

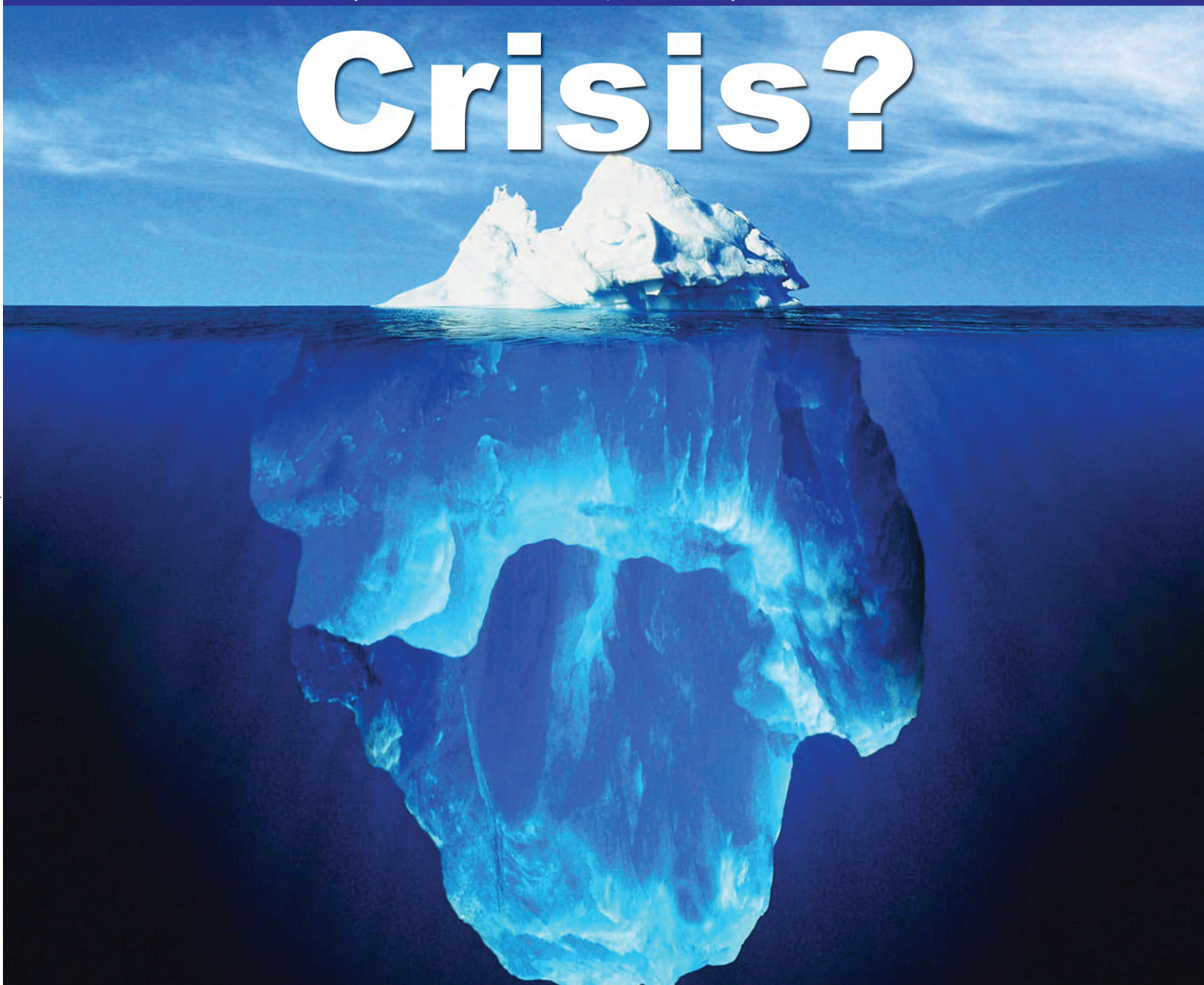
# socialist standard



July 2011  
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## Crisis?



### You ain't seen nothin' yet



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# socialist standard

JULY 2011

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# Introducing The Socialist Party

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

We use every possible opportunity

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

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our

ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

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

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



# socialist standard

JULY 2011

## Editorial

### Britain's care home crisis

IT HAS often been said that a society can be judged by how it treats its weakest members. How, then, are we to judge what are called the advanced Western democracies?

Consider the case of the elderly. Until recent times, the older members of human communities commanded respect as the bearers of accumulated wisdom. By contrast, how might we expect capitalism to treat the elderly? In short, we would expect it to treat our older citizens with a great deal less respect than it treats profits. We would expect there to be a tendency, strengthened during times of economic crisis, to raise the retirement age, to keep working-class people on the labour market for as long as possible, reduce the costs of pensions and social services so on, and increase the numbers of the unemployed, which acts as a downward pressure on wages and working conditions. We would expect our ageing populations to increasingly be conceived as a threat to prosperity, rather than a sign of human achievement and progress. We would also expect capitalism to rationalise the costs of elderly healthcare to the limits of social and moral acceptability, by centralising and cheapening operations, and turning them into private profit-making businesses where possible.

That's why socialists are sickened but not in the least surprised by the current crisis in Britain's care homes. At the end of May this year, Southern Cross, Britain's biggest care home company, edged towards financial collapse. Southern Cross bought homes across the country before the economic crisis hit, when the sector looked attractive to private equity and property investors – in other words, capitalists looking for

profitable homes for their money, who speculated that elderly care homes might make a profit if they bought them, flogged them on (partly to fund expansion, partly to line their own pockets), then rented the properties back. The crisis hit when the care homes could no longer afford the rent, which had been guaranteed to rise by a minimum of 2.5 percent a year.

The increased financial pressure on the industry coincides with weakened regulatory oversight. An investigation by the *Financial Times* (30 May) shows that this has led to dangerously low standards of care. One in seven privately run homes scored the lowest care ratings by the government regulator, which means they face problems as serious as "a failure adequately to feed or clean residents". The low rating applied to one in 11 homes run by non-profit organisations or local authorities. An anonymous inspector for the government regulator told the *FT*: "Fundamentally, it's now got to a point of being dangerous [for residents] – and it's going to get worse. If I had a relative who needed to go to a care service, I'd be concerned."

A few days after its report, the *Financial Times* (4 June) followed up the story by revealing that this disaster was not quite so bad for absolutely everyone. The top executives at Southern Cross pocketed £35m by selling their entire stakes in the company before the crisis hit and the shares began to plunge.

As we said, sickening. But if you're shocked or surprised, it means you haven't been paying attention. This is how capitalism works. And that's how it will continue to work unless we get our act together to stop it.

# Fission confusion

THE POLITICAL fall-out continues from the Fukushima plant as radiation levels continue to be revised upwards and the problems continue to cascade, with each solution itself presenting a new problem. Neighbouring states glare balefully as the Japanese now try to justify dumping 110,000 tonnes of radioactive water into the local fishpond. Meanwhile governments across the world hold Nuclear Safety Reviews in a fever to satisfy worried populations that they are not being as careless over nukes as they usually are over everything else. The UK's Chief Nuclear Inspector, Dr Mike Weightman, has been hurriedly asked to do a review of all nuclear facilities, and has delivered his interim report ([www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/interim-report.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/interim-report.htm)). The bemused Dr Weightman sees 'no reason for curtailing the operation of nuclear power plants or other nuclear facilities in the UK', no doubt because category 9 earthquakes and giant tsunamis tend not to happen in Britain very often. However this hasn't stopped the Nuclear Free Local Authorities pressure group, together with the Greens, from trying to whip up the anti-nuke fever with a briefing seminar at Westminster on the future of nuclear new build (<http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>). Now the EU is even talking about a nuclear-free Europe, after Germany and Switzerland have announced the winding down of their entire nuclear programme and Italy has just overwhelmingly voted against nuclear energy in a landslide referendum (*BBC Online*, 14 June). Almost alone in Europe, France continues to be independent and pro-nuke, possibly because of its history of being invaded by other Europeans, and Britain too remains resolute, possibly because of its history of being invaded by the French.

Folks with long memories were probably surprised at the renaissance in recent years of the nuclear option. There was a time when the anti-nuclear lobby seemed to have won the argument, or at least the contest for public opinion. The anti-nuke brigade had always got its biggest boosts from accidents at nuclear power stations, notably at Windscale in 1957, later at Three Mile Island in 1979, and of course famously at Chernobyl in 1986. Older Britons might remember having to pour all their milk down the sewers in Lancashire in 1957, but it was a shock to have to do it again in 1986 because of a leak the other side of the world. From this last disaster the pro-nuclear lobby seemed destined not to recover. Soon after this the German Greens saw a large increase in their support and the Green Party in the UK had its peak electoral success. But the opposition would not last indefinitely.

Indeed it was the very success of the environmentalist agenda itself which began steadily to erode the consensus against nuclear power. It was after all the only realistic alternative to fossil fuels, and there wasn't much doubt among experts that fossil fuels were implicated in global warming. While environmentalists protested loudly about viable alternatives it was clear to many that these didn't amount to much in practice. As solar, wind, geothermal, hydrogen and other more exotic technologies continued to make little headway, the debate remained a two-horse race of fossil versus fission.

The problem is that nothing comes close to fossil fuels for reliability, adaptability or energy conversion efficiency, while

alternatives are always piecemeal solutions which cost a fortune to implement and maintain, and for comparatively low returns. Short-term governments dislike sinking money into projects with long-term gains (for which they won't get the credit) when there are always more immediate demands for cash (for which they might). So all the most viable sustainable energy technologies continue to contribute negligible amounts to global energy requirements and where they contribute more, like hydro or biofuels, they end up causing massive environmental or social damage of their own. If there is any major technological advance it is not likely to come from the so-called viable methods but from some less likely source, as *Scientific American* argued in May this year.

So, as the new century dawned and no new technologies were found and significantly, no new Chernobyls occurred, people began listening to the pro-nuke assurances that 'lessons had been learned' and 'technology had progressed'. As old installations neared their pension dates and the question of replacement became pressing, governments talked bullishly about expanding their nuclear build, confident that the people would accept the least-worst option, with resignation if not enthusiasm.



Then Fukushima. And what it has showed is a fundamental split between what governments want and what populations want. The real problem that faces the world's governments, and by extension the various warring parties of its ruling class, is nothing to do with the environment. It's the ability of some countries, notably Russia but also China, Venezuela, the Gulf states and potentially even Norway and Canada, to hold the world to ransom through their ownership and control of oil and gas supplies. The recent Gulf wars, together with Russia's trigger-happy hand at the gas tap, have persuaded every economic bloc that it's either Do It Yourself nuclear or Do As You're Told fossil imports. And for a bonus, with nuclear power you can get nuclear bombs, as the mullahs in Iran are keenly aware. In any conflict with your neighbours it's much more effective to throw lumps of plutonium than lumps of coal. Thus, with the global balance of power at stake, nobody's much interested in the

environmentalists and their windmill schemes.

And this is the nub of the matter for socialists. Global energy policy is not being driven by concerns about the environment, however much governments dress the thing up in a pretty green frock, it's about ownership and control of key resources, who has them, and who's got the weaponry to seize them. In capitalism such conflicts are endemic and often end up as wars, but in socialism, where by definition resources are shared and controlled by the collective human race, the problem would be a simple technical one uncomplicated by geopolitical or military questions. Can nuclear power ever be safe, and even if it can, what do we do with the waste? Can a mix of sustainable resources really meet local needs and what are the environmental or social costs? Can wholesale reduction in consumption, facilitated by non-market production methods, help solve the problem? Will fusion ever work? Is there something we haven't thought of yet?

Well there is something the world hasn't thought of yet. The only way to take politics out of the energy question is to take capitalism out of the equation. Of course capitalist governments are not going to entertain that option. But we ought to.



## Reformist charities

Dear Editors

I've tried before to convince the reforming charities such as Oxfam and Friends of the Earth that their idealistic pleadings will not influence the inevitable, dominating drives of capitalism. They are doomed to failure. Getting governments to change is impossible. The fact is 'government' is not understood – they presume its function is to act in the best interests of the people when it just the executive control of capitalism.

Even though it is quite possible to 'green' the planet and feed everyone they do not understand the fundamental reason why this can't happen today – someone has to make a profit from it. I cannot get them to understand the nature of commodity production, buying and selling and money and profit prevent attaining the world they want. Both are 'middle-class' petty bourgeois do-gooders and reformers who think futile reforms will achieve their aims. These reformist positions must fail, the only real change can be by changing the very social system of which these are just symptoms.

They probably assume they are radical and energetically pursue these reforms but, for the 'respectables', consideration of the real alternative is "Steady on, you're going a bit too far in wanting a total revolution, and end to money, profits, commodity production, wage slavery and government itself." No, they are for too nice and sensible, they think appeals and tinkering with the present system is far enough. What a waste of energy.  
STUART GIBSON, Wimborne, Dorset

## World War Two

Dear Editors

Regarding your reply to Simon O'Connor's letter about the Socialist Party's stance on the Holocaust (*Socialist Standard*, June), some political commentators thought certain members of Britain's war-time coalition government would not intervene on the premise "The more Jews Hitler kills now the less there will be trying to get into Palestine after the war." It will be remembered the British sought to curry favour with the Arabs to maintain the flow of oil to British industry.

When the Partition vote on Palestine was carried in the United Nations in 1947, some governments voted in favour because they didn't want Jews in internment and refugee

camps coming to their countries. This included Canada whose prime minister was the notorious anti-Semite Mackenzie King. The probability was the capitalists whose interests they represented feared competition from Jewish businessmen. This was the reason for the Aliens Act enacted by the British government of 1905, restricting the immigration of Jews fleeing the pogroms sweeping through eastern Europe. All of which goes to prove that, where the interests of capitalism are concerned, people's lives count for nothing.  
STEVE SHANNON, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

## Plain English

Dear Editors

Can I make a plea for the use of plain English in articles in the *Socialist Standard*. Whilst it is obviously in the interests of capitalism's representatives in the press and politics to use euphemism and understatement to cover up the unpleasant facts of the system, surely we should be aiming to do exactly the opposite, namely to highlight its shortcomings and excesses.

In the article "Class against class", in the June *Standard Standard*, I counted the word "issue" used no less than 7 times to mean either "problem" or "question". An "issue" (at least among socialists) that a lack of money in the capitalist world is nothing less than a major problem for the vast majority of the population suffering from the affliction. The word "issue", like "challenge", seems to be in vogue at the moment and has apparently crept in from America, where people "have emotional issues" (i.e. "are upset") or "have weight issues" (i.e. "are overweight" – in many cases to a point detrimental to their health). In a recent TV comedy, a script-writer friend of mine included a scene in which a character asked the company psychologist 'Do you want me to discuss my what we're supposed to call "issues" these days?' When I complimented him on this line, he told me that he felt strongly enough to include it because "my kids are growing up a world in which they never hear the word problems".

"Sackings" is another word which has been discarded by the capitalist press in favour of any number of euphemisms, evidently because the term is a lot more graphic than "downsizing", "rationalisation", "reorganisation" etc. Likewise, bosses

use newspeak like "double-hatting" and "extra-skilling" to distract their staff from the fact that what they are really talking about is "making people do more than one job" and "retraining people to do additional work"?

I'm all in favour of neologism and changes of usage, provided that these are necessary or useful, but we mustn't let that stop us calling a spade a spade. If we don't tell it how it is, who will?

MARTYN DUNMORE, Brussels, Belgium

## Socialist Party Merchandise

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# Money – a waste of resources

PERHAPS YOU think that the money system is a necessary means of allocating scarce resources. In that case, you won't regard the resources that society devotes to operating the money system as waste. But have you tried to assess the sheer scale of these resources?

One approach is to see how many people are kept busy at tasks that would not exist in a society without money. I focus on the United States, but I don't think the overall picture is much different in other countries. My figures come from the May 2010 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor ([http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm#00-0000](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000)).

The occupational classification used in US government statistics divides the employed workforce into 22 broad occupational groups, which are subdivided into specific occupations. When we search these groups for money-related occupations, here is what we find.

### Group 11. Management occupations

There are 516,000 sales, marketing and advertising managers, plus 479,000 financial managers. At least a fifth of all managers manage monetary flows rather than material processes.

### Group 13. Business and financial occupations

This group includes:

- 1,072,000 accountants and auditors
- 221,000 financial analysts
- 272,000 purchasing agents
- 263,000 claims adjusters, examiners and

investigators

262,000 market research analysts and marketing specialists

184,000 cost estimators, etc.

Some of the market research analysts might still be needed in a socialist society for the non-manipulative analysis of consumer preferences.

### Group 33. Protective service occupations

This group includes:

- 1,007,000 security guards
- 644,000 police officers
- 111,000 detectives and criminal investigators
- 458,000 jailers and correctional officers

As most crime consists of offences against property, few of the functions performed by these two million people will exist in a socialist society.

### Group 41. Sales and related occupations

All of the 13,438,000 people in this group directly service the money system. Here we find: 4,155,000 retail sales workers; 1,172,000 supervisors of retail sales workers; 3,354,000 cashiers; 1,748,000 sales representatives; 415,000 counter and rental clerks; 319,000 insurance sales agents; 289,000 telemarketers, etc.

### Group 43. Office and administrative occupations

This group includes:

- 1,675,000 bookkeeping, accounting and auditing clerks
- 556,000 tellers
- 883,000 clerks processing and collecting bills
- 232,000 clerks processing insurance claims and policies
- 40,000 meter readers, etc.

Other money-related occupations lie scattered among various other groups. Actuaries, tax inspectors, teachers of business studies – the list goes on and on. Then, combining related occupations assigned to various groups, we discover 145,000 people working at casinos and other gambling joints and 519,000 people who do nothing but handle loans (interviewing and checking out loan applicants, processing repayments, pursuing defaulters, etc.).

There are many money-related jobs that the occupational classification does not allow us to count separately. Thus, computer science occupations must include many people working with computer systems for storing and processing financial information, while Legal occupations includes many people working in areas like commercial law and inheritance.

Next there are all the people who design, manufacture, transport, install and repair money-related machinery and equipment, such as ATM machines, cash registers (for all those cashiers!), safes, slot machines, credit card verifiers, gambling machines, and those contraptions which prevent you from getting into the underground without a ticket. Not to mention the people who actually make coins, banknotes and gold bars!

Then there are the workers who build, maintain and clean the premises used by banks, insurance companies and other money-handling offices, those who transport money handlers to and from work, and so on.

My best estimate is that about one fourth of employed Americans are engaged in tasks that would not exist in a moneyless society. To these people we must add members of the armed forces, workers in military industry, most non-working prisoners, the unemployed as usually understood, and the unemployed as unusually understood (otherwise known as the idle rich). All these people could be making a useful and productive contribution to society.

Let's return now to the question of waste. The money system is commonly justified as a rational way of coping with scarcity of resources. And yet, as we see, the operation of the money system consumes enormous human and material resources. We should also take into account the resource costs of such capitalist practices as built-in obsolescence, the use of patents to suppress innovation (*Socialist Standard*, February 2007) and luxury production for the wealthy (*Socialist Standard*, June 2011).

So how serious would the problem of scarcity be if all these costs were eliminated together with capitalism and the money system? Can any reasonable person avoid concluding that money is itself largely responsible for the problem to which it is supposedly the solution?

**STEFAN**





# cooking the books

## Good capitalism, bad capitalism?

"THERE IS good and bad capitalism," wrote Will Hutton in a recent article for the left-of-centre think-tank, the Policy Network (<http://www.policy-network.net/articles/3999/Liberal-social-democracy-fairness-and-good-capitalism>). He argued that:

"The left has to understand what capitalism properly managed can deliver: and then to demonstrate that the paradox is that only the left can provide the political tension that biases capitalism towards the good. While the right is the indiscriminate friend of all capitalism, the left's mission is to hold capitalism's feet to the Enlightenment fire – and thus make it work best to meet the ambitions and needs of ordinary people."

This – apart from the philosophical stuff about the Enlightenment (the 18th century intellectual ferment that provided the theory for the American and French bourgeois revolutions) – is what the reformists of the old Labour Party always stood for in practice, despite their talk of socialism (in most cases, actually state capitalism). They believed that it was possible, through legislation and government intervention, to humanise capitalism, to smooth off its rough edges. Only that was not how they (or those of them interested in more than just getting into office and taking on the day-to-day running of capitalism) expressed it. They talked in terms of these measures being stepping stones to something beyond capitalism rather than creating a "good capitalism".

What Hutton is doing is bringing the theory into line with the practice. As far as Ed Miliband is concerned, he's preaching to the converted as the Labour leader is already on record as saying he wants "a capitalism that works for people and not the other way around" (*Observer*, 29 August).

"Bad capitalism", according to Hutton, is "a universe of bloated incumbents, politically fixed markets, productive entrepreneurs forced to the sidelines and too little public investment. It cares little for the condition and risks of the people." And good capitalism? It, says Hutton, has

"two key properties – a system of business ownership in which the returns to owners and managers is proportional to the risk being undertaken rather than winners taking all, along with politically and socially constructed institutions that help mitigate risk, thus allowing more to be taken."

This is how capitalism according to its theorists is ideally supposed to function. But even if it did function in this way, there would still be minority class ownership, production for profit, and the division of society into rich and poor. In fact, for Hutton, there are also good capitalists and bad capitalists:

"Social democrats should properly distinguish between the deserving and undeserving rich."

He then added, curiously:

"They should also be prepared to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving worker – and the deserving and undeserving poor. Marx made this point to the French socialists in his critique of the 'Gotha Programme'."

Hutton may know about the Enlightenment but he clearly doesn't know about Marx. The fact that Gotha is in Germany should have been a hint that Marx was addressing German rather than French socialists. And there's nothing in what Marx wrote there about deserving and undeserving workers. Hutton has presumably misinterpreted the labour-time voucher scheme Marx mentioned.

What Hutton fails to understand is that capitalism is based on the exploitation of wage-labour for surplus value and is governed by the imperative drive to accumulate more and more capital out of this. Which is why it can never be made to work "to meet the ambitions and needs of ordinary people" and why it can only work as a profit-making system in the interests of those who live off profits.

There is no such thing as a good capitalism.

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## Why a socialist world won't be paradise

"Does Osama Bin Ladin get his 70 virgins now that he's in paradise?" asked a questioner at the Moslem platform in Speakers' Corner.

"In heaven you can have whatever you want," replied the old mullah. "You just imagine it and it's there. You can have wine and beer and no matter how much you have you never get drunk."

This will no doubt come as a shock to would-be Islamic martyrs who are hoping for real virgins rather than imaginary ones (although it will be a great relief to the virgins). The quality of the alcohol doesn't sound too good either. But at least it was some kind of answer to the question of what heaven is all about. Believers, although adamant that they want to go, tend to be rather vague about what you actually do when you get there.

So for any readers of the Socialist Standard, concerned about the next life, here are a few details (courtesy of Google) of what to expect.

First a few observations from a Christian website. [www.godandscience.org](http://www.godandscience.org) (Well we want scientific details don't we?)

"The new earth will have no sea. There will be no sun or moon. Gravity will be absent or greatly reduced. No more death, suffering, pain. Believers will receive a new body".

"The laws of thermodynamics seem to be absent from the new creation."

"Contrary to the Mormon view of heaven, it doesn't seem that people in heaven will be either male or female".

Don't get too excited about going yet though, you may not qualify. There's a long list of sins to be avoided. And it's unlikely

that many of our readers will not have succumbed to one or two of the following:

"Sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, prostitution, homosexual offences, theft, greed, drunkenness, slander, swindling, impurity, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, orgies, abomination, lying, cowardice, unbelief, murder, sorcery."

In case you need more information, Islam, anxious to make clear that Christianity doesn't have a monopoly of knowledge, also has several websites dealing with the subject. For the following we are indebted to [www.answering-christianity.com](http://www.answering-christianity.com).

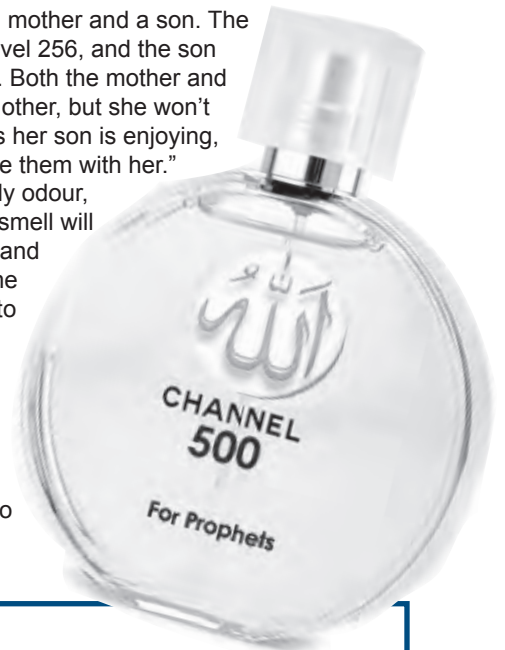
"Allah Almighty created heaven with 500 levels. The highest level will have the prophets, the martyrs, and the most righteous..."

"So, let's say we have a mother and a son. The mother was admitted to level 256, and the son was admitted to level 310. Both the mother and the son can still see each other, but she won't be able to enjoy the things her son is enjoying, nor will he be able to share them with her."

"No dung, piss, bad body odour, bad breath, or bad sweat smell will exist in heaven. The food and the drinks that we consume into our bodies will turn into great smelling musk. The higher the person's level in Paradise the better his smell will be."

So there we have it in excruciating detail. The righteous ones certainly do their homework.

NW



## Tiny Tips

The United States plans to export \$46.1 billion in weapons this year, nearly doubling its 2010 figures, officials said:

<http://tinyurl.com/69lcar9>

About 6.2 million Americans, 45.1 percent of all unemployed workers in this country, have been jobless for more than six months - a higher percentage than during the Great Depression:

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

Libyan women and girls who become pregnant through rape risk being murdered by their own families in so-called "honour killings", according to aid workers.

Rape is a sensitive topic worldwide, but in this country it is even more of a taboo. "In Libya when rape occurs, it seems to be a whole village or town which is seen to be dishonoured," says Arafat Jamal of the UN refugee agency, UNHCR. Libyan charities say they are getting reports that in the west of the country, which is particularly conservative, Col Muammar Gaddafi's forces have tended to rape women and girls in front of their fathers and brothers. "To be seen naked and violated is worse than death for them," says Hana Elgadi. "This is a region where women will not go out of the house without covering their face with a veil."

<http://tinyurl.com/668512e>

Non-battle Scars: US Military Rape Victim' Shares Her Pain 1 in 3 Female Soldiers are Raped or Sexually Assaulted by Fellow US Servicemen:

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/6hjlfpn>

Last time Beisner was on Fischer's program, Beisner said that the deadly tornadoes in the American South were "little tastes" of God's judgment. Yesterday, the two discussed how they believe environmentalists are earth-worshippers who are deliberately destroying the economy and that climate change is a myth. Fischer asked Beisner if the environmental movement wanted a return "into dark paganism" and Beisner agreed, saying that the end-game of environmentalism "would require the disappearance of about 95% of the human race."

<http://tinyurl.com/6l583jw>

Older adults who say they've had a life-changing religious experience are more likely to have a greater decrease in size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain critical to learning and memory, new research finds:

<http://tinyurl.com/44qkmlt>

China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei claim parts or all of the South China Sea, a territory believed to be sitting on rich deposits of oil, gas and minerals, as well as being a major shipping lane:

<http://tinyurl.com/5uwl7m9>

Vietnam said on Saturday live-fire naval drills scheduled for Monday were "routine" and said it would welcome efforts by the international community, including the United States, to help resolve disputes in the South China Sea:

<http://tinyurl.com/67xeqjm>





# Calm down *and listen*

DAVID CAMERON...serving at a barbecue alongside the Most Powerful Man In The World...striding through a hospital with Nick Clegg and Andrew Lansley telling everyone in earshot how much he loves the NHS...walking hand in hand with his wife on a Balearic island with not a Russian oligarch's yacht in sight. David Cameron taking time in Prime Minister's Questions to admonish Labour MP Angela Eagle to "...calm down dear and listen to the doctor". All in a day's work for a Prime Minister lording it over his contemporaries but nevertheless not secure enough to dispense with the need to assert his standing with regular, frequent publicity stunts – even when, strictly speaking, they are surplus to his requirements. Like slapping Eagle down when she was only protesting that he was mistaken in saying that the former Labour MP Howard Stoaate had been defeated by a Tory when in fact he had stood down at the election. Surplus because in 2005 Cameron pledged to do away with that kind of misuse of Parliament's time: "...the shouting, finger-pointing back biting and point-scoring in the House of Commons. That's all got to go". Surplus because in the event he had nothing to lose by a soothing apology for his insignificant error before resuming shouting and point-scoring. Perhaps he was too arrogant to realise that this was just the kind of triviality to get both sides in the Commons blowing up a storm, as part of their unrelenting efforts to conceal the fact that there is no considerable difference between them.

## Winner

Spinning somewhere towards the edges of the storm of bogus protest was the figure of Michael Winner, who is not a favourite of feminists but is famous as the director of what should rightly be known as some of the most tawdry of films and for flaunting his riches with excruciating conceit. Although the phrase "calm down dear" has been in common usage for a very long time Winner claimed to have originated it for use in a TV insurance advertisement and said for good measure that "...the Prime Minister has used it before which shows he's in touch with the British public..." It is not known whether the ex-Etonian Cameron was happy to be exposed to so warm an embrace by so nauseating a personification of capitalism's ugliness. In any case Angela Eagle ("...frighteningly feminist..." – *Daily Telegraph*) is not known for modestly declining an opportunity to attract attention to herself. She won Wallesy from the Tories in the 1992 election and has held it since – the first time that constituency has had a Labour MP. She has recently been engaged in a Canute-like struggle to prevent to closure of a local biscuit factory – the largest private sector employer in an area where, she says, there are 16 people known to be chasing every vacant job. In 1997 she declared herself to be lesbian, the first MP to do so; this was soon after her twin sister Maria had become an MP, making them to the first set of



"Frighteningly feminist"

twins in the Commons. To those who associate with them they are known as a formidable pair.

## Treasury

Until Labour were wangled out of power in May 2010 Angela Eagle held a number of governmental jobs and had a spell as a backbencher after being sacked by Tony Blair – perhaps as punishment for her being mutedly rebellious over the Iraq war and describing him as "fatally damaged" by it. In 2007 she was brought back by Gordon Brown and is now Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, squaring up to the Coalition's Danny Alexander over which party offers the most effective disguise of their hopeless floundering amid the maladjustment of world capitalism 2011. Eagle's claim in this contest is likely to be based on her being of the common salt – her father was a printworker – who clawed her way to university, fearlessly declared her sexuality in the cause of freedom and equality and then progressed to the base of the Greasy Pole. The facts, however, are not so promising for her. When she was a minor minister at the Treasury under Chancellor Alistair Darling there was no evidence of economic policy being influenced by any searchingly innovative contribution from her. In Labour's final spell of power, when Eagle was in charge at the then Ministry of Pensions, it was made clear that if Labour were returned at the election they would implement policies as harsh as anything planned by George Osborne. In March 2010 Darling conceded under questioning that in fact Labour's expenditure cuts would be "deeper and tougher" than those imposed under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, when Eagle was at Oxford studying for a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics which, she may well have hoped, would turn her out as a new style of political leader. She gives no reason to believe that she is disappointed to be as unoriginal and futile as all the others.

## Excitement

So what now of David Cameron and his slick wise-cracking appropriation of a sneer trade-marked by the execrable Michael Winner who had himself appropriated it? Ruling class demands on us are unrelenting, if variable. We experience episodes when we are disciplined to stay calm, for example when the country to which we are said to owe loyalty inflicts on us the fears and desolation of a war. And there are others when we are regimented to be excited – for example in April when we were swamped under a pervasive hysteria companion to the marriage of a couple of notably useless young parasites. We do not have to endure this catastrophic waste of human abilities; the argument for replacing this social order with another rooted in human interests sprouts from a solid base of facts historical, material, social...This is to be calmly assessed and excitedly brought into being.

IVAN

# Is the crisis over?



*“Once a crisis is in full swing, then the argument starts about who is to blame for it. The businessmen blame the abrupt credit refusals by the banks, the speculative mania of the stockbrokers; the stockbrokers blame the industrialists; the industrialists blame the shortage of money, etc. And when business finally picks up again, then the stock exchange and the newspapers note the first signs of improvement with relief, until, at last, hope, peace, and security stop over for a short stay once more. Modern society notes the approach of crisis with horror; it bows its head trembling under the blows coming down as thick as hail; it waits for the end of the ordeal, then lifts its head once more—at first timidly and skeptically; only much later is society almost reassured again.”*

These words could have been written yesterday, but are in fact the (slightly edited and paraphrased) words of Rosa Luxemburg (pictured), written a century ago, shortly after the crisis of 1907 (*What Is Economics* by Rosa Luxemburg. See ‘Is The Economic Crisis Over?’ at <http://critiqueofcrisistheory.wordpress.com/2011/05/01/is-the-economic-crisis-over>). The question is, what stage are we at in the crisis that arrived 100 years later? Is society beginning to ‘lift its head once more’ and look toward a future of hope, peace and security? Or should we bow our heads and expect more blows?

Regular readers will have noticed that, in the pages of this journal, we are still talking about crisis as if we’re in the midst of one (and we will be discussing the issue again at our annual summer school in July). Followers of the official story might be confused by this. According to the mainstream account, the crisis, which began with a financial blow-up in America in 2007 and threatened a cataclysm as serious as the Great Depression of the 1930s, was over by the middle of 2010 thanks to the government policy of providing ‘stimulus’ (printed money). As if to consign the experience to the historical

memory once and for all before moving on to business as usual, the crisis has even been given a name. It was the ‘Great Recession’. And now, it’s over.

## **The good news**

But is it? The official story says yes. But then, the authors of that story, mainstream economists and representatives of the capitalist class, hardly ever expect crises and are shocked by them when they appear out of the blue. This is despite the fact that there have been major downturns in every decade since the 1820s, and regular financial panics since the 17th century. Given this failure to notice still less predict what is obvious to anyone with the briefest acquaintance with history, we can be forgiven for treating their pronouncements with extreme caution.

Still, the question is a tricky one. Commentators still can’t decide when the Great Depression of the 1930s ended, for example. Was the upturn of 1933 the conclusion of the crisis, and the recession in 1937-8 a separate event, as some argue? Or was the 1933-7 recovery merely an artifact of government spending (‘stimulus’), with the depression ending proper with the





*Dealing with the economic downturn in Greece*

start of war production in 1939? Or should even the war production period be seen as a kind of government stimulus, with true, capitalist-based recovery delayed till 1946? To consider this problem is to see that, to some extent, history may be repeating itself.

At the present time, followers of the mainstream press will find confident pronouncements of recovery and positive (or, at least, not too badly negative) news from various economic indicators sitting side by side with accounts of deepening state debt crises, stockmarket slides, soaring inflation, falling wages and standards of living, and battles to impose austerity on the working class (including vast swathes of those who tend to think of themselves as 'middle class').

America, for example, the world's biggest and most important economy, is officially out of recession. Yet manufacturing surveys show that global growth is stuttering and stagnating once again. US growth slowed to an annualised 1.8 percent in the first quarter of the year, down from 3.1 percent in the previous quarter. The housing market is already in 'double dip' territory, inflation is on the rise (it could already be as high as 7.4 percent, according to a new index from professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and wages remain stagnant – average hourly earnings of production and non-supervisory employees, who make up 80 percent of non-government workers, are lower than they were in the depths of the recession, adjusted for inflation, according to Robert Reich, a professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley (Robertreich.org). Relative wages have, anyway, been stagnant or falling since the 1970s. Initial confidence in the rising number of new jobs was squashed by the start of June when it was reported that the rise in the number of jobs was far lower than predicted: just 54,000 jobs were added to the total in May against an expected 165,000, according to the *Financial Times*, and the unemployment rate ticked up to 9.1 per cent. State debt continues to rise to historically unprecedented levels, which has prompted the credit-ratings agencies Standard & Poors and Moody's to threaten to downgrade it. At the same time as we hear the crisis blamed on banks' reluctance to loan businesses money, businesses themselves are hoarding cash – almost \$1 trillion of it, according to a report in the *Wall Street Journal* published at the end of last year. This cash pile is the highest for half a century and "shows the deep caution many companies feel about investing in expansion while the economic recovery remains painfully slow and high unemployment and battered household finances continue to limit consumers' ability to spend".

The story is much the same around the world. Certain economies in Asia, particularly China, provide the most

obvious apparent exceptions, but the health of these are still, for now at least, partly reliant on the health of the US and other Western economies. Commentators are currently watching China's booming real-estate sector with particular concern – it is another debt-fuelled 'success' story, and a key driver of demand for commodities from other economies. But it is inevitably heading for a big crash, according to Nouriel Roubini, a bourgeois economics professor at New York University whose star rose when he correctly predicted the current crisis.

Of more immediate concern the eurozone – most particularly Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy – also remains in deep trouble. For now, all eyes are on Greece. Despite already having agreed a €10bn bail-out package last year, it is now obvious that that was not enough, and the EU, European Central Bank and IMF are having to bail out the bail-out, as *The Economist* put it. By 2012, Greece was supposed to be well on the road to recovery, but in reality, as austerity reforms stalled and the economy shrank (by 4 percent last year), state debt continued to soar. It's now near 160 percent of GDP. The consequences of default are currently deemed too dangerous, so other options are being considered, such as lending Greece yet more money, and extending the repayment dates on the debt. But some commentators, including Lex in the *Financial Times*, think that default is, sooner or later, 'inevitable'. The European debt crisis, says economics analysts Capital Economics, "may be entering a new and more dangerous phase". Meanwhile, as in the US, the biggest companies in Europe, not including the major banks, are sitting on £445bn in cash, according to a Bloomberg report at the end of last year.

Britain has been spared some of the worst of the troubles afflicting Europe because it is still in control of its own currency and can therefore engineer some fiscal wriggle-room with low interest rates and money-printing and so on. It has also recently elected a government committed to radical reforms that will impoverish sections of the working class but also, capitalists are hoping, reduce the deficit and restore profitability. But the picture is far from rosy for the capitalists. The British economy grew by only 0.5 percent in the first quarter of this year following a contraction of the same amount in the last quarter of 2010. Household disposable incomes are predicted to fall by 2 percent in real terms this year, and the TUC trade union body has warned that wages – already stagnant over the past 30 years while the economy doubled in size – are likely to trail behind inflation for years to come, putting low and middle-income earners into a "livelihood crisis". Growth has fallen off in the services sector, house prices

continue to slide, retail sales are down, and the Bank of England has been forced to cut its growth forecasts and up its inflation outlook. And with interest rate rises muted and surely inevitable sooner or later, things can only get worse in the near term. At the same time, as in Europe and America, British companies sit on vast cash hoards as the prospects of profitable investment remain small and risky.

### The bad news

There are really two questions here. The first is, is the crisis over in the narrow, technical sense, i.e. is the economy officially out of recession according to conventional definitions and measures? Here the answer is yes, though the shakiness of the recovery is signalled even in the mainstream press by the constant reference to the fear of a 'double dip', the return of recession, especially if or when stimulus measures end and austerity measures kick in (dampening effective demand), or both. Luxemburg's 'first signs of improvement' are certainly there, but it's still way too early to say that society is 'reassured again'.

The second is whether the crisis is over in a broader sense, and here the answer is, almost certainly not. Take a historical and Marxist view, and it seems clear that we are merely at the start of a major global restructuring. Apart from a socialist transformation of society, the only solution to the problems of a depression is the depression itself. If capitalism is to return to profitability, unprofitable concerns must be closed, workers laid off, wages suppressed, and capital devalued. This restores profitability and lays the basis for a new round of capitalist prosperity. The trouble is, despite a number of serious recessions and wobbles, capitalism has not had a proper and necessary clearing of the decks since the 1930s.

As the Marxist economist Paul Mattick points out, that depression, and the war that followed it, laid the basis for the 'Golden Age' of 1950 to 1973, an 'economic miracle' built on the destruction of the war and the corpses of 50 to 60 million people. This period of capitalist prosperity ran into serious trouble in the 1970s, and the result was the stagnation and inflation ('stagflation') of that period, a reliance on unprecedented

levels of state involvement in the economy, an excess of printed money and soaring debt. The idea was that this debt would be paid back in the good times as depression was averted and capitalist prosperity returned.

The reality was that the debt and spending had to continue to rise to subsidise capitalist industry and buy social peace. Despite the rhetoric and ideological determination, and some major attacks on working class living standards through the 1980s, it has proved impossible to roll back the state and cut spending and debt while keeping capitalism buoyant. The working class seemed to be boosted for a while with the credit card explosion and rising house prices. That prosperity, too, was obviously unsustainable for capitalism, and it ended in 2007.

But could the full force of a depression be delayed with a combination of yet more debt and spending? Governments around the world are betting that it can. But they are also hedging their bets by preparing and implementing austerity measures as it must be obvious, even to them, that the historically unprecedented expansion of state spending and debt cannot go on for ever if capitalism is to survive. Keynes himself famously ignored this problem. "In the long run, we're all dead," he said. Over the next decade, we'll discover what happens in the 'long run'.

The probability is that previously taken-for-granted entitlements (to education, jobs, retirement, health care, an income during periods of illness, joblessness or disability, and so on) and standards of living will end. There will be continuing struggles both within the capitalist class and between the capitalist and working classes over who is to bear the brunt of the losses. The hegemony of the United States may be challenged in the not too distant future, with potentially catastrophic consequences: bear in mind that it took a world war to completely end the last truly major depression. And the depression, if not rescued by a major war, could be deeply exacerbated by the falling off of cheap and easy oil and energy supplies and the possibility of ecological catastrophe.

Yes, in the long run we're all dead. But in the short run things are not looking too great either. At an underlying level, this economic crisis is not over. And neither is the increasingly desperate urgency and need for the socialist alternative.

**STUART WATKINS**

## WORLD SOCIALIST REVIEW #22



Is Obama a socialist? No, he's not! This book of 112 pages examines Obama's outlook and life story, his packaging as a politician, and his policy in the areas of healthcare reform, the economy, the environment, the space program, and Afghanistan. It places Obama in the context of a largely undemocratic U.S. political system and a wasteful, cruel, and crisis-ridden world economic system.

From the Introduction: "We have nothing against Obama personally. We do not accuse him of going into politics solely in pursuit of fame and fortune. He started out with the best of intentions, hoping that one day he might be able to do something to make the world a better place. Our aim is to show how the capitalist class, who exercise real power in our society, corrupt and co-opt well-intentioned young people like Obama, how capitalism frustrates and corrodes even the noblest aspirations."

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# Democracy and Capitalism

## Why in the end the two are incompatible

**D**emocracy, either as simply a word in our lexicon, an actually existing system or a utopian ideal, is a concept which should be wide open for discussion. The term is bandied about to represent something which is generally poorly understood, something which is widely recognised as being the status quo but with little or no thought given to the relationship between what we each individually mean when we use it and the situation on the ground to which we are referring.

Democracy is something alleged to be a system of popular involvement which leans towards majority consensus; but ask ten people, or a hundred, and get widely differing explanations of what it is or what it should be. It is a word that is ill-defined, misused, overused too ambiguously and has been hijacked by governments and elites to deliberately misinterpret their actions and so deceive a captive and poorly represented electorate.

For example – In the ‘largest democracy in the world’, India, how do the majority of the population on \$2 or less a day consider they are being represented? And how many of the minority even pause to consider the possible effects of this lack of representation on the majority?

For example, in so-called ‘developed’ countries, many of which have just two or three major political parties becoming ideologically closer and closer so that there is little difference whichever is voted in, how can this false choice be deemed democratic? A choice between two or three closely related manifestos, differing in minor details but overall being variations of the same business-friendly agenda, distanced from the majority of the voters.

### Existing political democracies

Electorates worldwide haven’t had the true experience of involvement,

of having had their voices heard, at any significant level to have resulted in a culture of expectation of inclusion in the various processes of so-called democracy. Rather than an expectation of involvement there is apathy, cynicism or a complaining mantra heard far and wide that governments don’t listen to the people or that they put on a performance of listening pre-elections and then make wide ranging excuses for their negligence in following up on promises or manifesto declarations.

Polls show people in greater numbers becoming further and further removed from statements made by politicians both right and

are getting less democracy as time goes by – arrest on suspicion of almost anything, tighter control of cyberspace, personal information passed from agency to agency without consent, working conditions changed without consultation, retirement age increased, education budgets severely cut (all these currently in focus in many countries) – the discussion required is much more than how to take back lost ground and go on to gain more leverage. It becomes how to take control of the direction and quality of our own lives; in other words how to move forwards to a true and meaningful democracy.



left on topics which impact on daily life – wages, working conditions, high unemployment, cuts in health care, education and general public spending, poor infrastructure, creeping surveillance, big-brother laws and questionable aggressive involvement in the affairs of other nations. And who can determine any significant difference between left and right whether in the US, UK or most other nations where all are beholden to corporate capitalism?

The current hierarchical systems of ‘democracy’ can never effectively represent the widely differing demands of majorities on wide ranging topics. What this system gives can more accurately be termed imposition. When people judge they

### “Capitalist democracy”

A UK government sponsored think tank, Wilton Park, concluded in a paper in 1996 that ‘Democracy must not be confused with capitalism. The former is a political system while the latter is an economic system. Although many capitalist countries are democracies, capitalism can exist without democracy.’

According to Noam Chomsky, writing in *On Power and Ideology* and referring to the US as a ‘capitalist democracy’, true capitalism isn’t possible, state intervention being a necessary component for several reasons: to regulate markets, to support business interests and to employ its means of violence in the international arena on behalf of business.

Chomsky being a highly respected political commentator and activist over a number of decades, many would agree with this assertion and with his comment that democracy is a commodity – you can have as much of it as you can afford. It is probably pertinent to add to Chomsky’s statement that true democracy also is not possible in capitalism because the system (and

the market) is manipulated by the capitalists to fit their agenda by use of media, advertising and lobbying. The incompatibility of capitalism and democracy, which follow opposing principles, render democratic capitalism an oxymoron.

### **Apathy and complaint**

Many so-called democracies tend to breed apathy for a variety of reasons. Decisions have long been made for people not by people, electorates distanced from their representatives, decisions made with no consultation process and 'leaders' believing they have been selected to take the reins and make all decisions on behalf of the voters. It's taken for granted that once elected the 'member' decides on behalf of the electors.

There is scant reference to the masses in times of major decisions – where to cut public spending, whether to involve a population in invasion or war, how to deal with the effects of harsh economic downturn. Even mass demonstrations against unpopular decisions can leave the elected unmoved and intransigent. As a result there has long been a culture of complaint, a collective feeling of impotence with no expectation of being heard, even if seemingly listened to.

It is easy to recognise from both an individual and collective standpoint what it is, in work, in life, society, environment, that is required to be changed, removed, expunged; however it is not so simple to know exactly what should be put in its place or how to do it. Most people can more readily identify the negative aspects of their lives which they want rid of than they can imagine the positives to replace them. They have been part of a manipulative system for too long and have become passively compliant.

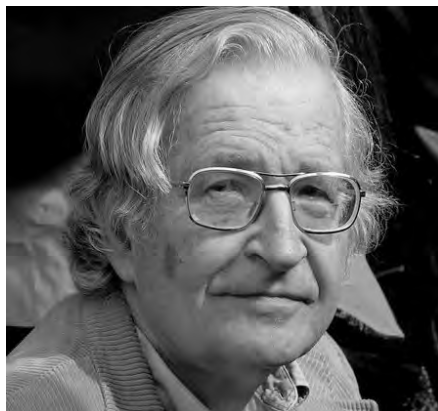
Anger and indignation can be positive motivating factors enabling people collectively to come to the realisation that if power won't heed the people then the people must act together, take hold of the power and make it their own if they are to become the active part of the decision making process.

Whereas emotional stimuli can play a useful part in rallying individuals to a cause overall a plan is vital. We need to understand not only where we're coming from but why and where we're headed. It's not enough to know what we're working against but significantly more important to understand and affirm what we're working to achieve. This largely entails each individual actively raising their own consciousness to

higher levels of understanding and commitment which ultimately will lead to a majority of the working class pulling together in order to take control of their own collective destiny.

### **Dissent**

Politically to dissent is simply to disagree with an official decision, course of action or set of principles but the term of reference has become debased and it is now commonly understood to be something other than seeking to have an alternative view expressed overtly; it is often



**Norm Chomsky**

conveyed as being connected to some kind of subterfuge, a covert, possibly illicit movement to overturn an established regime.

Dissent, because it is seen to be too far outside the mainstream of traditional politics, becomes a threat. And what leads to dissent? Poor working conditions and levels of pay, high costs of food, services, fuel, etc., high levels of unemployment, high levels of homelessness and poor housing conditions, perceived injustices with regard to minority groups, creeping surveillance and curbs on freedom of expression, limited access to health care and education, widespread corruption in the corridors of power, inconvenient secrets leaked to the media revealing a catalogue of lies and deceit that the people aren't supposed to be a party to, oppression and repression; in general lack of democracy in one form or another. Any one or any combination of these issues, coupled with a particular geographical location and appropriate timing could lead to the blue touch paper being lit and then look out for the explosion. Active dissent from the majority.

It is surely too narrow official, bureaucratic and parliamentary or oligarchical decisions which lead to all the states referred to immediately above – decisions taken which sideline, ignore, humiliate, debase and exclude the recipients from active participation in any of the

decision making processes for surely one does not dissent from decisions one had a free hand in making.

### **Real Democracy**

If democracy is to mean more than one vote nationally and another regionally every few years, an arrangement that most will agree displays a huge deficit of democracy and does little to represent public opinion, then an alternative system must be devised. An alternative system involving the general public in all decisions which impact upon them, their communities and local environments, one which embraces the notion that all are entitled to be active participants in the local and global community.

In order to invert the current system with the outcome that it will be society at large's decisions that are to become the norm means that each community's ideas and plans will be presented, discussed and decided upon by those within those communities. All discussion in the public domain; no minorities behind closed doors weighing up pecuniary advantage. The will of the people – so often disregarded – the will of the people on an ongoing basis, not just for the moment when they put their tick in a box, but the ongoing will of the people, giving ongoing legitimacy to all decisions in the best interests of all.

Hierarchies are necessarily divisive in their manner of imposition, patriarchal minorities holding onto power in situations opposed by their electorates until forced to give concessions or step down. Governments don't easily give up their power and use various means to cling on through thick and thin whether in Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Noam Chomsky has said, 'Propaganda is as necessary to bourgeois democracy as repression is to the totalitarian state.' The purpose of both to keep control.

In contrast the ethos of true democracy, with a horizontal structure, has a unifying factor with people working together for the best outcomes for all. Real democracy must mean a system of common ownership, production and consumption, moving from a system of passivity to one of proactivity and empowerment by sharing responsibility for decisions and outcomes. In a true democracy people would have real choices in all areas of their lives, not choices manufactured to suit business, market and monetary interests.

**JANET SURMAN**



# The archbishop is right

**“We are being committed to radical, long-term policies for which no one voted”  
(The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams).**

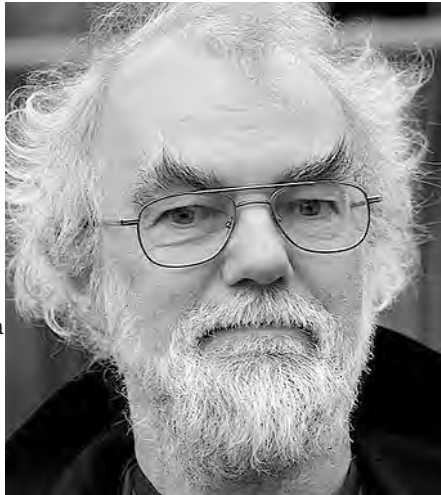
**H**e is right. The government is implementing policies for which no one voted, or would vote for. No one voted to cut care services for the old and the disabled. No one voted to close hospital departments or to delay repairing schools or to close libraries and sports facilities or to reduce rubbish collection. Yet this is all happening as a result of what the government is doing.

It's what governments always do when capitalism goes into one of its periodic crises. If nothing else this shows that capitalism is not a system geared to improving people's lives. If it was, this sort of thing would never happen. As productivity went up (as it does slowly but surely each year) then society would be able to produce more and so be more able to provide better care for the elderly and better amenities for everyone.

That is what the increasing surplus of wealth over and above meeting basic needs would be used for. Under capitalism, however, it takes the form of profits, and competition between profit-seeking enterprises forces most of these to be reinvested in production rather than in improving people's lives. Any government that tried to do this by diverting profits from capital accumulation would soon find itself in economic difficulties. Governments that have tried have been forced by capitalist economic reality to do a U-turn and give priority to “growth” as they call capital accumulation. But this growth is not a steady process but a series of fits and starts, of periods of booms ending in a crisis and a slump when amenities and living standards have to be cut as a way of creating the conditions for capital accumulation to resume.

Which is where we are now. People getting what they didn't vote for also shows that capitalism is incompatible with democracy as an expression of “the people's will”. This is not because there are no procedures in place for people to decide what they want, but because the way the capitalist economy works prevents some of these decisions being implemented. Capitalism is not geared to doing what people want. People want the problems they face to be solved but capitalism simply can't do this. And no amount of making the decision-making process more formally democratic can alter this because that's not where the problem lies. It's that capitalism is a system geared to making profits and accumulating capital irrespective of people's decisions and needs.

This is not happening just in Britain. In some other countries it's even more blatant. In Iceland a law was passed during the financial bubble guaranteeing the savings of depositors, whether from Iceland or abroad, in Icelandic banks in the case of a bank failing. No one expected that banks would fail but they did. The Icelandic government didn't have the money to hand to honour this promise so the British and Dutch governments stepped in and sent the bill to Iceland. The government there told these creditors that it would find the money by drastically worsening the life of the people in Iceland. And did so.



The people of Iceland have voted twice in referendums to reject the terms of the deals. To no effect. In the end the Icelandic government will have to pay up and cannot reverse its austerity programme.

It's the same in Ireland where the government had given a guarantee to underwrite bank losses. Fintan O'Toole made a valid point in the *Irish Times* (3 May) when he criticised the twisted logic used to justify making things worse for people there:

“The basic proposition is that ‘the Irish’ borrowed loads of money and ‘the Irish’ must pay it back. Each and every citizen of a particular nationality is responsible for the misdeeds of

others who hold the same nationality. National identity trumps everything else. It doesn't matter that you didn't borrow the money or that you had no way of knowing what decisions private banks were making. You're Irish, the banks are Irish, so you're all guilty. (...) so the nurse in Ennis and the factory worker in Portlaoise have to pay it back.”

The Irish government will have to honour its guarantee, and nurses and factory workers and others will have to suffer. The Irish voted to kick out the previous government but that hasn't made any difference. The new government will have to continue doing the same, as will the new government in Portugal and as the old government in Greece has been doing. It's what managing capitalism – whichever party or coalition of parties is in office – involves at the moment, what the Archbishop (who seems to be rather perspicacious) described in his article in the *New Statesman* (9 June) as “managerial politics, attempting with shrinking success to negotiate life in the shadow of big finance”. He described this as “not an attractive rallying point”, but that's all that's on offer and can be on offer.

In other places it's yet worse still. The government of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean decided recently to float its currency against the dollar as “essential to cut the country's ballooning budget deficit and stabilise the economy” (*Times*, 6 May). As a result “almost overnight, the price of staples such as rice and bread soared by 30 per cent”. Hence the news item's headline: “Violence in the holiday island intensifies as food prices soar.” The opposition party there is trying to use the unrest to get back into office but even if they succeed they would still have to attempt to negotiate life in the shadow of capitalism. This is all governments everywhere can do.

People don't take this lying down and, rightly, try to resist their lives being made worse. But if government action cannot overcome the iron laws of capitalism, neither can strikes, street demonstrations or riots. The most these can do is slow down the worsening a little but not reverse it. The cruel fact is that within the context of capitalism, as Mrs Thatcher said to the archbishop, there is no alternative. That's the case for socialism.

**ADAM BUICK**

# Peddalling

in ever-  
decreasing  
circles

Cycling  
is popular  
again but what  
happened to the  
old Clarion Cycling  
Club?

The metamorphosis of the precarious Ordinary – “Penny Farthing” – into its essentially present-day “Safety” format in the 1880s and a steady reduction in manufacturing costs, saw the bicycle by the following decade fast-becoming the main means of personal working class transport. Villagers and townies, hitherto isolated, could now venture healthily afield, widening geographical and social horizons, seeking erudition and enlightenment, diversifying and enriching the gene pool.

Devastating as it undoubtedly was for “High Wheeling” aristocrats and toffs to find their pastime suddenly infested with *hoi polloi*, salvation, at least for the seriously affluent, was nigh: the internal combustion engine was already spluttering into life.

The latter decades of the century had seen also a renewed interest in the radical ideas that had faded somewhat in the wake of the Chartist Movement of the 1850s. In particular, Hyndman’s Democratic Federation, established in 1881, swiftly proclaimed its socialist tendency, renaming itself Social Democratic Federation by 1883. Ever an uneasy coalition, it suffered breakaway the following year when a revolutionary group that included Eleanor Marx, Belford Bax and William Morris left a fundamentally reformist organisation to found the Socialist League.

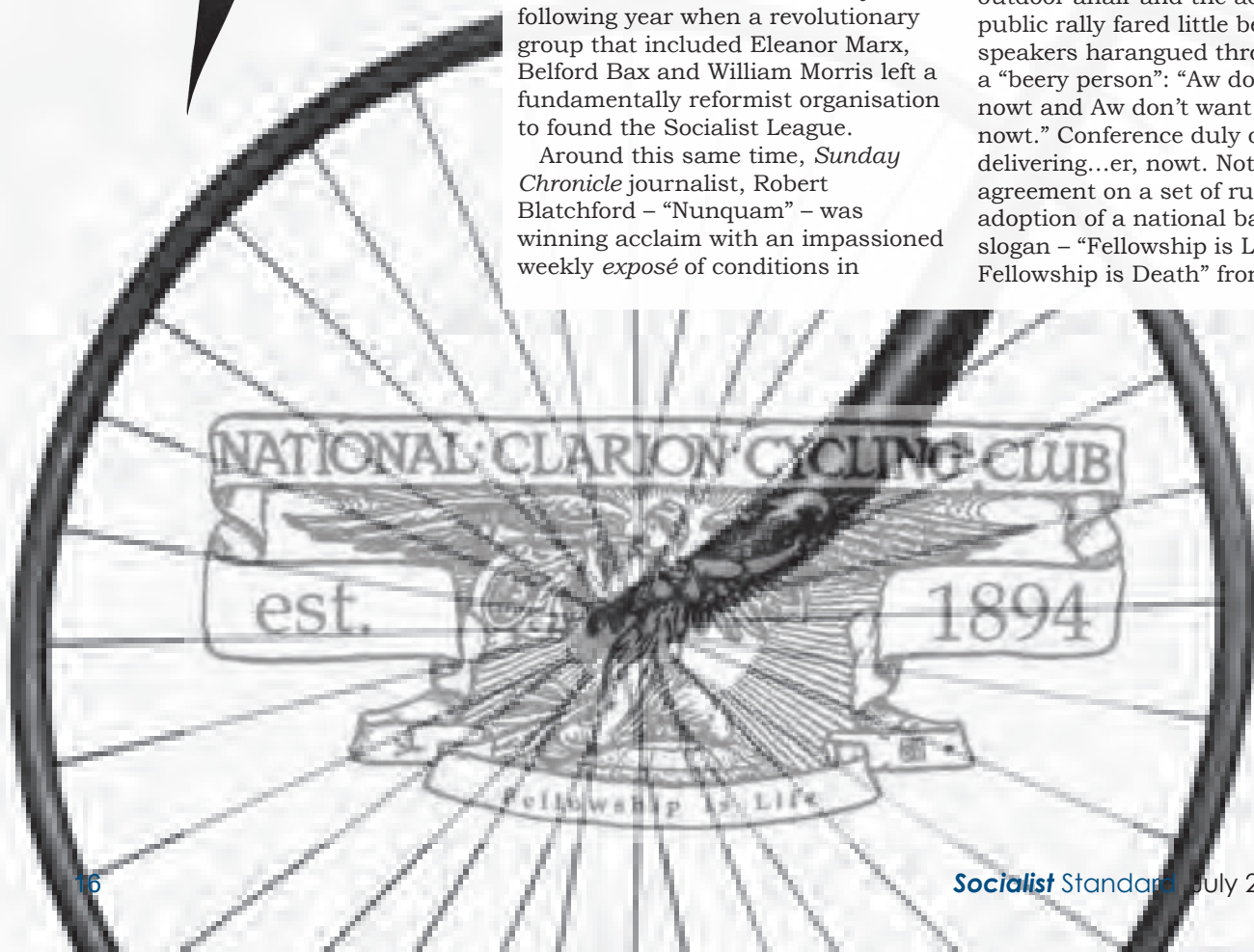
Around this same time, *Sunday Chronicle* journalist, Robert Blatchford – “Nunquam” – was winning acclaim with an impassioned weekly *exposé* of conditions in

the slums of Manchester. Openly declaring for socialism however, proved just too much for a nervous proprietor and following an enforced resignation in 1891, he set up his own penny weekly, *The Clarion*. On relocating south to Fleet Street some four years later, circulation rose steadily eventually, by 1908, doubling to 80,000.

*The Clarion’s* ideals were indeed lofty: to “make socialists” by writing fearlessly and honestly about injustice and inequality, to do so unpretentiously and humorously avoiding dogma and theory and to provide a forum for divergent viewpoints. This was its mission statement and – as time would ultimately prove – its suicide note.

Perhaps inevitably, cycling men and women, enthused by these ideas, would see the obvious advantages of the bicycle in spreading the message and at an 1894 meeting convened by young Brummie Tom Groom, a “socialist Cycling Club” was created; its name promptly amended to “Clarion” in honour of the journal. Reports of the club’s early activities – joyful, propagandising excursions requiring “boozometers rather than speedometers” – led swiftly to the formation of Clarion clubs elsewhere and an Easter Meet was arranged at Ashbourne in Derbyshire the following year to organise a national body.

The inaugural conference held there was an unpromising, damp, outdoor affair and the accompanying public rally fared little better; speakers harangued throughout by a “beery person”: “Aw don’t know nowt and Aw don’t want to know nowt.” Conference duly obliged by delivering...er, nowt. Notwithstanding agreement on a set of rules and adoption of a national badge and slogan – “Fellowship is Life; Lack of Fellowship is Death” from Morris’s







*A Dream of John Ball* – no attempt was made to actually define socialism other than in the vaguest of “caring-sharing”, “happy-clappy”, “ethical” terms. Contentiously too, membership was opened to professed non-socialists, Groom strongly maintaining that “Clarion reasoning and comradeship” coupled with “physical exercise and glorious countryside” would effect speedy conversion.

The rest, as they say, is history. Whilst number-wise at least, the Club blossomed – membership nudging 7,000 in 1913 – and did despite Blatchford’s hankerings for informality, bring some order to its administrative procedures, this collective failure to achieve understanding and consensus over the actual meaning of the term “socialism” and how it might be implemented, rendered it politically impotent; tyres well and truly punctured at the bikeshed door. Ironic indeed since by 1914, the Club badge now also incorporated a proud “Socialism the Hope of the World”.

And as for the redoubtable Blatchford, it was terminal decline; his initial demand for “common ownership” and boast of “converting England to Socialism in seven years”, soon becoming a plea for “brotherly love and respect”, before plummeting to an outrageous exhortation for young Clarionettes to both shed and spill their working class blood in the Imperialist Cause, firstly in Transvaal and subsequently Flanders. In later life, embittered and disillusioned – “The Working Class is not yet

ready for Socialism” – he embraced Conservatism, supporting Stanley Baldwin, “the finest British politician”, in the 1924 General Election.

*The Clarion* remained popular until 1914 but its jingoistic stance, abhorrent to so many, saw circulation collapse from sixty to ten thousand. Hostilities ended, it emerged as a smaller threepenny weekly but readership continued to haemorrhage in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the seductive pull of the new-born Communist Party of Great Britain. Repackaged in 1927 as a sixpenny monthly, life became increasingly difficult for a self-styled “independent Socialist review” supporting a Labour movement “as opposed to Bolshevism as it is to Fascism” and after a last brief tango as *The New Clarion*, it disappeared in 1934.

Oddly, the journal’s demise coincided with an upturn in Club numbers. Despite serious economic recession, bicycle ownership was increasing and on the back of the 1930s “outdoors/fitness”

craze, membership soared to an all-time high of 8,300. To what extent the Club’s politics contributed is, of course, debatable: other pastimes, rambling and hiking for example also flourished and besides, activism within the ranks, by no means universal from inception, had continued to diminish. For that minority who remained otherwise, there was little evidence of improvement in the calibre of that activism.

Discord reigned between the pro- and anti- war camps, whilst both the Workers’ Sports Movement and Esperanto language were lauded as the keys to “developing solidarity”, “dismantling international prejudices” and “eradicating misunderstanding”. Never, throughout decades of fresh air, camaraderie and carousing, did there ever appear to have entered

into the broad Clarion psyche, a recognition of the single global root cause of Humanity’s multiple socio-economic problems and therefore of the single global remedy required. It really was, and is, *that* straightforward.

Post-war, a brief membership boom was followed by serious decline as growing affluence brought with it mass car-ownership and in the prevailing Cold War environment, there began an inexorable process of airbrushing out its political roots. The Constitutional “propagation of the principles of Socialism” clause became “support for...” and office bearers, once required to actually belong to “an approved Socialist organisation”, could now be simply avowed socialists. And so it continued.

These days, the Clarion Cycling Club survives as a 600-strong



rump and – lest it deter potential sponsors – presents itself as “The Club for Wise Cyclists”. May it prosper: pro-Human sentiments are, after all, preferable to none. It is tragic, nevertheless, that so much benevolence, enthusiasm and integrity should, for want of a bit of clarity and direction, have gone to waste; doubly so because in terms of its sloganeering at least, the Club had it pretty-well nailed all along.

And since the Socialist Party remains – on several levels – untroubled by commercial considerations, we are pleased on behalf of countless long-departed and intrepid wayfarers to brandish the muddied Clarion banner one final time: “Fellowship is Life” and “Socialism” – properly defined and understood, is indeed – “the Hope of the World”.

**ANDREW ARMITAGE**

# Anyone know a lifestyle anarchist?

*Keep a look-out for people who are chock-full of undirected, ill-informed revolutionary gusto, but empty of any desire to organise their views into a coherent critique of the world.*

Are they easily bored by drab Marxian theory, with its 'materialist conception of history' and its 'labour theory of value'? Do they feel guilty because their parents managed to scrape a bit more out of capitalism than the average wage-slave? Do they feel the need to rebel against daddy's 'inbuilt patriarchal mentality' and mother's lack of ability to cut the apron strings? Perhaps they like to wear bands around their wrist bearing slogans like 'make poverty history' or even better 'make poverty herstory'. They might feel a sudden urge to grow dreadlocks, wear low crotched shorts, and backpack around the world. They may feel the need to say every damn thing as if it was a question, constantly inserting the word 'like' while offering self-righteous homilies about how they 'just really want to like help the world?' and how 'we've like got to find like a new way of living?'

They may, in short, be on the verge of becoming a 'lifestyle anarchist'.

Lifestyle anarchism can best be described as the malformed grandchild of that senile old bat, the sixties hippy movement. It sits in an uncomfortable position somewhere between Che Guevara and Ghandi, Bakunin and the Dalai Lama. Lifestyle anarchists like to engage in what they pretentiously call things like 'grass roots happenings' and 'autonomous eco-resistance.' To be a lifestyle anarchist you have to do things like 'dumpster diving' or 'skipping' basically taking egotistical pleasure in a society that reduces you to eating out of a bin.

Don't let a lifestyle anarchist hear you complain about the rent, it's much cooler to 'squat' or even better 'couch surf'. When university tuition fees get raised again or the trees in the park are chopped down in order to build yet another supermarket, it wouldn't do to put it down to the shitty social system we live under and then actively encourage fellow workers to help get rid of it, oh no. For the lifestyle anarchist it's much better to 'occupy' a lecture hall or chain themselves to an oak. That is of course until they get dragged away by a policeman, at which point they can really impress all their lifestyle anarchist mates by telling the copper what a 'brutal like fascist like pig' he is 'working for like the man like that'.

Ah yes 'the man', is this the start of an understanding of what us socialists mean when we say the capitalist class? Not really, the enemy to the lifestyle anarchist is some sort of white European male, intent on keeping us all in a little box by flying planes into world trade centres then blaming it on really nice guys like the Taliban who only ever wanted to fight oppression. These are just some of the reasons among many why the lifestyle anarchists score very high on the rest of the working class's bullshit radar.

Many lifestyle anarchists don't ever seem to work at all, raising the question: when the squats get evicted and the 'skipping' is getting harder, where does all the money come from? One lifestyle anarchist I met was very vague about how she actually kept herself financially afloat, for the year or so

she had spent hitch-hiking around Europe, preferring to answer the question with a patronising 'you don't actually need lots of money you know'. 'Yes.' I felt like saying, 'but then you didn't find your two iPods and your laptop in a skip now did you?' I never found out what her parents did for a living, (or didn't do in the case of the capitalist class). I was forced to leave it, we were 'couch surfing' in her house at the time and I suspected that if I really chose to assert my kindly granted 'right to free speech' it wouldn't be long before she asserted her 'right to private property'. It is for this reason that I am tempted to make my first experience of 'couch surfing' also my last.

## What other anarchists think

Trotsky once described anarchists as 'liberals with bombs', whereas the lifestyle anarchists would be better described as 'liberals with bins'. Trotsky of course had good reason to dislike anarchists, like Bakunin for example who for all his faults provided some very useful warnings about the dangers of authoritarianism in the working class movement, warnings a lot less applicable to Marx than to the likes of Lenin and Trotsky. While the lifestyle anarchists are keen to point out how 'free from dogma' they are, their complete lack of theory means they are prepared to uncritically help in the campaigns of any pseudo-socialist, Leninist party going.

It is of course unfair to equate lifestyle anarchism directly with the anarchist movement as a whole. For all its faults at least most strands of anarchism attempt a class analysis. At least some anarchists see the problems inherent in society as stemming from the fundamental features of



that society, i.e., wage labour, production for profit, class rule, and the solution lying in the abolition of these same things. Indeed it is interesting to see the old dog anarchists' reaction to this silly and incessantly annoying puppy chasing its own tail. On the one hand they like to encourage it for its 'direct action' and 'grass roots defiance' but even they are compelled to comment on the futility of it all.

Of course we socialists have nothing against people who want to raid through supermarket skips in order to help cut down on food bills. Having done it myself I can honestly say it's incredible what supermarkets chuck away. I once found a bin bag full of popcorn that was only a week out of date in a Marks and Spencer skip.

Nor do we have anything against those that choose to squat. It's another example of the ridiculous nature of capitalism that perfectly good homes should stay unoccupied while people sleep on the streets, just so a landlord can wait till the property prices rise. Where we have a problem is that for all the talk that lifestyle anarchists and others like them make about their actions being a means to an end, it invariably becomes an end in itself – people preferring to pose with their heads in skips or faces wrapped in kaftans without ever trying to actually understand why the world is the way it is.

**JOHNNY MERCER**





## What environmentalists are up against

**O**n the face of it the environmentalist movement has a lot of things in its favour. It would be difficult to find fault in their concerns about how the planet is being abused. Global warming, deforestation and pollution are real areas of concern for

anyone who examines how modern society is developing. Where socialists would differ from environmental activists is in two major areas. Firstly, in their analysis of what causes the problems and, secondly, what is the solution to the problems.

Quite often environmental activists make the assumption that the problems are caused by social ignorance and that the solution can come about by a series of legal enactments that would save the planet from its present dangers. Socialists would repudiate such a simplistic analysis. Let us look at one of the major concerns of environmentalists and socialists alike – the deforestation of the Amazon area.

“Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has increased almost six-fold since last year despite government promises to reduce the destruction according to data released yesterday. Satellite images obtained by the National Institute for Special Research reveal 595 sq km (230 sq miles) of deforestation in March and April of this year. Figures from the Brazilian government show a 27 per cent increase in deforestation of the world’s largest rain forest from August to April” (*Times*, 20 May).

This deforestation is not caused by social ignorance. All major governments are aware of the problem, but they are also aware that in order to keep capitalist profits on the rise they must have timber from the Amazon and the clearing of the forest for the growth of crops and the rearing of cattle. “In 30 or so years, we have gone from zero to 400,000 heads of cattle,” boasted Onofre, president of the local ranchers association. Nowadays everybody says we have to preserve the forest. But when we arrived nobody knew we had to protect anything we had to deforest. We chopped the trees down so we could feed our animals, our cattle.”... Back on his ranch, Onofre reflected on his hopes that Brazil’s Congress would approve a controversial bill altering the forest code and reducing the amount of rainforest Amazon landowners had to protect” (*Observer*, 22 May).

The local farmers and cattle raisers can heave a sigh of relief at the latest piece of news from their government. “Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies has voted to ease restrictions on the amount of land farmers must preserve as forest. The amendment also grants amnesties for previous deforestation” (*BBC News*, 25 May).

The drive for more and more profits make it essential that the Amazon landowners continue their policy of forest clearance. The importers of timber, cattle and agriculture products also cry out for more deforestation. While the profit motive remains, all attempts by the environmental movement to restrict the development of capitalism in the Amazon area is futile. Only the establishment of world socialism can stop this insidious destruction of our planet. **RD**



## Profits before petitions

“PROFIT BEFORE planet. Who is making deals with your government?” read the front page of the leaflet from Friends of the Earth that dropped through people’s letterboxes recently. Their answer:

“Oil companies. Supermarkets. Petro-chemical firms. Airlines. Globally they spend millions of pounds undermining environmental policy. Big businesses spend serious money on advertising and PR telling us that they are doing their bit for the environment. But away from the public eye they’re spending many millions holding back environmental progress. Airlines are spending millions to persuade governments to expand airports. Petro-chemical companies are blocking environmentally friendly measures because of the cost to them. Oil companies are funding ‘independent thinktanks’, designed to undermine serious climate change research. And they are all doing it for one thing. Profit.”

True, all too true. But the big businesses concerned are only doing what they were set up to do – preserve and increase the wealth of their shareholders. This is an economic imperative as well as a legal obligation. The directors and executives of a business who did not seek to maximise profits and grow bigger could face legal action from its shareholders. More importantly, it would also risk going under in the battle of competition as, if it didn’t seek to maximise profits, it would not accumulate enough funds to invest in the new productive equipment and methods that it must if it is produce cheaper or, at least, as cheaply as its competitors.

This competitive striving for profits is built-in to capitalism. The accumulation of more and more capital out of profits is in fact what capitalism is all about. The legal obligation on businesses to do this is a reflection of this basic economic mechanism of capitalism.

So what do Friends of the Earth propose to do about it? Campaign against the whole profit system and for a society in which there would be no profit-seeking businesses controlling production because productive resources would have become the common heritage of all and be used to directly provide for people’s needs?

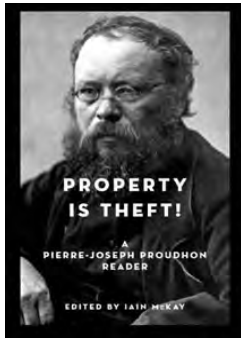
No, not at all. They accept the profit system and merely offer to restrain profit-seeking activities of big businesses by lobbying against their excesses. “We have nearly 40 year’s campaigning and political lobbying experience. So we know how to take on, and beat, the corporate bullies.” They claim an “ability to influence change” and that “left to their own devices, big businesses will simply not put the planet before profits. But there are two things you can do today to make them act.”

First, make a monthly donation to them of £3 a month. Second, sign a “campaign action card” to be delivered to David Cameron at Number 10, saying: “I am therefore calling on you and your Government to put the interests of people and our planet first – and not allow yourselves to be bullied by big business.” This is asking for the impossible. No government has, nor ever will, put people before profits. Their role is, precisely, to establish or maintain the best conditions for profit-making. The cards will just end up in the rubbish bin all government departments will have for such petitions.

Having said this, governments sometimes do intervene, in the overall capitalist interest, to restrain the activities of some business or industry where these activities are endangering the interests of all other businesses and industries. But they can work this out for themselves without the lobbying of no doubt well-meaning charities.

**Anarchist free-marketeer**

*Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology.* Ed. Iain McKay. AK Press. 2011



Proudhon came to fame in 1840 through a pamphlet *What is Property?* in which he declared that “property is theft”. Actually, this wasn’t as radical as it might seem

since what he was criticising was the private ownership of land. This was something which, later, supporters of capitalism such as JS Mill and Henry George also criticised and proposed to remedy by, respectively, land nationalisation and a single tax on rent. Proudhon didn’t even go that far; he advocated access for everyone to an equal amount of land.

Anarchists see him as their founding father as in this pamphlet he declared himself to be an “anarchist”, but by this he meant that he was opposed to government, even a democratically-constituted one, making rules about the production and distribution of wealth. He was (and remained till he died in 1865) a free marketeer, bitterly opposed to “communism” in the same terms and language as other free marketeers.

He has been called an “anarcho-capitalist” but this would be going too far as he was opposed to capitalism. “Anarchist free marketeer” would be fairer. His opposition to capitalism, however, was in the name of self-employed artisans who capitalism was

**Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory**



**The Socialist Standard examines their case**

reducing to working for wages for an employer. His proposed solution was that these should unite in “associations” (basically, cooperatives) which should exchange their products at their labour-time values. To this end he proposed a Bank of Exchange which would issue labour-money against products as well as providing interest-free loans to workers’ cooperatives it judged viable.

Iain McKay in his 50-page introduction puts a positive spin on this by stating that “Proudhon was an early advocate of what is now termed market socialism – an economy of competing co-operatives and self-employed workers”, adding “some incorrectly argue that market socialism is not socialist”. Some do indeed, but correctly. “Market socialism” is the economic equivalent of a square circle. But it gets worse. Proudhon envisaged his system coming into being gradually as the workers’ cooperatives, aided by free credit from his Bank of Exchange, conquered more and more sectors of the economy. He was opposed to strikes. In other words, he was a gradualist as well as a currency crank.

After being initially impressed by him (who he met and discussed with in Paris in 1844) Marx eventually realised that Proudhon, for all his insight that under the wages system the producers were exploited, was on the wrong track. When in 1846 Proudhon published his *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère*. Marx wrote (in French) a reply *La Misère de la philosophie*, translated into English under the title *The Poverty of Philosophy*, the first public exposition of his views on economic matters.

Large extracts from Proudhon’s book are included in this anthology, with McKay’s sometimes tendentious footnotes. But McKay is on to a loser here. There is no way that Proudhon can be presented as a serious exponent either of the way capitalism works or even of the history of economic thought, certainly not when compared with Marx. Today, in fact, most anarchists accept Marx’s analysis of capitalism if not his politics.

Some anarchists might find this 800-page anthology useful. Those of them who are communists will discover, as they plough through his rambling writings, that Proudhon was a life-long and bitter opponent of “communism” and of the principle “from each according to their ability,

to each according to their needs”. If they still want to regard him as one of their founding fathers that’s their prerogative. For us he’s an anti-socialist.

**ALB**

**International politics**

*Marxism and World Politics: Contesting Global Capitalism.* Ed by Alexander Anievas. Routledge, 2011



One of the roles of academics is to clarify the concepts used in everyday talk. The trouble is that today they are obliged to come up with something new, so now we have “MIRT” –

Marxist International Relations Theory – , though most of those involved seem to be Trotskyist or Trotskyoid.

The basic subject is interesting. Why, when there is only one global economic system, is the world divided into separate states? Is this something capitalism created or did it simply inherit it? Is it intrinsically necessary to capitalism? Could capitalism exist with a single world state? If not, why not?

These are discussed by the different authors in this collection of articles. The clearest and most informative, in terms of setting out the issues simply, is that by Neil Davidson. Most of the others employ an obscure terminology which no-one outside academia, indeed outside the small circle of those discussing MIRT, uses. As one of them revealingly, but apparently unself-consciously, noted:

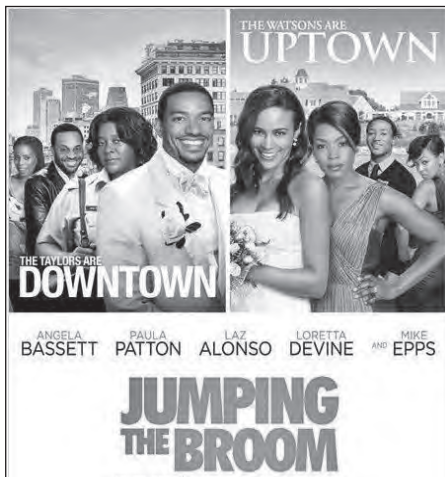
“A fellow traveller amongst Marxist circles – though not a Marxist himself – once asked us what was all the fuss about U&CD and ‘the international’. In exasperation with the whole debate, he threw up his hands declaring: ‘This uneven and combined shit is the dog’s whistle that only Marxists can hear!’”

True, very true, as long as you substitute “Trotskyist” for “Marxist”.

**ALB**



## Jumping the Broom



Jumping the Broom is a black (and you can bet there's no pun intended) comedy about class distinction in America's black community.

Sabrina Watson (Paula Patton) a successful lawyer, from a wealthy family, falls for Jason (Laz Alonso), a Wall Street wiz-kid, whose mother Pam (Loretta Devine) is a postal worker. Tensions flare the day before the wedding, when the two families meet for the first time. Pam feels ultra defensive, especially when she observes the Watson's home on Martha's Vineyard, which she compares to the Kennedy compound. When she says grace at supper, the evening before the wedding, Pam sets the tone for the movie by being blatantly insulting.

The crux of the matter becomes her

insistence that the 'Happy Couple' "Jump the Broom" This dates back to when African slaves were not allowed to marry and jumped over a broom, which was the equivalent of a ceremony.

Mrs. Watson (Angela Bassett) is totally opposed to this on the grounds that it was a slave ritual. She informs Pam that her family had never been slaves and, in fact, once owned them. That blacks themselves, sometimes, had black slaves is a little-known fact of American history. Class distinctions and the hostilities they create reach boiling point, causing family secrets, such as Sabrina's real parentage, to be revealed. Disgusted with everything, the bride refuses to marry and flees the scene.

This is where the movie, which is Salim Akil's directional debut, breaks down. When everyone's been rubbed the wrong way and all hitherto concealed feelings are in the open, it becomes kiss and make up and "lets give the audience a happy ending" time. This is hardly believable of any family in such a previously volatile situation. What is believable is that, if capitalists invest in anything, they will want as good a return as they can get. If it means giving the public an unrealistic ending, they will do so.

There is nothing new about class distinctions based on money, nor

hereditary titles among America's black community. In 1948 when Nat King Cole married Maria Ellington, her wealthy aunt, Dr. Charlotte Hawkins, shunned him because, although wealthy at the time, Cole came from a poor family. Dr. Hawkins, coming from a more prosperous one, had founded America's first finishing school for African American ladies and boasted of her friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt. When the happy couple returned from their honeymoon, Hawkins paid for a banquet in their honour as she considered it her duty, but refused to attend.

Capitalism is as divisive as it is corrupting whether the community be black, white, red, yellow or any other colour, economics will always cause distinctions between people.

**STEVE SHANNON**

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## Choosing To Die

THESE DAYS, the word 'controversial' is used more as a selling-point for television programmes than to describe their content or any reactions provoked. So, the BBC's documentary on

assisted suicide Terry Pratchett: Choosing

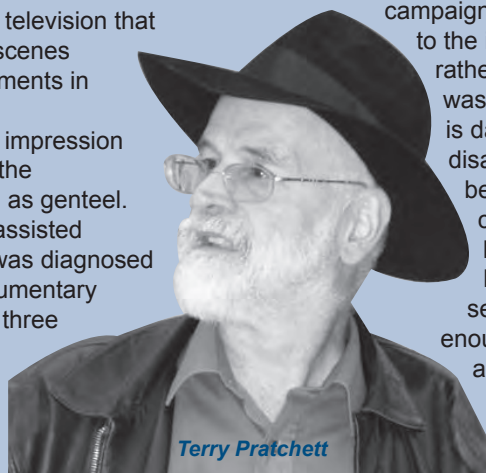
To Die was promoted by slots on their website, Breakfast and Newsnight telling us how contentious and important the show would be. There was even a lurid Radio Times cover announcing it would contain "5 minutes of television that will change our lives". This referred to its scenes of businessman Peter Smedley's final moments in Switzerland's Dignitas centre.

Although some of the publicity gave the impression that we would be watching a video nasty, the programme itself would best be described as genteel. Presenter Terry Pratchett has advocated assisted suicide for those able to decide since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, making the documentary more personal than most. He met up with three people with incurable conditions, two of whom decided to travel to Switzerland, where assisted dying is legal. Those thinking about using Dignitas to end their

lives were shown calmly and rationally discussing the issue with their families. Their bravery in choosing how to die was, paradoxically, life-affirming.

According to the Daily Telegraph, the vast majority of complaints were made before the programme was aired. Many of Choosing To Die's opponents accused it of being "pro-assisted suicide propaganda", as if every programme should blandly present both sides of an argument. The Newsnight discussion attempted to be more balanced, with Jeremy Paxman uncomfortably chairing an unfocused discussion with campaigners on each side. Some interesting criticisms were made by disability rights

campaigner Liz Carr. Her arguments apply to the issue as it exists within capitalism rather than assisted dying per se. She was concerned that assisted suicide is dangerous in a society which sees disability as negative, and that it could be a tempting option for those who can't afford specialist support for life-limiting conditions. However, as Dignitas charges over £3,000, their service is only open to those wealthy enough to afford their own palliative care anyway. In capitalism, it's not only your quality of life which is dictated by how rich you are, but also your quality of death.



Terry Pratchett

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## Meetings

### Clapham

Saturday **9 July**, from 10am  
Book Sale  
Sunday **10 July**, 4-7pm  
A WORLD WITHOUT MONEY  
Speaker: Dick Field  
Sunday **31 July** 4-7pm  
EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS WRONG!  
Speaker: Simon Wigley  
Discussion and refreshments  
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN

### Glasgow

Wednesday **20 July**, 8.30pm  
ANOTHER LOOK AT MARXISM  
Speaker: R.Donnely  
Community Central Halls,  
304 Maryhill Road.

### Manchester

Monday **25 July** 8.30pm  
Discussion on poverty  
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre,  
M4 1PW

### East Anglia

Saturday **30 July** 2 - 5pm  
WHAT IS SOCIALISM AND HOW TO GET THERE?  
Speakers: Darren Poynton; Stair.  
Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road  
Norwich NR1 4HY  
(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar.)  
All welcome.

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site:  
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## Fircroft College, Birmingham

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Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals, Friday evening to Sunday afternoon): £130. Concessionary rate: £80 . Non-residential cost (including all meals): £50.

To book a place, send a cheque for £10 (payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain) to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. Or, use the paypal facility at [www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/donate.html](http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/donate.html)  
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## Declaration of Principles

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

### Object

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

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

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

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

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





## Ring-Fenced

NO DOUBT we shall be returning to the Olympics in this column before the whole jamboree kicks off next July. For now we can just comment on a couple of aspects of the build-up.

Back in March there was an undignified spat between the British Olympic Association (BOA) and the London Olympic Organising Committee (LOCOG). BOA gets 20 percent of the profit from the Games, and argued that this should be calculated on the basis of the Olympics only, and so exclude any losses from staging the Paralympics. But the International Olympic Committee ruled against this idea, thus reducing the cut received by the BOA and increasing the amount kept by LOCOG.

And LOCOG and others won't be making money just from this decision. For next door to the tube and train stations at Stratford is Westfield Stratford City, a huge shopping mall, in fact the largest urban shopping centre in Europe, due to open this September. The expectation (or hope) is that 70 percent of Olympic visitors will arrive at Stratford station, where they will walk to the Olympic park via Westfield. This will mean hundreds of thousands of visitors (and potential shoppers) each day the Olympics run.

After the Olympics, this mega-mall will still offer 300 shops, 50 food outlets, three hotels, a multi-screen cinema and a casino. It will also contain a '24-hour lifestyle street', whatever that is. If all goes well for the company that owns it, it will become one of the country's top ten shopping destinations. So there will be gold in them there tills, not just at medal ceremonies.

PB



## Britain and the Common Market

THE COMMON Market has become a burning issue for British capitalism. After being convinced for years that it would fail, the Government has now belatedly realised that it may after all be here to stay. But so late have they left it, and so long have they dithered, that if they are to do something about joining they must do it quickly.

Otherwise, it will be impossible for them to jump on the bandwagon at all.

Hence Mr. Macmillan's somewhat panicky efforts to get matters straight with the Commonwealth and his undignified haste to prepare the ground at home.

For it is clear that the issue of whether Britain should go into the Common Market is causing a lot of heart-searching in many quarters. Not only is the Government worried, but industry, the Commonwealth, the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, even the trade unions. And not only worried, but

very much divided. Even allowing for the fact that the Labour Party has long abandoned all pretence of being anything but an appendage of capitalism, it is indeed strange, for example, to see Mr. Michael Foot and Viscount Hinchinbrooke lined up against Britain's entry, at the same time as Mr. Shinwell vies with the *Daily Express* in concern for the Commonwealth. And on the other side, Mr. Woodrow Wyatt, Rev. Donald Soper, and Lord Home certainly make an odd collection!

As far as industry is concerned, to the giants like I.C.I., the whole question is academic. They are going into the Common Market regardless of what decision the British Government may take. Confident of being able to compete on equal terms with the Europeans, the only thing they are afraid of is being left outside. On the other hand, there are many industries and firms that are very much afraid of meeting European competition and who are consequently violently opposed to going in.

(Editorial, *Socialist Standard*, July 1961)

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# Voice from the Back

## All Right For Some

That we live in a society that has world hunger, unemployment and homelessness is hardly a matter of dispute, but that is only a series of problems that confront the useful members of society. For others there are no social problems. "Paris Hilton has been spotted house hunting in Malibu. The heiress and reality TV star seemed to have taken a particular shine to a luxury pink stucco mansion with a hefty price tag. The rental property is reportedly costing \$80,000 to rent per month. With four bedrooms and four bathrooms, the beachside mansion would make the perfect summer hangout for the LA socialite and her many friends. Paris also checked out other luxury villas, all close to the beach with gorgeous sea views. 'Just got home. Saw some beautiful properties, so it's going to be a hard choice to make,' she tweeted later that day" (*Yahoo News*, 12 May). Could someone please tweet her that she is a useless parasitic exploiter?

## The Middle Class Myth

In reviewing Owen Jones's book *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*, the journalist Carol Midgely makes some valid points. "The Thatcher experiment, Jones says, repositioned working class not as something to be proud of but something to escape from. Being middle class was the holy grail. The dockers, miners, skilled factory workers and car workers of Britain have watched powerless as their jobs disappeared or were sent abroad" (*Times*, 28 May). Here we have



Jones and Midgely making the usual mistake about class. All men and women

who, because of their lack of property, are forced to seek work for a wage or a salary are members of the working class. Whether you work in a factory or an office, whether you push a barrow or a pen if you have to seek a wage or a salary in order to live you are a member of the working class.

## A Dog's Life

From time to time newspapers run obituaries of famous men and women but we had one recently for a dog! It was a rather special mutt though. You see it was a millionaire. The Maltese dog called Trouble had been left \$12 million by the New York hotel mogul Leona Helmsley. "Legal battles ensued and a judge cut Trouble's inheritance to \$2 million. She was placed with Carl Lekic, the general manager of the Helmsley Sandcastle Hotel, in Florida, who had played with her many times. He was paid \$5,000 a month for the privilege. He told the trustees that Trouble required \$100,000 a year for a security guard (the dog had received many death and kidnapping threats). \$18,000 for vet costs, \$1,200 for food and \$8,000 for grooming" (*Times*, 10 June). All this



insanity is happening in a world where millions are trying to survive on \$1.25 a day.

## The Class Divide

When socialists speak of class division we are often accused of being outdated, but here are recent figures that prove our point. "Last year was another good year for millionaires – though their pace of growth is slowing.

According to a new report by Boston Consulting Group out today, the number

of millionaire households in the world grew by 12.2% in 2010, to 12.5 million (BCG defines millionaires as those with \$1 million or more in investible assets, excluding homes, luxury goods and ownership in one's own company). The U.S. continues to lead the world in millionaires, with 5.2 million millionaire households, followed by Japan with 1.5 million millionaire households, China with 1.1 million and the U.K. with 570,000. ... The most important trend, however, is the global wealth distribution. According to the report, the world's millionaires represent 0.9% of the world's population but control 39% of the world's wealth, up from 37% in 2009" (*Wall Street Journal*, 31 May). Yes, startling though it may seem – less than 1 percent of the world's population own 39 percent of the wealth.

## Law And Disorder

We are used to reading of gallant and dedicated police officers rounding up criminals and packing them off to prison, but what

are we to make of this news item? "Members of Orlando Food Not Bombs were arrested Wednesday when police said they violated a city ordinance by feeding the homeless in Lake Eola Park. Jessica Cross, 24, Benjamin Markeson, 49, and Jonathan 'Keith' McHenry, 54, were arrested at 6:10 p.m. on a charge of violating the ordinance restricting group feedings in public parks. McHenry is a co-founder of the international Food Not Bombs movement, which began in the early 1980s" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 2 June). Feeding the homeless? What a despicable crime. Truly capitalism is a crazy society.

## FREE LUNCH

