

socialist standard

September 2011
Vol. 107 No. 1285
£1.50

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

Burning shame

Why rioters picked the wrong target



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SEPTEMBER 2011

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

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 9 October** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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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.



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SEPTEMBER 2011

Editorial

Why society is falling apart

IN 1997, as New Labour was first being elected, we carried a series of articles about the future of capitalism. In the light of the London riots, which spread with devastating effects through many other towns and cities across England a few weeks ago, it seems timely to reproduce some of the most salient points this month. They seem even more apposite now than they were then, and are all the more tragic that they were so predictable.

The social and moral codes which developed alongside the rise of the capitalist class during the system's ascendancy have been undermined. The nuclear family, the bourgeois work ethic and the sanctity of private property have all taken a battering under pressure from the rampant and ruthless individualism unleashed by the market itself. For any system of society to survive and prosper it needs its own codes and regulations of behaviour, but those that developed within bourgeois society are now being ceaselessly undermined.

This putrefying of capitalism's social basis and codes has taken on a number of forms, all of which are symptomatic of a society which is, to coin a phrase, 'ill at ease with itself':

- The ongoing break-up of community relationships and the atomisation of the individual. This has been particularly characterised by the development of a competitive "every person for themselves" type culture as the dominant one in society, and by the appearance and consolidation of seemingly unbridgeable generation gaps.

- The massive explosions of crime and drug taking, phenomena which were once peripheral or isolated in pockets, but which are now generalised throughout the market economy.

- The increases in violence and social disorder, spurred on by the horror and violence infecting the media (especially for

children), and the re-appearance – generally for the first time since capitalism's turbulent infancy – of mass rioting on a regular basis, which has turned major cities at the heart of capitalism into uncontrollable war zones..

- The continuing, if not increasing, political vacuity of the capitalist class which has been mirrored in the rise of a nihilistic 'no future' culture among large sections of young dispossessed workers who see no progress and no hope beyond their pint glass or next 'hit'.

- The massive corruption of capitalism's political apparatus, which is particularly evident in Britain, but which is in fact a feature of the modern nation state virtually across the globe.

It is in these ways that capitalism is undermining the principles and continued existence of collective life . . . and all the signs are that it will continue and probably deepen, for there are few if any forces or tendencies within capitalism operating in the opposite direction.

Filling the prisons is no solution on many grounds, not least of which is cost, and no government following this line has yet really succeeded in reversing the process which the market has started. None of the political appeals to "family values" are likely to succeed either as the very continued existence of capitalism and the forces it has unleashed make that near impossible.

Appealing to some sort of higher morality or set of values within the context of the market is clutching at straws, a long way from a considered and practical response to the problem. If the social decadence infecting society is to be overturned it has to be tackled at source – and that means the abolition of the market and the poisonous relationships which spring from it.

No Man Is An Island...

SOCIALISM WON'T be got by evolution but by intelligent design, though it would be nice to think there was an easier way. The political shortcuts turned out to be circular, but some people never give up hope that technology might open up some fast track to the Promised Land.

Of course there has been huge technological progress, but behind each screaming wave-front of optimism trails the long, Doppler-shifted whine of hindsight. For all the smart phones and sushi bars we're still slaves chained to the day job, compared to whom the playboys and girls of the Neolithic seem to have enjoyed great diet and health, endless holidays and free art classes.

The plough and the printing press were key technological developments in two of the most essential human activities of all, production of material goods and distribution of information. The whole trajectory of capitalism has been towards the efficiency and economy of scale of mass production and distribution, together with their correlates, state-imposed mass ideologies. When the horrors of Nazism and Soviet Communism turned people off 'mass' concepts, and rising affluence meant people couldn't be fobbed off with production-line uniformity, a new cult of the individual was born.

At first this 'lifestyle' capitalism was little more than a marketing scam. We could 'individually' commute to our individual replica jobs, eat our individual replica food in our individual replica residential boxes, while watching mass-entertainment on our individual idiot-boxes. Advertisers called us princely consumers and we bought the flattery along with the products. The more we acquired a bit of individual 'class', the more we forgot the collective power of class consciousness. The more the notion of individualism was fostered, the more sheep-like we became. We didn't mature into a society of individuals, we fractured into an atomised mass, our former commonality too *vulgar* to preserve.

Technology is embedding the illusion. Under Soviet rule dissidents were forced to resort to self-publishing their own material, a difficult and risky business known as *samizdat*, or *self-made*. The desktop publishing and internet revolutions have given us all the technology for this kind of independent self-expression. But people forget we are all products of society and therefore not so very different, so the upshot of all this self-publishing, blogging, Facebook and supposedly interactive Web 2.0 is that we have ended up with infinite versions of uniformity. Homogenous variety, *samizdat* become *same-as-that*.

If we don't see the illusion it's because we don't have the attention-span to look at the big picture but only into a mirror. Instead of opening the doors to infinity we are mostly using the internet to create a narcissistic bubble around ourselves, a self-promoting solipsism which closes out every fact or idea which contradicts our own world-view. And the advertisers are slaving to make it more so. People now get different results for the same Google search due to 'personality' filters they don't even know about (*New Scientist*, 23 July). Each person's *information environment* is determined not only by their own conscious likes and dislikes but also by automated

trackers deciding what is good for them.

Astoundingly, a similar thing could happen in the world of production, with the development of individual 3D printing, now being called by some the second Industrial Revolution. When the *Socialist Standard* first reported on this (August 2005) it was at an early stage, able to turn out fragile trinkets. Now it is possible to 'print' sophisticated equipment using composite materials with complex circuitry. The first 3D-printed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle has just been successfully flown (*New Scientist*, 30 July) and enthusiasts predict that in the future robots will walk out of printers, fully functional with batteries included.

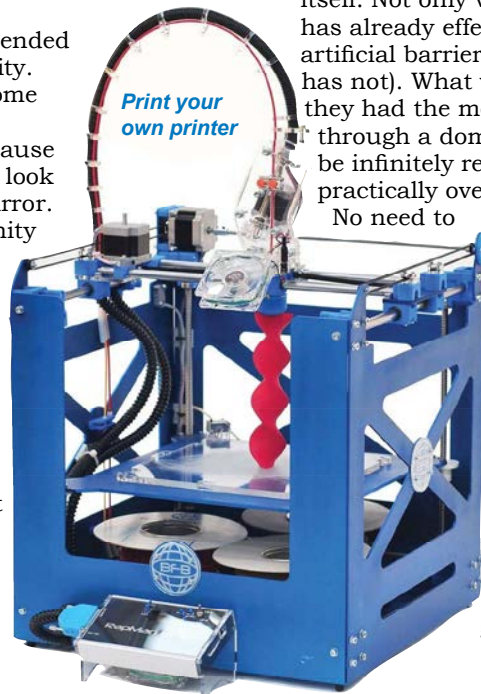
If they were only foreseeing a revolution in new research and development at the lab-bench, the optimists could well be right. The lag between plan and prototype is certain to decrease by at least an order of magnitude. But no, they are talking about nothing less than the 'democratisation' of production, just as the *digerati* talked about the democratisation of knowledge through the internet. Even supposing 3D printers one day become as cheap as computers, this is still to confuse democracy, where people act together, with the cult of the individual, where people act alone en masse.

While the new parochialism of the internet involves huge waste of heat and storage in order to deliver infinitely slight variations of the same thing, so each person under the illusion of personal choice may end up printing separately what they could have produced collectively. This would be like boiling a single serving of rice in separate pots, one grain at a time. Capitalism is quite capable of this sort of stupidity if there's money in it.

If the rich can afford to print whatever they want, it follows that whatever mass-production still remains must exist only to cater for the poor, with all the quality and variety that implies. The poverty gap could then become unimaginably wide. In response to this, the poor majority might use the technology, with 'hacked' designs to get round regulations, to print their own guns and ammunition.

The most significant aspect of 3D printers is that they can 'print' themselves. They can't print food or organic compounds though, or things larger than themselves. If 3D printing is the second industrial revolution, then nanotechnology is potentially the third. Eric Drexler is famous for his inspirational writing about the possibilities of nanotech, but even he overlooked the obvious political implication of a means of production that can reproduce itself. Not only would it abolish material scarcity (which has already effectively been done) but also any possible artificial barrier to individual abundance (which certainly has not). What worker would consent to slavery when they had the means to provide all their material needs through a domestic replicating device, which itself could be infinitely replicated? Capitalism would collapse, practically overnight.

No need to get too excited though. Nobody has come close to creating a self-replicating nano device, and like nuclear fusion it may remain permanently years away. Even if it could be done, such a replicator could run away with itself and convert the entire Earth into 'grey goo'. Even if it were made safe, the ruling class would have every reason to ensure that the technology was never developed. Even if they couldn't suppress it, material abundance does not imply socialist consciousness any more than knowledge implies wisdom. It's no use to live as a king in an empty palace. One way or another, socialists have still got work to do.





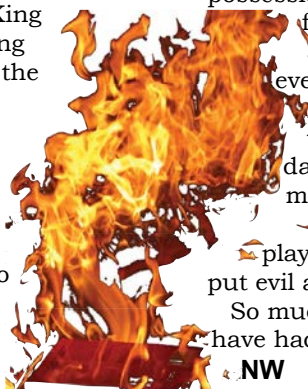
Holy Smoke

IN 1933 THE Nazis attempted to obliterate what they saw as anti-German thinking with a book burning campaign. Fortunately ideas are not so easily killed off and book burning as a form of censorship was abandoned. Or so we thought. Then earlier this year along came the wacky Florida pastor, Terry Jones, who decided that the thoughts of a non-existent god in the Koran were a threat to the thoughts of his own non-existent god - and rectified the situation by burning the Koran.

Now another Christian preacher in Wales, the Rev Geraint ap Iorwerth, has been at it too. In a novel twist though he's not been burning the Koran, or even the works of Marx and Engels. He's been cutting out and burning the bits of the bible that he doesn't like.

It's true there is some nasty stuff in the King James bible. Particularly those bits justifying mass murder and slavery, and advising on the treatment of women. The Rev ap Iorwerth's boss, however, the Bishop of Bangor, who presumably believes that God knows what he is talking about, is not impressed with the good Reverend's actions. "It's not given to us to pick and choose. Sometimes the most challenging parts are those we need to wrestle with most".

Well, good luck with that Bishop. We don't have room for many suggestions, but how about getting stuck into the following.



God's view on genocide for example. Despite telling us "Thou shalt not kill" his instructions on how to deal with the Amalakites was "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Samuel. 15. 3).

His instructions on how to deal with 'prophets and dreamers' of other gods. "Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people." (Deuteronomy 13. 8-9).

God's advice on purchasing slaves. "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for ever". (Leviticus 25.44-46).

And what to do if a woman is not a virgin when she marries. "Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you." (Deuteronomy 22.21).

So much for a loving God. The Rev ap Iorwerth must have had one hell of a bonfire.

NW



\$8 Million Gold-Plated Rolls Redefines Excess Nothing says class warfare quite like an armored, gold-plated car that costs \$8 million:

<http://tinyurl.com/42akog9>

Psychologist and social scientist Dacher Keltner says the rich really are different, and not in a good way: Their life experience makes them less empathetic, less altruistic, and generally more selfish "We have now done 12 separate studies measuring empathy in every way imaginable, social behavior in every way, and some work on compassion and it's the same story," he said. "Lower class people just show more empathy, more prosocial behavior, more compassion, no matter how you look at it:

<http://tinyurl.com/3mlnaq4>

Starving parents are marrying off girls for food as famine devastates Africa. Nearly half of kids in Kenya and Somalia had not eaten at all for a day this week, research reveals today and desperate mums and dads are selling girls as young as nine for just £100. Under-18s cannot legally marry in Kenya and child brides face terrible abuse, but World Vision UK's Philippa Lei said: "Girls can traditionally be sold for a bride price, cattle or food. But now girls are being sold off much earlier.

<http://tinyurl.com/3hbcf8r>

On Saturday night, as rioters in Tottenham threw fireworks and bottles at police officers, one man shouted, "This is our battle!" When asked what he meant, the man, Paul Rook, 47, explained that he felt the rioters were taking on "the ruling class."

<http://tinyurl.com/427a2q2>

"Violence in the streets, aimed at the wealthy. That's what I worry about." That was what an unidentified billionaire told Robert Frank of the Wall Street Journal a while back. Rich people are scared of global unrest, Frank reported, citing a survey by Insite Security and IBOPE Zogby International of people with liquid assets of \$1 million or more (translation: folks who have or can get their hands on \$1 million in cash fairly easily) that says 94 percent of the wealthy are concerned about "global unrest" around the world. He noted: Of course, Insite has an interest in getting the paranoid rich to beef up their security. Still, the numbers are backed up by other trends seen throughout the world of wealth today: the rich keeping a lower profile, hiring \$230,000 guard dogs, and arming their yachts, planes and cars with military-style security features:

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

"We are all human. God created us from one dirt. Why can we not marry each other, or love each other?" Halima Mohammadi, an Afghan teenager whose love for another teenager, Rafi Mohammed, set off a riot by flouting their village's tradition of arranged marriages. "What we would ask is that the government should kill both of them." Kher Mohammed, her father:

<http://tinyurl.com/4xnhrt7>

Famine in the Horn of Africa – AGAIN



ALTHOUGH THE current drought conditions are affecting a wide area in the Horn of Africa including Kenya and Ethiopia, the main media focus has once again fallen on Somalia, a country with a complicated and turbulent colonial history. The story is always the same: following a

devastating drought there is a famine; the problem is not lack of food but lack of the ability to pay for food or lack of access to land to grow it. The world is stockpiled with food but giving it away would negatively affect the market.

This time around we hear that 3.5 million Somalis and 12 million Ethiopians within the drought region are under threat of starvation. Droughts are not new to the region, they are a regularly occurring phenomenon, but with the UN Famine Early Warning System in place for a number of years now, expectations would surely have increased for improved handling of the situation. Warnings did go out early this year predicting starving millions in the south of Ethiopia but the regime continued with its policy of selling and leasing great swathes of land to other countries to grow crops for foreign consumption. Last year 10,000 tons of rice were exported to Saudi Arabia alone.

Thomas Mountain, a US journalist who has lived in Eritrea since 2006, comments that while southern Ethiopians are suffering the worst drought and famine for 60 years those in the north are hungry because of 'near record high food prices.' This he contrasts with what is happening in neighbouring Eritrea, which is a result of totally different governmental policies. Here, within a handful of years, a move from rain-fed crops to a micro dam-fed irrigation system has led to better, more secure crops and dramatically falling prices of staple grains. According to the World Bank, life-expectancy improvements are 'dramatic' and Eritrea is one of the countries which will meet

the Millennium Development Goals especially in the areas of children's health, malaria mortality prevention and AIDS reduction. (<http://www.countercurrents.org/mountain050811.htm>)

News coverage of unfolding events in the area is patchy and can be biased according to allegiances or contracts of employment. Reports of facts on the ground are often distorted, depending on who's pulling the strings. Currently Eritrea is a 'state sponsor of terror' according to Hillary Clinton who claims it supplies weapons to Al-Shabaab in Somalia. As a result, the media can say nothing positive about it.

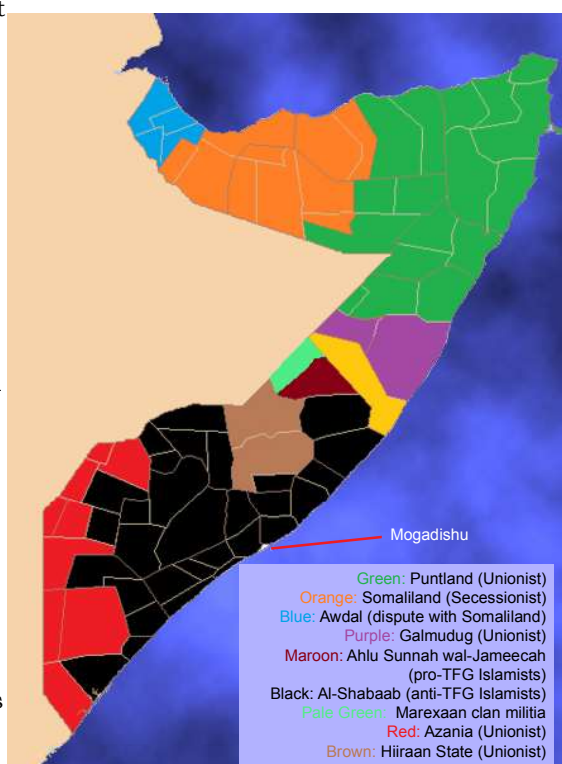
Without doubt, the ongoing civil war in Somalia is exacerbating the crisis affecting so many of its people. The most problematic areas of Somalia for needy recipients of food aid are controlled by Al-Shabaab, a 'rebel organisation with links to Al Qaeda', which is unwilling to allow a number of food-aid agencies access for fear they are infiltrated by the CIA. The CIA is working closely with the official Somali central government in Mogadishu, a government widely recognised to be in control of only a portion of the country.

The whole of this region has suffered long and hard throughout its colonial history and is continuing to suffer as colonial powers attempt to subjugate regimes or leaders of regimes in pursuit of profit through the exploitation of natural resources and land accumulation. As explained succinctly in the article 'Africa, starvation and speculation' in last month's Socialist Standard, the small elites in control of natural resources are only too happy to profit personally while exposing millions to penury and starvation by driving them from their land through international land deals. Different regions of the Horn of Africa are affected in different ways by the diverse conditions on the ground – but whichever way the story is spun, the competition for profit and accumulation underlies the neglect of the population's needs.

Droughts are a well-known fact of life in a number of regions of the world and will continue to affect this region

of Africa. Forecasts predict they will become more severe as problems with climate change increase. But it is not inevitable that there should be famine after drought. Famine results from the denial of land, placing restrictions of the free movement of populations, treating food as commodities and the growing commercialisation of agriculture, especially for export. All this is compounded by bad planning, inadequate water storage and management, poor infrastructure and logistical organisation. Socialism could not prevent natural events such as lack of rainfall (but it could prevent droughts by an adequate infrastructure) but in those circumstances, no one would starve as food would simply be released from warehouses or transported from other parts of the world.

JANET SURMAN





Nothing to offer

"PEOPLE IN general have lost faith in the free-market, Western, democratic order," lamented *Daily Telegraph* columnist Gorge Moore (22 July). "They have not yet, thank God, transferred their faith, as they did in the 1930s, to totalitarianism. They merely feel gloomy and suspicious. But they ask the simple question, 'What's in it for me?', and they do not hear a good answer."

They certainly don't. The mad-marketeers who ruled the roost at the time of Thatcher and Reagan didn't have anything to offer, but at the time many people thought they did. Thatcher openly proclaimed that she intended to destroy "socialism", by which she meant everything associated with the post-war Labour government (nationalisations, NHS, council housing) and her government went a long way towards doing so, even if she was only doing what the economic circumstances of British capitalism required her to do.

Then, in 1991, the USSR collapsed. The partisans of "the free-market, Western, democratic order" were elated. They proclaimed the "end of history" and that "socialism is dead". But what had died was state-monopoly capitalism not socialism (which had never existed in Russia). A "peace dividend" was promised. It never materialised. Instead, there was the First Gulf War, to be followed by the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan by the Western capitalist countries. In 2007 the biggest slump since the 1930s broke out. We're still in it.

Wars, slumps, capitalism as usual. No wonder the likes of George Moore are disoriented and disillusioned. He even entitled his column "I'm starting to think that the Left might actually be right", explaining:

"One of the great arguments of the Left is that what the Right calls 'the free market' is actually a set-up. The rich run a global system that allows them to accumulate capital and pay the lowest possible price for labour. The freedom that results applies only to them. The many simply have to work harder, in conditions that grow ever more insecure, to enrich the few. Democratic politics, which purports to enrich the many, is actually in the pocket of those bankers, media barons and other moguls who run and own everything."

What Moore was lamenting was that the Right (to accept his term) has no answer to this criticism (only slightly caricatural) of the private corporation capitalism they uphold and promote. And they haven't. Capitalism is now more intellectually bankrupt than ever. It has no inspiring vision to rally people, not even "freeing" people from state capitalism. As a result of the way it inevitably works, capitalism has become a dirty word again.

But what is the answer? By "the Left" Moore probably means the supporters of state capitalism (he explicitly states that "the Right" includes "the New Labour of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown"), but the above is a criticism of capitalism which we in the Socialist Party could broadly share, even though we don't consider ourselves a part of the Left precisely because they stand for state capitalism.

We are opposed to private corporate capitalism and to state capitalism, both of which have failed. The answer is a classless society without rich or poor where productive resources have become the common heritage of all so that the production and distribution of the things we need to live and enjoy life can be carried out in accordance with the principle "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". It's the original meaning of socialism before the experience of Russia and Labour governments made it a dirty word. It's high time it became respectable again.

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*Tabloids and
 ruthless reporters
 pre-date
 Murdoch's era by
 many decades.*

RUPERT MURDOCH and his sleazy crew of phone-hacking journalists are easy to hate. But even if Murdoch's media empire crumbles, other media moguls and conglomerates will simply pick up the broken pieces. And tabloid reporters will continue to write titillating stories about celebrities and crime with or without recourse to phone hacking. Murdoch, of course, is hardly the first to build up a newspaper empire. One way to put the current scandal in some historical perspective, is to watch two classic Hollywood movies: *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *Ace in the Hole* (1951).

A Pre-Murdoch Mogul

In his film *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles plays the role of newspaper owner Charles Foster Kane, who he models on the real-life tycoon William Randolph Hearst. The media empire that Hearst built, beginning in the late 19th century, bears more than a superficial resemblance to the present-day empire of Murdoch.

In the film we see the obscene amount of wealth and power concentrated in the hands of Kane and how he uses his

network of newspapers to influence public opinion and politics, to the point of not only cheerleading for war (as Murdoch has often done) but even furnishing a *casus belli* for the Spanish-American War. Kane tells a correspondent, "You provide the prose poems, I'll provide the war."

Even the meddling of newspaper tycoons in politics seems, if anything, worse in the Hearst era as depicted in the film – or at least more blatant. Kane uses his newspapers to build up an image of himself as the people's crusader, and then to launch his own political career, taking on the corrupt politician, Jim Gettys, in the gubernatorial election. His opponent is no chump when it comes to using the press either and beats Kane in the election by exposing his adulterous affair.

For all of its insights into the brutal reality of journalism, the film may give the profession more credit than it deserves. At times Welles seems to imply that Kane's tragedy stems from his veering away from the muckraking journalism of his early years when he even exposed economic scandals that touched on his own business interests.

There is an interesting early scene in the movie where Kane,

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admitting that as a capitalist owner he is just another scoundrel, says his duty as a newspaperman is, “to see to it that decent hardworking people in this community aren’t robbed blind by a pack of money-mad pirates just because they haven’t anybody to look after their interests.” Kane thinks that the fact he has “money and property” makes it possible for him to play this role. And it is hard to tell whether Welles as director thinks that Kane could have looked after the interests of hardworking people, or whether he recognizes the absurdity of a man with “money and property” defending the interests of those who lack both.

Kane may not in fact be as split in two between good journalist and bad capitalist as he claims, for in the same scene he adds, “If I don’t look after the interests of the underprivileged maybe somebody else will, maybe someone without money and property.” This seems to imply that the split between Kane the stockowner and Kane the journalist corresponds to the difference between his narrow interests as an individual capitalist and his broader interests as member of the capitalist class—two different shades of greed. If this is a point Welles was trying to make, he was a bit too subtle for his own good.

Ironically, the campaign Hearst led to suppress *Citizen Kane* did more to expose the newspaper tycoon’s obscene influence on

society than the film itself. Hearst did not succeed in physically destroying Welles’ film as he had tried to do, but he did use the full power of his newspapers and columnists to coerce movie theatres not to screen it.

A Wilder View of Things

The 1951 film *Ace in the Hole*, written and directed by Billy Wilder, centres on a character far lower on the journalistic food chain, the newspaper reporter Chuck Tatum (Kirk Douglas).

The film opens with Tatum arriving in Albuquerque, New Mexico and begging his way onto the staff of a local newspaper, *The Albuquerque Sun-Bulletin*. Tatum’s only hope at this stage in his career, after being fired from a string of newspaper jobs, is to chance upon some sensational story that will land him back at a big-city paper.

His opportunity finally arrives a year later when he is the first reporter to discover that a man, Leo Minosa, has been trapped inside an ancient Indian burial mound. Tatum is quick to realize that each day that Leo remains stuck is another day of exclusive reporting. To elbow out other tabloid sharks and drag out the rescue operation as long as possible, Tatum enlists the services of a corrupt sheriff up for re-election.

Tatum thus crosses the line between simply reporting a story and influencing how it plays out—all the while posing as Leo’s savour and claiming, “I don’t make the news, I just report on it.” Tatum’s self-interested attitude disguised as compassion is no different from the outlook of today’s obnoxious reporters who feed on human tragedy.

Billy Wilder makes it perfectly clear that Tatum is no exception in the news racket by introducing other vicious journalists who almost make Tatum look decent by comparison. Tatum knows most of them by name from former jobs, and not one of them ever helped him when he was down on his luck. So when they plead, “Hey Chuck, we’re all in the same boat,” his icy response is that *he* is in the boat and they are in the water, “So let’s see if you can swim, buddies.”

Tatum knows the public’s appetite for “human interest” stories. He digs through the photo album of Leo Minosa to

fashion a compelling profile and uses his skills as a writer to transform Leo’s estranged wife Lorraine into the picture of wifely fidelity because “that’s how the story reads best.”

Just as Tatum expects, the public eats up his story, even flocking to the site of the burial mound by the hundreds to take part in what has literally become a media circus, replete with amusement park rides and carnival performers. These onlookers are eager to believe that their own morbid curiosity and craving for entertainment actually constitute a sort of human compassion.

Wilder’s criticism cuts much deeper than the world of tabloid journalism and its readership. Tatum and the other reporters are not the only ones dazzled by money and power. There is Leo’s wife who wants to peddle enough hamburgers and Navajo rugs at her husband’s store to make her escape to New York, the young cameraman working with Tatum who is losing his innocence and dreaming of a world bigger than Albuquerque, the contractor beholden to the sheriff who agrees to the most time-consuming rescue method out of fear of losing his job, and all the carnies, musicians, and other riffraff who flock to the site to make a buck off the crowd. Even Leo, the victim, had gone into the cave in the first place to get his hands on some Native American relics to sell.

Money is the magic substance that brings together this crowd of strangers in the New Mexico desert, forming what a radio reporter there describes as a “new community” which has sprung up. But once the show is over and there is no more money to be made, this community dissolves in a matter of minutes. Leo’s “friends” take off in search of the next new thing, leaving behind his grieving parents.

Although minor characters, Leo’s parents are important: their love for their son contrasts sharply with the selfish and superficial human relations around them. In several scenes we see Mr Minosa refusing any payment from Tatum and others, mistaking them for his son’s saviours. And his devout wife is so lost in prayer for her son that she is almost oblivious to the obscene scramble for cash going on around her. Whenever Mr or Mrs Minosa enters a scene it immediately highlights how crass and downright bizarre the world of commerce is – a world where nothing is sacred, where everything and everyone has a price.

Setting the film in a part of the country where there are still traces of a pre-capitalist society is another way that Wilder makes our familiar money-centred world seem grotesque. The Native American rugs and pottery Leo had sold in his store were not originally commodities for the market but things for direct use or “sacred items” buried with the dead. What a remarkable contrast between that extinct society, where people had not been connected by money and the manic scenes of product peddling in the movie.

Tatum’s brand of journalism is perfectly suited to the money-mad society in which he lives. Wilder does present us with a character who might seem an alternative to Tatum: the upstanding owner of *The Albuquerque Sun-Bulletin*, Mr Boot, whose motto is “Tell the truth.” But Boot is only able to follow that motto by limiting his reporting to rather inconsequential local stories about soapbox derbies and rattlesnake hunts. When, later in the film, he says that he thinks the sheriff is corrupt and wants to expose him some day it does not sound convincing. A guy like Mr Boot has to stay in Albuquerque because he would not last a week in the cutthroat big-city newspaper business.

The films of Welles and Wilder and the past century of journalistic history are a warning to those who might think the end of Murdoch will mark some qualitative improvement in journalism. Take away Tatum, and another shark swims into his place: topple Kane’s empire, and another tycoon rises up. And the same will be true if Murdoch and his crew one day meet their demise. It is foolish to call for a reformed journalism but leave in place the profit motive that drives tabloid excesses.

MICHAEL SCHAUERTE

The riots:

not the way to help ourselves

Self-regarding and typically under-employed, those exotically nominated experts in human behaviour have offered many wordless thanks for the unheralded events that enlivened the streets during those August nights. Suddenly they found the immediate future looking decidedly rosy with the prospect of well-paid sessions of unexciting analysis from TV sofas responding to badgering by equally tedious chat-show figureheads. Then there was the blossoming market for anaesthetic contributions to the newspapers, offering the seamier among them some help in recovering from the consequences of their exposed habit of phone-tapping. All of which sprang from the reassuring assumption that there was an easily accessible explanation, handily encapsulated in a slogan or even a single word, for the mobs with their rioting, looting and violence. This was a process to be helped in accordance with the weight of the qualifications of the “expert”. Even more so if their theories or explanations could be presented as original but neglected.

Previous

There is, as usual, no lack of precedent offered by those same experts and commentators. For example from London’s recent history there were the events in Brixton in 1981 and the disturbance in Broadwater Farm Estate in 1985 in which a policeman was killed, for which a black man was sentenced to life imprisonment only to be exonerated in 1991. Inevitably, there

were official enquiries after the disturbances, yielding the assurance that “lessons will be learned” – a phrase which has been worked to exhaustion in response to the present crisis, demonstrating how futile and misleading it is. Because the “lessons” have often revealed faults – shortcomings, errors or deliberate provocations such as racist bigotry on the part of the police – which have persisted to the present. So when it comes to the inevitable probing of this year’s disturbances the starting point should be the police killing of Mark Duggan on 4 August and the attempt to dismiss the family’s concern until, on 6 August, the threat of serious demonstrations on the streets burst out, spreading across London and to other cities.

In their response – or perhaps lack of it – the police seemed to be following an established procedure. This was not the first such case in which the official version, coming immediately after the event, was quickly shown to have a worryingly tenuous relationship with the truth. It brought back memories of the death of Ian Tomlinson during the G20 demonstrations in 2009. It then required some years of probing before the facts of Tomlinson’s death were established and, however reluctantly, accepted by the police. One result is that a police officer, condemned by the inquest, is now due to stand trial for manslaughter.

In the case of Mark Duggan the police said initially that they had been forced to shoot him after he fired the first shot at a police officer,



whose life was saved only because the bullet struck his radio. It did not take long for this version to be blown away, when the Independent Police Complaints Commission stated that there was no evidence to prove that Duggan had fired a gun. But beyond this confusion – if that is an adequate word for it – there is the hard reality of the actual social situation, of unyielding divisions, of inequality, poverty, sickness, despair... The police can deny any obligations arising from this, except to act as the enforcers of the essential principles of capitalist society, whatever misery they cause.

Opportunistic

We have not seen the last of the verbal strategies used to conceal the nastiest facts about those recent public disorders. For example there was a newly minted vocabulary to



denounce the looters, which had them as “opportunistic” offenders against property. This paid no heed to the fact that we are actively encouraged to accept that very word in admiration of much of what is rapturously accepted within capitalist society. Like the bankers and their infamous bonuses, or hedge traders gambling on a forecast movement in share prices. Like the exploitation of any and every development for whatever advantage it can allow a political party. Like the flood of lies designed to conceal the tragic reality of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of them opportunistic.

Then there was the dismissal of the looters’ claim that as things are now they can have little sense of ambition for their future and were merely trying to ease their poverty by helping themselves from the shelves of convenience stores or giants like ASDA. A youth worker from East Ham told the media that young people feel “trapped in the system...disconnected from the system and they just don’t care”. This was countered with the argument that young people can hardly complain about poverty when they are wielding the latest models in so-called social networking technology, suggesting that they could cope with their problems as stoically as others such as elderly vulnerable people.

The limits of this case were shown by a social worker in a part of London unaccustomed to social disorder among its leafy green open spaces who was almost speechless with rage on behalf of one of his clients who is housebound, blind and incontinent, and whose (paltry) special laundry allowance has been cut off by the local council. This woman is scared of the rioters in her locality, and the social worker, while not at all likely to join them, has something of an understanding of their motivation. He is not at all impressed by the millionaire ex-Etonian, David Cameron whining about “...sickening scenes... This is criminality, pure and simple, and it has to be confronted and defeated” – which brings us stark memories of Thatcher’s opinions about the riots which periodically broke out while she was doing something called putting the Great back



Above: Tottenham during the recent disturbances, and a scene from the Brixton riots in 1981

into Great Britain: “Nothing, but nothing, justifies what happened... They were criminal, criminal...”

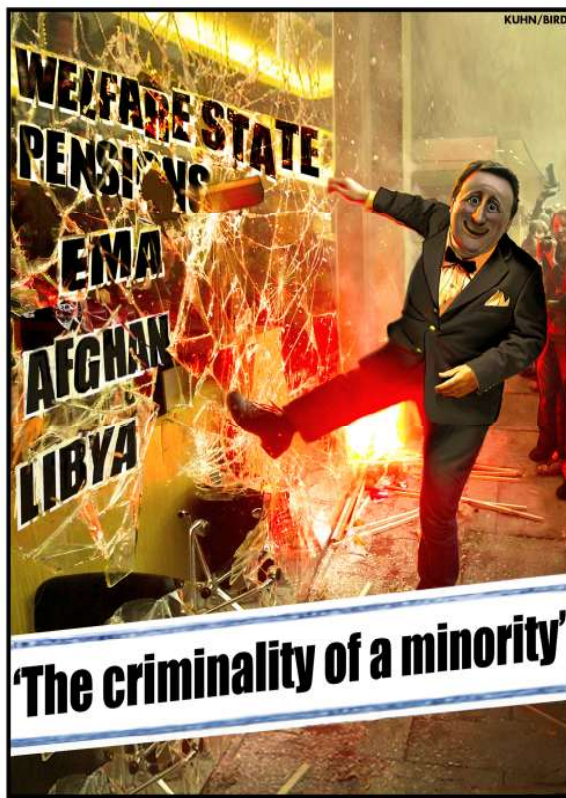
Bullingdon

And in case there is any doubt it should be made clear that she was not referring to the earlier activities of Cameron, Osborne and London Mayor Boris Johnson who helped themselves ease the boredom of swotting during their time at Oxford by joining the Bullingdon Club which, apart from dressing up in fancy evening suits devoted themselves to wrecking restaurants and other such places, often to the fear and annoyance of other people there. It was Johnson who came back from his very costly recent holiday to join the chorus about the looters’ behaviour being “criminal” without recalling those leisure time activities of his younger days; perhaps he had forgotten that in his case there was a rich parent to defuse any resentment and dissuade the Bullingdon’s victims from any intention to refer the matter to the courts.

But for anyone caught up in, or suffering from, those recent nocturnal mob activities, there was no such relief; their lot was fear and anxiety about their safety – or even their survival. For them any anger, desire for revenge about the looters would be perfectly understandable, if as futile as the whole machinery of so-called justice and order. The fact is that riots do not emerge from nowhere or nothing. Social disorder, damage to life and home, are part of the daily assumptions about life within capitalism. Even David Cameron has had to acknowledge that these forces are inexorably at work when he referred to “120,000 most troubled families” in this country (he did not mean those with someone in the Bullingdon Club).

Teaching

The police sent to control this year’s outbreaks were stronger in their weaponry and protective clothing than those in the past. This is represented as progress in the verbiage of the politicians and of those experts when what it in fact demonstrates is that the problems persist and show no sign of fading into history. Any meaningful investigation of the origins of the riots and looting cannot disregard their link to the effects of unemployment and the other persistent features of working class life – to poverty whether unemployed or in work, to poor housing and unnecessary disease all adding up to a burden of social deprivation which needs a



Kuhn and Bird's take on the riots

‘Present-day society, which breeds hostility between the individual man and every-one else, thus produces a social war of all against all which inevitably in individual cases, notably among uneducated people, assumes a brutal, barbarously violent form — that of crime. In order to protect itself against crime, against direct acts of violence, society requires an extensive, complicated system of administrative and judicial bodies which requires an immense labour force. In communist society this would likewise be vastly simplified, and precisely because — strange though it may sound — precisely because the administrative body in this society would have to manage not merely individual aspects of social life, but the whole of social life, in all its various activities, in all its aspects. We eliminate the contradiction between the individual man and all others, we counterpose social peace to social war, we put the axe to the *root* of crime — and thereby render the greatest, by far the greatest, part of the present activity of the administrative and judicial bodies superfluous. Even now crimes of passion are becoming fewer and fewer in comparison with calculated crimes, crimes of interest — crimes against *persons* are declining, crimes against *property* are on the increase. Advancing civilisation moderates violent outbreaks of passion even in our present-day society, which is on a war footing; how much more will this be the case in communist, peaceful society! Crimes against property cease of their own accord where everyone receives what he needs to satisfy his natural and his spiritual urges, where social gradations and distinctions cease to exist. justice concerned with criminal cases ceases of itself, that dealing with civil cases, which are almost all rooted in the property relations or at least in such relations as arise from the situation of social war, likewise disappears; conflicts can then be only rare exceptions, whereas they are now the natural result of general hostility, and will be easily settled by arbitrators. The activities of the administrative bodies at present have likewise their source in the continual social war — the police and the entire administration do nothing else but see to it that the war remains concealed and indirect and does not erupt into open violence, into crimes. But if it is infinitely easier to maintain peace than to keep war within certain limits, so it is vastly more easy to administer a communist community rather than a competitive one. And if civilisation has already taught men to seek their interest in the maintenance of public order, public security, and the public interest, and therefore to make the police, administration and justice as superfluous as possible, how much more will this be the case in a society in which community of interests has become the basic principle, bind in which the public interest is no longer distinct from that of each individual! What already exists now, in *spite of* the social organisation, how much more will it exist when it is no longer hindered, but supported by the social institutions! We may thus also in this regard count on a considerable increase in the labour force through that part of the labour force of which society is deprived by the present social condition.’

Friedrich Engels, speech in Elberfeld, February 1845 (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/02/15.htm)

relatively minor provocation to bring an explosion of anger and violence.

Is this the best we can expect in a world capable of satisfying human needs? Must our society be distorted by the toxicity of social ulcers? The looters deceived themselves that through the shattered shop fronts they were not just helping themselves to material goods but in a sense re-arranging social assumptions. As the enquiries into those events will eventually tell us, there are lessons to be learned here, but we reject the notion that these come best from those who claim the right to teach us, discipline us and punish us. Better to help ourselves by working for a peaceful, co-operative, abundant community.

IVAN



Outrage is not enough

Capitalism has shown that it cannot meet people's needs properly, not even in the developed countries of the West, let alone in the rest of the world. In a world capable of providing enough for all, austerity is being tightened on people everywhere. Political democracy, despite its advantages, has become an empty shell, with popular participation limited to giving the thumbs up or the thumbs down every few years to rival bands of professional politicians and with fewer and fewer people bothering to do even this. Social disintegration is gradually spreading, with increasing mental ill-health, drug addiction, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Most people are aware of this, but don't think they can do anything about it. They don't like it, but accept it as something they have to put up with as they try to make the best of their life and that of their family. This has been called apathy, but it's really more resignation or fatalism.

Socialists find this frustrating as we know that, if people chose to, they could get rid of capitalism and establish a different world in which not only could

people's material needs be met as a matter of course but where a genuine community would exist. This is why we can only welcome any sign of people beginning to realise that present-day society has nothing to offer them and to think about doing something about it. The latest example of this is the Real Democracy Now! movement that started in Spain in May with the slogan 'We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers' and who call themselves the 'Indignatos' (the outraged). See their manifesto opposite. A similar movement has arisen in Greece.

Regular readers of this journal will be able to see the manifesto's limitations, but what is significant is that here are some people who are beginning to see through capitalism, even if they haven't worked out what going beyond it has to involve. A welcome feature of the movement has been the democratic, non-violent nature of the public meetings, indoor and outdoor, that they have organised, at which all points of view, including the socialist, can be expressed.

The manifesto is intended to be an appeal to 'ordinary people' by other 'ordinary people' who consider



REAL DEMOCRACY NO THE PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER

themselves
(and in fact are) the victims
of the present system without a say in how things are decided. Some of its points are clearly true:

The will and purpose of the current system is the accumulation of money, not regarding efficiency and the welfare of society. Wasting resources, destroying the planet, creating unemployment and unhappy consumers.

Citizens are the gears of a machine designed to enrich a minority which does not regard our needs. We are anonymous, but without us none of this would exist, because we move the world.'

In view of our tradition, we prefer to talk of 'workers' rather than 'citizens' but we are not going to quibble over a word because it is true that, whether we are called or call ourselves citizens or workers, we run society from top to bottom but for the benefit of a privileged minority.

When it comes to describing the outlines of an alternative society, we wouldn't employ the language of 'rights'. We agree of course that everybody should be able to automatically satisfy their need for housing, education, health-care and culture (entertainment) and should also be able to have enjoyable work and a say in the way things are run. But to describe these are 'rights' is to

give
credence to the illusion
that there are 'inalienable truths'.

In any event, there is no 'inalienable' right to 'employment' or 'consumer protection' as these would only be applicable in a capitalist society, where work takes the form of paid employment and where people have to buy what they need. But, given capitalist society, they are not achievable as both a reserve pool of labour and an underclass of unemployables are necessary, endemic features of capitalism. As long as there is buying and selling, some sellers will always try to swindle buyers, as the Romans understood when they coined the phrase 'Buyer, beware'.

This brings us to our fundamental criticism of the proposed alternative. There the manifesto states 'instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service'. In other words, it proposes to retain money and all that implies, and to try to make the system serve human needs and interests. The full implications of this become clear when the practical proposals published elsewhere on their site (www.democraciarealya.es) are examined (our translation).

'Reduction of working time and a better balance between work and family life, so as to eliminate structural unemployment (i.e. until unemployment falls





below 5 percent).
 'Retirement at 65 and no further increase in the retirement age, so as to eliminate youth unemployment.'

'Security of employment: prohibition of collective redundancies for large corporations that are making profits.'

'Banks in difficulty must be allowed to fail or be nationalised to create a public bank under social control.'

'Increase in the rate of tax on wealth and the banks.'

This is very disappointing as it is the sort of thing that reformist politicians have long promised. They have never delivered. Why? The suggestion of the Indignatos seems to be that it's because these politicians seek to enrich themselves as they are not subject to democratic pressure from below. The evidence, however, points to another reason – because they could not deliver even if they were sincere or subject to outside democratic pressure as capitalism is inherently incapable of being made to serve the interests of all the people.

Capitalism is a class-based society which can only operate for the benefit of the minority who own and control productive resources, as rich individuals or through private corporations or the state. This is the reason for the failure of all reformist politicians and governments in all countries. In Spain it is the reason for the failure of the PSOE (literally the Spanish Socialist Workers Party) which started out with a much more radical programme than above.

Things would not be any different if members of parliament were elected by and were responsible to democratic assemblies, as Real Democracy Now! wants. Capitalism just cannot be reformed to work in the interests of workers and their families (or 'citizens' if you prefer). If Real Democracy Now! goes down this road they are doomed to failure and disillusionment. A genuine, participatory democracy is part of the solution but is not the solution on its own.

As they state in their manifesto, 'the will and purpose of the current system is the accumulation of money, not regarding efficiency or the welfare of society.' Precisely. Capitalism is a system of capital accumulation out of monetary profits extracted from the labour of those who 'move the world'. This gives rise to economic laws which impose that priority be given to profits and profit-making rather than to satisfying people's needs. No government, no pressure from the street, no riots, can change this. Any government, however democratically elected and accountable, that takes on responsibility for governing within the framework of capitalism is obliged to respect these economic laws or make things worse by provoking

Democracia real YA! Manifiesto

We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us.

Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice.

This situation has become normal, a daily suffering, without hope. But if we join forces, we can change it. It's time to change things, time to build a better society together. Therefore, we strongly argue that:

- The priorities of any advanced society must be equality, progress, solidarity, freedom of culture, sustainability and development, welfare and people's happiness.
- These are inalienable truths that we should abide by in our society: the right to housing, employment, culture, health, education, political participation, free personal development, and consumer rights for a healthy and happy life.
- The current status of our government and economic system does not take care of these rights, and in many ways is an obstacle to human progress.
- Democracy belongs to the people (demos = people, krátos = government) which means that government is made of every one of us. However, in Spain most of the political class does not even listen to us. Politicians should be bringing our voice to the institutions, facilitating the political participation of citizens through direct channels that provide the greatest benefit to the wider society, not to get rich and prosper at our expense, attending only to the dictatorship of major economic powers and holding them in power through a bipartidism headed by the immovable acronym PP & PSOE.
- Lust for power and its accumulation in only a few; create inequality, tension and injustice, which leads to violence, which we reject. The obsolete and unnatural economic model fuels the social machinery in a growing spiral that consumes itself by enriching a few and sends into poverty the rest. Until the collapse.
- The will and purpose of the current system is the accumulation of money, not regarding efficiency and the welfare of society. Wasting resources, destroying the planet, creating unemployment and unhappy consumers.
- Citizens are the gears of a machine designed to enrich a minority which does not regard our needs. We are anonymous, but without us none of this would exist, because we move the world.
- If as a society we learn to not trust our future to an abstract economy, which never returns benefits for the most, we can eliminate the abuse that we are all suffering.
- We need an ethical revolution. Instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service. We are people, not products. I am not a product of what I buy, why I buy and who I buy from.

For all of the above, I am outraged.

I think I can change it.

I think I can help.

I know that together we can. I think I can help.

I know that together we can.

an economic crisis.

What is required is a revolution but not an 'ethical revolution'. It is a revolution in the basis of society, to be carried out, yes, by democratic means and more or less peacefully, that will make productive resources the common heritage of all under democratic control. Within this framework alone can production be re-oriented towards satisfying people's needs while at the same time respecting their welfare at work and the welfare of the rest of nature. This involves the end not just of the accumulation of money by a minority, but the disappearance of money altogether.

ADAM BUICK

Universities challenged



The White Paper is to form the basis for a new Higher Education Bill in 2012, after the current consultation period ends in a few weeks time. In truth it is the latest in a rather long line of papers and reports setting out a future for HE in the UK since the 1960s. In particular, it follows in the footsteps of the Robbins Report of 1963, the Dearing Report in 1997 and then – most recently of all – the Browne Report of 2010 commissioned by the Labour Government.

During this time, HE in the UK has seen developments that have been similar to those affecting university sectors in many other parts of the world. In particular, there has been a massive expansion in student

The Government White Paper on Higher Education (HE) entitled 'Students At the Heart of the System' has created controversy since its publication in the summer. As the new academic year begins, we take a look at its likely impact.

numbers – impelled by, among other factors, the conversion of former polytechnics and colleges of HE into what are sometimes termed the 'post-1992 universities' and the increased government funding that then allowed them to rapidly expand. There has also been a significant expansion in vocational HE beyond traditional areas of engagement like teaching, law and the ministry. This has been reflected in the growth of what some have considered to be more esoteric subjects like sports

management and herbal medicine, and particularly in the development of Business Schools, which only grew to be of any significance in the UK in the 1980s but which are now commonly one of the biggest discipline areas in universities of all kinds.

Unsustainable

The previous Labour government famously set a target of 50 percent of school leavers going on to study at university and while this has

never been reached, decent enough progress was nevertheless made, prompting some to complain of a 'dumbing down' of entry standards. In 1955 less than 5 per cent of school leavers went on to study in HE, a proportion that had risen to 12 per cent by 1980, to 19 per cent in 1990 and then to over 35 per cent for most of the years in the last decade.

This growth, like many things in the market economy, has happened for a reason. As capitalism has developed and its operations have become more sophisticated, the working class of wage and salary earners who operationally run capitalism from top to bottom have needed to have a different and often more developed set of skills than was required, say, a hundred years ago. While the economy of course still needs production workers, miners and other manual and physically skilled staff, capitalism has developed a vast administrative apparatus around buying and selling, the service economy and the state sector which is needed to ensure that this all runs smoothly.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics have shown that the percentage of workers in the UK employed in manufacturing and construction fell from around a third in 1983 to just under 20 per cent in recent years, confirming a long-term trend. At the same time there has been a significant growth in the service sector, in particular. This has necessitated government encouragement for more young people to seek out the type of education and skills supposedly provided by a university education. The problem has been that in doing this, the government has created a huge amount of additional expenditure to be funded out of general taxation, and as we have seen on a range of fronts in recent times, state expenditure tends to have its limits – especially as the burden of taxation has ultimately to fall on the profit-generating sectors of the economy (i.e. the private sector).

As more and more students have entered HE the cost of their tuition as well as contributions towards their living costs have become too burdensome for the state. This has over the last two decades led to periodic attacks on what many students of earlier generations took for granted. These attacks have included the removal of the right for students unemployed during the holiday periods to claim benefits for this, through to the full-scale assaults on the student grant system and the highly controversial

introduction of tuition fees (with students loans to pay for them) mooted under John Major's Tory government but carried out by Labour under Blair.

In this respect, the Government White Paper is but the latest in a long line of initiatives with a common thread and a common purpose.

Main features

There are several aspects to what is proposed currently and little if any of it is genuinely new. Indeed, what is most striking about it is how it usually develops existing approaches or applies other approaches already implemented by government in other fields. The main features of the proposals in this respect are these.

- *Increase debt and reduce (or disguise) the burden on taxation.* This is a continuation of what occurred under Blair and Brown when tuition fees and student loans

“Education should be available for those needing it and people shouldn't expect to have to commit themselves to a lifetime of drudgery to pay for it either”

were introduced. The approach this time is more radical (if radical be the right word) as tuition fees will rise hugely from £3,375 to between £6,000 and 9,000 a year, depending on institution. This is to make up for the fact that in England at least (Wales and Scotland will stick to variations on their existing systems for now), the funding that government gives to support student tuition is to be removed almost completely. This will happen to all subjects except those already in receipt of higher levels of subsidy from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) because of their elevated cost levels e.g. science subjects, medicine and engineering. To achieve this change, a modification of the student loan system is to be introduced whereby those earning over £21,000 after graduation will begin to pay back their loan through the taxation system with interest charged at RPI plus 3 per cent. In many respects,

this is becoming ever more like a disguised graduate tax, with the advantage for the government that those leaving the country after they graduate will still have to pay it back. Like most taxes – whether disguised or not – it will eventually mean that wages will have to rise, other things being equal, so that people can pay it, in this way cutting into employer's profits in an indirect and more subtle way. Furthermore, the attitude of government to the huge (and about to become even bigger) student loan book is also revealing, as they estimate that the amount borrowers will be liable to repay will have risen to £70 billion by 2016-7. Few seemed to have noticed that the government has just asked Rothschilds to develop a plan for 'how to monetise the loan book' including 'selling [the loans] outright to financial investors, or selling loans to one or more regulated companies set up to manage the loans' (*White Paper*, p.24). Clearly the recent financial crisis and its causes has been forgotten already.

- *Outsource/privatise where possible, introducing 'competition'.* Until recently, the only private-sector university in Britain was the University of Buckingham, though now BPP University College of Professional Studies (owned by the Apollo private equity group) has acquired taught degree awarding powers and others are lining themselves up to be granted university status. This is in part an attempt to provide competition so that existing universities don't all charge fees at the higher end of the permitted range (as most are proposing to do at present) while being a philosophical nod in the direction of 'free markets'. The main problem here is that fears about the quality of academic provision declining in these circumstances have some substance. The proliferation of so-called 'degree mills' in countries like the US and Canada has long been an issue (where students can effectively buy a degree) and the largest private university in the world by most counts, Phoenix University, Arizona, has seen its applications plummet in the last two years because it has been subject to legal action by no less than 10 Attorney-Generals in different states over its 'deceptive practices'. Coincidentally, and perhaps unfortunately, it is also owned by the Apollo private equity group.

- *Increase links between the universities and the private sector, binding the two ever closer together.* Again, this has been happening for years and it is standard practice

for universities to check when they are validating new courses that they meet the needs of relevant employers. However, the government is concerned by the recent decline in 'sandwich years' for students with business and in internships, and wants to see these encouraged. It also wants to see the links between research and private business developed and commercial opportunities exploited to the full. Interestingly, postgraduate courses already receive little by way of HEFCE funding and have had higher fees to make up the difference as it has long been assumed that much postgraduate study is sponsored by employers (something the government would like to see extended to undergraduate study too, wherever possible).

- *Target state support rather than universalise it.* Student grants to help with living costs will be targeted at the poorest families only and the old education maintenance allowance for 16-19 year olds studying before they get to university is to be abolished on the grounds of cost. Similarly, HEFCE funding is only likely to remain for those high-cost courses that students couldn't otherwise pay for themselves out of their loans, and which employers would be reluctant to sponsor as this wouldn't be appropriate or they would be too expensive, such as medicine, veterinary science, etc.

- *Set up a complex regulatory framework to oversee it all.* The Browne Report had recommended uniting HEFCE, the Quality Assurance Agency for HE (the university academic quality watchdog) and two other related bodies into the one organisation dealing with the oversight of HE. This will not happen now, and the complexity of the proposals, the loans, the targeting and the new entrants to university status means that the regulators will clearly have their work cut out.

The devil is in the detail

The details of much of this could change and probably will, but the general trajectory is clear: a business-led HE sector; an expansion of vocational courses; students in debt for most of their lives, wedded to wage-slavery just to pay off their loans (and that before any consideration of mortgages and likely personal debt). As there are over 120 universities currently in the UK it is likely that some will go bust (and the government has explicitly stated that it will not 'underwrite' the finances of the existing HE providers),

especially given the likely falling away of full-time student numbers consequent on higher fees. And the drive for 'efficiency' in the HE sector will be pushed ever harder, with the government setting up the Diamond Review into how universities can be run more efficiently (if this doesn't entail recommending that universities 'outsource' much of their central services like Finance and Human Resources it will be a surprise).

The most obvious and predictable effect of these changes is likely to be a move away from full-time HE by 18-21 year olds, reversing the decades-old trend for more school-leavers to go to university. The precise extent of this is likely to depend on the buoyancy or otherwise of the job market, with those who can often choosing employment and relevant training over university and a lifetime of debt. It is also not difficult to predict a rise in the coming years of students studying part-time and flexibly alongside their employment, in many cases linking one to the other through programmes of negotiated work-based learning, for instance (another one of the growth areas in HE in recent times) where people receive academic reward for their personal learning in and through the workplace.

A sane society

It is clear that many potential students have already been put off university for life. But of course, as the old saying goes, it doesn't have to be like this. Education should be available for those needing it and people shouldn't expect to have to commit themselves to a lifetime of drudgery to pay for it either. Indeed, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with studying a subject like history or art simply because you are interested in it, but this has become more difficult in recent years and will now be more difficult still as pressures from business and through the job market dictate that students have to study what will make them employable.

Nevertheless, one of the more interesting developments in the last ten years or so has been the whittling away of some of the old snobbishness and elitism that has existed in universities across the country. An unintended consequence of the rise in vocationally-oriented courses has been that some have discovered that what is often called the 'knowledge capital' of society exists mainly outside the Ivory Towers. To many professors this is a frightening concept that challenges

their very legitimacy as 'the experts'. But experiential learning – that is learning by doing, typically in the workplace – has started to come into its own, along with reflection on how people work and learn together this way. The deliberate division between learning passively in a seminar room or lecture theatre and learning through doing has sometimes been necessary but when reinforced systematically as has been the case in HE until recently it became a strangely lopsided way for an education system to operate – the 'University of Life' is indeed a valuable and important place and universities were in denial about it for quite some time. Stripped of the functionalism required by employers and the market, this could be a useful educational development.

We can certainly add to this that a co-operative society of the future would seek to ensure that a university education would be genuinely meaningful – not just for the participants but for society as a whole, being finally freed from the narrow constraints of the market and money, loans and liabilities. Situated within a society of common ownership and with common purposes for the dissemination of wealth and happiness it could indeed, finally, be part of a rounded University of Life.

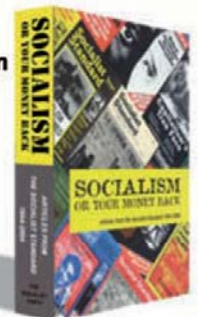
DAP

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Massacre in Norway

ON 22 July, the government offices in Oslo, Norway, were blown up, killing eight people. Shortly afterwards the bomber travelled to a Norwegian Labour Party summer camp mainly attended by children and began shooting them. He killed 68.

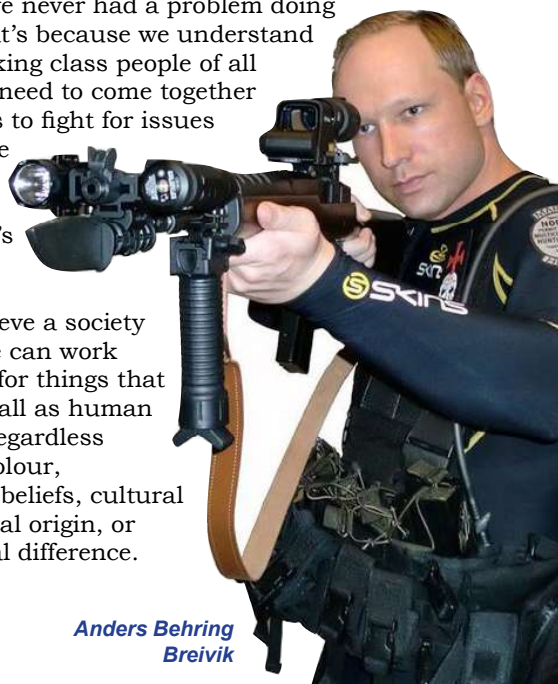
To begin with, the news media reported this accurately as a terrorist attack, speculating predictably but wrongly that the attacker was muslim. When it emerged that the attacker was not in fact muslim but a self-declared christian, with political views similar to that held by many mainstream news commentators and politicians, and with links to right-wing political parties throughout Europe, suddenly it was decided that Anders Behring Breivik was not a terrorist after all, merely a deranged madman, acting alone.

Then began the usual debate about how to define terrorism, which is held, as Chomsky has pointed out, to be a “vexing and complex problem” – at least, it’s deemed vexing and complex by those whose job it is to provide apologetic cover for the forms of terrorism that are acceptable to the ruling class.

There is just as much confusion about multiculturalism, or what the Norway terrorist called in his political manifesto “Marxist multiculturalism”. The fact is that human societies, and especially modern ones, are almost always multicultural. As Gary Younge pointed out in the *Guardian* (14 March): “Cultures are dynamic, and emerge organically from communities. None exist in isolation or remain static. So the presence of a range of cultures in Britain or anywhere else is not novel, but the norm.” There’s nothing wrong with that. A diversity of languages, festivals, music and food is something to be welcomed and enjoyed.

But the other kind of multiculturalism – that which advocates liberal, state-led policies for encouraging and supporting cultural differences at the expense of working class unity – has nothing to do with Marxism. It is something to be opposed as much as the alternative policy pursued by some states of inculcating a single “national identity”. Workers should be encouraged to think of themselves as members of a worldwide class with a common interest, not as members of different “nations” or different “ethnic” or “cultural” groups with their own different, competing interests.

We have never had a problem doing that. That’s because we understand that working class people of all cultures need to come together as equals to fight for issues that unite them as a class. And that’s the only way we’ll ever achieve a society where we can work together for things that unite us all as human beings, regardless of skin colour, religious beliefs, cultural or national origin, or individual difference.



Anders Behring Breivik



Too much debt or too little profit?

“DEBT BEING the problem, creating more debt can’t solve it” was the title of a recent thread on the Zeitgeist global forum. Given all the fuss in the media about government debts (or “sovereign debt”), this is not surprising, but it is not debt that is the problem. Government debt is a symptom of the problem.

Government’s borrow money to cover the gap between what they spend and what they raise as taxes (the budget deficit). Like all borrowers, governments anticipate being able to repay their debts with interest out of future income, in their case, future tax revenue. Most taxes fall, in the end, on the new value created in production, and either taken directly as taxes on profits or indirectly as sales taxes and taxes on personal income.

Since the current slump broke out in 2008 new production has fallen and is nowhere near the level it was before, so putting governments in difficulty, some more than others. The anticipated income as tax revenue to repay their loans has not materialised. The current sovereign debt problem is thus a direct consequence of the continuing slump.

Governments typically borrow by issuing bonds for sale at a given face value and fixed rate of interest, repayable in a given period of time which can be as short as a month or as long as 30 years or more, say £100 at 5 percent interest per annum. Once taken up, the bonds become tradable and are bought and sold. The price at which they are traded is determined by the laws of supply and demand, not by their face value, but the amount of interest remains the same.

If, as has happened to Greek, Irish, Portuguese and now Spanish and Italian bonds, those wanting to sell (supply) exceed those wanting to buy (demand) then their price falls. If it falls, say to £90, the government still has to pay the same amount of interest on them (in this case £5). The ratio between this amount and the bond’s price is known as their “yield”. In our example it would be 5/90 or 5.55 percent. In other words, the rate of interest will have risen from 5 to 5.55 percent and this will be the rate the government will have to offer on future bond issues. Which presents a problem when the loans come up for renewal, as they continually do.

The governments of the Eurozone countries and the European Central Bank are not trying to solve the sovereign debt crisis of some of their members by creating more debt. They are trying to reduce the likelihood of the holders of these debts (amongst them leading European banks including some in Britain) not getting all their money back. This is why they are pressing the governments affected to reduce their budget deficit by reducing their spending, i.e. by imposing austerity. They have also come up with various schemes to keep interest rates on these governments’ bonds down as interest payments on them are part of government spending.

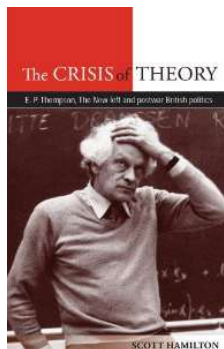
What all this confirms is that interest is secondary to profit. Debt and the interest on it is not the root problem. Interest is a share in the surplus value created in production. If not so much surplus value is being created – and a slump is precisely a drop in production including of surplus value – then there is less available to pay interest, either directly by businesses or indirectly via governments.

Creating more debt is indeed not the solution. But neither is creating less debt. If capital accumulation resumed and reached previous levels, there would be no further talk of a “debt crisis” as international investors would be assured that the surplus value would be there from which the interest on their loans and investments could be paid.

If, on the other hand, capital accumulation does not resume quickly enough, as some are beginning to fear, then the investors may well lose some of their investments. But it won’t be the result of too much debt but of too little profit.

New Left

The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left and Postwar British Politics. Scott Hamilton, Manchester University Press, 2011



Many socialists would count EP Thompson's books among the best socialist books ever written, particularly *William Morris: From Romantic To Revolutionary* (1955), *The Making of the*

English Working Class (1963) and *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (1978). Thompson's own politics however are less admirable. He joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1942 and was an active member until 1956 when he resigned as a result of the Russian military invasion of Hungary and Khrushchev's 'secret speech' which denounced Stalin. To a significant extent, the rest of Thompson's political career can be seen as distancing himself from Stalinism. He later tried to justify his CP membership by claiming it was part of a 'Popular Front' against fascism. But Thompson did not appreciate that his CP membership would lend legitimacy to Stalin's reign of terror. His concern for the lives of ordinary workers did not extend to the Russian working class.

William Morris: From Romantic To Revolutionary showed that Morris was a revolutionary Marxist. This book was written and published while Thompson was in the CP and in it he claims that Morris's ideas were being realised in Stalin's Russia. In the Second Edition of 1977 this claim is removed. *The Making of the English Working Class* won huge critical acclaim and it is still widely used as a textbook. Thompson's book is an account of the formation of class consciousness, and in his 1980 Preface he argued that 'in the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs'. Some critics had complained that Thompson's analysis of class is too subjective and this forms a major theme of his *The Poverty of Theory and Other*

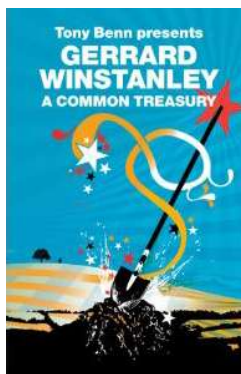
Essays. Among Thompson's targets was the 'Stalinism in theory' of Louis Althusser. For Althusser history was 'a process without a subject' in which specific circumstances determined human behaviour. For Thompson, on the other hand, the class struggle was the motor of history and so therefore he wrote about the experiences and consciousness of the working class.

Thompson was one of the self-appointed intellectuals who founded the New Left Review in 1960, and it is still published bi-monthly. It was conceived as the journal of the New Left who were opposed to Stalinism and Labour Party 'revisionism' (an open acceptance of capitalism). After an initial surge in interest provided by their work in Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, most of the New Left found their ideological home in the Labour Party. Thompson was involved with the Labour Party in the 1960s and re-joined in 1978. By the early 1980s CND was resurgent and Thompson was its main spokesperson, and he harangued large public meetings on the 'logic of exterminism'. He thought the superpowers were dragging the world towards an inevitable nuclear annihilation, a fatalistic way of thinking he once would have denounced as 'Stalinist'. Thompson died in 1993 but, as Hamilton shows, his books live on.

LEW

Early Communist

Gerrard Winstanley: A Common Treasury. Presented by Tony Benn. Verso, 2011. £8.99



introduction by Tony Benn (3 pages). Winstanley, an early advocate of making the Earth a common treasury for all, is always worth reading. The selection here includes only his writings from 1648-9 and so does not include his main work *The Law of Freedom*.

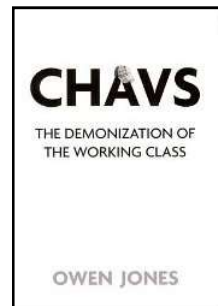
ALB

Verso have republished this selection of writings by Winstanley chosen by Andrew Hopton. It first appeared in 1989. The publishers have given it a new title, a new Foreword (20 pages) and an

We have received a further letter from Iain McKay about our review of his book about Proudhon *Property is Theft!* (*Socialist Standard*, July). It can be found at <http://anarchism.pageabode.com/anarcho/second-letter-socialist-standard-proudhon> together which the comments it provoked.

Old Labour

Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class. Owen Jones. Verso Books 2011.



This well-received book has a snappy title and the subtitle fairly summarises one of its main themes. But a careful reading of its pages, and especially the concluding

chapter, suggests a more descriptive title: "Down with middle-class Conservatism and New Labour. Up with the working-class Old Labour."

Jones writes at the end of the introductory chapter: "Class prejudice is part and parcel of a society deeply divided by class. Ultimately it is not the prejudice we need to tackle; it is the fountain from which it springs." Tackling 'the fountain from which [prejudice] springs' is open to different interpretations. But the context makes it clear that for Jones the ending of the class system by the substitution of socialism for capitalism is not one of them.

The following chapters range over the inconsistent media treatment of the disappearance of middle-class and working-class children, the horrors of Thatcherism (no argument there), and the blaming of the victims in 'broken Britain'.

In his concluding chapter – the author develops some of his Old Labour ideals:

"Instead of economic despots ruling over the British economy with nothing to keep them in check, key businesses could be taken into social ownership and democratically managed by workers – and consumers for that matter. It would be a real alternative to the old-style, top-down bureaucratic form of nationalization..."

Nationalisation is not, of course, the same thing as socialism, nor is it a step on the road to socialism. It is one of the two forms of capitalism:

state (or officials acting on behalf of the capitalist class – as a whole) and private (ownership by individuals or corporations).

“The new class politics would be a start, to at least build a counterweight to the hegemonic, unchallenged politics of the wealthy... Working-class people have, in the past, organized to defend their interests; they have demanded to be listened to, and forced concessions from the hands of the powerful. Ridiculed or ignored though they may be, they will do so again.”

With those few stirring words Jones introduces his cunning working-class plan designed to achieve the new – improved – status quo. First, step up delivery of the loaves we produce into the ample larders of the rich and the powerful. Then fight them peacefully for crummy concessions. Good luck!

SRP

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



The Socialist Standard examines their case

Super 8



This is a commercial not an art film and any ideological content is entirely subservient to box-office earnings. Its appeal is primarily to young teens and their forty-something daddies. It mates an undemanding kids-versus-aliens storyline to a meticulously detailed 1970s social-realist setting. It is widely said to be the most Spielbergian film never made by Spielberg (who is, however, credited as producer). As such, the cinema-goer gets full value for money: gooey emotion, scares, laughs, big bangs, weird happenings, puppy love and heroic geeks. Essentially this is director, JJ Abrams's tribute to the master, extensively referencing Spielberg's life and movies including 'ET: The Extra-Terrestrial' and 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind'.

There are two interesting aspects to the film. Firstly, the portrayal of the military (the word is evil). The head honcho oversees the torture of the shipwrecked alien into insanity, runs an assassination

programme against witnesses including a busload of young teens, and holds an injured high school teacher in grossly unhygienic conditions before murdering him by lethal injection. No comment has been made about the credibility of this portrayal. In the light of the well-publicised atrocities in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, it is unlikely there will be none forthcoming. Most would not acknowledge that “they have the right to do anything we can't stop them from doing” and that we can't stop them from doing anything.

The second is the nature of the alien. Although it does some scary things, when revealed in full it is not a scary thing - much resembling the comic horror of 'Cloverfield', which JJ Abrams produced. In essence, this is a human in alien clothes, perhaps even more human than the humans. Unlike the saintly ET, this alien, tortured and incarcerated, reacts like a human being with anger. It is, however, unlike the demonic aliens from 'Alien'. Like any human, it can be appealed to on grounds of its own self-interest. The boy hero wisely does not apply logic or an appeal to the alien's better nature.

Of course 'Super 8' is stupid and unrealistic in many respects. But sci-fi's purpose is to provide an eye-catching scenario within which an entertaining drama can be played out and ideas put forward and issues raised. 'Super 8' does this. This is not a 'socialist film' but like JJ Abrams's other creation, the much vaunted 'Lost', there is food for thought here.

KAZ



From WAGs to riches

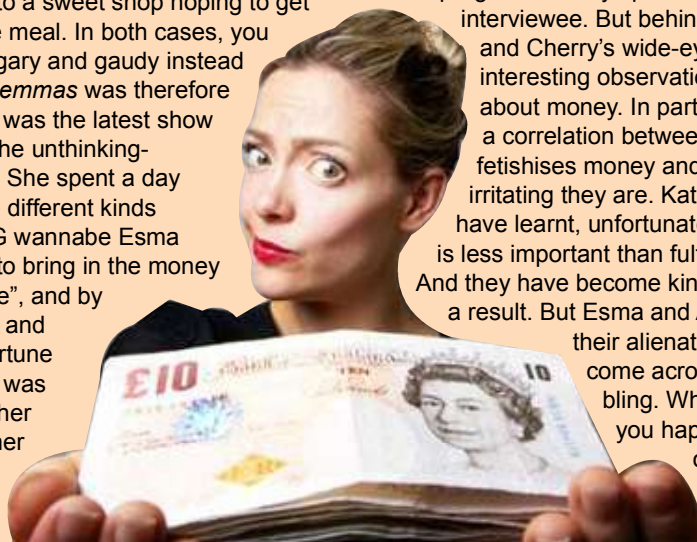
WATCHING A BBC3 documentary and expecting it to give you a deep insight into capitalist society is like going into a sweet shop hoping to get

a three-course meal. In both cases, you end up with something sugary and gaudy instead of nourishing. *Cherry's Cash Dilemmas* was therefore like a bag of liquorice allsorts. It was the latest show from Cherry Healey (pictured), the unthinking-person's investigative journalist. She spent a day each with five women who have different kinds of relationship with money. WAG wannabe Esma believes that “it's the man's job to bring in the money and the woman's job to look nice”, and by 'nice' she means being bronzed and vajazzled. Amanda made her fortune inventing and selling potties but was too busy making money from other people's children to be around her own kids. 'Freegan' Katharine avoids spending money by

raiding bin bags, looking for food needlessly thrown away by cafés and takeaways. Claire struggles to feed her family of nine on wages of £150 a week. And Birgit went from the Hollywood high life to a council flat in London, and feels that 'karma' has caught up with her.

Presumably it was assumed that the viewers would have the attention span of an amnesiac goldfish, as the programme only spent ten minutes with each interviewee. But behind the hyperactive editing and Cherry's wide-eyed zeal were some interesting observations about how people feel about money. In particular, the show revealed a correlation between how much someone fetishises money and how self-absorbed and irritating they are. Katharine, Claire and Birgit have learnt, unfortunately the hard way, that money is less important than fulfilling, warm relationships. And they have become kinder and more thoughtful as a result. But Esma and Amanda, who have allowed their alienation to take them over, just come across as tanned robots with bling. Whether or not money can buy you happiness, the love of money only seems to buy you shallowness.

Mike Foster



Meetings

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

Clapham

Saturday 10 September from 11pm
BOOK SALE AND LITERATURE STALL
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham
High St, SW4 7UN

Leeds

Saturday 10 September, 2.00pm
WHAT SOCIALISM WILL BE LIKE
Speaker: Paul Bennett
Albert Room, Victoria Hotel, Great George
Street, Leeds, LS1 3DL (The Victoria
Hotel is to the rear of the Town Hall)

East Anglia

Saturday, 10 September, 2pm-5pm
AFTER THE RIOTS
Film & Discussion Meeting
The Workshop (basement)
53 Earlham Road, Norwich, NR2 3AD

Kent

Sunday 11 September, 5.00pm
Inaugural meeting of Kent & Sussex
discussion group.
Travelodge café/bar, St Peter's Street,
Maidstone ME16 0SR

London

Saturday 17 September 11am to 5pm
Socialist Day School:
MARX: A VISION FOR TODAY
11am: Marx's Capital: A Satirical Utopia
Speaker: Stuart Watkins
1pm Break for lunch
2pm: Why History Matters.
Speaker: Gwynn Thomas
3.30pm: Marx on "The Anarchists I
Knew". Speaker: Adam Buick
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham
High St, SW4 7UN

Glasgow

Wednesday 21 September, 8.30pm
THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS
Speaker John Cummings
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill
Road, G20 7YE

Liverpool

Sunday, 25 September, 7.00pm
SHOULD WORKERS SUPPORT THE
LABOUR PARTY?
The Liverpool Pub (function room), 14
James Street, Liverpool, L2 7PQ

Manchester

Monday 26 September, 8.30pm
WHAT SOCIALISM WILL BE LIKE
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre, M4
1PW

AUTUMN DELEGATE MEETING

Saturday 1 October/ Sunday 2 October,
10.30am to 5pm
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham
High St, London SW4 7UN

OBITUARY

Eileen Smith

On 24 April Eileen Smith spent the day at Ealing hospital, where a series of tests showed that she was suffering from cancer in her lungs and brain. Blind and frail, she could not care for herself alone so a place was found for her at a local nursing home where she died on 8 August.

Eileen joined the party – the old Ealing branch – in 1952. She was one of seven from the same family. Not cut out to be a speaker, she contributed to the *Socialist Standard*, for a while. She was branch secretary and a member of the Propaganda Committee. She showed an unusual talent for selling the *Standard* at outdoor meetings and on the doorstep – which helped the branch reach their sales target for the month. Clear and emphatic as a socialist, she was particularly passionate in denouncing the delusions of religion. She worked as a primary school teacher. She was also a Samaritan volunteer.

Many members of that branch are dead and others are scattered – but we remain united in our memories of her as a stalwart contributor to our work for socialism.

The Party sends its condolences to her sons, one of whom is a Party member.

RC

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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess

but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local,

in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

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

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

ACTION REPLAY

World of Sport

IT TAKES a Professor of Leisure Studies to write an atlas of sport. Alan Tomlinson's *World Atlas of Sport* was published recently by Myriad Editions and New Internationalist. It contains sections on specific sports, on individual countries and, of course, on sports politics and economics.

One point that emerges is the way that globalisation has affected sport just as it has permeated many other aspects of life. This is not just a matter of the global dominance of football but of the undermining of more local sports, though of course many of these survive, such as pétanque in France and Gaelic football on Ireland. In other cases, changes can only be welcomed: polo



Survivors: pétanque and Gaelic football



in Argentina is no longer played using a live duck rather than a ball. As European nations extended their power to new parts of the planet, they introduced their own sports. Polo is very popular in Argentina, while cricket is primarily played in Britain and former British colonies: it has been described as an Indian game accidentally discovered in England.

Some sports can be played by almost anyone with a minimum level of fitness, while others require a lot more investment in financial terms. Skiing was once the preserve of the idle rich, though cheap travel and carefully-prepared snow areas have now widened its appeal to some extent. But polo remains the sport of an elite, often an aristocratic one, while horse racing, as far as the owners are concerned, is still the sport of kings, capitalists and sheiks. Not to mention those who flaunt their wealth in sailing – the have-yachts.

In his introduction, Tomlinson remarks that sports matter because they express the hopes of billions. But, as he says in his section on merchandising, 'Sports sell'. Even for a humble kick-around in your local park with jumpers for goalposts what are the odds that players will be wearing logo-covered gear?

PB

50 Years Ago

Little Budget

MANY BIG-TIME financial editors applauded Mr. Selwyn Lloyd's second attempt at producing a Budget for 1961/2. Here, they said, was the strong medicine which was needed to sort out our troubles once and for all.

This was the sort of comment which greeted Mr. Butler's autumn Budget in 1957, when Bank Rate last went up to seven per cent. It is what is always being said about the so-called remedies for the economic and financial crises of capitalism.

The trouble this time, said Fleet Street, is that we are all living too well. Agricultural workers, who are getting by on an average wage of £10 11s. a week and local government employees who are somehow making do on an average of £10 16s a week, must have been very surprised to hear that nowadays their

life is one long spree of opulence.

Whatever measures successive Chancellors may impose, the economy keeps on staggering from boom to recession, from expansion to retrenchment. One budget (often at election time) knocks a couple of pennies off beer, a couple of shillings off income tax. Another puts them back on, or onto something else.

The workers end up where they started, with a personal budget which is very finely balanced, often on a tight-rope supplied by the hire purchase companies. Yet they keep their faith with capitalism — if they blame anything, it is the planners, or their plans. But capitalism — unplannable, chaotic, unbudgetable — is always doing its best to teach them better.

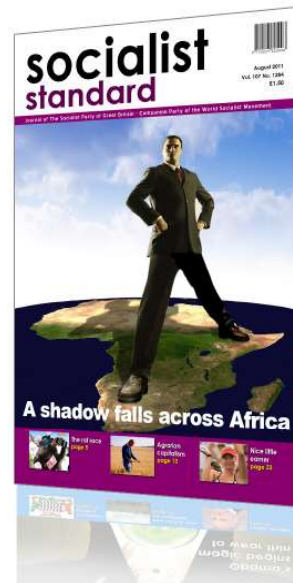
(from News in Review, *Socialist Standard*, September 1961)



Selwyn Lloyd

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Voice from the Back

The Seeds Of War

Many reasons are put forward for the conflict in Afghanistan. Some would argue it is a conflict over religion, others that it is a struggle for democracy. The following piece of information seems a more likely cause for the hostilities. "Afghanistan and Central Asia are abundant with natural resources worth billions. So far, they are largely untapped but the battle is raging for who will be able to exploit them in the 21st century. In the 19th century it was the Russians and the British who wrestled for influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia in a highly-explosive endeavour known as the Great Game. Today, Afghanistan's natural resources are estimated to be worth billions of dollars. The resources in the neighbouring Central Asian states are thought to be worth even more – the cake is huge and as yet largely untouched." (*Deutsche Welle*, 15 July) The seeds of all modern wars have been the rivalries over sources of raw materials, markets and political spheres of interest.

Premature Celebrations

The abolition of the hateful system of Apartheid in 1994 was correctly celebrated throughout the world, but capitalism remained intact and as long as capitalism survives it will throw up problems of exploitation and inequality. "South Africa celebrated Nelson Mandela's 93rd birthday on Monday with songs by millions of children and calls for public service, but the nation he led out of apartheid is divided by poverty and his ANC movement seems to many to be losing its moral compass. ... Mandela's calls for greater access to the economy for the poor black majority have



Statue of liberty

been dealt blows by corruption eating into welfare programmes and entitlements that benefit a sliver of the black elite with close ties to the ANC." (*Reuters*, 18 July)

The Future Is Bleak

The illusion that many workers share is that as they reach retirement age they will be able to live in a sort of rocking-chair contentment. In reality most of us will live even more parsimonious existences than we do at present whilst we are surviving from pay-day to pay-day. "Millions of people face a 'bleak old age' because they are falling through the cracks of private sector pension provision, a review suggests. The Workplace Retirement Income Commission says 14 million people are not saving into a workplace pension scheme at all." (*BBC News*, 1 August) Working for a wage or a salary as we all have to do is a precarious existence but when we are finally thrown on the industrial and commercial scrapheap the future for most

workers according to the

Commission is apparently even more awful.

The Perfect Worker

Newspaper editors have a difficult task every day – what should be their front page headline? Millions starving in a famine in East Africa? Demonstrators gunned down in Syria? A difficult choice perhaps but the editor of *The Times* led with a really important headline. "Welfare in chaos as thousands live to 100" (*Times*, 4 August). In any sane society the news that human beings

are managing to live a little longer would be the cause for celebration, but this is capitalism and there will be no dancing in the street at the

news. The news that the working class who produce all the wealth of the world are tending to live longer is bad news for the capitalist class who live on the surplus value that the workers produce. To the owning class the perfect worker is one who goes to work after they leave school, works two nights overtime and a Sunday and on the day he retires goes to the Post Office to collect his state pension and drops dead at the counter. No pension, no drain on the owning class's surplus value. Perfect!

Who Are The "Primitives"?

For thousands of years small tribal groups have lived in the forests between what is now Brazil and Peru. They are looked upon by many as "backward" or "primitive", but nevertheless they have survived in isolation and relative security.

The advent of capitalism has changed all that. "The head of Brazil's indigenous protection service is to make an emergency visit to a remote jungle



Give the man an Uzi...

outpost amid fears that members of an isolated Amazon tribe may have been 'massacred' by drug traffickers. On 5 August Brazilian federal police launched an operation in the region, arresting Joaquim Antonio Custodio Fadista, a Portuguese man alleged to have been operating as a cocaine trafficker. But after the police pulled out, officers with the indigenous protection service (Funai) decided to return fearing a 'massacre'. They claimed that groups of men with rifles and machine guns were still at large in the rainforest. Reports suggest the traffickers may have been attempting to set up new smuggling routes, running through the tribe's land." (*Guardian*, 9 August)



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