

# socialist standard

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

## New Economic Forecast



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people  
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# socialist standard

NOVEMBER 2011

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The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 3 December** 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

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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

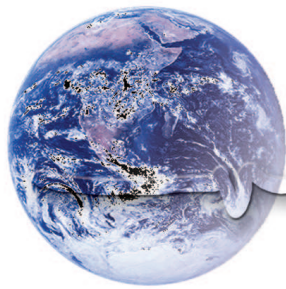
to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest 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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NOVEMBER 2011

## Editorial

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### Beyond the cutbacks

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IT'S SIMPLE really. Your wage or salary is the money necessary to reproduce your ability to work. Your pension is your wages or salaries deferred until you retire. Concerns over the effect of increasing life expectancy – sometimes described as a “burden” – are only a smokescreen. We need to be clear. Lowering pension levels and raising the retirement age are in effect cuts in real pay.

Pensions are a transfer payment from the profits of the capitalist class; which ultimately come from what workers as a whole produce. That there is at present a “problem” once more proves that the market economy is incapable of going beyond the limits of the wages system. It cannot adequately provide for the needs of the class that produces and distributes all the wealth in the first place.

Advances gained from the increased productivity of our labour – including an increased lifespan – are being clawed back by capital to its advantage, pushing the burden from the capitalists onto the workers.

The capitalist class encourages us to see their interests and problems as ours. As a result we find our lives opened up to the chaos and uncontrollable insanity of the market. The market system cannot provide any security for us in the long run, which is why we need to turn the current struggle over wages, salaries, and pensions into a politically organised movement for a society based upon the direct satisfaction of human needs.

It is encouraging to see the fight back. The gains made by wage and salary workers on pay, pensions and other related issues have not, after all, been granted by benevolent governments or employers. They had to be fought for. If those gains

are to be defended, democratic and unified action by workers is necessary. If governments and employers win on pensions and wages they will try it again with something else.

Nevertheless, important as activity of this sort is today it still does not get to the crux of the question.

The Socialist Party urges all workers to consider their position. Workers have to strike because they are wage slaves to the capitalist class who buy our lives by the week or by the month. So, besides making the greatest possible use of trade unions, we ask for recognition that even at their best such action cannot bring permanent security or end poverty. No strike can overcome the power of the market. In the end the logic of capitalism will always win out.

While trade union activity, including strike action, is necessary as long as capitalism lasts it can't work miracles. There can be no lasting solution to the problems the market economy creates within the market system itself. Austerity and insecurity, in a world of potential plenty, is always the lot of the working class. In addition to trade union action socialist political action is needed on the basis of a clear understanding and awareness of our class interests.

Unions cannot make revolutions. Only the working class themselves can do that, through clear, democratic, determined political action.

Reform is no answer.

The single, simple fact we urge working people to recognise is that capitalism generates problems it is incapable of solving. The remedy – the only remedy – is to consciously end the property system that divides and oppresses us.





## Bones of Contention

YOU'LL OFTEN find that socialists take a special interest in history and the ancient past. It's something to do with taking the 'long view'. But you don't have to be a socialist (or 6 years old) to be interested in dinosaurs, and with today's computer generated images (CGI), it's all a lot more fun than it ever used to be. The BBC's new series *Planet Dinosaur* uses the kind of Hollywood-style special effects that made its 1999 *Walking With Dinosaurs* such a success. New technology and discoveries have added hugely to the knowledge about dinosaurs in recent years, and the show's star attraction will no doubt be the representation of feathered dinosaurs, a very recent entry into the scientific consensus.

In the 1999 series too many unqualified assertions were made about dinosaur behaviour which could only have been guesses. This time the BBC has been careful to back up claims with evidence, letting the viewer follow the chain of reasoning, and making proper distinctions between fact and conjecture.

Yet still there's a propaganda gloss on the scientific process, as if the audience somehow wouldn't buy the real thing. The obsession with carnivorous monsters, and heavy repetition of words like 'killer' and 'deadly hunter', seem to assume the audience is on a five-second boredom timer and can only be motivated by blood and guts (ie that we are 6 years old). There is a curious moment when, in magisterial tones, we are informed that the fearsomely spiked tail of a stegosaurus is known as a 'thagomiser'. As it happens this term started life as a joke by Gary Larson, in whose *Far Side* cartoon the caveman professor explains to the class that it is named 'after the late Thag Simmons'. The Smithsonian Institute, having a sense of humour and no prior name of its own, promptly adopted Larson's term, which is now semi-official. Joke names abound in science, but the BBC seems to disapprove.

There is also no hint of the huge disagreement which until recently raged over feathered dinosaurs. And then there is the

*archaeoraptor* debacle. When this fossil turned up from China in 1999, National Geographic reported that it was the missing link between birds and dinosaurs. This elicited a furious response from the Smithsonian which, losing its sense of humour for once, accused the magazine of reaching 'an all-time low for engaging in sensationalistic, unsubstantiated, tabloid journalism'. Why were they so upset? First, the link between dinosaurs and birds was at that time highly speculative; second, the article had preceded the scientific paper into print, meaning that according to the rule of precedent the rightful naming of the species had been effectively filched by the magazine; third, a term like 'proto-feather' committed the pre-adaptationist fallacy, as if evolution knew where it was headed in advance; fourth, the fossil had been illegally exported and should not have been touched by any reputable institution anyway.

Embarrassingly, the fossil turned out to be a fake, a fact that National Geographic might have learned if it hadn't been in such a fever to publish. The story was reported with glee by the creationist lobby, ever desperate to find leverage. Though the dinosaur-bird link has since been established, the real scandal that came to light was not only the rampant trade in illegal and stolen fossils but the large numbers of forgeries that were appearing on the international market, mainly from unregulated China. The trade in fossils continues unabated, to the continued frustration of real knowledge, as much of the traffic is destined for the private collections of the rich and is thus unavailable for study.

You don't have to be a 6 year old to like dinosaurs, but you do have to be a socialist to understand a world where people will steal and fake old fossils for the sake of a few dollars or yuan. 'Archaeoraptor', by the way, means 'old robber'.

## Fault finders

WHERE THERE'S blame there's a claim, so now they're prosecuting scientists for not predicting an earthquake ([www.nytimes.com/2011/10/04/science/04quake.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/04/science/04quake.html)). This seems a tad unfair since nobody is suing the bankers for not predicting a global economic disaster, even though they helped cause it.

"No one expected to be told the exact time of the quake", said one plaintiff, "We just wanted to be warned that we were sitting on a bomb."

You would have thought that 400 tremors in the previous 6 months would be a sizeable clue, and that only a lit and sparking fuse leading directly up into the rectal cavity could give greater cause for alarm. But you'd be wrong, because the local seismic survey team reported that the risk was still low. This low risk was however translated by local officials into 'no risk', a prediction which turned out to be spectacularly wrong, and the writs started landing before the masonry had finished falling. The problem was that people wanted a categorical yes or no statement, and the fact that you can't expect that kind of answer from a seismologist somehow got lost in the ensuing uproar.

People have strange ideas about science. Half the time they hate it and don't believe a word of it, the rest of the time they seem to think it is capable of performing miracles. A bit like how people see capitalist politicians, come to think of it. It seems inconceivable that any law court would really convict the scientists, but if they do then presumably we can all start suing the Met Office every time the rain ruins our washing.

**E=MC<sup>3</sup>?**  
IT'S  
SOMETHING  
when you  
go down the  
pub or the  
supermarket



and everyone's talking Einstein. But it happened recently after a world headline splash that some CERN physicists had sent some neutrinos on a faster-than-light trip through an Italian mountain. Not that anybody could make any sense of the story, not even the expert commentators. Assuming it wasn't a mistake, either it was possible to travel faster than light, in which case the standard model of physics was in trouble, or the neutrinos were somehow skipping out the side window of another dimension and back in again, in which case the standard model of physics was still in trouble. Cosmology is in big trouble anyway, as 97 percent of the universe is officially missing (dark matter, dark energy) and large chunks supposedly keep disappearing (dark flow). And the quantum theorists are ready to string themselves up too, not having had a sniff of a decent theory in 30 years. Could life get any worse for physicists? Well, let them take a lesson from socialists. We're optimists. We look forward to the day when everybody down the pub is talking Marx. That's when the standard model of capitalism will be in serious trouble.

## Crises and collapse

Dear Editors,

As a member of the Socialist Labor Party for 43 years I'm convinced that discussion with workers about the intractable calamity global capitalist society is facing can only logically start with the Marxian Law of Value: that commodities exchange value for value in the amount of socially necessary labor time invested in their production. The corollary to this is that human labor power is the source of all value.

As every socialist knows, lurking behind burgeoning unemployment, dire poverty, and a hopeless future is the fact that workers receive in wages only a small and diminishing fraction of the values that they produce. They cannot buy back those values when they appear as commodities in the market in their real value. Global capitalism is writhing in its death throes with this fact in its craw. Every worker needs to get this message before any meaningful discussion of socialism ensues. To discuss social issues that are only subordinate to this without a basic understanding of value, I believe is futile and will never make socialists.

What approach do you encourage socialists to take in initiating discussion of capitalist collapse and the necessity of socialism with workers?

Yours for a socialist society,  
**Bernard Bortnick, United States**

### Reply:

We are glad to hear you are keen to make more socialists but do not agree with your view that capitalism will collapse – either on past evidence or given our understanding of Marxian economics. As long ago as 1932 we published a pamphlet called *Why Capitalism Will Not Collapse* which pointed out the fallacy of such predictions at the time of the Great Depression. As Marx himself said, there are no permanent crises and every economic downturn creates the conditions for the next boom.

The view you put forward that the workers can't buy back the entire product of industry is no explanation of economic crises in itself, and certainly doesn't point in the direction of the collapse of capitalism. It was specifically repudiated by Marx in Volume 2 of *Capital* in Chapter 20 where he argued that the inability of the working class to buy back

the entire product of industry is a permanent condition of capitalism and of itself explains nothing.

He also pointed out that if the contention is really that the restricted consumption of the workers causes crises, then this is unconvincing too. Wages as a proportion of national income usually have a tendency to rise during booms so this would otherwise indicate crises should be averted.

The working class of wage and salary earners do not *need* to buy back the entire product of industry incidentally (what use would workers have for producer goods like lathes and robotics equipment?). Much of the output of industry is bought by the capitalists i.e. producer goods like those just mentioned, and also those luxury goods that the working

class can't afford to buy.

The ultimate cause of all economic crises within capitalism is the system's tendency to grow in an anarchic, unbalanced fashion in the relentless pursuit of profit (viz. the housing and construction bubble in large parts of the developed world that laid the basis for the recent financial crisis and recession). Our approach is to point out that crises and other social and economic problems are endemic to the way the market economy works. No reform of the system can ever solve these problems – only socialism represents a positive hope for humanity. – *Editors*

## Feasible socialism

Dear Editors

The article, 'Russia – the myth of socialism', in the October *Socialist Standard*, well written though it is, does raise a fundamental question. It is claimed, not unreasonably, that in the mid-nineteenth century, capitalism "had not economically matured to the point where Marx's vision of a classless society where free access to needs (sic) would be the mode of distribution could be realised", whereas by 1917, this economic maturity had been achieved, albeit not in Russia itself (which begs questions as to what options a bona fide socialist party

operating in Russia around this time would have had, and how a world socialist revolution might have played out had it occurred

in 1917).

My query is this. On what grounds can such an assertion be made? What objective criteria or economic observations can be cited in support of the proposition that world socialism was feasible in 1917 (and not feasible in 1850)? I don't think it's sufficient simply to generalise that technology had advanced over the intervening 67 years. An empirical case surely needs to be made, thought. For example, it might incorporate the notion of a 'tipping point' having been arrived at.

This is not a pedantic issue. If it can be convincingly demonstrated that socialism was feasible way back in 1917, then a fortiori, it is surely the case that it is far more feasible now insofar as technology has surged ahead beyond the wildest dreams of those who were around during those ill-fated 'ten days that shook the world'. Nevertheless, the case still needs to be made – empirically – that the world could sustain a free access society, and this must mean taking account of current technology, and indeed of a valid representation of human nature (since these aspects are respectively integral to the 'give' and 'take' sides of any economical situation).

**Andy Cox (by email)**

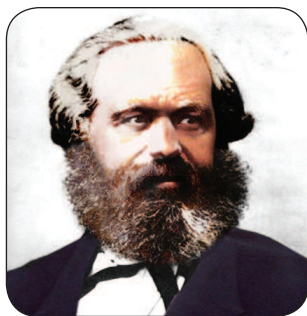
### Reply:

In the 1910 edition of his *Woman and Socialism* the German Social Democrat August Bebel produced evidence to show that at that time the world was capable of producing enough food, clothing, shelter and otherwise provide for everybody on the

planet. He saw electricity, generated by steam turbines, as being the energy source that made this possible.

"Electricity", he wrote, "has an advantage over every other form of power in that there is an abundance of it in Nature." His explanation has a surprisingly modern ring: "Our rivers, the tides of the sea, the wind and sunlight provide untold horse-powers, once we learn how to use them rationally and to the full."

He summarised Sir Joseph Thompson (winner of the 1906 Nobel Prize for Physics) as saying



**Law of Value: Marx**



**Abundance: August Bebel**

**continued page 16**



THERE WAS a time when 'land' used to refer to those parts of our habitat that were cultivated for food, grazed by animals for hide, wool, meat, milk and fertilisation, and to forests from which timber, firewood and food were collected and also to where communities lived sharing the common wealth. Now, as with everything else one can imagine, land is just another commodity to be bought and sold at the best possible price and to be acquired whatever the consequences for long-term incumbents. So too is everything it can offer – food, fuel, minerals and water – with the added bonus of investment and speculation.

The phenomenon of 'land-grab', well known now, was originally seen as a way for food insecure and rich countries such as Saudi Arabia and China to gain access to foreign farmland in order to meet the food needs of their own populations. Then came the big push for biofuels following targets agreed by governments at a succession of meetings on climate change. The Worldwatch Institute recently reported that rural populations have been pushed off prime land in 25 sub-Saharan countries for the production of biofuel crops for foreign nations. In other examples, food is grown on an industrial scale solely for export, disenfranchising local populations and turning them into wage labourers if they are lucky, and forcing them into urban areas and likely penury if they are not.

The most exciting opportunity now for big money seeking even bigger money is that of investment and speculation in both food and land. Pension schemes, universities, bankers and large investors are jostling to invest in land for speculation. According to one spokesperson for a large company fund, it doesn't matter if nothing is grown for ten years, you'll still 'turn a good profit.' Pension funds globally run to around \$23 trillion. Their investment in land and agriculture is relatively recent but growing fast and admitted by some investment bankers and civil society organisations to be a major cause of rising food prices globally.

At the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal, this February an appeal against land-grabbing was launched. By September over 650 organisations had endorsed it. Estimates of land the size of western Europe (227 million hectares) have been sold, leased or licensed in the last decade. One Oxfam case study found at least 22,500 people lost both homes and land in Uganda when they were evicted in favour of a British company, the New Forest Company. There were conflicting versions from the company and from the evicted, but a high court order to restrain evictions was sidestepped and the company put the responsibility onto the Ugandan National Forest Authority. There are numerous accounts of promised benefits to displaced persons and communities not materialising even after several years of waiting.

Efforts to draw up and implement regulations for the protection of local populations, even voluntary ones, have been less than robust.

In India government policy is to dispossess its own population. Prime Minister Singh has stated that 70 percent of India's farming population is surplus to requirements and that this surplus must be resettled in urban areas where 1,000 training institutions are being set up to facilitate new employment opportunities. Devinder Sharma, academic and commentator, says that this will be the world's biggest environmental displacement and that what is needed is a production system by the masses not for the masses. He says this policy will add another 95 million to the urban population within a decade, forcing farmers to abandon agriculture, usurping land, water and natural resources in the name of development. In West Bengal, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh fertile land has been taken for industrial development, residential development, businesses and Special Economic Zones whilst big corporations acquire land in other countries, specifically African countries, for development of agribusinesses to cultivate crops for Indian consumption. More than 80 companies have so far acquired land through direct negotiations with host governments but without input from the affected farmers. 1.8 million hectares in Ethiopia alone have changed hands this way to the detriment of small farmers in both countries. 250,000 Indian farmers committed suicide in the last 15 years. In the last decade more than two million hectares of farmland (equal in size to the whole of Kerala state) have been acquired for non-farm purposes, and studies show that India will be a major food importer by 2017-8.

The countries of Africa have been a major target for land-grab with agriculture on an industrial scale reaping substantial profits for investors. Corporate agriculture, however, is not about food production or satisfying the needs of the undernourished or downright starving but about producing profit. How long can it be at this rate before its limits are reached – dispossessed millions starved to death in favour of a tidy accumulation for the few? A lengthy study by the Oakland Institute in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Mozambique,

Zambia and South Sudan looked at the viability of industrial-scale farming compared with small family farms. What they found was that where 100,000 hectares of plantations would employ 1,000 workers, traditional agriculture of the same area would sustain 50,000 families, that is between 200-250,000 people.

This land is our land. Reclaiming the commons for the peoples of the world is a vital part of the socialist revolution.

**JANET SURMAN**

*Recommended follow-up: [farmlandgrab.org](http://farmlandgrab.org), [grain.org](http://grain.org), [devinder-sharma.blogspot.com](http://devinder-sharma.blogspot.com)*



*Brazilian Indian family participating in the World Social Forum in Bélem, Brasil, 2009*



## Producers and predators

*PRODUCERS AND Parasites* was the title of a 1935 pamphlet by the Scottish-born American Marxist John Keracher. On the face of it Ed Miliband's distinction in his Labour Party Conference speech between "producers" and "predators" seems more radical. After all, aren't predators worse than parasites? But this is only on the face of it, as what Miliband meant by producers was quite different from what Keracher did. Nor were his "predators" the same as Keracher's "parasites".

Keracher was explaining Marx's theory of surplus value which starts from the observation that wealth can only be produced by humans applying their mental and physical energies to materials that originally came from nature. Under capitalism these producers are exploited in that the difference between what they are paid as wages and salaries and the value of what they produce is appropriated by those who own and control the means of production. These capitalist employers and their hangers-on are "parasites", argued Keracher, living off the unpaid labour of the "producers".

Miliband's distinction is not between wealth-producing workers and those who live off profit, interest and rent, but between two types of capitalist. It's a distinction between Keracher's parasites. According to Miliband, there are good capitalists who invest in providing goods and services and jobs (the "producers") and those who are out to make a quick buck through asset-stripping and financial wheeling and dealing ("predators").

There are two things wrong with this distinction. First, it accepts the capitalists' impertinent view of themselves as wealth-producers (in Stock Exchange circles they even call mining companies "miners"); whereas all wealth is produced by those who work with their hands and brains, not those who invest for profit. Second, all capitalist firms are predatory in that their aim is to grow bigger by winning the battle of competition against their rivals and absorbing them through take-overs. That's what all the big capitalist firms of today have done, including Rolls Royce, which Miliband cited as an example of a good capitalist.

For some reason, commentators interpreted Miliband's speech as a turning to the left by the Labour Party. Certainly it was a piece of demagoguery that went down well with his audience of councillors, would-be councillors and trade union bureaucrats. But in essence it was no different from Ted Heath's 1973 denunciation when Tory PM of Tiny Rowland and Lonrho as "the unacceptable face of capitalism."

Actually, the speech was an open recognition of what has always been the Labour Party's practice – accepting capitalism and trying to smooth off the rough edges of capitalism, to humanise and moralise it. Cameron employed the same approach when, in opposition, he spoke of the Tories standing for "compassionate capitalism." (It's a different story now.)

It's a pipe-dream of course. Capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of the real producers which can only work in the interest of the parasites, whether predatory or passive, who live off profits. It can never be made to work in the interests of the majority, as the experience of the present Coalition government and the immediately preceding Labour government is showing. In fact, as the experience of all governments everywhere has always shown.

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## Rowan Williams v New (and old) Atheism

YOU ALMOST have to feel sorry for the Archbishop of Cant. It seems that the Church of England is on its knees. With declining attendance, internal disagreement about God's wishes regarding women and gays becoming bishops, and clergy defecting to the Catholics he has the job of holding the whole circus together and trying to present it as a credible organisation with something useful to say.

Back in February, in response to a report highlighting the problems the Church faces in trying to convince us to take it seriously, he put much of the blame on what he calls 'new atheism'.

How this differs from old atheism he didn't say but presumably he was referring to the numerous books published recently attacking the antiquated beliefs that he and his cronies expect us to accept. What was needed, he said, was for the clergy to be more vocal in countering the arguments put by such writers as Dawkins and Hitchens.

Unfortunately he didn't give any suggestions as to the kind of counter-arguments he expects them to use against the flood of rationalism and science that they face so it's difficult to imagine exactly what he has in mind. He certainly didn't volunteer to step in himself and debate against Dawkins on the question of 'Evolution or Creationism?' That would be worth hearing.

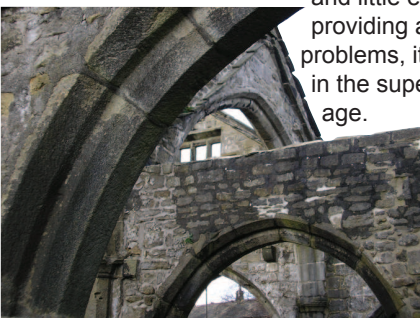
Maybe he's busy behind the scenes praying for some undeniable evidence that the story of Adam and Eve and the talking serpent IS true, that the earth really IS only a few thousand years old, and that Noah DID collect together two elephants, two aardvarks, two duck-billed platypus, two orangutans, two hippopotami, etc, etc, etc, and take them all for a ride in his ark.

To be fair to the Archbishop and his mates though, it's unlikely that many of them believe this tosh any more than we do. And it must be difficult to keep a straight face when they have to mention it. But that's the problem they are saddled with. Rowan Williams can hardly turn round now and say, "Sorry folks, it's just a load of old cobblers we've been using to remind you of your place in a class divided society". Well, he could; but he's not going to. He may like to be seen as an affable old leftie but he's certainly no socialist.

As for 'new' atheist Richard Dawkins, well, as a scientist and academic he is of course concerned that such unscientific nonsense as 'intelligent design' is being taught in schools. And while we agree with him, from a socialist point of view the problem is much deeper.

It's all very well to point out the lack of logic in religious beliefs, but religion is not simply a jumble of confused ideas. It is a powerful weapon in the hands of the capitalist class. It divides us and blinds us to the class action that is required to overcome the menace of capitalism.

Religion is the ideological expression of a long-gone world and its ancient social conditions, a world of superstition, slavery and little education. Far from providing an answer to today's problems, it tells us to put our faith in the supernatural hopes of a past age. Instead of uniting us as a class we are to become meek and mild, and to submit to the whims of an ancient god that was dreamt up in the bronze age.



Jenny Nicholson is tired of hearing how the poor are poor because they make poor choices. Let's see what kind of choices you make when it's your turn to be flattened by the economy. That's the idea behind Spent, an online game Jenny Nicholson created to challenge popular misconceptions about poverty. Play it at [www.playspent.org](http://www.playspent.org).

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

Some children in the North [of China] live ferally: they are known as kotjebi, or "fluttering swallows", and roam in packs. When they cannot steal in the markets, they eat dead dogs and rotten food (reportedly chewing toothpaste in the belief that it prevents food poisoning).

<http://tinyurl.com/5tsx7ou>

A typical prize for a children's contest might be a backpack, a lunchbox or maybe some toys. But not in Somalia. Over the weekend, a Somali radio station run by the Shabab, the most powerful Islamist militant group in the war-ravaged country, held an awards ceremony to honor children who were experts at Shabab trivia and at reciting the Koran. The prizes? Fully automatic assault rifles and live hand grenades:

<http://tinyurl.com/6dfq6wp>

What makes individual stockbrokers blow billions in financial markets with criminal trading schemes? According to a new study conducted at a Swiss university, it may be because share traders behave more recklessly and are more manipulative than psychopaths:

<http://tinyurl.com/687fz98>

A Saudi Arabian ministry statement carried by the state news agency, SPA, stated that Abdul Hamid al-Fakki "practiced witchcraft and sorcery," which are illegal under Saudi Arabia's Islamic sharia law. Al-Fakki was beheaded in the western city of Medina on Monday, the interior ministry announced:

<http://tinyurl.com/63pxe29>

Mr. Daisey's trip to Shenzhen, China, where he posed as a wealthy businessman to infiltrate factories where Apple products and other electronics are made. He says he witnessed inhumane conditions and interviewed workers outside of factories who said they were as young as 12... 'What was shocking to me was the level of dehumanization built into the systems that have been put into place by American corporations in collusion with suppliers.....

There's a hunger in very controlling companies like Apple to create planned obsolescences sooner rather than later, so it will become more and more difficult to stay functional':

<http://tinyurl.com/6bl7szc>

Eight in 10 British workers are overweight or living with long-term illnesses that limit their productivity, according to early findings of a 25-year study of people's wellbeing:

<http://tinyurl.com/3jwbf3k>

Tobacco companies knew that cigarettes contained a radioactive substance called polonium-210, but hid that knowledge from the public for over four decades, a new study of historical documents revealed:

<http://tinyurl.com/6hv4cq7>







# Djanogly – One Of The Family

AROUND THAT legendary city of Nottingham there is a name which is very difficult to avoid and even more difficult to forget. Djanogly.

There is, for example, the Djanogly City Academy, previously the Technology College. Then there are the University Djanogly Gallery and Lecture Theatre and a Djanogly playground. Even more splendidly we might come across the Sir Harry and Lady Djanogly Learning Resource Centre – a daringly circular building on an island platform. All this reminds us that the said Sir Harry, apart from owning the largest collection of Lowry paintings in the world, has also been an habitual sponsor of technology and learning and if we ask how he can afford this we need to know only that he has interests in, apart from anything else, the massively famous textile company Coats Viyella (now Coats plc), which he is said to have founded. Another family investment has been their son Jonathan who, after an unexciting academic experience, qualified as a solicitor and is now a partner in the corporate department of a city law firm as well as the Conservative MP for Huntingdon – one of the safest seats in the country previously represented by Prime Minister John Major, who is a close personal friend of Sir Harry.



**Clockwise: millionaire MP Jonathan Djanogly; its academy; its students**

## Millionaire

The Djanogly family fortune is put at £300 million; Jonathan is himself a millionaire, recording shareholdings in companies including Imperial Tobacco and BP. However it has not all been unyielding happiness for among the rural bliss of Huntingdon there has been mutinous gossip on the theme that Sir Harry's close bonds with John Major may have allowed some subtle arm-twisting to ensure that his son was selected to stand for the Tories after Major gave up. Any such resentment could not have been soothed by the new MP's subsequent rapid rise up the Greasy Pole, in opposition and government, until Cameron's victory in 2010 saw him blossom into Under-Secretary of State at the Justice Department, dealing with matters including legal aid, family justice and the law courts.

But at some stage – there were quite a few incidents to explain it – the dizzying rise and rise of Djanogly stalled. Perhaps it was when, as one source of information has it, he caused local opinion to sour to the extent of describing him as “lazy, with no political convictions or beliefs”. Or when one leading party member, possibly nostalgic for the battles between John Major and his Eurosceptic bastards, thought that he “works very hard not to give an opinion... nobody knows where he stands on anything. He is a wet fish...” and again he was damned for winning the candidature because “...party members voted for him as a favour to John Major. He has been a disaster and we need to deselect him”. With which the local “Ditch Djanogly” Facebook campaign, whose membership included the “estranged” son of a Tory big-wig, will heartily agree. In his own defence Djanogly can give examples of his performing with very adequate energy and commitment, except that this was not always on matters and in a style likely to justify the approval of the Huntingdon Tories.

## Expenses

There was, as a start, the scandal of his expense claims in which, along the green benches, he was not alone. Djanogly had claimed something over £77,000 on his “second home” in Cambridgeshire while giving his main home as in London. This claim entailed a certain adjustment of the facts, because that £3.7 million Maida Vale home is owned, or rather held in trust, by his parents who allowed him to live there rent free. Then there was the sum of £4,936 to install a set of automatic gates at his home in Alconbury, which he said were needed to keep him safe from animal rights campaigners protesting at his links with the notoriously animal-testing Huntingdon Life Sciences. Gardening costs accounted for £400 a month, two digital TV boxes £846...

And then there was the item which attracted the most intensive media scrutiny – his claim for over £13,000 for students described as cleaners for his constituency home, although it emerged that one of them was an *au pair* who advertised herself as such and spent most of her time in their London home or on holiday with them, looking after their children and waiting on visitors at constituency events. Under pressure from the exposure of his breaches of the rules on expenses, Djanogly had to repay £25,000 while local party members were angry that he – a Minister



of Justice - had lied to them.

Their Honourable Member's response to this was to employ, at a cost of £5,000, private



detectives who worked their well-honed deceptive skills to trick Djanogly's most serious critics (who included his constituency agent) to reveal their identity. And any energy he had to spare from this subterfuge he devoted to pushing through the Commons a Bill

which, by slashing legal aid entitlement and changing the procedures in cases of claims for damages after accidents and the like, promises effectively to benefit the insurance industry by as much as hundreds of millions of pounds. Djanogly did not seem to be embarrassed by being likely to profit from this as a partner in his family's underwriting firm – although, seven days after the matter was publicised in the *Guardian*, he moved his shares in the Djanogly Family LLP to a “blind trust”. Just another incident in the political career of Jonathan Djanogly, with its ripples of confusion, doubt and outrage among even his closest supporters, to put his parliamentary future in serious doubt. By even the accustomed standards, it has been a sad and sterile affair, nurturing the myths of capitalist politics – that privilege and charity are proper and adequate adjustments to enduring poverty, that society's rulers wheedle into power over us on the pledge that the outcome will be to our benefit when it will remorselessly aggravate the damage and repression we already know so well.

**IVAN**





# Where will it end?

*The Occupy movement is a sign of spreading unrest.*

Just last month ago we asked in our editorial whether we were beginning to see the “red shoots” of recovery in the class struggle. At the time, the annual conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had just called for joint industrial action, street protests and a campaign of civil disobedience, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had warned that America and Europe were facing the worst jobs crisis since the 1930s and an ‘explosion of social unrest’. We said then that there was no way of predicting with any confidence whether this expected ‘explosion’ would go off, or turn out to be a damp squib, depending, as it did and does, on what millions of people think and decide to do.

Since we wrote those words, you’d have to be a dour cynic indeed not to be heartened and encouraged by world events. Truly has it been said that there are decades when nothing happens, and weeks when decades happen. It’s hard to believe that in just one year we have seen a series of democratic uprisings across the Middle East and north Africa threaten or topple dictatorships; strikes and increasingly militant protests against austerity in Greece and across Europe; strikes, demonstrations and riots across Britain; and mass protests and occupations against anti-union legislation in Wisconsin, USA, to name just the most obvious and inspiring examples.

And then, in September of this year, the anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* and the activist group Anonymous announced an occupation of Wall Street. The bourgeoisie – along with the older, more senile, battle-wary ranks of class warriors and socialists – barely had time for the sneers to settle on their faces before the ‘anarchism as usual’ action had morphed into what some commentators are already calling the most significant populist movement of the left since the 1930s. On Wall Street, a decade happened in just a few weeks, and a small activist action exploded into an ever-growing movement that the mainstream media and ruling-class establishment eventually and reluctantly decided it could no longer ignore.

Ignoring it didn’t work, and neither did a rapid police attempt to suppress it with violence. Every attempt to

*Left: Occupy Wall Street. This page: scenes from Occupy London*



silence and repress the Occupy Wall Street movement – including mass arrests and rioting cops pepper-spraying young girls – merely led to new waves of support. More and more workers from all kinds of backgrounds – nurses, sacked cleaners, doctors, serving and former soldiers, unemployed graduates, poor youth from the city’s most impoverished districts, even sympathetic Wall Street traders – have poured into New York’s financial district to see what’s happening, listen to talks, take part in democratically organised general assemblies to plan actions and decide upon demands (if any), and generally build solidarity, communication, and mutual aid. (For informative news reports, see the Democracy Now



channel at [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org).) The example in Wall Street soon spread throughout the country, and there are now copycat occupations in Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Wisconsin, and many others, and attempts to repeat the success are spreading around the world, soon to arrive in London and the rest of Britain.

With what result? Well, of course, no one but fake Cassandras and Nostradamuses know. It may be that the whole thing will have fizzled out before this journal hits your doorstep. Or perhaps the movement will turn lamely reformist and be bought off. Perhaps, like the civil rights movement, it will prove not at all lame, even if reformist, and win some essential gains for our class. Or perhaps even, if some of the more radical demands and ideas put up on the Occupy movement’s websites become reality, we will see a genuine anti-capitalist movement develop worldwide. These are exciting times.

The key, of course, will be whether the protest movement can involve the rest of the working class and organise to take democratic control of the whole of social life, including winning control of the powers of government. With the potential for the Occupy movement spreading to this country and a nationwide day of action, including strikes, on 30 November, organised by the TUC, these are days of precious opportunity for the working class in Britain. It’s time, as the poet Shelley once put it, to rise like lions after slumber, in unvanquishable number. We have a life to win.

**STUART WATKINS**





# Riot!

## Capitalism and the limits of tolerance

So, what did actually happen during those six August days and nights?

Was it simply a sudden and inexplicable upsurge in criminality and

'disgusting behaviour' by urban youth?

Or was it an inarticulate cry of the working-class

stumbling blindly

towards a revolutionary

overthrow of the established order?

Perhaps, of course, it was neither of these things. Perhaps it was something else entirely.

It's worth reminding ourselves that the rioting, wherever it occurred, had several obvious and consistent features: it took place almost exclusively in the poorer districts of cities; it had no obvious racial basis; the participants were young, sometimes very young; and where their voices were recorded in the dozens of published web videos, they delivered the same angry and unambiguous message: "it's payback time."

## Payback

But payback for what? The answer which the rioters gave most frequently themselves was payback for years of indignity suffered at the hands of the police. And it was apparent that at the Pembury Estate in Hackney and at various other locations, many of those out on the streets were spoiling for a fight. 'Kill the police', they shouted. One man summed up the general mood this way: '[The police] are not all bad but most of them are; no-one around here has got any liking for the police'. I've been wanting to do this to the Fedz for

## We take another look at the August riots.

Moral outrage ran riot across the pages of the tabloid press for six days in August this year while looting, arson and battles with the police spilled across the streets of London and other English cities. Angry condemnation of the rioters and promises of legal revenge emerged from the mouths of Westminster politicians, while the nightly television newscasts drip-fed the nation with a steady message of shocked disapproval.

'These are sickening scenes. This is criminality pure and simple, and it has to be confronted and defeated' said an apparently affronted David Cameron (PM and former member of the Bullingdon Club).

In the first days and nights of rioting, David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham, put the establishment case. The riots were: 'an attack on Tottenham, on people, ordinary people, shopkeepers, women, children, who are now standing on the street homeless as a consequence'. It was a politician's oily speech, carefully tailored to achieve maximum media effect, but it expressed a view which many of Lammy's constituents might well have shared: the main damage inflicted by the rioters was on their own communities. The looting and arson attacks had been indiscriminate, directed at small

local shops as well as banks, larger businesses and chain stores; people's homes had been destroyed and members of the community were left traumatised and angry. Eventually, the rioting would also lead to the deaths of five innocent people. What Lammy's comment also implied, though, was that the rioters were somehow not 'ordinary people.' By marginalising them in this way he was showing a desire to sidestep any need to understand what was happening.

## Revolution?

Unreported by the corporate media, another very different political commentary was also taking place. Its tone was not condemnatory but enthusiastic: 'We are in a revolutionary moment', proclaimed one blogger, 'Prepare yourself...' Several of the more excitable anarchist and leftist groups were in animated discussion about whether the long awaited 'revolutionary moment' had arrived; or, if it hadn't, whether the rioting was, at least, an important step towards it; or, if it wasn't, whether this was, anyhow, how revolution might begin? Of the more ponderous political groups out on capitalism's left-wing, the Trotskyist 'Socialist' Party of England and Wales (SPEW) preferred to censor the disorderly way young workers on the streets were expressing their frustration at the system. In its view, this was clearly incorrect. (The rioters, evidently, had not asked SPEW to stage manage the week's events.)





years, said another. Although the killing of Mark Duggan by police officers on 4 August and the insulting treatment meted out to his family was a powerful trigger for the riots, it was the longer-standing resentment felt towards the police in London and elsewhere that lit the powder keg.

For unemployed teenagers and young people in urban areas, regular harassment by police and the use of stop-and-search tactics has long been the source of that resentment. For black communities who feel themselves singled out for this kind of treatment, it is a double insult. But, black or white, the rioters universally expressed the view that the police “took the piss” on the streets.

There was, though, another aspect to ‘payback.’ It was about claiming what many felt society had denied them: the right to be treated equally and the right to a decent standard of living. They were not shy about it: it was about ‘the money’. Stafford Scott, in a Guardian comment piece made this connection: “looting comes from the belief that if you cannot get equality and cannot expect justice, then you better make sure that you get paid.” Though he was speaking of attitudes within the black community, his remarks chimed very closely with what all the rioters were saying. For some, the collective nature of ‘riot’ was enough to legitimise the looting of shops and businesses. It was a moment of ‘freedom’ one teenager claimed. And though not all spoke openly in these terms, the attitude is nevertheless implicit in the widespread notion of payback.

### Class war

So, were the rioters simply criminals, as Cameron, and others claimed? Certainly

they were criminals. The law defines all attacks upon capitalism’s system of property relationships as criminal, whoever carries them out. But the question that Cameron, as a defender of capitalist property could not raise, however, let alone answer, was what kind of challenge the rioters were making.

The significance of the August riots becomes clear only when they are set against the background of the conflicts of interest that are built into the social relationships of capitalism. Those conflicts are never far from the surface and are liable to break out at any time, visibly and destructively. That’s especially the case when the capitalist system, which is always unstable and unpredictable, puts large groups of people or even whole classes under pressure. And the rioters who came from Hackney, Tottenham and Peckham, and from dozens of other socially deprived urban areas around the country were certainly feeling the pressure. Many of these areas have for a long time been dependent on services funded by government and, as a result, are now being disproportionately hit by cuts in public spending. As the UK Coalition government continues its policy of making the working-class pay for the chaos and shrinkage in the economy, many families on low incomes now face not just the prospect of increasing unemployment but benefit cuts, higher prices, and the withdrawal of public services. All this is happening - and seen to be happening - in a society where the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, and conspicuous consumption by the rich continues unabated. It is hardly to be wondered at, under these circumstances, that frustration is going to spill over into action on the streets.

The rioting was not an example of class conflict. There was no direct confrontation between workers and their employers, for example. The indiscriminate acts of violence, and arson seen on the streets last August were purely destructive. The looting was for

individual gratification or to meet individual need. And there was certainly no sign that any of this would lead to a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order. But as damaging to their own working-class communities as the riots showed themselves to be, they were a response to the specific class conditions that the rioters found themselves facing under capitalism. The targets they chose to loot were the everyday embodiments of capitalist property relations, high-street shops and businesses that hand over their consumer goods only to those with the money to pay for them. Also targeted were the defenders of those property relations, the police. Looting in these circumstances is a way of breaking through the barriers that capitalism imposes. It’s a way of challenging capitalism’s institutionalised entitlement system (money) and asserting your own sense of entitlement to a share of what society has produced. To that extent, rioting is a political statement.

What is striking, though, is how little sense of identification the rioters had with their own communities or with other members of their own class. From a socialist perspective, they betrayed no real understanding of why they lacked jobs and had little prospect of getting them - or why they needed jobs at all. They showed no understanding of why they led impoverished, disempowered lives in a world full of rich folk, expenses-grabbing politicians, greedy bankers and glitzy consumer goods. They were seeking payback and a means, individually, to survive. They were not fomenting revolution. But at the same time, they understood enough to know that their interests were not being served by the world in which they lived, and felt strongly that they were entitled to something more.

### HUD







approach.

Many of the issues homeless people face are centred around their ability to pay for their accommodation and to maintain those payments. Whether buying or renting, housing takes a disproportionate amount of income and in recent years has sailed close to the maximum 30% as recommended by most financial experts as a percentage of income. These costs coupled with spiralling food and fuel expenditure, mean the ability to maintain housing is getting increasingly harder for many families. Loss of a job, reduction in working hours or wages can have a devastating impact and can often result in homelessness. Exact figures for homelessness are difficult to obtain due to the transient nature of the people involved, the various bodies doing research and the changing way the government classifies homelessness. However, as a rule of thumb, in times of economic downturn the number of homeless persons increases exponentially. No amount of charity, magazine sales or campaigning will alter the root cause of the problem and the profit driven nature of housing.

So in 20 years how has the *Big Issue* helped with solving the problems of homelessness? According to their own website:

"The *Big Issue* is a business solution to a social problem, demonstrating that an organisation can succeed whilst being simultaneously driven by commercial aims and social objectives. It has helped thousands of individuals to regain control of their lives and has simultaneously altered public perceptions of homeless people" ([http://www.bigissue.com/History\\_34.php](http://www.bigissue.com/History_34.php))

No doubt on an individual basis the *Big Issue* has helped some of the thousands it has had contact with to be able to better their own situations, but in the bigger picture it, like so many other homeless charities, is unable to achieve anything of real and lasting value. There was a huge homeless problem 20 years ago in the UK and there is still one now. Unless capitalism is swept away, there will still be one in 20 years time.

Under capitalism, housing, like everything else, is a commodity to be bought and sold on the market. For those unable to afford it, homelessness is the only option unless bailed out by limited council and state help or charitable donations. These are not solving the problem, merely at best reducing some of its ill effects. Business has no interest in solving social problems, contrary to the statement by the *Big Issue*. Its goal, always, is profit. If housing was fairly distributed according to need rather than via a market, then the problem of homelessness would disappear and there would be no need for such 'social entrepreneurship' as lauded by the *Big Issue* and similar organisations.

A telling quote comes from John Bird himself:

"I am a self appointed grandee of the poor. I am one of them who got out and got into a position to help, so I will mollycoddle Lord Mandelson, Cameron, Blair, and Brown, anyone if it helps. I don't want to read *The Big Issue* and read how miserable it is living under capitalism. I want to know what you're going to do about it, how you're going to dismantle it" (*Independent*, 5 September).

In socialism, a society based on people's needs not profit, housing like everything else would be free and open to all. The masses of empty homes would not stay empty because people couldn't afford to live in them anymore. Homelessness will be a thing of the past and consigned to history, and with it will be the well-intentioned but ultimately self-perpetuating charities. Hopefully in another 20 years there will be no need for a 'celebration' of the continuing need for charity.

**David Humphries**

**T**he *Big Issue* was started back in 1991 by Gordon Roddick (husband of Body Shop owner Anita) and John Bird (not the John Bird of TV comedy Bremner, Bird and Fortune) who was himself a victim of homelessness when young. Its initial aims were to help the homeless by allowing them to help themselves. The basic concept of the magazine is simple: a homeless person is given 5 copies to start for free. They sell these for £2 each and can then buy further copies from the magazine for £1 each, re-selling for £2 and keeping the difference. In time the vendor can eventually build up for themselves a small client base and earn reasonable enough money to eventually get themselves set up in a home of their own, thus 'solving' the homeless crisis one person at a time. For some this method indeed works and there have been many successful vendors over time. However as a wider solution to the housing and homeless crisis, this kind of work-for-your-supper thinking is really a very poor quality sticking plaster over a wide, gaping wound and is fundamentally flawed.

Homelessness is a complex issue. For every homeless person there is a raft of interrelated reasons why they may be in that situation. Some are simple: loss of housing through relationship breakdowns, inability to pay for housing, drink, drugs, mental health issues, abuse and domestic violence. For some, all they really need is a house or flat. For others, more complex social help is required from specialists perhaps in drink and drug rehabilitation, or social workers to support individuals through crises. In fairness to the *Big Issue*, they never set out to deal with these problems, although the later founded *Big Issue Foundation* has tried to expand its



# What is wrong with using parliament?



*The anarchist paper Black Flag recently reviewed our pamphlet on this under the title “We use it as a Dung Market”. We reply.*



It seems ironic that the review should start with a romantic nod in the direction of William Morris when one of the things that Morris is well known for was his passion for “making Socialists”, something that the Socialist Party is rightly or wrongly often simplistically ridiculed for.

In essence, Morris’s socialist “propagandising” was about making sure that there was a strong body of socialists who had a good understanding of the workings of capitalism and a clear understanding of the components of a society in contrast to it. He happened to call this socialism, as we do, and it rested on the view that there needed to be a mass of opinion in favour of it as a classless, stateless, moneyless society.

If people start to believe in the possibility of a future society beyond the market and the state then it seems sensible that they should cover all bases and rob any ounce of legitimacy that the capitalist class (including leftist would-be managers with their own statist dreams) will try to bestow upon themselves. The icing on the cake is that we don’t allow them that privilege and that we should go into parliament as rebels. Of course this implies a mass of anti-capitalist opinion outside parliament of which those elected would be the mandated delegates.

The anarcho-communist Alexander Berkman once pointed out that:

‘Our social institutions are founded on certain ideas and as long as these are generally believed, the institutions built on them are safe. Government remains strong because people think political authority and legal compulsion necessary. Capitalism will continue as long as such an economic system is considered adequate and just. The weakening of the ideas which support the evil and oppressive present-day conditions means the ultimate breakdown of government and capitalism.’

In other words, the big holding power that capitalism in more “developed” countries has over many is in people’s heads in that the majority believe that there is no alternative or/and that they are “free” and living in a “democratic” society. It is precisely in the countries that have a semblance of democracy that seem to be the most stable in capitalist terms, for the reasons stated by Berkman above. So if that’s the case, what’s wrong with using the platform offered by parliament to call their bluff about being democratic?

The common objection to this raised by anarchists is the “corrupting effects of politics”. If that’s a problem then anarchists wouldn’t be able to trust their own mandated recallable delegates either, since such delegates is what we propose when we seek the platform of parliament to further articulate that desire for a society free from capital and the state and ultimately capture those powers that could be used against us. And if who controls the state is not important then why are so many anarchists concerned about the BNP getting hold of it?

The Socialist Party doesn’t have a blueprint for how a future society may come about but isn’t it wise to minimise as much as possible the risk of violence that states which, if left at the disposal of those who currently control them via their own “delegates”, could more easily deploy against the development of a new society?

Any process that has as its aim the revolutionary transformation of society has to have a future vision as a realisable possibility. This has to increasingly gain ground by being articulated in workplaces, the community, shops, pubs, in the arts and culture in general. As that future society gains ground as a tangible possibility then the conversation, discussion and plans will be increasingly enthused about how best to organise and adapt in all areas to meet society’s needs.

What’s the best way to help this process? Should we go down the route of fetishising every struggle going as, according to many on the left, struggle in itself is going to magically transform the consciousness of those involved into hardened revolutionaries? But if struggle alone is supposed to incrementally revolutionise us all then what’s the reason why so many workers who’ve gone through a lot of struggle, the miners, construction workers and others, have not reached radical conclusions but sometimes very reactionary ones such as “British jobs for British workers”?

To focus on explaining the root cause of society’s problems rather than tinker around with the edges (symptoms) is one of the most important reasons for an organisation like the Socialist Party to exist. That’s why we think it important not to spend endless amounts of time campaigning as a party to try to deal with the inevitable aspects of what capitalism throws at us as workers.

Anyone would think from reading the review that all our members do is campaign to persuade people to resort to the ballot box. The conception that the review has of the Socialist Party supposedly thinking that strikes are a “diversion” is a complete red herring. What fairy tale was that whisked up from? Strikes are an inevitable part of the class war that workers can sometimes utilise to defend or improve their working conditions or rates of pay. Our members are involved in these as workers. What’s wrong thinking that all these things don’t necessarily lead to revolution? Surely if they did then, with all the struggles on the economic front that the working class is forced to engage in every day since it came into existence, we should already be there in the review’s (for want of a better term) “councillist utopia”?

This rosy view of the working class doesn’t accord with reality.



**William Morris - known for his passion for "making Socialists"**

Most workplaces in the developed world are not one big "comradely experience" although most people are pretty decent despite the competitive environments they find themselves in. In the UK for example it's the "Service Sector" that accounts for 73 per cent of GDP. I have worked in it and wonder why the reviewer has not been able to see what I see. Low pay, poorly unionised, competitive and non-stop, target-driven bullshit for many. Hierarchies built-in all over the place, where managers believe they've got a better deal than other workers who they generally view as their subordinates, and where often in return the other workers have respect or/and fear of the "higher ups". In many cases the view is that the way to improve one's position is done not as a class but as a rat in the rat race up the ladder. The effect is that the higher up the worker goes, the more they are forced to compromise and conform and get those beneath them to do the same.

Try openly putting across revolutionary or even militant ideas in workplaces like this (and many typically are) and you will be seen as "different" by your fellow workers who generally have very reactionary ideas in their heads. There's also the problem of all the informal hierarchies that are there as well as the real ones. Ever seen *The Office*? It's a brilliant example of this kind of behaviour. Once the bosses get an idea that there may be a "real revolutionary" in their midst, one that can't easily be compromised that is, then they'll soon "come up" with a "plausible" reason to get rid of them.

In addition, the figures for part-time work, temporary contracts and self-employment pose severe problems with the various "down tools" scenarios. And what about

the unemployed, those on benefits, the retired or those dependent on partners or parents who may well go along with the way things are? Those pushing papers around in the world of academia or those working out how to push some product onto the "consumer"? What clout do they or will they have if just tied down to a concept of revolution as a purely economic struggle?

What was probably most offensive about the review is the final paragraph where the reviewer sites the Socialist Party "slap bang in the middle of the Marxist vanguard groups whose characteristics it shares - authoritarian structure, party chauvinism and so on". One of the reasons I joined the Socialist Party was because I didn't like the de facto personality-dominated politics that often crept into groups that deemed themselves to be "anarchist",



**Anarcho-communist Alexander Berkman**

with little or no structure to get the "personalities" to come down from their privileged positions. In this respect at least, I felt that the Socialist Party was actually more "anarchist" than the anarchists! An important part of my "anarchism" meant allowing for the widest conception of democracy possible to suit the needs of society.

The Socialist Party is merely a tool to be used by those who want socialism and who think that organising democratically is more important than seeing yourself as bigger than the society that you want to inhabit and think it important to have a voice for the possibility of a future that is so often buried.

Ultimately, what socialist conscious workers decide to do will be for them to decide. If they decide that parliament is an irrelevance then they will ignore it. On the other hand, if they see that to ignore it could be dangerous and also that it has potential, then they will make use of that potential.

**STAIR**

## Letters continued

in 1909 that "the day was not far off when the use of sun-rays would revolutionise our life, would make man independent of the energy of coal and water" and quoted "how great is the supply the sun lavishes upon us becomes clear when we consider that the heat received by the earth under a high sun and a clear sky is equivalent ... to about 7,000 horse-power per acre." Bebel concluded that "this removes the fear that we shall ever run short of fuel" and that "there is no human activity for which, if necessary, motive power would not be available" (section 4 of chapter XXI).

With regard to food production, Bebel cited the claim of the American economist Henry Carey (who had died in 1879) that "the 360-mile long Orinoco valley alone could supply sufficient food to feed the whole human race" and commented "Let us halve this estimate and there is still more than enough. In any case, South America alone could feed several times the present world population" (section 4 of chapter XXX).

In 1850, on the other hand, the main sources of energy were coal, coal gas, the steam-piston engine and horses. Some time between then and 1910 a qualitative change in the productive forces at the disposal of humanity occurred which meant that the problem of producing enough for all had in principle been solved. At the same time capitalism came to dominate the whole world, which Marxists and others analysed using the term "imperialism" (today we might say "globalisation").

So, yes, the wars, famines and general deprivation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could have been avoided had world socialism been established a hundred years ago as was technologically feasible. As you say, every new advance in technology makes socialism all the more possible  
- Editors.

## Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



**The Socialist Standard examines their case**





# Casino capitalism: inefficient and irrational

*Even supporters of capitalism can see this – at least some of the time.*

One of the trends of political reporting in recent years has been to announce the odds being given by bookies of a particular outcome of an election. On the face of it, this makes a lot of sense. Punters will use the information they have to hand to gauge the mood of the electorate and risk their money. The fact that many of them do so separately should draw out the “wisdom of the crowd” and provide the best analysis short of the actual vote itself. Of course, this face value isn’t the whole story: candidates may try boosting themselves by encouraging supporters to bet on them; large-scale betting syndicates may skew the odds through their betting patterns; punters may follow the crowd and bet on the short odds, hoping for a win; some people may just place a flutter without caring if they win or lose. Which is why we don’t decide elections based on the bookies odds alone, and wait till the actual vote.

Some people, though, think that that is a good way to organise producing and distributing what we need. There was an idea, with considerable traction in academic and official circles, called the Efficient Markets Hypothesis, which held, as a recent UN report puts it, ‘that all publicly available information is immediately reflected in prices. In its strong form, the EMH contends that even private information – available only to individual market participants – is reflected in the price through the effects of the transactions of the persons in possession of the information.’ ([www.unctad.org/en/docs/gds20111\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/gds20111_en.pdf)). In short, it holds that market prices (particularly stock market prices) are always right, and we shouldn’t try and second guess the market. Almost no-one, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, seriously puts this case forward any more – although a few bitter-enders maintain it was the state failing to leave it to markets that caused

the crisis; and doubtless a new version will appear if the economy returns to steady growth.

The UN report, *Price formation in financialized commodity markets: the role of information*, delivers an academic *coup de grace* to that idea. It analyses recent trends in food markets, with a view to explaining their apparent volatility. It finds ‘market participants also make trading decisions based on factors that are totally unrelated to the respective commodity, such as portfolio considerations, or they may be following a trend.’ It explains this by identifying a difference between commodity markets (trying to profitably get goods to where they are needed) and financial investment (which is about maintaining a portfolio of investments and following a pattern of earnings, irrespective of the goods/outcomes involved). When this latter predominates, then, they note, rational use of information goes out of the window:

‘In an environment of herd behaviour there are limits to arbitrage. Acting against the majority, even if justified by fundamentals, may result in large losses, often of borrowed money. It may therefore be rational for market participants to ignore their own information and follow the trend. This is what many financial players do by default, basing their trading decisions purely on the behaviour of price series (algorithmic trading), which can lead to a commodity price bubble.’

That is, it becomes harmful to act on good information against the flow of the market. A “weight of money” effect can come into play. If, for example, an investor commits a large sum of money relative to the market, and then faces liquidity constraints. This may push market prices in the wrong direction. In particular, since many investors rely on computer programs to organise their trades, there is a risk of re-enforcing herd behaviour due to the fact that the software is following the same set of algorithms and programmed responses: like an evolutionary ecology lacking diversity, it may work well





([www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/foresight/docs/computer-trading/11-1276-the-future-of-computer-trading-in-financial-markets.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/foresight/docs/computer-trading/11-1276-the-future-of-computer-trading-in-financial-markets.pdf))

They also, though, find that computer-based trading is more efficient than human trading. That may be, as another study has shown, that human traders do not behave in a rational manner at all. According to *Der Spiegel* a study at the University of St. Gallen has found traders behave in a reckless manner:

'the bankers weren't aiming for higher winnings than their comparison group. Instead they were more interested in achieving a competitive advantage. Instead of taking a sober and businesslike approach to reaching the highest profit, "it was most important to the traders to get more than their opponents.(...) And they spent a lot of energy trying to damage their opponents.' ([www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,788462,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,788462,00.html))

Rather than behaving like parts of a rational algorithm, they behave like primates in a status competition. In either case, whether it is computer or primate driven, the financial markets, according to the UN report, have expanded massively into the food production process. Its authors speculate that this may be attributable to the 2000 financial crisis (the collapse of the dot.com bubble after the Asian Tigers wobble) as investors sought to find a new safer profitable place to put their money. In other words, the real world need of human beings to eat became subsumed to a (virtual) game of profit making ever more divorced from reality.

The important thing about all these reports is the emphasis they put on the flow of information in the production process. As the UN report notes:

'There is ample information on physical commodity markets, but it is not easy to obtain in a systematic way. A number of sources provide the same information, but in different formats. It therefore takes time and expertise to find out which are the most useful, relevant and reliable sources of information required for a specific commodity. Even from a single source the multiplicity of information products can make it rather cumbersome to access the targeted information. The various sources of information include official sources, such as international organizations and study groups, organizations specializing in specific commodities or groups of commodities, and governments of countries which are key players in the commodity markets, such as Australia and the United States, as well as private sources. In many cases, even from official sources, the information is not publicly available and can be accessed only against payment.'

This, in part, illustrates what a simple idea socialism is: that that information about production and stocks will be opened up and consciously shared. It doesn't require complex mathematics, or the invention of the new way of doing things, but a framework allowing the opening up and provision of information currently hidden behind and distorted by the operations of the financial market and indeed of the whole market system. The brains of mathematicians currently behind the computer trading programs could be put to use finding creative and useful ways of enabling the free information to find its way to the hands of those who need to organise producing and distributing what we need. Socialism will not be the result of advances in computing, but it could certainly benefit. Even aggressive bankers will see that they would benefit: after all, many of their jobs are now being mechanised away. We can see to it that getting food for everyone isn't a gamble. It's what might be called the Efficient Non-Market Hypothesis.

**PIK SMEET**

change in the environment could see everyone killed off.

A recent report by the UK Government Office for Science, entitled *The Future of Computer Trading in Financial Markets*<sup>7</sup> identifies:

'three main mechanisms that may lead to instability when financial markets involve significant proportions of CBT [Computer Based Trading]: nonlinear sensitivities to change (where small changes can have very big effects), incomplete information (where some agents in the market have more, or more accurate, knowledge than others), and internal "endogenous" risks based on feedback loops within the system.'





## Ground rents and coronets

THE SLUMP has led to a revival of long-forgotten nostrums. Last year the *Times* (10 June) carried an article advocating a single tax on land as a way out of the crisis. This proposal normally associated with Henry George (1839-1897), but Philippe Legrain chose to associate it with Winston Churchill. Hence the subtitle of his article: "Adopting Churchill's plan would benefit wealth creators at the expense of the idle rich".

It is true that a hundred years ago, when the Liberal government of the day was in a power struggle with the House of Lords over the budget, Churchill who was then a Liberal did support a tax on land as a way of getting at the landed aristocracy.

Some harsh things were said in the course of this struggle with the likes of the Duke of Westminster and Churchill's cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, being denounced as "land monopolists" and the "idle rich". As indeed they were. Those who own a piece of the Earth's surface are able to extract an income from the rest of society as ground-rent without having to lift a finger; the higher the demand for their land, the higher their income. In capitalist society this has to come out of the surplus value created in capitalist agriculture and industry. Naturally it was resented by the capitalist class who at least have to arrange for their capital to be invested before they can obtain their property income.

Henry George's idea was to tax away the whole of the ground-rent of landowners and use it to relieve the capitalist class of the need to pay any taxes. Churchill, Lloyd George and the others didn't want to go that far, but they still wanted to tax the mere ownership of land. Legrain repeats their argument:

'The country's biggest private landowner, the Duke of Buccleuch, owns 277,000 acres, not because of his talent or industry, but because his ancestors seized vast swaths of Scotland. These "land monopolists" — as Churchill dubbed them — get richer not through their own efforts, but that of others. The Duke of Westminster owns 300 acres of what was once fields and is now London's priciest real estate — Mayfair and Belgravia. And because so many people have established thriving businesses in the capital, that inheritance is now worth billions of pounds. Surely it would be better to tax that windfall gain, rather than the employees and entrepreneurs who generate it?'

The landed aristocracy lost the political battle and in 1911 the House of Lords had its wings clipped. But they kept their property. According to Legrain, in Britain today '0.3 percent of population owns 69 per cent of the land.' The latest *Sunday Times Rich List* puts the Duke of Westminster as the 4<sup>th</sup> richest person in Britain with a pile worth £7,000 million. The Duke of Buccleuch is equal 381<sup>st</sup> with "only" £180 million, but that's because land in the wilds of Scotland is less in demand than land in central London. Other bluebloods monopolising land in central London are Earl Cadogan (21<sup>st</sup> with £2,850 million), the Howard de Walden family (33<sup>rd</sup> with £1,820 million) and Viscount Portman (53<sup>rd</sup> with £1,200 million).

The Queen, who besides being the figurehead of the British capitalist state is a landed aristocrat in her own right, is equal 257<sup>th</sup> with £300 million. Other titled landowners with more than her are the Duke of Devonshire, the Duke of Sutherland and the Duke of Northumberland.

Their wealth is obscene and not justifiable even by capitalist standards. But Legrain is mistaken. Taxing away their rents would not benefit the real "wealth creators", i.e. the wage and salary working class, but only the capitalist class by reducing the tax it has to pay.

## OBITUARY

### Margaret Hopwood (1924–2011)

Manchester Branch are saddened to report the death in Bolton of Margaret Hopwood, the widow of Alf Atkinson, late General Secretary of the Socialist Party.

Margaret joined Manchester Branch in 1945, where she met Alf, having been introduced to socialism by her father Ernie Hopwood, a *Socialist Standard* subscriber and sympathizer. She remained active in the branch until it folded in 1957 and was involved in the re-forming of branch in 1968, a very active period in Manchester. She was responsible for organizing the 1969 and 1970 Manchester Summer schools, both tremendous successes.

In 1975 she and Alf moved to East Grinstead, a career move for Margaret who became headmistress of a school teaching English as a second language to immigrant children. This gave her an opportunity to work at Head Office, and she was Overseas Contact Secretary and a member of the Library Committee for many years. She was also a founder member of Croydon branch in 1981. Generous and hospitable, she and Alf accommodated Bolton and Lancaster delegates at Conference and Autumn Delegate Meeting for years – more than eight members at once sometimes.

Despite her commitment to socialism, Margaret could be critical at times of the Party and its members. Often, her opening remark was "and what have you done for socialism today, comrade?" She was by far the best *Socialist Standard* seller I have ever seen; no street corner was safe. On retirement, she and Alf moved to Shrewsbury, attending meetings in Birmingham until Alf's death in 1998, when she transferred to Manchester Branch again.

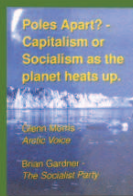
Margaret was clever, funny and a true socialist. She will be missed by her many friends and comrades. Our sympathy goes out to her children, Owen and Adele, both members of the Party, and to her grandchildren.

## socialist party dvd



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**All Keynesians now?**

*The Political Economy of Development.* Edited by Bayliss, Fine and Van Waeyenberge (Pluto Press) 2011



The subject of this book is the World Bank. Along with the International Monetary Fund, it was created by a UN conference at Bretton Woods USA in 1944. The original

purpose of the Bank was to encourage post-war investment for reconstruction and development by making loans to governments. The Bank, based in Washington, went on to develop financial aid packages for the less developed countries around the world. Critics complained that this aid was conditional on accepting the 'Washington Consensus' on the need for implementing neo-liberal ideology – deregulation of markets, privatisation and a reduced role for the state. Since 1998 this has been replaced by the 'Post-Washington Consensus' in which the Bank promotes the market through state intervention. As the authors explain, 'neo-liberalism has never been short of state intervention'. What is new, they argue, is the state-sponsored expansion of private financial institutions and services over the last three decades.

This book challenges the neo-liberal assumptions which still guide the Bank, and they provide detailed evidence of its failures. But what is the alternative? The authors pose the rhetorical question 'Are we all Keynesians once more?' with the clear implication that it is the only alternative. However, this conclusion lacks historical perspective. Keynesian economics (after the economist JM Keynes) is basically the belief that governments should intervene in the economy to spend their way out of trouble, and its failure to solve the problems of capitalism led to its replacement by faith in the market in the 1980s. (In practice, governments – even those who have formally repudiated Keynesianism – have intervened to prop-up their markets when necessary; especially in the current recession.) Neo-liberal

faith in the market was bound to end in disillusion, but that does not vindicate an equally misplaced faith in Keynesian economics. Keynesianism and neo-liberalism are merely two policies for running capitalism.

**LEW**

**Reformism Failed**

*Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party.* Martin Pugh (Vintage) £9.99.



It's not often that an entry in a book's index gives rise to a chuckle, but that's the case here. Under 'Thatcher, Margaret', the index lists a few page references

and then states, 'see also Blair, Tony'.

In fact Pugh clearly has it in for Blair, regarding him as an essentially Conservative figure. 'When he announced his intention of becoming an MP friends laughed and asked: "Really, which party?"'. He was easily impressed by strong personalities, not just Thatcher but also George W Bush and Rupert Murdoch. Blair was also keen to ingratiate himself with others, and in 1982 he wrote to the then Labour leader, Michael Foot, saying, 'I came to Socialism through Marxism' (not that he has a clue about either).

Pugh has a point when he says that it is not really so odd for Labour to have been led by a Conservative, for ex-Tories had previously played a prominent role in the Party (such as Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps). Tories and Labour agreed originally on issues such as protectionism, empire and alcohol, where Liberals took a different view. An internal Labour report of 1955 accepted 'the absence of clearly defined differences between the parties'.

Unfortunately, Pugh gives too much emphasis to questions of leadership, claiming that the Labour Party has tended to choose the wrong leaders and then retain them for far too long. He uses the word 'socialism' a lot but never defines it, though he is no doubt correct in saying that Clause IV of the Labour constitution, with

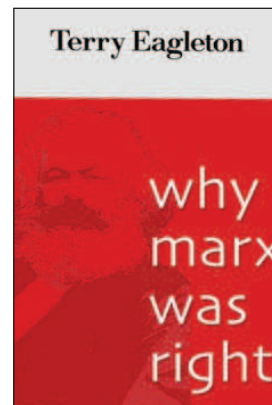
its commitment to nationalisation, was of largely symbolic value. Even Harold Wilson opposed its removal when Hugh Gaitskell tried to do away with it in 1959, though of course Blair achieved this in 1995.

Overall, Pugh gives a good factual picture of the Labour Party's history, including its backing for wars and the British Empire, and its preparedness to undermine strikes. It is odd, however, that he says virtually nothing about the actual formation of the Labour Party out of the Labour Representation Committee in 1906.

**PB**

**Marx was right  
than this**

*Why Marx Was Right.* Terry Eagleton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011) £16.99



Was Marx right? As Terry Eagleton points out in the preface to this book, of course he wasn't. No thinker gets everything right, nor can any reasonable person

expect them to. But was Marx "right enough of the time about enough important issues to make calling oneself a Marxist a reasonable self-description"? In this sense, Eagleton says the answer is yes. And Eagleton is right.

As Eagleton puts it, you can tell capitalism is in trouble when people start talking about capitalism – people become aware of capitalism in crisis, just as an illness or injury makes you newly aware of the body you always took for granted. Thanks to the crisis, people all around the world are talking about capitalism again. How can this discussion become deeper and better-informed? Well, in all kinds of ways, but we can hardly ignore Marx's body of work, which has "for long [been] the most theoretically rich, politically uncompromising critique of that system", as Eagleton puts it. Marx was the first person to "identify the historical object known as capitalism – to show how it arose, by what laws it worked, and how it might



be brought to an end". That must surely be of interest to those who are wondering whether capitalism has a future.

What, then, could be more welcome and timely than a book that demonstrates why Marx was right, in what ways he was right, and the relevance of his ideas for political action? And who could be more relied upon to write a witty, engaging and accessible account of this than Terry Eagleton, the author of many justly popular books on subjects related to Marxism, and of regular witty essays and polemics pricking the pomposity of many of our culture's most unjustly respected liberal thinkers? It would seem to be the perfect book for our time, written by the person perfectly placed to do the subject justice. Sadly, Eagleton lets us down.

Marxists reading this book may think twice about just what it is they've signed up for. Virulent anti-Marxists will wonder where all (what they consider to be) the most devastating arguments against Marxism are to be found. But most importantly, non-Marxists, politically interested, anti-capitalist or disillusioned working-class readers, are highly unlikely to be convinced by it either. Eagleton makes no effort to carefully define what Marx's thought was, nor to compare it with the reality of everyday life under capitalism. Marx's supreme achievement, as Eagleton says at the start of his book, was to identify an historical object known as capitalism,

and show how it worked. But in the book's 258 pages, we do not hear a word about Marx's thought on that subject. We do not hear once just what capitalism is, or how it works. Instead, we are just exhorted to believe, from various vague pronouncements and polemical swipes, that capitalism is mostly a very bad and unjust thing. Quite why it is bad, or quite why it leads to such results, we are none the wiser.

As for what socialism is, we hear much more about that. But anyone who is familiar with Marx's arguments about what capitalism is will wonder just what the difference between capitalism and the various forms of "socialism" Eagleton champions is supposed to be. Even if you're not familiar with Marx's arguments on this, anyone who reads Eagleton's apologies for the Bolshevik dictatorship in Russia and Mao's China would be quite justified in snapping the book shut and concluding that their prejudices were quite correct after all: that Marx and socialism were things to be avoided at all costs. For Eagleton, these "socialisms" were "botched experiments", a disgustingly coy way to describe the blood-soaked, anti-working-class tyrannies that imposed state-led, capitalist industrial development on economically backward countries. Whenever Eagleton does bump up against the occasional sensible argument, he quickly dismisses it as "ultra-left", and veers off to the

right – to the rightwing deviation, the senile disorder, of Leninism. Perhaps that's why Eagleton can find room to mention approvingly or critically just about everything that has ever been dignified with the name of socialism apart from the idea, put forward by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, of the "communistic abolition of buying and selling". Genuine socialism is just too ultra-left for him.

This book is, then, a bitter disappointment and a wasted opportunity. The capitalist West is just emerging from a long period of illusion. As Eagleton points out, the illusion was not so much a deep belief in capitalism, but a disillusion about the possibility of changing it. "What helped to discredit Marxism above all, then," says Eagleton, "was a creeping sense of political impotence. It is hard to sustain your faith in change when change seems off the agenda..." Change is back on the agenda. Marx's analysis of capitalism remains as astute and relevant as ever. But if you want to know why, you'll have to go to better sources than this book.

**SPW**



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## Stripped Blair

IN THE dark corridors beneath the Chilcot theatre, Gordon Brown has finally caught up with Tony Blair. He raises his gun and Blair tries to talk his way out of a tight situation one last time: "I think you'll make a great Prime

Minister. You'll love it. The girls. The parties.

Power's a great aphrodisiac."

Brown doesn't listen and, trembling, he pulls the trigger.

And so marks the end of Blair's escape from those who turned on him, as imagined in *The Comic Strip Presents: The Hunt For Tony Blair*. This enjoyable one-off reunited the team who have been making short comedy films since Channel Four's launch in 1982. Previously, their output has included both the miners' strike and Ken Livingstone's takeover of the Greater London Council filmed in the style of Hollywood blockbusters. *The Hunt For Tony Blair* developed this



approach by presenting Blair's downfall as a 1950s film noir. On the run for murder, he finds himself abandoned by his previous allies, including a sinister, camp Peter Mandelson who changes sides to help Blair's pursuer, Inspector Hutton. He's even rejected by George W Bush, here depicted (probably for the first time) as a mafia godfather out to "fuck Iraq". But the most memorable performance is from Jennifer Saunders, playing Margaret Thatcher as a faded movie star. Lying on a chaise longue, she reminisces over old footage of the Falklands War before seducing Blair in her four-poster bed. Keeping the satire this loose allows

the Comic Strip team to get away with scenes like Blair pushing Robin Cook from a mountain during "a friendly walk in the Highlands". But elsewhere, the film skirts closer to reality, especially in Stephen Mangan's spot-on portrayal of Tony Blair as someone too self-satisfied to accept his guilt as a murderer.

**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/>

### Salisbury

Saturday **12 November**, 2pm  
CAPITALISM: AN UNHEALTHY OPTION  
Speaker: Dick Field.  
Railway Tavern, 135 S Western Road,  
Salisbury SP2 7RR  
(opposite railway station).

### Clapham

Sunday **13 November** 4-7pm  
POVERTY AND THE WORKING CLASS  
Speaker: Jacqueline Shodeke.  
Sunday **27 November** 4-7pm  
CAPITALISM: AN UNHEALTHY OPTION  
Speaker: Dick Field.

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

### Chiswick

Tuesday **15 November**, 8pm  
*EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE.*  
Video on life of Sylvia Pankhurst  
followed by discussion.  
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,  
Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN  
(nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

### Glasgow

Wednesday **16 November**, 8.30pm  
BANKING  
Speaker: Vic Vanni.  
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill  
Road, G20 7YE.

### Islington

Thursday **17 November**, 7.30pm  
**Public debate:**  
SHOULD TRADE UNIONISTS  
SUPPORT THE LABOUR PARTY?  
Yes: John Gray (Labour Party Activist and  
Blogger - [grayee.blogspot.com/](http://grayee.blogspot.com/))  
No: Bill Martin (Socialist Party)  
Resource for London, 356 Holloway  
Road, London. N7 6PA (nearest Tube:  
Holloway Road).

### Kent

The next meeting of the newly-formed  
Kent & Sussex branch is:  
Sunday, **20 November** at 3.00pm  
at the Muggleton Inn (first floor), 8 High  
Street, Maidstone, ME14 1HJ.

### Leeds

Saturday, **19 November**, 2pm  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH USING  
PARLIAMENT?  
Albert Room, Victoria Hotel, Great  
George Street, Leeds, LS1 3DL. (The  
Victoria Hotel is to the rear of the Town  
Hall).

### East Anglia

Saturday, **26 November**, 2pm-5pm  
*WHEN CAPITALISM HITS THE FAN*  
Film & Discussion Meeting.  
The Workshop (basement)  
53 Earlham Road, Norwich, NR2 3AD.

### Manchester

Monday **28 November**, 8.30 pm  
SHOULD WORKERS SUPPORT THE  
LABOUR PARTY?  
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre, M4  
1PW.

## The Socialist Party of Great Britain badge



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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

## Flat Out

BACK IN July we commented on the build-up to next year's London Olympics, in particular the new giant shopping mall that lies between Stratford station and the Olympic Park.

But that's not the only way in which capitalist companies hope to make a profit from the Games. For instance, spectators will only be allowed to take in with them drinks in small containers, as a way of encouraging them to buy refreshments inside the venues – at inflated prices, no doubt.

Property developers, too, have seen a chance to make a killing in what has always been one of the poorest areas of London. New blocks of flats are being built in anticipation of an 'Olympic legacy' that will attract young professionals who can afford prices such as £350,000 for a two-bedroom



flat. Not many of those who live in the area at the moment will be buying at prices like these, even as their local shops and houses are demolished or converted.

While the Games are on there will be an enormous demand for accommodation, especially in the surrounding area. So, many homeowners are planning to move out for a month or so and rent their homes to others for the duration at several thousand pounds a week. And "an increasing number of landlords are asking for clauses to be written into their rental contracts allowing them to kick out their tenants for a convenient 'holiday let' during the Games" (*Guardian* 8 October). Who said the housing industry existed to meet human need?

PB

## 50 Years Ago

### Labour Conference

WHAT WAS the theme of this year's Labour Party Conference?

Revolution? Radicalism? Reform, even?

Well, no—respectability.

Many responsible newspapers have been worried for a long time at Labour's inability to dent the Tories' confidence. None of them want to see the British capitalist class having to rely upon only one party to form their governments for them.

So they were full of concern that Labour should have a dignified conference. They all hoped for the sort of inoffensive, meaningless resolutions which would make the Labour Party appear as a party which any man of good will could vote for.



Hugh Gaitskell

This is what is needed to make Mr. Gaitskell anything like a reasonable bet for Prime Minister.

The platform at Brighton played exactly as the press had advised and, except for one or two resolutions, the conference as a whole also fell into line.

This is the logical end to the Labour Party road of power conscious, capitalist reform policies. It is the end which Socialists foretold over fifty years ago, when the Labour Party were busily dubbing us Impossibleists.

Perhaps some of the Labour pioneers never thought it would come to this.

Blackpool, 1961, has done its share to show how wrong they were.

(from 'The News in Review', *Socialist Standard*, November 1961)

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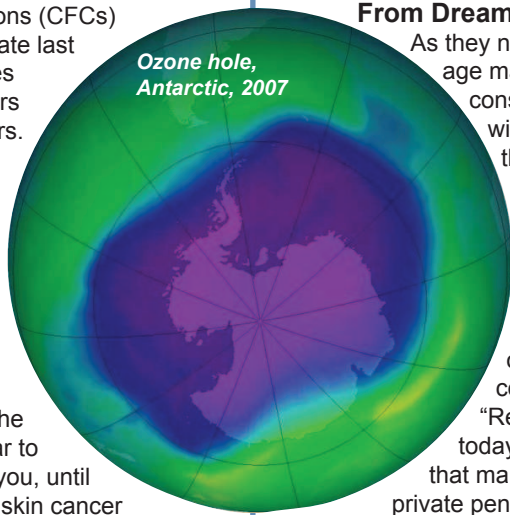




# Voice from the Back

## Pollution And Capitalism

In their mad demand for profit the capitalist class are polluting our world more and more. "Ozone loss over the Arctic this year was so severe that for the first time it could be called an 'ozone hole' like the Antarctic one, scientists report. ...Ozone-destroying chemicals originate in substances such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that came into use late last century in appliances including refrigerators and fire extinguishers. ... The ozone layer blocks ultraviolet-B rays from the Sun, which can cause skin cancer and other medical conditions" (*BBC News*, 3 October). On the face of it a scientific report on the BBC may not appear to mean that much to you, until your child develops skin cancer or some other awful medical condition. It will mean a lot then.



## The Sick Society

Inside capitalism everything has a price. If you can afford it you can get the best food, clothing, housing and entertainment. Conversely if you don't have the money you have to do with the cheap, the shoddy and the second-rate. Regrettably this applies to health-care too. "Half of hospitals 'failing to feed elderly patients properly'. Staff forgetting to give food and water, while dignified care is lacking at 40% of hospitals, Care Quality Commission says. ... The figures for England, compiled from reports published over the summer, will be officially released next week by the CQC. At Sandwell general hospital inspectors found serious issues with nutrition, especially for people who needed help with eating. Staff did not check whether patients had eaten and did not keep track of their fluid intake. One nurse said:

"Sometimes I am the only staff member to feed on the ward. How can I feed all these people? Sometimes by the time I get to the last bay, either the food is cold or it has been taken away" (*Guardian*, 8 October). They call it the National Health Service: the national ill-health service would be more accurate.

## From Dream To Nightmare

As they near retirement age many workers console themselves with the notion that they will at last be free from money worries, but recent research may lead them to reconsider their dreams of rocking-chair contentment. "Research published today suggests that many people with private pensions will be as much as 30 per cent worse off compared with those with similar savings who finished work in 2008, because of a combination of tumbling stock markets and interest rates at a record low. PricewaterhouseCoopers, the accountants, said those facing retirement this year would be left 'between a rock and a hard place', forced to consider putting off claiming a pension until market conditions improve" (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 October). Even after a lifetime of work and money anxiety capitalism still holds no respite for many workers.

## Empty Promises

Politicians vie with each other in claiming that they can solve capitalism's boom and burst cycle of trade. Beyond their empty boasts there is a reality that they dare not recognise in their bombastic promises. It is that booms and bursts are the way capitalism operates and politicians are powerless to do anything about

it. A recent survey by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows what the future is likely to be. "Falling incomes will mean the biggest drop for middle-income families since the 1970s, says a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies. The IFS forecasts two years 'dominated by a large decline' in incomes, pushing 600,000 more children into poverty. By 2013 there will be 3.1 million children in poverty in the UK, according to the IFS projections" (*BBC News*, 11 October). All the politicians can do is make empty promises while we suffer empty pockets.

## Skint But Not Poor

For centuries politicians, philanthropists and social observers have tried to solve the problem of the poor, but poverty has remained despite their best efforts. Now, however, a so-called think-tank has ridden to the rescue. "One of Britain's foremost think-tanks wants to ban the phrases 'poor people' and 'the poor' to describe those in poverty, claiming they amount to discrimination akin to racism and sexism.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) says politicians and members of the public are guilty of 'povertyism', an unacknowledged form of prejudice which stigmatises deprived people" (*Sunday Times*, 9 October). The findings of this think-tank must be a great consolation to those workers who find themselves unemployed, homeless and desperate. They may be skint but they are not poor. Thanks very much JRF!



Money-free?



## FREE LUNCH

