger had taken its last roar, lost all its teeth, became mangy and thin and eventually lay down and died. An economy that

had enjoyed an average of 8 percent growth during the boom was found to be built on sand. After 2002 growth had been driven disproportionately by a madly over-heated property and construction sector funded by banks who believed that valuations would go up forever.

Ireland was building 75000 residential units a year, for a population of fewer than 5 million when the UK was building fewer houses than that for a population 10 times the size. We had 5-star spa Hotels opening every other day and the main cities were a forest of construction cranes. Developers were the new aristocrats, living in ostentatious luxury supported not by the proceeds of their businesses but from more and more bank borrowings. Fianna Fail (FF), the main party of government, were complicit with their ill-conceived property tax breaks, Europe's lowest corporation tax and a virtual absence of financial regulation. When the global banking crisis hit, the Irish house of cards fell quicker and harder than most. For the coalition government of Fianna Fail and their minority Green Party partner, most of 2010 was spent lurching from crisis to crisis whilst sorting out a bail out the EU and the IMF.

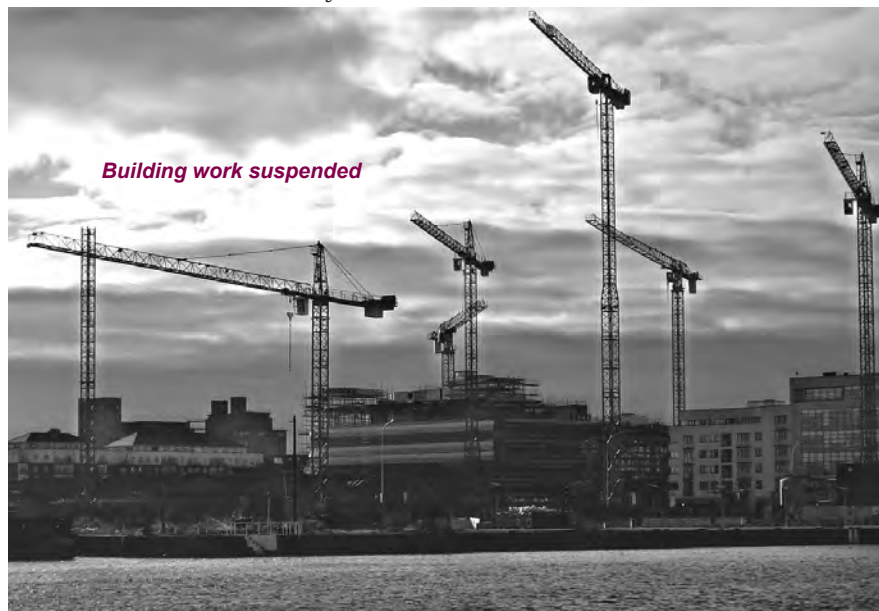
The Soldiers' Destiny

Brian Cowan, the Taoiseach saw his ruling Fianna Fail party routed. The Party which has been in power for longer than any other since the establishment of the state saw the writing on the wall. Cowan resigned as leader in the run-up to the election and in the days that followed, his Ministers and TDs

(MPs) formed a long and disreputable queue to announce that they would not be seeking re-election. They did so in the sure and certain knowledge that they were facing humiliation in the polls and so took the chance to benefit from the soon-to-be-cut severance payments to outgoing TDs, although most claimed health reasons for their decision not to stand – proof if proof was needed that this had indeed been a sick government. Their lacklustre newly-elected leader Micheal Martin bore the expression of the condemned man. His natural political arrogance however enabled him to attempt to convince the electorate that, despite the fact that he had been a long standing minister in the outgoing government, really none of the mistakes were down to him, that he had a brave new plan and the experience to deliver it. Actions though belied his words. His Party didn't even field enough candidates to form a majority administration – a first for an outgoing governing party.

All the opposition parties could smell blood. It was clear that the parties of government were going to get a hammering. The main opposition parties Fine Gael (FG), under the leadership of Enda Kenny and the Labour Party under Eamon Gilmore knew that this was their big opportunity for power and the smaller parties such as Sein Fein could see the chance of a land grab. The election was extraordinary if the result merely predictable. Not extraordinary in the usual boring predictable way that a disreputable government gets routed by the opposition, in the way Blair's New Labour did to the Tories or as was done in turn to Labour last year by the shiney posh boys of Conservative/Libdems. This was different in a number of respects.

Firstly, the outgoing Fianna Fail/Green government managed to get cross-party support for the passing of a Finance Bill in the last few days of government. The need for a quickly agreed Finance Bill was a condition of the EU/IMF bailout. That the main opposition parties were complicit in letting it get passed was a result of their desperation to grab power at any cost and knowing that any delay in the passing of the bill would only delay an election being called. In doing so they enabled a Bill which ranks amongst the most vicious attack on the poor in recent memory. The cavernous budget deficit was



to be brought under control to meet conditions imposed by Europe. The principle was that the gap would be closed by budget cuts and tax increases to the proportion of 60:40. The 60 percent that is to come from budget cuts will see swinging cuts to social benefits, health services, education and every conceivable social and cultural subsidy. The tax elements overwhelming hit the poor including the cynically named universal social charge set at 7 percent.

So any perspective party of government, in their indecent haste to get into power, in effect committed themselves to the fiscal and budgetary policies of the outgoing government.

Another extraordinary feature of the run up to the election was the level of public anger and disillusionment at party politics and the lack of belief that any of the parties provided a plausible alternative. This became reflected in the unprecedented number of independents who stood. Indeed, there was a point in the early days of campaigning that it even appeared that there may have been a coalition of independents into a brave new political party. That was not to be but it was to prove the strongest ever showing for independents, winning almost 3 times as many seats than in the last general election.

New faces, same policy

The lack of faith by the electorate in a plausible opposition was evidenced by the respective leaders. The most positive thing that the collective media were able to say of FG leader Enda Kenny after each of the televised leadership debates was that he hadn't messed up. Kenny, who is now Taoiseach, is a man untroubled by deep thought. He appeals, as does his party, to rural catholic Ireland, boasting recently that he 'ate his dinner in the middle of the day'; a nod to his farming constituents. The Labour party Leader, Eamon Gilmore, in all his pompous self importance, was a man determined to lead his party into government at any cost; principle was a small price to pay. The Labour Party knew this was their big chance but they also calculated correctly that their only real hope of achieving that, was as a minority coalition partner to the right of centre
FG party.

IRISH ELECTION RESULT

FF	FG	Lab	SF	Left	Ind	Green	Total
20	76	37	14	5	14	0	166
-57	+25	+17	+10	+5	+9	-6	166

Such a potential ethical dilemma troubled them little so, not only did they facilitate the passing of the pernicious Finance Bill but it was clear that they were having coalition negotiations with FG from the earliest days of the election.

A more principled Labour Party may have seen the obvious anger and desperation of a country which might have welcomed a more radical Labour alternative. It's not like the peril of minority coalition wasn't obvious to them. The minority Green partner in the outgoing coalition had in recent month become a national laughing stock and got their just deserts in the election in which they lost every single seat – obliterated! And Labour must also have looked across the water at the pathetic spectacle of the Liberal Democrats writing their political obituary for a term in office.

Labour's lack of edge was truly stunning. Gilmore's apparent outrage at the fiscal irresponsibility of the last government has been exposed as only skin deep. Labour's election stance was different by imperceptible degrees. They made major principles out of the smallest detail such as the timeframe over which the deficit was to be managed, the proportionality of cuts versus tax increases or the extent of public sector reform. What they demonstrated was that their intent, just like FF and FG, was to run the system in the interest of the capitalist class. No proposal on a wealth tax or an immediate cessation of the tax breaks for the wealthy. Indeed it is remarkable that not one party, let alone Labour, proposed an increase in the disproportionately low Corporation Tax in Ireland. At 12.5 percent it is significantly below the rest of Europe (UK 21-28 percent) and is the principle driver of foreign direct investment into the country. Even a small increase in that tax would make a significant contribution to the deficit but all of the parties bought into the threats of the business community of a mass exodus of overseas investment. It is an empty threat and that all of the parties bought it exposes both their spineless self interest and basic economic ignorance. The idea that Google, Intel, HP et al would unwind €100s million of investment and infrastructure to avoid a few percent of increase is an empty threat.

Neither has either the main opposition parties proposed any risk to the International Bond Holders who funded the Irish Banks in their drunken gorge

fest. When the Irish government bailed out these criminally irresponsible banks, it made sure there was fair play in protecting not just the life savings of Mr and Mrs Murphy but also the bond investments of international capital. That commitment to these wealthy hedge funds and their like is to be protected in the next government paid for by the Irish people through savage cuts.

Themselves alone

The only sizable party which tried to articulate anything resembling an alternate voice was the reformed terrorists of Sinn Fein (SF). It was however a very feeble attempt at being radical as their illiteracy in even bourgeois economics was exposed. Their leader Gerry Adams, who gave up his UK parliamentary seat to stand in the republican heartland of Co Louth, showed just how much of a one issue politician he is, as he struggled with the basics of economics, social policy and even cultural life South of the border. His incredulous continued denial of having been a former member of the IRA did not trouble his hard-line supporters who voted him in. It has however fastened his reputation as a fraud.

Five "far left" TDs were elected under the umbrella of the United Left Alliance, an election pact between Irish sections of Militant and the SWP. It will be instructive to see whether or not they use their seats to act as a megaphone for socialism or simply to press for reforms (actually, we know the answer). The others are a complete rag bag ranging from right wing euro-sceptics to traditional rural conservatives who solely deliver 'favours' to their constituents in the expectation of being re-elected.

The result has been quite extraordinary as shown (see chart). The effect however will prove to be very much less extraordinary.

FG and Labour spent 10 days in talks agreeing a coalition and programme for government. The media have welcomed this programme uncritically ignoring the fact that it reflects for the most part the conditions as imposed by the IMF and the terms of the Finance Bill, passed by the outgoing government.

What is a cast iron certainty is the Irish working class face many years of the most severe punishment for the unbridled free market sins of capitalism. What is also certain is that the new government will pay the price of taking on the job as wiping boy for the system.

BRIAN MONTAGUE

Seeing the trees and the wood

A tree surgeon reflects on why no business can give due regard to the needs of workers and the environment

I am, I suppose, a businessman; not, I should say, from choice but more from the need to follow a prescribed and necessary course; necessary, because, were one not to, inevitably the business would fail and fall by the wayside. I say businessman, now, but thirty years ago I would have called myself a 'tree surgeon', or 'woodman' without the slightest feeling of inadequacy or embarrassment. Admittedly the term 'tree surgeon' does sound rather more grand than the reality of the work, pruning, cutting and working with trees, and certainly does not have the prerequisite of six years' intensive study at one of the country's finest universities. Nevertheless a tree surgeon is what I was and work with trees is what I did.

I have often thought back and wondered why I found myself in this industry. The reasons, actually, are quite simple. I loved working outdoors and with my hands; I loved practical problem solving, such as one comes across when dismantling a large tree using ropes in a confined space or in a dangerous condition; I love trees and nature and moreover I enjoyed the work; so much so that I looked forward to the day's work with interest and enthusiasm. Now, over thirty years on, I have what most people would view as, a successful business; it employs twenty-three people and is well respected in its field – a success story, some might say. So why do I feel unhappy about the place I find myself and why do I find myself questioning the very thing that has enabled me to live in some comfort and pursue my interests and generally enjoy life? The reasons are many but maybe I should start by returning to the beginning and explaining how the business evolved and how it became more and more apparent to me that to operate a business within the system, under which we are all obliged to work and function, could not be done in a way that is commensurate with good practice with regard to people and the environment.

After thirty five years of running a tree business, I think I have a reasonable idea of what I am talking about with regard to the needs and workings of the industry that purports to care for trees in the environment. I also hope that the illustrations below of how my business; although, in reality it could be any business, is quite simply always on a collision course with all that should be right and proper in the pursuit of 'care of trees'.

The beginning

This is a job that cannot be done alone, one needs to climb the tree and be assisted by a colleague on the ground who helps with the roping and clearing of the cut branches and timber. I used to work with a young chap and would charge the client exactly what I paid him, in those days about £20 per day. It was soon pointed out by my accountant that this would not do; I needed to charge him out at at least three times what he was paid thereby making a profit on his labour.

Therein lay the first step that formed the uneasy gap in what had been a breezy, happy relationship. Now, all these years on, the gap has widened and the company

(me) has very much become 'the employer', always under pressure to hold down wages or cut corners to maximise profit. I am not saying we treat staff badly or that our work is shoddy, but there is no doubt about it the pressure and conflict are always there.

The 'care of trees'

This is a term used by most of us in the industry to describe our work. It implies that the work we do is good for trees, makes them 'better', is necessary for their well-being and without which they would not survive. The reality of the situation is quite different; 95 percent of the work we do is entirely unnecessary and probably in the majority of cases actually harms the tree. So, what do we do and why do we do it?

Most of our work involves removal of parts or all of the tree or trees. This is usually to solve a perceived problem such as loss of light, leaves falling into gutters or to make space for some form of development. In the vast majority of these cases if we are to abide by scientific recommendations with regard to correct pruning times – which often dictate that work is undertaken over many years to allow the tree to recover from the pruning work – we simply would not get the job, as people will almost always be drawn to the cheapest option, that is, to do the work in one visit thus incurring the least possible expense. As the business is driven by the need to make profit there is no means by which we can operate in the interests of the tree.

Furthermore, all of the jobs we undertake involve an estimator visiting the client to assess the job and provide a quotation. Often the client will be seeking three or more estimates for the work, which may only involve the pruning of a single apple tree, so, when analysed, a small job necessitates at least three people travelling anything up to thirty miles, sometimes more, vast amounts of paperwork and a team travelling in heavy diesel vehicles to do what less than fifty years ago would have been undertaken by a local woodman or even by the owner themselves, all this just for the cheapest price; The cost to the environment speaks for itself.

Although for the owners of trees the work undertaken, either at their request or on the recommendation of the tree surgeon, might seem necessary, the pressure and temptation for the estimator, having driven to the site and needing to 'get the work in' is undoubtedly to find work even if it is not needed either by the client or the tree. I am of no doubt that companies are constantly



recommending unnecessary and potentially damaging work on trees.

Treework in relation to the environment

I have mentioned the need for long and pointless journeys above but let me mention all the other facets of our work that impact detrimentally on the environment. Ideally, we would use hand tools, such as cross cut saws and axes to cut timber and natural materials for our ropes, clothing and other essentials but, as we are driven by the need to make a profit, we need to get a job done quickly, hence the need for the fast chainsaw – itself, a very dangerous tool. A recent research paper has found that a single hour's use of a medium sized chainsaw is as damaging to the environment, in terms of emissions, as driving a small saloon car for over two thousand kilometres. The need for speed when undertaking potentially hazardous work in itself creates a greater likelihood of staff having accidents or, through pressure of time, not working to a high standard; the net result of this is a reduction in job satisfaction and self worth. It seems strange to me that we live in a climate of health and safety and yet something as obvious as this as the reason accidents happen completely escapes the powers that be.

Although when one thinks of it when has the health of a working person ever been more important than the bottom line?

Working conditions

The heavy snow in December meant that it was impossible to carry out most of the work we normally do. Suddenly the staff became very worried that they would not be paid if they could not work and the brutal reality was, that, no they wouldn't.

We reached an agreement in the end which meant that they could choose to take unpaid leave or holidays but the reality of the situation is, that the snow was not their fault and their way of life and plans were compromised. You may ask why were they not paid? The answer is that they were for a brief period but, under the present system, more than a few days would not have been possible as the company would go out of business and then they would not have a job at all. It, like all wage problems, leaves you with a bad taste in your mouth and creates all the usual bad feeling and misery.

We are expected, naturally to provide all workers with serviceable and safe tools and equipment to work with. I will say no more other than the cost of such equipment is a major consideration when the need arises to buy or replace such items. We do our best but I have heard of another company who, to save costs, did not service a wood chipper and it came loose from the vehicle which was towing it and crashed into an oncoming car, severing the woman driver's arm. There are many more similar stories in this and other industries that clearly indicate that the bottom line comes before safety.

I mentioned above that our company employs twenty-three people. Of those, six are wholly involved with finance such as estimating, typing quotations, bookkeeping, invoicing and purchasing. Thus, over thirty percent of staff carrying

out work that in a society without money would equate to free time. I have not included our accountant's time or the time saved by the workers who, as part of their work, earn the money to pay for the 'non workers'.

Treework in a socialist society

Working with trees will always, by its nature involve hard physical work but then, as I have already said, the work is enjoyable and rewarding especially when planting trees for the future or solving a problem for someone not to mention the exercise and fresh air (when not using a chainsaw!). Much of the work we do now would be undertaken with no need to rush and always with the highest safety precautions in place. Work would, undoubtedly be very local and without the need for long journeys. When bad weather prevented work, workers will not need to worry that they will lose out; they could simply do the job another time and use the opportunity to relax or pursue another activity.

Work carried out on trees will be undertaken in a way that is sympathetic to the environment and the general health and well-being of people and in a manner that avoids harm to the tree. Tools would be made to last and work practices would as far as is practically possible, be in harmony with the environment. But, above all, work would, once again, be a pleasure, with everybody equal and with the joint aim and shared pleasure of producing work at a craftsman level unfettered by bosses demanding unrealistic targets and destroying the potential for the satisfaction that comes from doing a job well. Wages would be non-existent; but then, who would worry as everybody would have all they needed to live a happy and fulfilled life.

Working on that problem tree would, once more, be the pleasurable experience it was when I first started 35 years ago...

A final thought

I have sat high up in the branches of trees that are hundreds of years old; such trees are often seen as a nuisance when the aphids that suck on their leaves secrete honeydew on a smart car below or drop leaves that blow around the garden. Such trees began their lives before capitalism, before the dawn of the motorcar or the industrial revolution; If they could impart knowledge from within their deepest heartwood, or tell of all that they have seen and learnt since the day when the first leaf emerged from the rich soil, what would they say? What would they tell us; us who cut them to pieces with power saws fuelled by the decayed remains of their long dead relatives; whose activities are destroying countless millions of their cousins in the Amazon and Malaysia; who are poisoning the very air that they breathe... that all is well?

Trees grow slowly, time has an entirely different meaning to them; they do not feel the need to work quicker for more profit. They lay down each year's wood, their buds swell and the leaves burst forth and finally sail down to feed the soil below; they watch and see all around them.

Will a young tree growing today see the end of this destructive society and some time in the future provide shade for a person who with much leisure time on his hands, sits with his back resting against the gnarled trunk and looking up through the beautiful canopy of green thinks to himself "How could we have once lived like that?"

GLENN MORRIS

Letters continued

Trade Unions and Socialism

Dear Editors

After reading a number of SPGB statements on the unions, among them the SPGB Executive Committee's appeal to trade unionists (*Socialist Standard*, September 2009), I wonder if you could devote some space to further explaining your position on the role of unions in the revolutionary process.

I am prompted to raise this question by certain things I have read in Marx on the same question, among others the statement in *Value, Price and Profit*, where he speaks of the unions "using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system". Similarly with Marx's contention that "only the trade unions are thus able to represent a real working-class party, and to form a bulwark against the power of capital".

The second statement, with its emphasis on "only the trade unions", is taken from Marx's 1869 interview with the German trade unionist Hamann, as quoted by Karl Kautsky in his 1909 article, "Sects or Class Parties", which is posted to the Marxist Internet Archive. Kautsky also said there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Marx's statement to Hamann. I also know the importance Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party in America attach to it. (See, for example, De Leon's articles, "A Brace of Specimens, Even 'Neater'" and "With Marx for Text", both of which are posted to the Daniel De Leon Internet Archive.)

By "union" you will understand that I do not infer today's unions, which are as unfit on the economic field as your country's Labor Party is on the political, but unionism as Marx envisioned a union aiming at "abolition of the wages system." Frankly, I cannot reconcile my understanding of the SPGB's position on this question with these statements from Marx, and would like to see a *Socialist Standard* article devoted to clarifying the SPGB's position on the union question and how it relates to the Marx passages cited here.

BERNARD BORTNICK (SLP Member),
Dallas, Texas.

Reply:

As can be seen from the quote in Kautsky's article Marx was talking about the existing, non-revolutionary unions:

"The trade unions should never be affiliated with or made dependent upon a political society if they are to fulfil the object for which they were formed. If this happens it means their death blow. The trade unions are the schools for Socialism, the workers are there educated up to Socialism by means of the incessant struggle against capitalism which is being carried on before their eyes. All political parties, be they what they may, can hold sway over the mass of the workers for only a time: the trade unions, on the other hand, capture them permanently; only the trade unions are thus able to represent a real working-class party, and to form a bulwark against the power of capital. The greater mass of the workers conceive the necessity of bettering their material position whatever political party they may belong to. Once the material position of the worker has improved, he can then devote himself to the better education of his children; his wife and children need not go to the factory, and he himself can pay some attention to his own mental education, he can the better see to his physique. He becomes a Socialist without knowing it." (Translation by Zelda Kahan for the July 1909 issue of the *Social Democrat*, theoretical journal of the SDF),

We can agree with Kautsky that there is no reason to suppose that Marx did not say something like this, as it conforms to his strategy of the time of working within the International Working Men's Association to encourage a trade union consciousness amongst workers to develop into a socialist political consciousness. His advice to the existing unions to organise workers irrespective of their political opinions and to avoid being linked to a political party is sound (it is our view too). What he says about unions being the only real defence workers have under capitalism against "the power of capital" is also true.

We cannot see that this passage can be interpreted as Marx advocating a syndicalist approach. If it wasn't for his other writings of the period urging workers and their unions to aim also at the abolition of the wages system he might rather be thought to be advocating here a trade-union based party like the Labour Party in Britain was at the

beginning.

In any case, events did not confirm the optimistic view Marx expressed here that the trade unions would be "schools for Socialism". Kautsky correctly makes the point about this that England showed that the existence of trade unions "alone is insufficient to convert the worker to Socialism 'without him knowing it'; that they do not necessarily bring Socialist conviction home to the worker because of 'the incessant struggle against capitalism which is being carried on before their eyes'. Only a scrap of this struggle is really being pursued daily, and this scrap is not even always sufficient to indicate the real meaning of the whole struggle." Hence the need for a socialist organisation to point out that meaning.

But this is not a reason for socialists to oppose the existing unions. They are organisations that can, in a limited way, defend the wages and working conditions of their members. That is why our members join them and work with their fellow workers to get what can be got out of employers. Inside them, we advocate a class approach, internal democracy, non-affiliation to a political party (our members refuse to pay the levy to the Labour Party) while of course also arguing that the only framework within which the problems facing workers can be lastingly solved is socialism and the abolition of the wages system.

We have never seen the point of trying to organise a socialist or revolutionary union to rival the existing unions. Since the vast majority of workers today are non-socialists such a union would be small and ineffective. The non-revolutionary position of the existing unions ("a fair day's work for a fair day's pay") is a reflection, not the cause, of the non-revolutionary ideas of their members. However, when more and more workers come to be socialists the unions will be transformed.

In fact, we envisage workers, once they have become socialist, organising both politically and economically to bring in socialism. Politically to wrest political control from the parties of capitalism. Economically, to keep production going during and immediately after the changeover from capitalism to socialism. We don't envisage the socialist revolution being purely electoral and parliamentary (if that's what you were thinking). – Editors.



Royal Wedding

SCIENTISTS HAVE almost succeeded in crossing an endangered inbred species with a specimen from the related species homo-partius-animalis. The splicing of Prince William of Diana, KFC with the Right Ordinary Kate Middlebrow will take place under closed circuit conditions in front of 1900 specially

invited observers, with appropriate ambient vibrations provided by a bank of sterilised musical 'pop' androids, before the couple retire into a private mansion to bonk out what is hoped will be the next generation of media darlings. "It's pretty crucial they get this right", said one mating specialist, "as results have been so disappointing for the last three generations. There's a real danger the line may go extinct, or gaga, and Britain could end up being a garden-variety republic like France."

Experts say that it is quite hard to train royal breeds as they have a tendency to run off at the mouth and look stupid in front of cameras, or else punch the people holding the cameras. They have to be kept on a severely rich diet and protected from work and other hereditary allergies while at the same time being represented as 'normal' people who 'do things'. They are secluded from prying spotters yet must remain visible enough so that people can remember who they are. They are surrounded by obsequious flunkies and then told that they are 'serving the nation'. They must be prevented from expressing opinions and embarrassing themselves in public, since like many celebrities they tend to believe that because everyone is looking at them they must be clever people with something to say. Finally they must at all times profess their loyalty and devotion to a political system which regards them as anachronistic nobodies who should by all historical logic and precedent have long since been shot in a cellar. Not surprisingly these restrictive and paradoxical conditions often lead to strange and delusional behaviour, especially in the elder males. Many of them tend to speak in a strangulated squeak from permanently contracted sphincters, a conditioned reflex learned from their public school upbringing. The females often go off the rails entirely and have to call in Lord Max of Hastings to conduct damage limitation.

For the sartorially curious, Kate Middleroad will be wearing a dress worth several African dictators. William's younger brother and best man will turn up in a Nazi uniform for a bit of a lark and a nod to their forebears. Charles will be dressed as a cactus.

Wills, as the adoring public love to call him according to the *Daily Mail*, saw active service behind the lines of bodyguards and became a highly trained helicopter pilot, a fact that may come in useful if ever the republicans stage a coup and the Royal Benefit-Scroungers need to do a swift bunk to Sweden. He is descended from many notable English monarchs including Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Ivor the Cutler and Vlad the Impaler. However, anti-royal spoilsports may retort that this pedigree is genetically spurious, since like all humans Willy probably shares more genes with the Neanderthals than he does with his great-great-grandfather.

Wills gets given a dukedom as a wedding present, which lasts a bit longer than a set of towels from BHS. Meanwhile we get a day off, which lasts a day. But hey, let's not be churlish. It's a bit of a show, a bit of pomp, a bit of nonsense our descendants will scratch their heads over. And it's no worse than the X-Factor.

HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE! (Trans: if you don't like it, f**k you!)

PJS



Brown re-invents the wheel

GORDON BROWN has written a book. Not gossip about what went on between him and Tony Blair but about the Crash of 2008 and what he thinks should be done to avoid another one. Called *Beyond the Crash*, the subtitle of the first part could well have been "How I saved the world from financial meltdown."

He writes that by 26-27 September "the choice was clear: either we had to step in and accept all the associated risks, or simply leave the free-market system to collapse":

"We were facing a situation that risked becoming worse than 1929. No one trusted anyone in the banking system, and people were predicting not a recession but a depression. People were panicking, asking which would be the next bank to collapse. The financial system was looking over an abyss."

Brown puffs himself for discovering that the way to end a financial panic in which banks and other financial institutions are afraid to lend to each other is for the government to make more money available. As if governments hadn't done this in the past, even in Marx's day.

In Volume III of *Capital*, Marx quoted extensively from the parliamentary reports into the financial panics which occurred in 1847 and 1857. This from the Report on the Commercial Distress, 1847-8:

"[T]he bankers and others finding that they would not rely with the same degree of confidence that they had previously done upon turning their bills and other money securities into bank-notes, for the purpose of meeting their engagements, still further curtailed their facilities, and in many cases refused them altogether; they locked up their bank-notes, in many instances to meet their own engagements; they were afraid of parting with them... The alarm and confusion were increased daily; and unless Lord John Russell...had issued the letter to the Bank...universal bankruptcy would have been the issue."

Lord John Russell was the Prime Minister and his letter to the Bank of England suspended the Bank Charter Act of 1844. Engels explained in a footnote what this meant:

"The suspension of the Bank Act of 1844 permits the Bank to issue any quantity of bank-notes regardless of the gold reserve backing in its possession; thus, to create an arbitrary quantity of fictitious paper money-capital, and to use it for the purpose of making loans to banks, exchange brokers, and through them to commerce."

Marx wrote of "a point where either the entire industrial world must go to pieces, or else the Bank Act", and went on:

"Both on October 25, 1847, and on November 12, 1857, the crisis reached such a point; the government then lifted the restriction for the Bank in issuing notes by suspending the Act of 1844, and this sufficed in both cases to overcome the crisis."

So Brown did nothing extraordinary. He merely did what the capitalist class expect their government to do when there's a financial panic that threatens to seize up commerce and production – make more money available to the banks. As in similar circumstances in the past, this stopped the immediate financial panic. But it didn't stop the coming slump, as GNP fell from that quarter on and is nowhere near its pre-crisis level even today.

Lord John Russell was more modest. He didn't write a book about how in 1847 he had saved the world from universal bankruptcy.

Pity about the politics

Hobsbawm: History and Politics. Gregory Elliott, Pluto Press, 2010.



Once upon a time, the teaching of history in Britain was a fantasy world in which the emphasis was on the doings of kings and queens, statesmen and Prime Ministers, the role of Empire and 'facts' to be

learned by rote. About 60 years ago this began to change and to some extent this can be attributed to the thinking of Karl Marx and his insistence that history had to be understood in its material contexts – that is, how wealth was produced, the parts played by social classes and the technology they used.

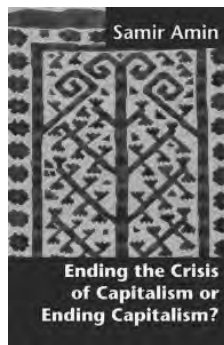
E.J. Hobsbawm along with other notable historians of this period such as E.P. Thompson, Christopher Hill and Rodney Hilton produced works informed by Marx's theory of history. Hobsbawm gained critical and commercial success with *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848*, (1962), *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (1975), *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (1987) and *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (1994). These and other works of Hobsbawm have been reprinted many times and have gained him a reputation as probably Britain's best known historian and Marxist.

However, when it comes to Hobsbawm's politics a very different picture emerges. Hobsbawm, Thompson, Hill and Hilton were at one time all members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). But whereas Thompson, Hill, Hilton and many others saw the error of their ways – especially after the suppression of the uprising in Hungary by Russian military in 1956 – and resigned, Hobsbawm remained in the CPGB until its dissolution in 1991. As a cheerleader for the CPGB and the Russian empire, Hobsbawm defended the leading role of the party advocated by Lenin, and dismissed the view that the emancipation of the working class had to be the work of the working class itself – the cornerstone of any Marxian politics. Even now, aged 93, he is still unapologetic about his political beliefs. Hobsbawm the historian had some interesting things to say, but his politics remain anti-Marxist.

Lew

World capitalism

Ending the Crisis of Capitalism or Ending Capitalism? Samir Amin. Pambazuka Press. 2011



Samir Amin was one of the pioneers of "dependency theory" in the 1970s.

Its exponents regarded capitalism as a single world system divided into a centre which exploited the "periphery". They challenged the conventional view, held also by those Amin here calls "historical Marxists" (which would include us), that the sort of capitalism that exists at the centre could develop in the periphery. This was impossible, they claimed, as, to continue to exist, the centre needed a dependant periphery to exploit for what Amin calls "monopoly rent" (and Lenin called "super-profits").

This led Amin to Maoism and its modification of the famous slogan at the end of the Communist Manifesto into "Workers and Oppressed Peoples of All Lands Unite". He still stands by this slogan and is still sympathetic to Maoism.

In this book he argues that capitalism developed in the centre by dispossessing those who worked on the land. In the 19th century these dispossessed were able to emigrate, in particular to the US where capital accumulation in search of labour-power was expanding. Capitalism, he says, is still developing by dispossessing the peasantry, this time in the South, but this time there is nowhere for the dispossessed to migrate to. So, they are condemned to vegetate in dire poverty. Pauperisation is still inherent in capitalist development.

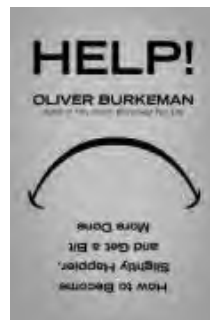
He sees world socialism as the only way out but envisages it as coming into being just as capitalism did over centuries, with the countries of the South breaking the link to the centre (now merged into a single imperialism of the US, Europe and Japan which he calls the "Triad") and developing on a non-capitalist basis.

While we do not share this perspective (there can be no non-capitalist development within world capitalism), or the view that the centre depends on "monopoly rent" from the South (they are just ordinary profits) we can credit the

dependency theorists with bringing out the fact that capitalism is a single world system, not just a collection of national capitalisms, real or potential.
ALB

Help yourselves

Help! Oliver Burkeman. Canonsgate. £12.99



Subtitled 'How to Become Slightly Happier and Get A Bit More Done' this is a well written and amusing romp through one of capitalism's biggest growth industries: self help books and

ideas. Readers of *The Guardian* will know Burkeman as the author of the ironically titled 'This Column Will Change Your Life' feature, and here he tackles everything from numerology to leadership systems and Scientology.

Burkeman is an expert spotter of flummery and exaggeration and the world of self-help and personal growth literature has more than its fair share of both:

"If you want to get really stressed out...you could do worse than read *Change Your Life in 30 Days*, a bestselling book by the American TV life coach Rhonda Britten... [but] 30 days looks relaxed compared to *Change Almost Anything in 21 Days*, *Change Your Life in 7 Days*, *Shape Shifter: Transform Your Life in One Day*, and my favourite, *Transform Your Life in 90 Minutes*... As a sucker for quick fixes, it took me a long time to realise the problem. Deadlines induce stress and worry."

In truth, a book knocking some of the worst excesses of this genre is easy enough to concoct, but Burkeman has also accessed a good deal of the research to make a case for what does work (usually with modest effect) compared with what manifestly doesn't. Among the interesting findings are that the act of giving has more lasting, positive psychological effects than receiving, about why Sunday is the most depressing day of the week, and of the reasons why having experiences tends to be more fulfilling than acquiring possessions.

Burkeman is clear that one of the problems with the self-help

continued page 22

The Company Men



This was at first a personal matter for writer and director, John Wells. Having seen his brother-in-law, an electrical engineer, struggle after being laid-off, the plot follows the misfortunes of three executives employed at G.T.X. a major ship-building company, whose head honcho, Jim, played by Craig T. Nelson, made \$22 million bucks in bonus payments the previous year. "We work for the stockholders now," Jim reminds his underlings as he prepares to fire thousands of workers.

Tommy Lee Jones is Gene, Jim's old college room mate who helped him build the company up from scratch. Gene thinks of G.T.X.'s employees as if they were family and it hurts him deeply when he's required to inform "relatives" their services are no longer required. In an early scene, Jim's wife requests the use of the company jet, a luxury she won't enjoy for much longer, to go from Boston to Palm Springs to get in some shopping.

Most of the movie deals with the struggle of 37-year-old hot shot salesman, Bobby Walker (Ben Affleck). At first Bobby cannot come to terms with being unemployed, whereas his wife, Maggie

(Rosemarie De Witt) suggests selling the Porsche and the house. Bobby is convinced he'll soon find employment at his old salary of \$120 grand a year, not realising there are few such jobs available and the competition for them is ferocious.

We watch Bobby's gradual disillusionment; being expelled from the country club because he can't afford the fees, watching the new owner drive off his Porsche and being forced to live with his parents. In desperation, he accepts a job in construction, working for his brother-in-law, Jack (Kevin Costner), who delights in Bobby's downfall and lets him know it.

There is a surreal scene when Bobby attends a placement workshop, which Wells himself did. The manager has a roomful of unemployed constantly reciting, "I will win because I have faith, courage and enthusiasm." When Wells asked the manager if she was embarrassed, she replied, "I'm dealing with people who feel like they've been in a car accident."

The finest acting is by Chris Cooper as Phil, a sixty year-old who worked his way up from a welder to the number three man at G.T.X. Cooper takes the viewer right into the heart of a man tortured by insecurity, fear and anxiety. Phil is bewildered by the new and real world he finds himself in. One job placement officer advises him to quit smoking, on the premise that, "The employers don't want a guy with health problems, it will push up the insurance." When applying for an international sales position he finds how age goes against one; "It's a demanding job, I wouldn't offer it to anyone older than thirty," the boss tells him.

Though the acting, direction and dia-

logue are good and the movie absorbing, it doesn't tell the viewer anything new. By now most unemployed labourers, truck drivers and factory workers, are aware that getting the axe isn't any easier for the middle-of-the-road managers than it is for them. Whatever bitterness the ex-exec's feel is directed primarily at G.T.X. and a little at America itself. Nowhere is there any suggestion there is something fundamentally wrong with capitalism.

A reviewer should not give the ending away, so suffice it to say, it's capitalist propaganda at its most desperate. *Company Men* is just another movie that tells its audience, "There's nothing terrible about the economic system we live under. So what if times are sometimes hard, with faith courage and enthusiasm, things will get better." In that respect, perhaps the most significant comment is when Bobby glares at the personnel manager, who has delivered the bad news and uses the well-known and delightful, "P.O." expression. What would be more delightful is when a Socialist majority says that proverbially to capitalism.

Steve Shannon

WSM FORUM

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

Join the forum via www.worldsocialism.org



Cabarets in the lunch hour

SITTING DOWN to watch *The British At Work* (BBC2), you soon realise that this documentary series has been beamed in from a parallel universe.

The first hint that it doesn't relate to our world comes in presenter Kirsty Young's preamble. She says "chances are that most of you ... will firmly believe that you, like me, have spent the day doing a job you enjoy. ... And I'm pretty sure you feel that you're part of a workforce where everyone's treated with respect". In Young's world, anyone can stride confidently around London, empowered and fulfilled.

But working life wasn't always like this, even in the perfect society where Young lives. The first episode covers employment trends between 1945 and 1964, when this other universe was black-and-white, all working men wore cloth caps and all the women had their bottoms pinched. The programme tells us how sexism and racism were problems caused by the ignorance of these workers alone. And it was their backward and pessimistic outlooks which led to laziness and inefficiency. The unions only made things worse by focusing solely on pedantically following every rule about demarcation to the

letter. Before these workers were saved by health and safety legislation, they actually worked in places harmful to their wellbeing. However, the occasional workplace death could be excused because the bosses looked after their staff, with yearly outings to the seaside and cabarets in the lunch hour.

So, although this parallel universe has some superficial similarities, its history isn't quite the same as ours. And some concepts and words have different meanings there to what we would recognise. In Young's world, 'the working class' just means manual labourers, preferably with a funny accent and fusty clothes. 'The bosses' is a more vague term, meaning both capitalists (who always wore top hats) and the workers in bowler hats we would call managers. The society described by Young doesn't seem to have a capitalist class at all now, since top hats went out of fashion.

The BBC should be applauded for having the technology to send its film crews to this other universe. Maybe they are there most of the time, as programmes like *South Riding* and *Silk* also seem to be set in places with different rules about how workplaces function. The traditionally London-centric BBC has already relocated some studios to Cardiff, and is planning to move much of its administration to Manchester. Perhaps its programme producers are now based the other side of a wormhole?

Mike Foster

Continued from page 13

meaningful and enjoyable work, plenty of free time to spend with your family, friends and loved ones, and to pursue your interests and passions, a life free of stress and anxiety and boredom (if you're lucky), and of extreme poverty and violence and war and environmental catastrophe (if you're not)? In that case, you will have to think carefully about what socialists say. What we say is that this is a laudable aim – indeed, our rightful inheritance as human beings – but is impossible to achieve under capitalism.

This is clearly a difficult argument to make, especially to 'ideologically indifferent' workers. But we live in interesting times – capitalist crisis is to a large extent making our argument for us, and making it more strongly and reaching more people than we have ever been able to. As the foregoing arguments should have made clear, crisis can have the effect of making workers feel even more insecure and therefore even less likely to become socialist. But it also calls into question the viability of the system, and makes it more obvious than ever that it cannot satisfy our needs as human beings. This crisis has a dual potential: it makes aspects of the socialist case for us, even as it threatens to drive the working class further into the welcoming arms of capitalist domination and exploitation. Which way it goes is down at least in part to what socialists and workers think and do over the next decade. Our work as socialists is therefore more urgent than ever

STUART WATKINS

Book Reviews continued

approach is that it systematically over-estimates individual willpower and under-estimates environmental factors in making us what we are. His book is unlikely to fundamentally change many lives (and thankfully doesn't promise to) but it manages to be alternately amusing and sobering about what is possible and impossible within the confines of the society we live in.

DAP



Picture Credits

Cover: Gaddafi - U.S. Federal Government. Prisoner - U.S. Federal Government. Poker chips - © 2007 Logan Ingalls Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic.
p4: Chimpanzee typing, New York Zoological Society, 1907, Public Domain
p6: Floating house, Sendai, March 14 2011, Katrina Menchaca, Public Domain
p9: Prisoner - U.S. State Legislature
p12: 'Islands of Consciousness' - © 2005 David R. Ingham Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0.
p13: Edward Bernays - Public Domain.
p14: Cranes over Dublin, Jnestorius, 2008, Public Domain
p16: Tree surgeon photo, Andrew Tallow, 2007, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.
p19: Wills & Kate cup, Zazzle.co.uk
p20: Hobsbawm: *History and Politics* - www.scifind.co.uk. *Ending the Crisis of Capitalism or Ending Capitalism?* - www.amazon.ca. *Help!* - http://www.play.com
p21: *The Company Men* - filmofilia.com
p24: Calcutta rickshaw, 2007, Public Domain

Meetings

East Anglia

Saturday, 9 April

12noon: informal chat / branch business

1pm - 2pm: meal

2pm - 4pm: discussion of conference agenda.

Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road
Norwich NR1 4HY

(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar.)

All welcome.

Edinburgh and Glasgow

Day School

Saturday 14 May 1pm to 5pm

'A SOCIETY IN CRISIS'

The Middle East Powder Keg: Speaker
Gwynn Thomas (South London)

The Rise of Chinese Capitalism: Speaker
Paul Bennett (Manchester)

Has Capitalism a Future? Speaker John
Cumming (Glasgow)

Admission free with light refreshments
served.

Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill
Road, Glasgow G20 7YE.

Annual Conference

Good Friday 22 April 10.30 to 5.30pm

Easter Saturday 23 April 10.30 to 5pm

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham
High St, London SW4 7UN

Visitors welcome.

For full details of all our meetings and

events see our **Meetup** site:

<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Chips with Everything

WHERE THERE is gambling, there is likely to be corruption or cheating, and where there is sport there is likely to be gambling. From betting on prize fights and horse-racing sweepstakes to football pools and the current enormous betting industry, sport and gambling have always been closely allied. But recent complaints and sporting scandals surrounding corruption allegedly caused by gambling have moved to a new level.

Over the decades there have been a number of celebrated betting scandals. In 1919, players in the Chicago White Sox team threw the baseball World Series, so some gamblers could make a fortune betting on their opponents; as a result, eight players were banned for life. In a scandal in the Football League in 1962, three players were imprisoned and banned after betting on their team to lose a match; as one of them, Peter Swan, said, 'Where there's money there will always be a fiddle.' In each case the players benefitted relatively little but paid a big price.

More recently, three Pakistan cricketers have been banned for fixing a Test match against England. They did not conspire to lose but, it's alleged, to do things such as bowl no-balls at particular points, since that's the kind of specific event that you can now bet on. They are facing criminal charges too.

The International Olympic Committee is setting up a taskforce to combat not just match-fixing but also illegal betting, an industry worth several hundred billion pounds. Jacques Rogge, IOC President, has said that 'illegal betting...threatens the credibility of sport'. But the credibility and reputation of professional sport are already undermined, from horse doping to fixed boxing matches to dubious games of snooker or cricket. Swan, it seems, had it half-right: the profit motive leads to fiddles and cheating, where the swindled punters or the corrupted athletes are the real losers.

PB



Jomo Kenyatta

SIR PATRICK Renson, the Governor of Kenya, recently refused to release Jomo Kenyatta and gave two reasons for his decision. They were:

"The political campaign for Kenyatta's release, which has roused many emotions and which has not allowed divisions and personal fears a natural atmosphere in which to diminish."

Kenyatta's refusal to 'make any statement or reveal his thinking about the great issues which Kenya is facing,' in spite of the fact that six Ministers, including three Africans, had visited him in August'..."

Dictators have often put people in jail, or kept them in exile, because they have "made statements" or "revealed their thinking" about public issues; this must be the first time a political leader has been kept in exile because he refused to take up a political stand

The Socialist position is straightforward. We are opposed to any attack on democratic freedoms, whether it is jailing for political reasons, restrictions on the right to vote, or any other weapon in the colonialists' armoury. But we are not blind to the real nature of the struggle in Kenya, it is the old struggle between land and capital. It is the old struggle between capitalists, whether they are those who hope to establish full-scale industrial capitalism in Kenya, or those who have already established it in Great Britain. We welcome any extension of democracy in Kenya which this struggle between two rival propertied classes has produced or will produce. But we know that democracy is never safe in a capitalist society. That has been seen in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Czechoslovakia and the rest. Only in a Socialist society will democracy be safe from overthrow.

(from 'The Passing Show', *Socialist Standard*, April 1961)

FREE

3-month trial subscription offer to the *Socialist Standard*



For more details about The Socialist Party, or to request a free 3-month subscription to the *Socialist Standard* please complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**

Please send me an info pack

Please send me a free 3-month subscription to the *Socialist Standard*, journal of The Socialist Party.

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....



Voice from the Back

A Class Divided Society

When socialists describe capitalism as a class divided society some of capitalism's supporters dispute this claim, but here is one dyed-in-the wool supporter of capitalism who seems to be agreeing with us. "Britain is dividing into 'two nations'," Iain Duncan Smith warns today, as he identifies a growing underclass for whom life is comparable to the Third World and who can expect to die in their fifties. ... Speaking just days after publishing his Welfare Reform Bill with radical measures to drive people into work, he said: 'In Britain today there are pockets that are peculiarly Third Worldish in terms of life expectancy, general expectations, disconnection for a group that is growing in number'" (*Times*, 19 February). Needless to say Smith's determination to 'drive people into work' applies to the working class not the useless parasitical capitalists.

A World Of Inequality

There is a widespread illusion that we live in more equitable times than previous generations, but recent statistics from the World Bank give the lie to that notion. "A sharp rise in food prices since June has pushed 44 million people in developing countries into extreme poverty – having to live on less than \$1.25 a day – according to a report by the World Bank" (*New York Times*, 15 February).

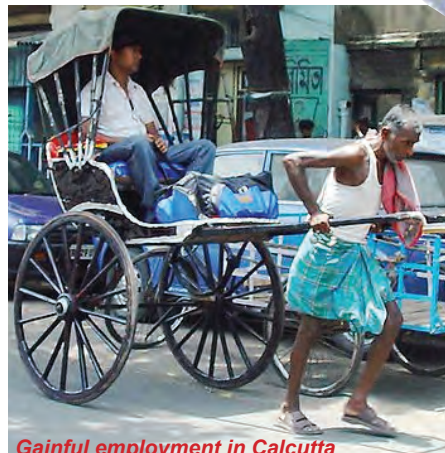
Hard Times – For Some

We are told ever day by the mass media that we are living in hard times and that we must be prepared to tighten our belts. Longer working lives, lower pensions and the threat of growing unemployment are the prospects for the working class. This period of "economic reality" does not affect the owning class of course. "Carlos Slim gets even richer as he beats Bill Gates to the top of the 2011 Forbes billionaires list. Carlos Slim, the world's wealthiest man, saw his fortune jump \$20.5bn last year as he beat a record 1,209 rival billionaires, including Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and British

resident Lakshmi Mittal, to the top of the Forbes global rich list" (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 March). In case you imagine that this only applies to Mexican, American or Indian billionaires Forbes informs us that the Duke of Westminster managed to increase his stack to \$13 billion last year.

Class Division In India

A visit to an Indian city such as Calcutta would convince the visitor that it is a country of extreme poverty and qualifies as what the press call a "third world country". You can see homeless families seeking out an existence living on the streets but that is only part of the story. "In a wedding estimated to have cost Kanwar Singh Tanwar, the groom's father and a member of Parliament, £15 million, about 30,000 guests ate 100 different dishes and the couple's main gift was a seven seater helicopter" (*Times*, 4 March). For a tiny minority of Indians a life of undreamt affluence is the norm in this "third world" country.



Gainful employment in Calcutta

Land Of The Free?

American politicians are fond of boasting about the "land of the free" and contrasting the freedoms of people in the USA with that of other countries, but recent developments in the state senate in Ohio seem more dictatorial than democratic. "Ohio joined Wisconsin on Wednesday in advancing a plan to restrict public sector unions, posing a

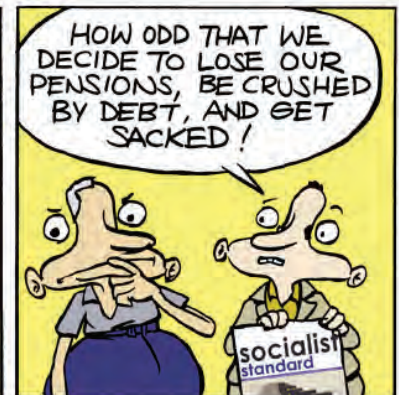
new threat to U.S. labor union power in one of the most politically and economically important states. The Republican-controlled Ohio state senate approved a proposal to curb the collective bargaining rights of public employees and forbid government workers from going on strike" (*Reuters*, 2 March).

The Ganja Of The People

Away back in the 19th Century Karl Marx once stated "Religion is the opium of the people", but how do you respond to this 21st Century news item? "The sale of marijuana has been banned by authorities in Nepal during a popular Hindu festival at which holy men traditionally smoke the drug. About 500,000 people and thousands of holy men travelled to the Pashupatinath temple in Katmandu for the festival, which marks the end of winter. ... Police stopped people from dealing but did not prevent the holy men from smoking the drug" (*Times*, 4 March). Perhaps the Christian holy men should take a leaf out of the Hindu's book, it might help their falling church attendance figures. "Truck on Jesus man", may become part of the new holy orders as a way to fill those empty collection plates.



FREE LUNCH



ISSN 0037 8259

Produced and published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN