

socialist standard

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Apple's rotten core



Dumb brutality behind the smart apps



The cult of
Apple
page 10



Down on the
City farm
page 16



Framing
workers
page 21

socialist standard

MARCH 2012

contents

FEATURES

Apple, Foxconn and The iConomy 10

Apple and the Great Chinese Take-Away 13

From Handicraft to the Cloud 14

Pigs, fat cats or scapegoats? 16

A Capital Notion 18

REGULARS

Pathfinders 4

Letters 5

Material World 6

Cooking the Books 1 7

News in Briefs 8

Halo Halo! 8

Greasy Pole 9

Cooking the Books 2 19

Reviews 20

Proper Gander 21

Meetings 22

Action Replay 23

50 Years Ago 23

Voice from the Back 24

Free Lunch 24

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Introducing The Socialist Party

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

We use every possible opportunity

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

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

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

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

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



socialist standard

MARCH 2012

Editorial

The whole of capitalism is unacceptable

FOLLOWING THE 2010 General Election, the new government published the Conservative- Liberal Democrat Coalition Agreement. In this initial policy document were proposals to reform banking, which stated: "We will bring forward detailed proposals for robust action to tackle unacceptable bonuses in the financial services sector..." But what is an "unacceptable bonus"?

Should RBS bank boss Stephen Hester have been forced into waiving all his bonus, worth almost a million pounds? Is it okay that Barclays Bank Chief Executive Bob Diamond is getting a bonus estimated to be around £2million: or should it be less? The total amount of bonuses to be shared out around the City for the 2011-2012 period is £4.2 billion – that's £2.5bn less than in 2010-2011 but peanuts compared with profits that capitalist firms rake in. Is that still too much? What should the amount be?

When it comes to answering questions like these, to paraphrase Rhett Butler, frankly, any socialist or right-thinking person won't give a damn. Not about the greed and gross inequality, but about trying to come up with palatable reforms.

How much bankers get paid compared to teachers, nurses or refuse collectors is a distraction from the real problem, which is that a tiny minority have a right to own vital natural resources and industrial assets that provide the majority with all of the products and services that make life possible and acceptable and only allow those resources to be used if there is a profit in it for them.

Politicians encourage people into wanting, believing or hoping that capitalism can actually be made fair, when it can't. For this deception they employ a we're-all-in-this-together rhetoric and insincere calls for "responsible capitalism", "performance-

linked pay", "value for money for taxpayers" and "rewards for success, not failure". Reactionary newspapers and broadcasters play their part in spreading and reinforcing this futile reformism with their sole focus on capitalistic so-called 'solutions'. And to be seen on the side of the austerity-penalised majority during an economic crisis, populist exercises are undertaken, like taking away an ex-banker's knighthood or pressurising a few out-of-favour executives into trousering less money than usual (which can always be got back when the heat's off).

If most voters just want to see the pay and bonuses of bankers cut back because their greed helped crash the economy, or because they don't deserve the sizeable amounts they get, or because there's such a thing as a fair profit, then there's never going to any meaningful and lasting progress made. While capitalism carries on, there'll always be widespread inequality in incomes and living standards because capitalism is irreversibly a system that exploits the many to benefit a few. Always has been. Always will be.

The alternative – a classless, moneyless socialist society – is actually very easy to achieve and maintain. A clear majority just knowing what it is and wanting it can bring it about. And as a much more efficient, unwasteful and uncomplicated system, compared to the present one, keeping it going certainly isn't going to be a problem (not something that can now be said about outdated, failing capitalism).

Seeking to reform the bonus culture will achieve nothing because capitalism can never be made nice. It only thrives on inequality, ruthlessness and selfishness. Only completely replacing capitalism with real socialism will permanently end the disgusting inequality and greed seen in the present class-divided society.



Despite the surreal appearance of a Pirate Party in Sweden and now in the UK as well, most opposition is not based on some imagined 'right-to-download' but on the unarguable truth that, to accommodate the differences between the legislatures of various countries, this agreement is so necessarily general it opens barn-doors to the future enactment of a large array of repressive

ACTA of Desperation

One of the more memorable jokes in Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy was the one about the supercomputer which, on being asked the meaning of life, supplied the answer '42'. One of capitalism's most profound illogicalities is its constant need to render unquantifiable things – like knowledge - in monetary terms so that its beancounters can do their sums properly. It's the same joke, only accountants don't get the laughs.

NASA is pulling out of its agreement with the European Space Agency over the planned ExoMars Rover programme, citing lack of funds. It has already ceased supplying the International Space Station. Given that the ISS is the most expensive thing ever to have been built by human beings, this seems rather like spoiling the spaceship for a ha'porth of tar, but there's a slump on and the purse-strings are being pulled tight. Science is worth the money, says Barack Obama's budget, as long as it's somebody else's money.

The price of knowledge is being addressed in a different way by the recent signing by 22 countries of ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, which is the latest international attempt to establish base-line rules for protecting intellectual property rights (IPR). Internet traffic is international but regulations are national, meaning that information – and therefore profit - leaks away everywhere like water from a leaky bucket and national regulators can do nothing about it.

There has been outcry against this agreement, with protests in many European cities. Much of this is youth-based and centred on the idea that information ought to be free. Socialists ought to be sympathetic to this, given that we want everything to be free, but there's something irritating about people who see no further than the one commodity they're personally interested in. Instead of being quasi-socialist thinking, it looks like the self-indulgence of privileged young Westerners who don't know the real meaning of poverty. To someone starving or homeless, they must look like a bunch of rich kids sulking and demanding free sweets.

measures, including those relating to free speech. Pleas by ACTA's defenders that such measures are not the intention are probably true at this precise moment, but this of course doesn't guarantee that the thought will never cross their minds in the future. Any legislation which makes repression easier in principle should be opposed on principle.

The ACTA agreement contains provision for the prevention of counterfeit goods too, which, in the case of counterfeit medicines would, in theory, be a very good thing as they are a huge global problem. Whether it is really intended to focus on that market, which largely consists of poor people buying dud drugs because they can't afford the real thing, or on the lucrative trade in bogus clothing, electronics and DVD brands, which involves flush westerners simply saving a few quid, we leave to the reader's intelligent guess. It is significant that China doesn't support ACTA, given that much of this counterfeiting comes from there. China, being a box-shifting manufacturer not a developer, tends to be intensely relaxed about intellectual property laws (see *Apple Stuffing*).

Against the naive assumption that, alone of all commodities in capitalism, information should be free, should be set the equally naive assumption by ACTA supporters that all 'stolen' goods represent a loss of earnings. That piracy costs the entertainment industry money is undoubtedly true, but how do

you estimate the value of what people don't buy? The likelihood is, if piracy were ever truly stamped out, the former pirates would not then happily go out and stump up fifteen quid for a new film or music CD. Instead they'd do without, or wait until it was cheap, and the industry wouldn't gain much.

What ACTA is really about is not repression but manufacturers desperately trying to raise their profits in the middle of a slump while fending off attempts by poor consumers to undermine them. But other manufacturers can always cash in by doing the opposite. Cheap DVD players are now sold with USB connections, allowing you to play AVI format films from a flash-Rom memory stick. How the film arrived on that stick, and in that format, is a question that we socialists, not being pirates of course, must once again leave to the intelligent reader.

Apple Stuffing

Apple's trade in China (see this issue) is not without its downside. Apple has just lost a case against the company Proview in a Hong Kong court over the worldwide rights to the name 'iPad', which Proview thought of but which Apple claims it bought off them for use in ten countries. Now it is going to a mainland Chinese court, but the Chinese state is going to be nervous about upholding an intellectual rights case on its own turf when it flagrantly violates them over everything else. When you lie down with the dragon you can get your wallet singed.

Golden Opportunity

It seems the Tory back-benches are mounting a revolt over the government's spending on wind energy development, possibly because of the heavy subsidisation costs, or maybe because they don't want bloody great wind farms all over their Cotswold hunting ranges. The government is committed to increasing wind energy from its present 2.2 percent

to 15 percent by 2015, if it's to keep to its internationally agreed environmental targets. Fat chance of that. More realistically, its keen environmental concern is in not being held to ransom by the Russian gas oligarchs, and there are only so many nuclear power stations it can foist upon us.

Aside from gales-into-gigawatts, alternative energy research is throwing up other possibilities. Interesting research into Microbial

Fuel Cells at Bristol UWE recently claimed a world first in proposing urine as a revolutionary new fuel (BBC Online, 9 November 2011). Its stored energy potential may not be particularly high but it is free to collect in large quantities, and may well save on sewerage costs into the bargain. Above all it would then allow us to point out what we've known all along, that the state's environmental energy policy is all wind and piss.

Not just political

Dear Editors,

A friend recently brought to my attention the history of the turmoil that took place in GB following WWI when the principal unions had apparently coalesced for unified action and apparently got cold feet when confronted with the situation of the potential power of their organized resistance to capitalist exploitation. The dilemma was expressed in the statement made by the Prime Minister to the Triple Alliance accordingly:

“Gentlemen, you have fashioned in the Triple Alliance of the unions represented by you, a most powerful instrument. I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion we are at your mercy. The Army is disaffected and cannot be relied upon... If you carry out your threat to strike, then you will defeat us...

If you do so, have you weighed the consequences... *if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State.* Gentlemen, have you conferred and if you have, are you ready?” (David Lloyd George to Union Leaders in 1919) This seems to have taken the wind out of their sails.

If this statement and the history surrounding is accurate, it would suggest that tactically the idea of a parallel class conscious unified union organization to that of a political party is desirable and indeed, essential in order to use its power to back up the mandate of a socialist ballot plurality. That the Triple Alliance didn't have the mettle to act does not invalidate the potential tactical necessity of unified working class action. During the formation of the IWW Daniel De Leon wrote a series of responses to those who argued that either political or economic action alone were sufficient to create a socialist transformation (“As To Politics”) demonstrating with decisive logic that both were essential.

Your Party has apparently steadfastly resisted the dual necessity of working class action, vague allusions notwithstanding, and has given the impression of pure and simple political action as being the sole necessity to transform society into the cooperative commonwealth. Yet David Lloyd George's comment seems to suggest the latent power of working class economic action is a

decisive factor.

Perhaps you can enlighten me on the historical significance of what happened way back in 1919 and your reaction to those events and your subsequent applications of lessons learned.

Bernard Bortnick, Dallas, Texas

Reply:

The words you quote are taken from, *In Place of Fear* (1952) by the Labour politician Aneurin Bevan, and published many years after the events in question. Bevan recounts that, the miners' leader Robert Smillie, (who died in 1940) told him - and this must have been some years after 1919 - that this is what Lloyd George had said. So this is a third-hand report - not that Lloyd George would not have said something like this but it can be doubted that these were his exact words.

If correct and Lloyd George wasn't just windbagging, this would illustrate precisely why a political party is essential - the unions had no programme to seize the power that supposedly lay at their feet and backed down. Contrary to what you keep on asserting, the Socialist Party doesn't reject industrial organisation as a key plank of a revolutionary strategy. We are dissimilar to Industrial Unionists and the like in refusing to cut one of our legs off before running the race. We are for the working class using all the resources at its disposal, both political and economic, and chasing the rulers into every centre of their power, wresting that power from them.

For the record, here is what the *Socialist Standard* of the time (April 1919) said (note the rather different approach taken by Bonar Law, who was the leader of the Conservative party and a Minister in Lloyd George's coalition government):

“It was when the Reports of the Commission were given to the Government that the great lesson for the workers emerged. In announcing that the Government had accepted and would act upon the Report of the Chairman's section of the Commission and referring to the possibility of a strike, Mr. Bonar Law said

If such a strike comes the Government—and no Government could do otherwise—will use all the resources of the State without the

smallest hesitation.’

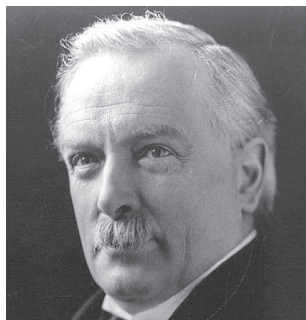
If such a strike came, the mine-owners, if they decided to fight it out, could win by simply pitting their immense resources of wealth, an indication of which is given by the figures above, against the few pounds the miners could gather together. On the economic field the masters are in a far stronger position than the workers and can beat them any time they decide to fight to a finish. Yet in this, as in so many other cases, they threaten to use the overwhelming power of the State for their purpose because it is so much more speedy and decisive.

But how comes it that they can use the State for this purpose? Because on 14th December, 1918, the miners, in conjunction with the large majority of the other workers, placed the State in the hands of the masters when they voted the latter into possession of political power.

While the workers accept the poisonous nonsense that ‘capital should have a fair profit,’ while they swallow the lies and humbug of the labour leaders like Thomas, Brace, Williams, and so on, that the interests of the master class are the interests of the ‘community,’ or ‘society,’ they will be easily led to vote their masters into possession of the power to rule society.

When the working class rids itself of this stupidity, and realises its weakness in the economic field against the power of the employers, then it will turn to the facts of its situation for a solution and find that the way to salvation lies through organisation for control of the political power. Not until that is assured can the workers own the means of life and operate them for their own benefit. When that lesson is learnt the day of Socialism will be dawning.”

-Editors



Windbagging? Lloyd George





Houston, we have a problem

THE REVELATION by his political opponents last year that Barack Obama may not actually be a US citizen and is perhaps a Muslim or, even worse, a socialist, has made it difficult to tell the difference between fact, fantasy and conspiracy theory in the run up to the US Presidential election.

Republican contenders for the job are taking the need to demonstrate their patriotic credibility very seriously. Newt Gingrich, for example, has expressed his intention to colonise the moon. "By the end of my second term we will have the first permanent base on the moon. And it will be American", he promised his supporters. A difficult act to follow, you might think. But no, not if you have God on your side.

Space oddities come no odder than his opponent, Mitt Romney. He believes that with God's help he, too, can boldly go where no man has gone before and solve America's problems.

As a lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – a Mormon bishop in fact, he believes that the baptism of the dead to bring them into the Church is a sensible idea, and is guided in life by the 'Book of Mormon'. The contents of this amazing volume were revealed to the church's founder, Joseph Smith (who had 30 wives and was killed in a prison shootout) on golden plates and written in a mysterious language known as 'Reformed Egyptian' by an angel named Moroni. Fortunately, with the help of a pair of magical crystal spectacles, Smith was able to translate it into English.



NW

In case that is not enough to convince voters of Romney's suitability for the job, he believes, too, that God lives on a planet called Kolob and he wears special Mormon underpants. (Romney wears the special underpants, that is, not God). And if you want more details, or wish to order a pair, visit www.mormon-underwear.com.

So as Americans decide whether their future lies in a colony on the moon or in special underpants from planet Kolob, you may wonder whether things can get any more bizarre. Well unfortunately, yes, they can. While the space centre in Houston contemplates its future missions to Newt's moon base and Planet Kolob, a strange object in the shape of 'Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio' is hurtling asteroid-like towards them and is due to collide in March. And when it comes to cranky 'out of this world' ideas the Lady Apostle makes Gingrich and Romney look like mere space cadets.

She is a preacher from Nigeria with her own church who specialises in casting out witches, particularly from children. For her 12 day visit to Houston in March she promises deliverance from (amongst other things) bondage, bad dreams, witchcraft attacks, mermaid and other evil spirit possession, untimely deaths, lack of promotion, financial impotency and chronic and incurable disease.

All good, clean harmless fun? Well unfortunately no. Helen Ukpabio is no joke. In her book *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft* she explains how to identify a child witch. "If a child under the age of two screams in the night, cries and is always feverish with deteriorating health, he or she is a servant of Satan", she advises. Her teachings are said to have contributed to the torture or abandonment of thousands of Nigerian children. "Suffer the little children" as the good book has it.

News in Briefs

▶ Eric Gherkin MP has expressed outrage that a local council has been banned by the High Court from discussing politics during council meetings, but former councillor Norman Shin is unrepentant about bringing the case: "Politics has got nothing to do with what the council does. All we do is line our pockets, create jobs for the boys and have banquets. When some of these dinosaurs try to drag politics into it, like local poverty or homelessness, it discriminates against people like me who are only in it for the money. It's a matter of principle."

▶ There was shock in the City this month on the announcement of a gigantic three million pound bonus for Bob Gland, a Tower Hamlets road-sweeper, for services to the transport infrastructure. Berkeley's Bank Staff stood resolute behind the bonus: "Bob's a diamond geezer. Besides, it's vital to incentivise such work. We also plan to pay our toilet cleaners two mill each, plus preference shares in our range of cleaning products, and a villa in Belize. Ordinary everyday merchant bankers don't seem to understand that they wouldn't be able to go to work in the morning if it wasn't for maintenance staff like ours. Without them, nothing would be cleaned and we'd all die of cholera in a traffic jam." Senior banking executives have responded that their work is important too, and they should be paid at least in line with the minimum wage, but Berkeley's dismiss the claim: "They couldn't lift a finger to pick their noses. The day they produce anything useful, we'll eat our brooms."

▶ Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey has said the Christian faith is facing "gradual marginalisation". Blaming the rise of secularism and a modern 'aggressive atheism', he said that Christianity was suffering like Jesus on the cross from the slings and arrows of outrageous

unbelievers. "We demand our human rights to inculcate everybody's children with tales of heaven, everlasting torment, virgin births, raising the dead, walking on water and stoning homosexuals. How can children grow into moral, responsible adults if they're not told these stories? Why, oh why does nobody take us seriously?"

▶ Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, says "great" nuclear achievements will be announced in the next few days. Declining to give details, the president instead advised the population of Israel to make immediate travel plans. Barack Obama, the US president, hit back in a press statement, claiming that Iran was using its 'domestic' nuclear programme to intimidate rivals: "They're aiming to use terror tactics to walk all over their neighbours and achieve global dominance. We know, because that's what we did. It is completely unacceptable for us not to have all the weapons. These farty little countries can't be trusted with nukes. They might use them on us." A White House special envoy is due to fly out to Tel Aviv to meet with the Knesset Interior Minister for a detailed discussion on how to shoot more Iranian nuclear scientists. There was no comment from North Korea, where the phone was off because of a power cut.

▶ Health Secretary Andrew Lansley says the government is "committed" to the NHS bill, amid reports that three Tory cabinet ministers have concerns. Speaking from an upstairs window in a Clapham bedsit, Mr Lansley defended allegations that he is now a 'toxic' minister whom nobody wants to touch with a barge pole: "David Cameron asked me to fillet the NHS like a haddock, but then panicked as soon as there was protest. However he fully supports me falling on my sword, and I can confirm that this government is totally behind me like the back-stabbing bastards they all are." Rejecting suggestions that there was division among senior Tories, he said "Mr Cameron's cabinet is absolutely united in its unswerving resolve to blame me now that the shit's hit the fan." Mr Lansley is a member of BUPA.



Back to the 1930s?

DURING THE spat last December between Britain and France about which government most deserved to lose its triple-A credit rating (It was the French rating that was eventually lost.) Christine Lagarde, the head of the IMF, urged Europe's leaders to solve the Eurozone crisis, commenting:

"If that doesn't happen the risk is that of retraction, rising protectionism, isolation. This is exactly what happened in the Thirties and what followed was not something we are all looking forward to (*Times*, 16 December).

Writing later in the *Times* (27 December) Stephan King, the HSBC's group chief economists made a similar point:

"The global economy has plenty of faults but increased isolationism will only make things worse. We don't want to sleepwalk back to the 1930s."

So, what did happen in the 1930s? Here are some quotes from "Background of the War 1939-1945", a chapter taken from our 1950 pamphlet, *The Socialist Party and War*.

The *Times* (22 January 1936) reported on a speech to the Japanese parliament by the Foreign Minister Hirota:

"After referring to restrictive measures of various kinds on world trade, Mr. Hirota continued :- 'To a modern nation, particularly such as our own, with a vast population but meagre natural resources, the assurance of a source of raw materials and of a market for finished products is a condition of prime necessity to its economic existence.'"

The *Economist* (5 November 1938), in an article entitled "Germany's Trade Offensive", wrote:

"The probability must, therefore, be faced that Germany's efforts to expand her trade will affect British trade more in the future than in the past ... Britain's need of imports is greater than that of any other first-class Power, and our earnings are already barely enough to pay for our imports. Any substantial encroachment on our markets would directly limit our access to the raw materials and foodstuffs we need."

The *Economist* was objecting to Germany's policy of export subsidies, dumping, currency controls and bulk buying and commended the British government's retaliation of buying up the whole Rumanian wheat crop. To which a German economic periodical *Wirtschaftsring* replied by accusing Britain of "attempting to throttle Germany's trade with Eastern Europe and of encircling her in economic fields" (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 September 1938).

In a speech in Warsaw on 21 March 1939 Robert Hudson, Britain's Secretary of Overseas Trade, declared:

"We are not going to give up any markets to anyone ... Great Britain is strong enough to fight for markets abroad. Britain is definitely going to take a greater interest in Eastern Europe" (*News Chronicle* March 1939).

When in September of that year Germany invaded Poland, so expanding its control in Eastern Europe, Britain together with France declared war on Germany and the second world war in a generation was on.

We don't suppose that another world war starting in Europe is what Lagarde had in mind; more probably she was thinking of a break-up of the EU and a return to national protectionist measures. We are now four years into a depression which some are speculating could last for another ten. If that happens we could well see movements supporting nationalist, isolationist and protectionist measures move out from the margins and into the mainstream, as in the 1930s. Hopefully – and alternatively – it would lead to a growth of a movement for a world community without frontiers based on the world's resources being the common heritage of all.

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AMERICAN GLOBAL hegemony continues its steady decline. The most striking recent instance is the overt shift of Pakistan, long a US client state, into China's sphere of influence.

The US, unable now to supply its forces in Afghanistan through Pakistan, has no choice but to withdraw rapidly from that country. (We know from *WikiLeaks* that the US asked China to allow a new supply route through Chinese territory but was refused.)

Afghanistan will revert to its traditional status as a dependency of Pakistan, whose tool the Taliban was from the start. Eventually Afghanistan too, with its rich unexploited mineral resources, may be integrated into the Chinese sphere. Or there may be renewed Russian and Uzbek intervention (advocated by some Russian strategists), with north-south partition the probable result.

Illusions of grandeur

America's vast military spending and far-flung network of bases are now hugely disproportionate to its diminished economic strength and real influence over events. Multiple wars have left its troops overextended and exhausted. Yet the idea of deep reductions in military forces remains taboo in mainstream American politics, while the US and Israel again gear up for war with Iran (for an earlier analysis see *Material World*, *Socialist Standard*, January 2008).

Neither the special interests of the military-industrial complex nor the insatiable thirst for cheap oil fully explain such insanity (even by capitalist standards). Like the rulers of all dying empires, the US elite is in the grip of illusions of grandeur. Indeed, there is less realistic discussion of waning American power today than in the years following the 1987 publication of Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Decline of the Great Powers*, when the process was much less advanced.

The US – China relationship

The emerging axis of the world power configuration is the relationship between the old hegemon and the only conceivable (though not necessarily likely) candidate for the role of new hegemon – China.

The US has lost considerable ground to China in the rivalry over the resources of regions where its sway was previously unchallenged – Africa and Latin America (once known as Uncle Sam's "backyard"). For instance, China is now Brazil's No. 1 trading partner.

Other sources of tension between the US and China include disputes over territorial rights in the South China Sea (MW, April 2009), restrictions on exports of China's rare earth metals (MW, May 2011), intellectual property rights, and currency exchange rates.

Until recently, however, these tensions were counterbalanced by a symbiotic interdependence between the US and Chinese economies, requiring a certain level of cooperation. China's industrial expansion was fuelled by American (as well as Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese) investment and imports of Chinese consumer goods.

The symbiosis disintegrates

This symbiosis is disintegrating under the impact of the

economic crisis. Much consumption of Chinese goods was financed by debt, and now the bubble has burst. Other longer-term factors are also at work. The recent successes of China's workers in raising their wages make China less attractive to foreign investors, who are now moving their money to countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh where they can still pay rock-bottom wages.

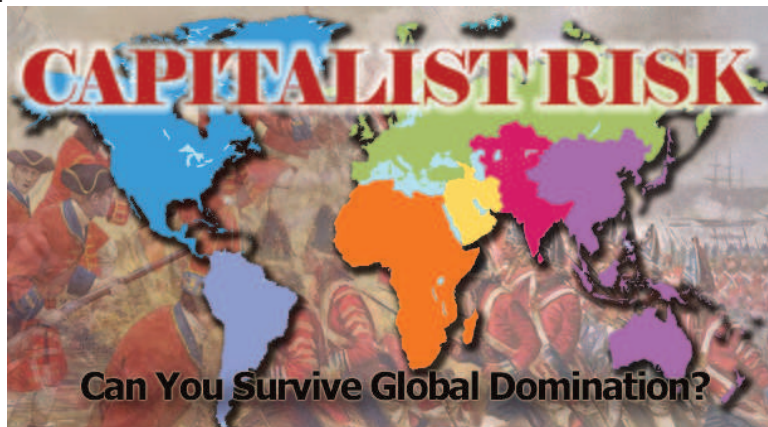
As a result, the US – China relationship is becoming more conflictual. China is deploying more forces to the South China Sea, while America is beefing up its military presence in the Philippines and Singapore and even plans a base in northern Australia.

At the same time, the US adroitly manipulates understandable fears of China in the countries along its borders. In particular,

it seeks close relations with India (traditionally a Soviet/Russian ally), which it encourages to pursue its own regional rivalry with China. India tries to surround China with its client states, while China tries to do the same to India.

So although China has strengthened its positions in more distant regions, its control over its immediate neighbourhood is slipping, as signalled by Burma's decision not to cooperate

with China's dam construction program. This could lead to a highly unstable "sandwich" pattern of great power rivalry.



The Russia – China relationship

The relationship between Russia and China is marked by similar rivalries and ambiguities. Like the US, Russia is losing ground to China in a region where it used to predominate – post-Soviet Central Asia with its oil and gas. There are also tensions in cross-border relations, notably over Chinese firms' exploitation of timber, fish and other resources in the Russian Far East.

Nevertheless, the cooperative element in Russian-Chinese relations is also strong, and perhaps more resilient than US – China cooperation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) facilitates multilateral relations among China, Russia and the Central Asian countries, and this helps to mitigate Chinese-Russian rivalry in Central Asia.

In October 2008 this column suggested that the SCO might prefigure a Chinese-led bloc directed against US hegemony (MW, Oct 2008). Now it looks as if the conflict of interests between Russia and China may be too great to permit such a development.

An opaque multipolar world

Thus, in the foreseeable future there may be neither a new global hegemon to replace the US nor a new bipolar configuration. Rather, the current opaque multipolar world will continue to evolve in ways that are difficult to predict. This will occur in the context of enormous climatic change, accompanied by the scramble for the melting Arctic (MW, Sep 2007) and later on for the melting Antarctic.

Unless, that is, we can forge links of solidarity across all the actual and potential battle lines that scar our plundered planet. Unless we can dismantle all the rival state machines and set up a world socialist community.

STEFAN



Baby David speaks

up by the analysts after last August's riots was Tottenham, that place in North London with the Seven Sisters Road and White Hart Lane, Jimmy Greaves and, less happily, the tragedies of Baby P and Victoria Climbié. And the Broadwater Farm Estate where in 1985 there was a riot on a scale to ensure its place in the record books. The riot was notable, too, for the killing of PC Blakelock, an event which led to Winston Silcott being sent to prison for life only to be released in 1991 when his conviction was found to be based on fabricated evidence.

Bernie Grant

It took a long time for Tottenham to adjust to the memories of those events and to the fragile tension which followed. This was not helped when the Leader of Haringey Council, Bernie Grant, shrugged off the killing of the policeman in the memorable description that "...what (the police) got was a bloody good hiding". It says enough about those times that Grant went on to be elected when the Parliamentary seat at Tottenham became vacant in 1987 and later stood for the leadership of the Labour Party. He died of a heart attack in 2000; his wife was on the candidates' short list but the party, perhaps hoping for a less combustible representative, preferred one David Lammy who, when he was elected in June 2000, may have warmed many a Tottenham heart by becoming the Baby of the House – not expected to turn out to be like one of those gurgling, screeching, defecating infants who keep you awake at night.

Thatcher vs Beveridge

And so it has turned out as Lammy, with his scholarships and Masters Degree and being called to the bar, is one of what some electors are comforted to call "middle class". And perhaps to foster this he was quickly assumed to be well suited to a smooth, unhindered rise up the Greasy Pole with a succession of ministerial posts eventually reaching the heights of Minister of State and Privy Councillor. All this came to an abrupt end with the 2010 election. As the Labour Party subsequently struggled to unravel the chaos of Gordon Brown's leadership, Lammy's contribution to their leadership election did not seem to be entirely free of confusion. He nominated Diane Abbott while declaring his support for Ed Milliband, then refused Milliband's obliging offer of a place in the Shadow Cabinet on the grounds that he wished to be free to speak on a wide range of issues. Labour members may have seen this as something of a continuous process when he bewildered them by writing that he saw common ground between two people who they had always regarded as at opposite ends of the political spectrum: "...to knit society back together again.... means a working class with a stake in capitalism and a middle class with faith once again in the welfare state. It requires fulfilling the goals expressed by both Mrs. Thatcher and Beveridge, not one or the other" (*Out of the Ashes – Britain After the Riots*).

Smacking Children

There was more to come on the same theme. At a meeting in

September 2011 of the "think tank" Policy Exchange he warned, "We can't have another generation that are routinely unemployed for longer than a year.



We have to guarantee these people work otherwise we will pay the price dearly". But in January he was advising a markedly different explanation for the riots, declaring that they were due to "...an explosion of hedonism and nihilism," rather than government cuts or unemployment. He expanded on this analysis by linking the riotous behaviour to legal restraints on

parents smacking children: "Many of my constituents came up to me after the riots and blamed the Labour Government, saying, 'You guys stopped us being able to smack our children'. He then displayed more confusion by outlining the problems of all those frustrated unsmacking parents who "...raise children on the 15th floor of a tower block with knives, gangs and the dangers of violent crime outside the window", contrasting them with those he can classify as "middle class" who can afford to place their children in private schools where they are taught "discipline" and have tennis lessons.

Branding

Contradicting Lammy's ravings, there is a mass of established evidence that anti-social behaviour is deep-rooted in poverty and alienation, aggravated by the police assertion as the guardians of property society and its system of class privilege. A study by the London School of Economics and the Guardian – one of many – which interviewed 270 of the rioters last December said that 86 percent of those interviewed gave poverty as the main cause; 85 per cent said the police were "important"; and 79 percent said unemployment. There is no record of anyone mentioning restraints on parental smacking of children. If, as Lammy blusters, "hedonism" and "nihilism" were contributory factors, that is likely to be, as an observer of a typical Saturday afternoon in any shopping centre will notice, the effects of the "branding" of goods which is designed to be a powerful aid in a profitable sales method. The problems displayed in the riots and beyond are severe and toxic. The events at Broadwater Farm took place 26 years ago. Has nothing been learned since then, as the politicians promised? Has nothing of any consequence changed? As long as the matter is left to the likes of David Lammy, that is all there is to look forward to.

IVAN



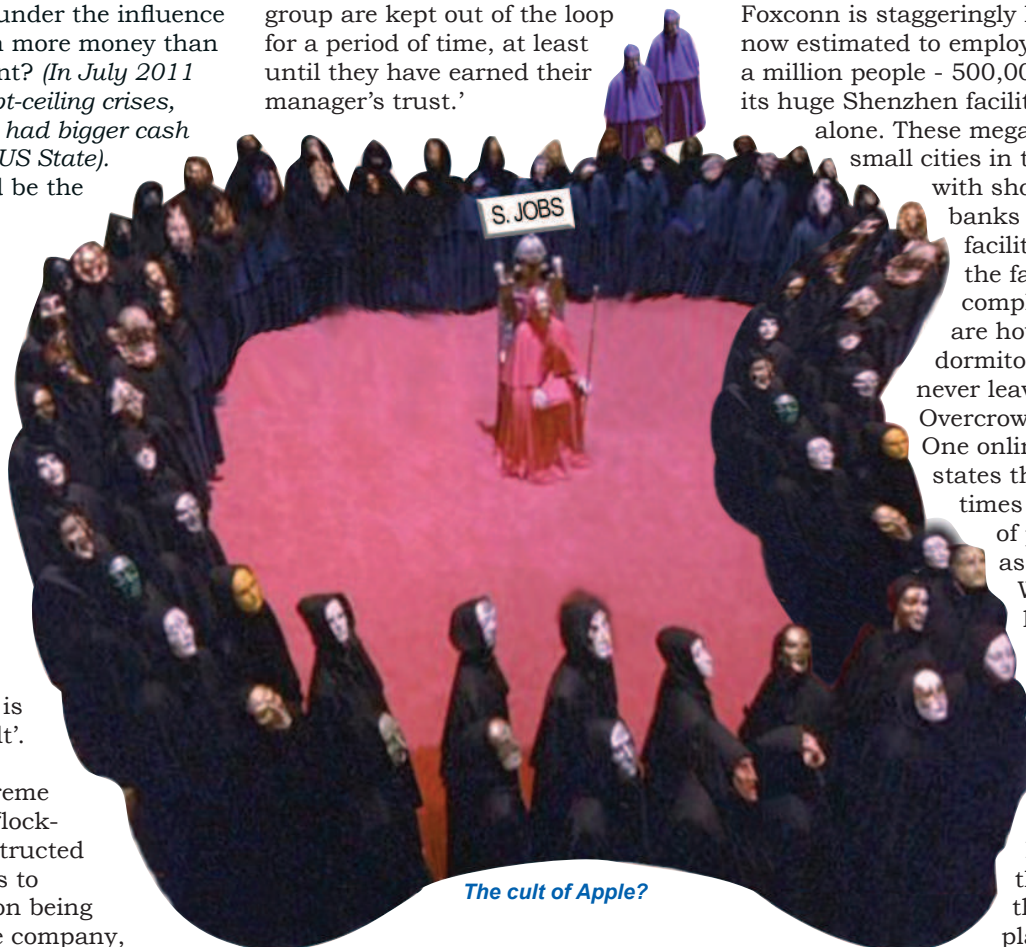
Apple, Foxconn and The iConomy

Apple, the creators of the iMac, the iPod, the iPhone and iPad as well as other must-have devices, are now industry leaders in providing personal computing and related technologies. But amongst the latest gadgets and a total income of over \$108bn (2011), what of the company's workers and workforce? How do they fare under the influence of a company with more money than the US Government? (*In July 2011 because of the debt-ceiling crises, Apple at one point had bigger cash reserves than the US State*). Not so good would be the short answer.

Apple itself employs around 60,000 people worldwide and by some accounts can be a strange place to work. Despite the famous informality of jeans in the office, reports in a recent book (*Inside Apple* by journalist Adam Lashinsky) claim working for Apple is like being 'in a cult'. With overbearing management, extreme secrecy and even 'lock-down rooms' constructed inside other rooms to prevent information being leaked outside the company, 'paranoid' may not be too strong a word. Many employees have been fired for discussing their jobs outside work and it is rumoured that company spies operate in bars and venues used by employees. Lashinsky states: 'So there's no confusion, the penalty for revealing Apple secrets, intentionally or unintentionally, is clear: swift termination.' An ex-Apple employee goes further saying that Steve Jobs (now deceased) would make it clear before any media 'company broadcast' about new developments or products, that 'Anything disclosed

from this meeting will result not just in termination but in prosecution to the fullest extent our lawyers can.'

Lashinsky also describes Apple as 'cultish', and states that 'neophytes are entrusted with only so much information'. He goes on: 'As with any secret society, trustworthiness is not assumed. New additions to a group are kept out of the loop for a period of time, at least until they have earned their manager's trust.'



The cult of Apple?

A senior Apple engineer said: 'People are so committed that they go home at night and don't leave Apple behind them. What they do at Apple is their true religion.' It is alleged that Apple operates around the concept of disclosure - Jon Rubinstein, a former senior hardware executive at Apple, says, 'We have cells, like a terrorist organisation. Everything is on a need-to-know basis.' So much for the 'be inspired every day' tag line on Apple's recruitment page, then.

Outside America and Europe things are worse though. Despite

early Apple claims to be 'made in America' the company have for years been outsourcing work to China and other far eastern countries. One of the main contractors for Apple abroad is a Taiwanese concern called Foxconn, part of the Hon Hai Precision Industries Company. With factories in China and Taiwan, Foxconn is staggeringly huge and is now estimated to employ well over a million people - 500,000 work at its huge Shenzhen facility in China

alone. These mega factories are small cities in themselves with shops, barbers, banks and other facilities within the factory complex. Workers are housed in huge dormitories and never leave the site. Overcrowding is rife. One online estimate states that it is 'five times the density of population as Mumbai'.

Working hours are long and pay is very low by western standards. In 2011 no fewer than ten workers killed themselves in the Shenzhen plant alone and another three attempted the same act. Many jumped from buildings, including one who had lost a prototype iPhone, prompting a media outcry.

The company responded in typically business-like fashion by introducing a new anti-suicide clause in its workers contracts - apparently those desperate enough to want to take their own lives will think again if it means a breach of contract. They also cynically raised wages twice in one week in 2011 which brought the average basic pay of an employee from 1200 to 2000 yen a month, or

“Right now, customers care more about a new iPhone than working conditions in China”

roughly from £130 to £200.

Death may not come by one's own hand here though. In May of 2011, Foxconn again hit the headlines when a massive explosion ripped through the plant where the shiny aluminium backs for Apple's iPad2 are polished, killing three workers and injuring many more. From reading online news reports, however, the biggest worry seems not to be about the dead and their families but about whether the gadget-hungry fools in the West would get their iPad2 on time.

Workers in China travel far to get jobs in this plant. An in-depth article in the *New York Times* (25 January) reported on one such individual. It stated: 'When Mr. Lai finally landed a job repairing machines at the plant, one of the first things he noticed was the almost blinding lights. Shifts ran 24 hours a day, and the factory was always bright. At any moment, there were thousands of workers standing on assembly lines or sitting in backless chairs, crouching next to large machinery, or jogging between loading bays. Some workers' legs swelled so much they waddled. 'It's hard to stand all day,' said Zhao Sheng, a plant worker.'

The article goes on to say 'Banners on the walls warned the 120,000 employees: 'Work hard on the job today or work hard to find a job tomorrow.' Apple's supplier code of conduct dictates that, except in unusual circumstances, employees are not supposed to work more than 60 hours a week. But at Foxconn, some worked more, according to interviews, workers' pay stubs and surveys by outside groups. Mr. Lai was soon spending 12 hours a day, six days a week inside the factory, according to his paychecks.'

The long hours and low pay are not the only issue. The NYT article notes that: 'Mr. Lai's college degree enabled him to earn a salary of around \$22 a day, including overtime — more than many others. When his days ended, he would retreat to a small bedroom just big enough for a mattress, wardrobe and a desk.'

Those accommodations were better than many of the company's dorms, where 70,000 Foxconn workers lived, at times stuffed 20 people to a three-room apartment, employees said. Last year, a dispute over paychecks set off a riot in one of the dormitories, and workers started

throwing bottles, trash cans and flaming paper from their windows, according to witnesses. Two hundred police officers wrestled with workers, arresting eight. Afterward, trash cans were removed, and piles of rubbish — and rodents — became a problem.'

Sadly, Mr Lai was one of the workers killed in the explosion at the iPad plant. He suffered 90% burns and died in hospital two days later, his girlfriend only recognising him from his legs. The explosion was later found to have been caused by aluminium dust igniting as three polishing lines worked continuously to keep up with demand a few weeks

direction, there is a large element of smoke and mirrors being deployed. As a former Apple executive with firsthand experience commented in the NYT report 'Noncompliance is tolerated, as long as the supplier promises to try harder next time...'

But others disagree. Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) has twice been used by Apple to advise on such issues: 'We've spent years telling Apple there are serious problems and recommending changes,' said a consultant 'They don't want to pre-empt problems, they just want to avoid embarrassments.'

While Apple may indeed have



Some of Foxconn's 120,000 employees at work

after the iPad2 was launched. In the drive for profits at any price, though, neither Apple nor Foxconn paid much heed it seems. Just seven months later in December 2011 an iPad factory in Shanghai exploded from.....igniting aluminium dust, resulting in 59 injured, 23 of them hospitalised.

Foxconn, however bad, are not the only villains in the piece and Apple has to take a lot of the blame. When the world's media started publishing stories about these conditions, notably an undercover report from the *Daily Mail*, Apple were shocked into action. A massive auditing operation of their suppliers was carried out and the results published. Some of these results showed allegations of under-age workers (under 16 in China) being hired - one audit in 2010 acknowledged 91 employees found to be under this age or were when they were hired at Foxconn alone. Although seemingly going in the right

spent 2010 getting more adept at identifying problems and forming action plans to put things right, the company's own report admits that if situations have not been resolved within 90 days of an audit, it will only 'continue to collaborate with the supplier towards further improvement.' It is obvious that the die has been cast - Apple really has nowhere else to go to get its products made: it needs its suppliers as much as they need Apple. Both are caught in the relentless quest for profit at any cost. This is borne out by Apple being approached by companies desperate to become a new supplier. When Apple decides to see if they can supply a particular product or part, they contact the company. The NYT reports says: 'When the news arrives that Apple is interested...small celebrations erupt. Then, Apple's requests start.'

Apple typically asks suppliers to specify how much every part costs, how many workers are needed and

the size of their salaries. Executives want to know every financial detail. Afterward, Apple calculates how much it will pay for a part. Most suppliers are allowed only the slimmest of profits. So suppliers often try to cut corners, replace expensive chemicals with less costly alternatives or push their employees to work faster and longer, according to people at those companies.

'The only way you make money working for Apple is figuring out how to do things more efficiently or cheaper,' said an executive at one company that helped bring the iPad to market. 'And then they'll come back the next year, and force a 10 percent price cut.'

The financial evidence for the above is also available. A recent Bloomberg chart shows that from 2007 and the introduction of the iPhone, Apple's profit margins have increased to over 30%. Over the same period, Hon Hai Precision Industry (Foxconn's parent) has stayed steady at just 1.5%.

'Hon Hai is willing to sacrifice margins so it can get volume and scale,' said Vincent Chen, in the same candid report. Chen is an analyst at Yuanta Financial Holding Co in Taipei who has a 'buy' rating on the stock. 'Apple is also getting so large that it needs a supplier that can provide such scale.'

The iPad is 'very difficult to make,' Hon Hai founder and Chairman Terry Gou told shareholders in June. Gou's strategy has earned him the nickname 'Low-Cost Terry,' according to Chen.'

Low cost indeed, but high profit for Apple. The real cost as always, is being incurred by millions of Chinese and Far Eastern workers, living in huge de-humanising factory complexes and working long hours for little pay in often dangerous conditions. And not just at Foxconn.

At another Chinese plant, this time owned by Wintek, the workers actually went on strike. They had been asked to use a noxious chemical called n-hexane which is known to cause nerve damage and paralysis. The substance replaced rubbing alcohol to clean iPhone screens, as it evaporates to the air three-times faster and speeds up production. Over a hundred employees suffered injuries as a result of its introduction, prompting the industrial action. The NYT noted:

'In its supplier responsibility report, Apple said it had 'required Wintek to stop using n-hexane' and that 'Apple has verified that all affected workers have been treated successfully, and we continue to monitor their medical reports until full recuperation.' Apple also said it required Wintek to fix the ventilation system.

That same month, a reporter interviewed a dozen injured Wintek workers who said they had never been contacted by Apple or its intermediaries, and that Wintek had pressured them to resign and take cash settlements that would absolve the company of liability. After those interviews, Wintek pledged to provide more compensation to the injured workers and Apple sent a representative to speak with some of them.'

Half a year on, trade and business reports highlight the cut in prices being paid by Apple to Wintek for their services. Business has spoken,

unlike Wintek which declines to comment on the issue.

So are Apple alone? Not really. They are merely following, very successfully in monetary terms, the rules of capitalism - namely rule Number One - Profit at All Costs. Moving production from a heavily

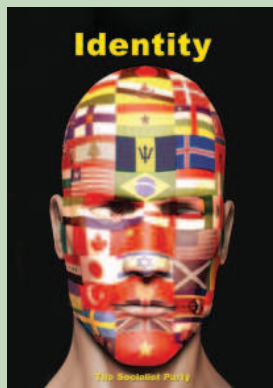


regulated and therefore expensive country like the USA to a relatively unregulated and therefore much cheaper country like China makes perfect economic sense from a capitalist's point of view. The market dictates all. An Apple executive sums up this attitude with a salient point: 'You can either manufacture in comfortable, worker-friendly factories, or you can reinvent the product every year, and make it better and faster and cheaper, which requires factories that seem harsh by American standards, and right now, customers care more about a new iPhone than working conditions in China.'

The reality of modern capitalism is that it transcends national borders. Barrack Obama once asked Apple CEO Steve Jobs, 'when are those manufacturing jobs coming back to the USA?' Jobs famously replied, 'Those jobs are never coming home.' This exchange highlights the way that capital does not heed the often spouted patriotism and rhetoric of politicians but deals in cold hard financial facts. Workers would do well to note this and adjust their own attitudes accordingly. Perhaps if we cared less about new gadgets at any cost, humane and environmental, and instead forged stronger links with workers around the globe, we too could adopt a truly global resistance to the onslaught of capital and start paving the way towards socialism and the end of sweatshops and the consumer culture altogether.

David Humphries

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Apple

and the Great Chinese Take-Away

LAST YEAR Apple earned over \$400,000 in profit per employee – more than Goldman Sachs, Exxon Mobil or Google. Apple has 43,000 employees in the US and 20,000 overseas; however, their contractors' employees number around 700,000 engineers, assemblers, etc., in Asia, Europe and elsewhere (<http://tinyurl.com/71676hc>).

Why China? Why not the US?

When Steve Jobs demanded new scratch-free screens for the new iPhone at short notice a Chinese company tendering for the contract constructed and prepared premises including on-site dormitories and a warehouse filled with glass samples with engineers on hand. *Just in case they got the contract.* They got it. And when the screens were ready and in transit to the Foxconn assembly line 8,000 workers were woken up around midnight, given tea and a biscuit and began a 12 hour shift, producing over 10,000 iPhones a day. According to one executive, 'no American plant can match that.' Apple had estimated that around 8,700 industrial engineers would be needed to 'oversee and guide' a 200,000 strong assembly line of workers who would be employed in manufacturing iPhones. Company analysts had forecast it would take up to nine months to find that many qualified engineers in the US. In China it took 15 days.

In 1983 the Apple Mac was 'made in America'; by 2004 Apple products were in large part manufactured and assembled abroad. Currently the software and Apple's 'innovative marketing campaigns' are created in the US by 100 full-time employees and the semiconductors are made in Texas by 2,400 employees of South Korea's Samsung.

Manufacturing the iPhones in the US would increase the price of each phone by about \$65 whilst the profit is often hundreds of dollars per phone. The main factor for having moved the vast majority of jobs to China is not the cost of wages but more to do with 'inventory costs,

supply chains and the time involved in scaling production up and down', plus it's still easier to bypass labour regulations and to hire and fire in China than in the US.

It is for reasons like these that so many 'middle-wage' jobs have disappeared in the last two decades from the US. Any new jobs that are created there are mostly in the service industry – restaurants, call-centres, hospitals and temporary work, with little upward mobility opportunities. Apple's own high-tech plant in California became an Apple Care call centre with jobs at \$12 per hour.

Martin Hart-Landsberg (<http://tinyurl.com/76a76cs>) points out that the manufactured goods of China's top exporters, though recorded as Chinese products, include around 60% of all items and 85% of the high-tech items produced by foreign companies operating in China. He also cites figures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics showing manufacturing employment in China falling between 1994 and 2006 from 120.6 million to 111.61 million and, in particular, urban manufacturing (mostly foreign) falling from 54.92 million to 33.52 million. Significantly of total urban employment most growth was in the casual wage or self-employment area – 80 million of 81.7 million 'informal' workers.

The Chinese Take-Away

Of the thousands of jobs that have been created from developments in US solar and wind energy, and semiconductor fields within the last decade, much of the actual employment has been abroad. US facilities have been closed to reemerge in China where executives say they are competing with Apple for shareholders. They are obliged to rival Apple's growth and profits to survive. Capitalism and its shareholders have no regard for workers wherever they are; their loyalty is to the god of profit only.

Janet Surman

Up close and personal

Mike Daisey, who makes his living performing monologues on stage, is a self-confessed technology devotee, 'an Apple aficionado', 'a worshipper in the cult of Mac' - for 15 years or more a total Apple geek. Then one day he says he 'started to think, and that's always a problem for any religion, the moment when you begin to think.' He decided he had to find out for himself what was actually going on within the Apple empire so he assumed the guise of a journalist and set off for Shenzhen, now China's third largest city with a population of 14 million but just a small town thirty

years ago. This is where Foxconn has a massive complex making electronics for Apple, Dell, Nokia,



Panasonic, Sony and Samsung. This is the facility infamous for the netting stretched around the outside of the buildings to thwart suicide attempts. Daisey found a place outside one of the gates away from the many security guards and with

the help of a translator interviewed workers who queued up to talk to him, some only 12, 13 or 14 years of age and legally too young to be employed. He learned of the no talking rule on the assembly line, of the supposedly officially enforced eight hour shifts actually being 12 and often 16 hours, of the concrete box 12 foot by 12 foot dormitories with up to 15 beds, of the cameras on the assembly line, in the rooms, in the corridors, everywhere. And everything *hand assembled* because it's cheaper than installing expensive high tech assembly equipment.

For more detail on Mike Daisey's experiences in China researching Apple listen to or read 'This American Life' (<http://tinyurl.com/8aypq8a>).

From Handicraft to the Cloud

Part 1 of 2

As in the industrial revolution, progress in the computer revolution comes at a price.

Despite all the technological innovation, computing is all too often a frustrating and limiting experience. Is this because Google, Apple, Facebook or Microsoft are evil and lock down hardware, platforms, software and content? NO! Is this because we should all avoid proprietary software, even freeware in favour of mutual co-operative open-source projects such as Linux? Well this is barely half the story as can be seen when free open-source software is not immune to industry trends such as cloud computing, bloat, eye-candy, new version fetishisation and app stores. The elephant in the room is the broad historical trends in the industry which affect free software somewhat less than proprietary software and mirror the industrial revolution and tend to disempower, limit and alienate (in the Marxist sense) the end user. Software and personal computing suffers from class divisions.

2011 was another year of hype for cloud computing. In June 2011 Google launched the Chromebook and Apple announced iCloud. The Google Chromebook is no ordinary laptop, it relies on storing software and your data on Google servers. This is called cloud computing and has been considered the next big thing in IT by market experts for some years. The term 'cloud' is appropriate since its benefits are nebulous and it may also represent dark clouds on the horizon for personal computing.

The history of personal computing is almost as old as the first

manned moon landing in 1969, and in technological terms, the personal computers of today are certainly more advanced. Why on earth is personal computing then, a frustrating and limiting experience? By 1965, Gordon E. Moore had predicted the rate of advancement in computer hardware (doubling every 18 months), which has proved largely accurate. By 1973, the first mouse-driven graphical user interface had been produced. Niklaus Wirth observed that 'software is getting slower more rapidly than hardware is getting faster'. This parallels Stanley Jevon's observation over a century earlier that 'advances in efficiency tend to increase resource consumption'. To find out why this is the case we have to look at the history of personal computing and its potential downfall.

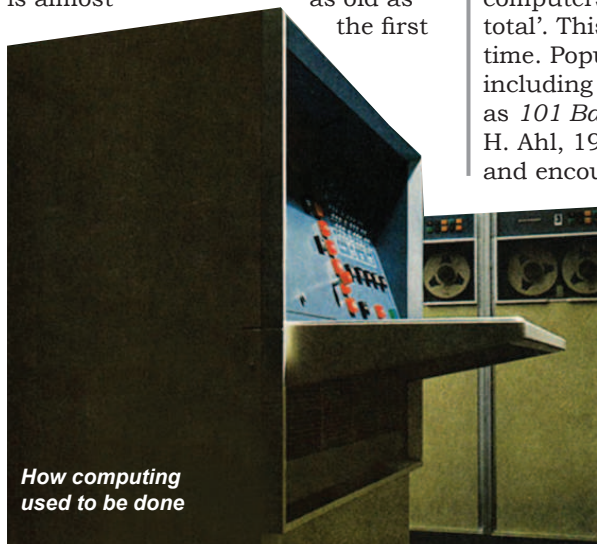
'A computer in every home'

The first million selling computer book was the *Art of Computer Programming* by Donald Knuth in 1968. Although it was an incredibly technical book, Knuth liked to stress the art aspect of the title, and it was certainly in stark contrast to the industry that it is today. In other respects, sentiments among computing enthusiasts would be familiar (especially to socialists) throughout history. In particular, *The Hacker Ethic* (Steven Levy, 1984, Hackers) which included such noble statements as 'all information should be free' and 'access to computers should be unlimited and total'. This was not unusual for the time. Popular computing literature including magazines and books such as *101 Basic Computer Games* (David H. Ahl, 1973) printed lines of code and encouraged users (especially children) to input the code to produce games. Most personal computers offered a command-line interface (even those with an additional graphical user interface) and were bundled with some form of the BASIC programming language, so named because of its ease of use and

suitability for learning. The learning curve for using home computers was steep when compared with today but popular computing literature at the time helped make the curve somewhat more graduated. Despite its significance, very few writers have lamented the disappearance of BASIC, perhaps the most well-known article is titled 'Why Johnny Can't Code' (David Brin, 2006).

As Neal Stephenson put it, in the beginning there was the command-line and Microsoft had the odd idea of selling operating systems. It was Apple Macintosh however, who introduced the first commercially successful graphical user interface with drag and drop capabilities and WIMP (Windows, Icons, Menus, Pointers) interface in 1984. Just a year later, the Commodore Amiga 1000 made colour, animation, sound and multi-tasking affordable to home users. Although the desktop metaphor for graphical user interfaces was used by rivals, the Amiga offered an indicator of the ethos of the time. It used the metaphor of a deeply-customisable workbench for its operating system. The desktop metaphor prevailed partly because home computers in the West evolved out of the office at a time when industrial capital was on the decline. But also, the desktop prevailed over the workbench metaphor, because empowering users to control the means of production was gradually becoming an alien notion.

No single business seemed to be able to establish a hardware monopoly, let alone a software monopoly, that was unchallenged by rivals. In January 1986 PC Magazine reviewed fifty-seven different programs for word-processing. Even the most popular application software such as WordStar, AmiPro and WordPerfect was largely produced by small teams and in some cases individuals. The spirit of the age was described as the era of the bedroom programmer, although this is possibly a little exaggerated. Sharing software was widespread, computing magazines distributed cover disks with public domain and shareware software



How computing used to be done

and users exchanged software in classified advertisements. Software developers might not have liked it, but magazines were an important channel for distribution. Acceptable software costs to users were generally regarded as the cost of the disk and this was the attitude in businesses as well as at home. The limitations of the hardware of the time meant also that developers were expected to optimize code to be as fast as possible.

Windows 95

The personal computer industry grew rapidly over subsequent years. By 1992, Amigas had fallen by the wayside. Ataris were cheaper and in 1993 could boast multi-tasking but by then it was too late. A monopoly position had already been established by IBM-PC compatible hardware and Microsoft consolidated their monopoly in software with a \$300m launch of Windows 95. Although users may have been reluctant to embrace planned obsolescence, this was a time when the vision of 'a computer in every home' still involved selling hardware to first-time buyers.

The truth behind the hype was a little different, RoughlyDrafted.com (5 February 2007) comments:

From the mid 80s to the mid 90s, Microsoft amassed fortunes as an application developer for the Mac. Even in 1996, Microsoft reported making more money from Office--\$4.56bn--than it did from all of its Windows sales combined--\$4.11bn. Tying sales of Windows 95 to Office helped to boost sales of both. Microsoft pushed the new version of Office as a reason to buy Windows 95, and Windows 95 helped kill sales of rival applications, including the then standard WordPerfect and Lotus 1-2-3, neither of which were available or optimized for Windows 95 at its launch. By the release of Windows XP in 2001, Microsoft had swallowed up 98percent of the OS market'

Innovation, but not for the masses

Although Windows 95 firmly established the desktop metaphor over rivals, this was the limit of its innovation and other enhancements were criticised as merely cosmetic. The successful introduction of encyclopedia software called Encarta on CD-Rom was regarded as cutting edge use of technology for encyclopedic content. That encyclopedias might not be traditionally editorially controlled and might instead be participatory by the next major Windows release was not anticipated by Bill Gates in

his published book *The Road Ahead* in 1995 or its heavily revised 1996 reprint.

Many innovations after the achievement of software monopoly never reached the masses or if they did, many years later than when they first appeared. IBM OS/2 never replaced Windows 95, though some



considered it more advanced. By 1997, an operating system called BeOS had been introduced with instant-on boot, 64-bit, journaling, indexing and metadata tags, but this too never reached the masses. The first 32-bit internet web browser, with FTP client, usenet group reader and internet relay chat (IRC) client was not from Microsoft but from Cyberjack in 1995. But by embedding Internet Explorer into Windows just as the internet was taking off, Microsoft was able to delay tabbed web browsing as standard (until 2006) which already existed in the relatively popular Netscape Navigator. Internet Explorer became so popular for about 5 years after 2001 that it felt no need to introduce a new version. By then it could no longer ignore the threat of Mozilla Firefox (loosely descended from Netscape) which was rapidly gaining market share.

At least, the marketing for new versions of Windows did claim to offer usability improvements and fix the many problems identified in previous versions rather than just eye-candy. What became clear beyond any doubt was that software was getting inflated at a rate roughly in proportion to each passing year (faster than Moore's Law). Benchmarking tests are one way to test this, and are sometimes used in the independent computing press.

Bill Gates commented: 'I'm saying we don't do a new version to fix bugs [...] We'd never be able to sell a release on that basis' (*Focus Magazine* 23 October 1995).

The vision of 'a computer in every home' began to look dated. Instead, focus shifted to encouraging existing computer users to upgrade software. It suited hardware manufacturers that software updates should make older computers slower. Whereas the earlier trend was for first-time hardware sales to come packaged with software, now software sales (with artificial barriers) would drive the need to buy new hardware.

Games also played a big part in driving early hardware sales of the first personal computers in the home. Games revenue eventually overtook the movie and music industry and games were even described as the leading artform of the era. The latest 'Call of Duty' game was the biggest entertainment launch ever in revenue terms. Games helped drive the industry upgrades but many users' reluctance to upgrade persisted, and Windows sales through retail channels continued to decline. Planned obsolescence needed introducing more forcefully, and subscriber-computing and the internet was about to offer the opportunity to do it.

The emergence of viruses and malware on the burgeoning internet helped the software update industry. The idea of software spying on the user or otherwise compromising privacy, was something malware and viruses did, not legitimate software. Users owned their software and anything else was an alien concept. As one user on MSFN.org put it:

'I will never understand why users tolerate or accept this. If an individual or company demanded that you prove that you did not steal your home or car, you'd eventually file some kind of complaint or harassment charges against them. If the same standards that are used for applications were applied to operating systems, XP and newer systems would be classified as spyware. Windows has been going in the opposite direction for some time, with each new version giving the user less control over what it does and less access to the data it stores.'

This comfortable position of around 90 percent market share could not be threatened by any rivals. Journalists of the computing press might have been tempted to describe the hardware and software monopolies as the end of home personal computing history. But to do so, would have been as foolish as Francis Fukuyama's claim to have reached 'The End of History' a decade earlier.

DJW

BANKERS BONUS BONANZA

KUHN/BIRD



They're even greedier than MPs!

Pigs, fat cats or scapegoats?

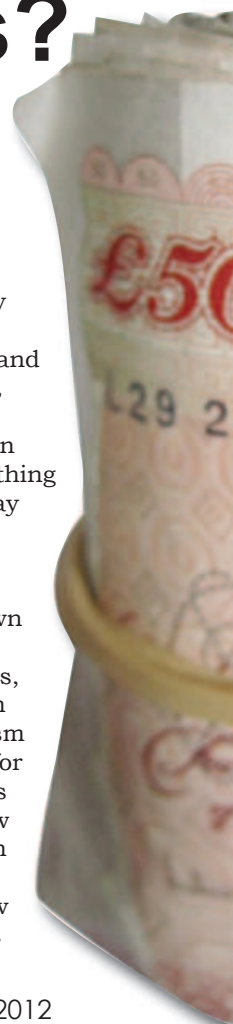
Bankers are unpopular. Not the ordinary bank teller or the back-up IT staff, but the directors and top managers who award themselves huge salaries and big bonuses. They are so unpopular, in fact, that the chief executive of Royal Bank of Scotland, Stephen Hester, has been forced to give up a bonus of nearly £1m while his predecessor, Sir Fred Goodwin, has been stripped of his knighthood.

The banks defend themselves by arguing that they bring “wealth” into Britain, and pay a considerable amount of tax on it. Some even describe themselves as “wealth creators”. This is absurd. What banks do is compete for a share of the pool of wealth already created by the productive sections of the world’s working class, wealth which is extracted from them as surplus value. They can be more or less successful in doing this. Banks situated in Britain can channel some of the world’s surplus value this way which might otherwise have gone elsewhere, but this is capturing surplus value rather than creating wealth. In this way, banks do bring profits to Britain and the taxes they pay on it help finance the capitalist state. It’s an argument that carries some weight with other capitalists and with the government, whether Tory, Coalition or Labour (and it was Labour who knighted Goodwin), which manages the general affairs of UK Plc.

The popular perception of banks as merely shuffling money rather than producing anything useful is basically

correct, even if it doesn’t go any deeper than that. Wealth – as something useful to human living – can only be produced by humans applying their physical and mental energies to material that originally came from nature to fashion it into something useful. As an early political economist, Sir William Petty, put it in the seventeenth century, Labour is the father and the Earth is the mother of all wealth. No bank, not even any bank worker, is engaged in the production of wealth as they are not involved in transforming materials from nature into something useful. This is not to say that banks do not play an important role within the capitalist system. They are part of the division of labour within the capitalist class. If banks didn’t exist then industrial capitalists would have to be their own bankers.

Under capitalism, as under all social systems, wealth is produced by human labour acting on materials that came from nature. But capitalism is a class-divided society in which the means for producing wealth – factories, machines, means of transport and communication as well as raw materials – are monopolised by a minority. On those means the rest of us are dependent and in them wealth is produced for sale with a view to a profit for this minority. Two consequences



From top left: Federal Reserve, Bank of England, Central European Bank, Bank of Canada



The amount of profit a particular firm makes does depend on the decisions of those managing the firm. Being able to see trends and follow them up, being more efficient and the like can bring a firm higher profits. This is why some firms are prepared to pay their top managers big bonuses, on the assumption that their skills will bring in more money than the amount of the bonus. Whether this is in fact the case or whether the top managers are simply plundering the shareholders is an open question. In any event, it is not the business skills of those in charge of a firm that “create” the profits; they only withdraw them from the pool of surplus value previously produced by the working class, “capturing” them as we said. And the more they capture the bigger the bonus some get.

The averaging of the rate of profit means that in effect the whole capitalist class exploits the whole working class. So workers have no interest in singling out one section, for instance bankers, for special opposition. They are all in it together and should be denounced equally as exploiters and parasites.

We have of course no sympathy for Stephen Hester and Fred Goodwin, but they are only scapegoats for the sins of capitalism. As far as we’re concerned the side show of them being sacrificed is not going to detract us from campaigning to get rid of capitalism altogether.

ADAM BUICK

follow. First, wealth acquires a value (related in the end to the amount of labour required to produce it from start to finish). Second, that those involved in the actual production of wealth are exploited – they produce more value than what they are paid for the sale and application of their mental and physical energies. This “surplus value” is the source of all profit, not just the profit of the industrial capitalists but also of the profit of those capitalists engaged in non-productive activities such as selling – and banking.

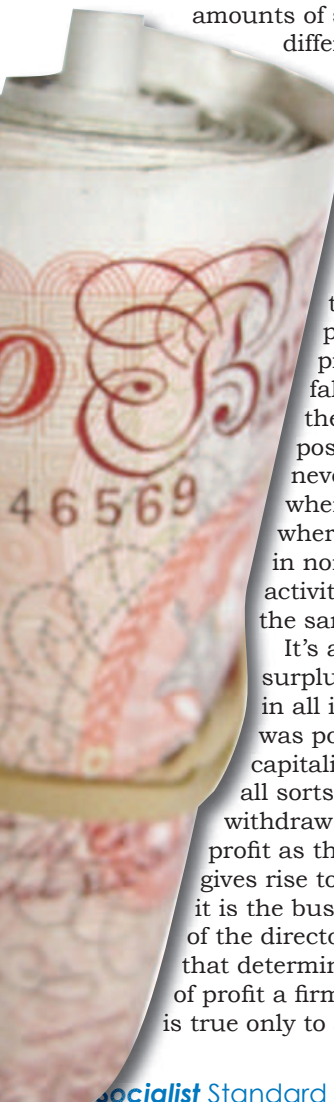
Such non-productive activities are necessary under capitalism and if they were not organised by independent businesses then the industrial capitalists would have to arrange for this themselves. They would have to tie up some of their capital in a department to sell their product to the final users or in a fund to finance longer-term activities. It proved more convenient – and in fact more profitable – to in effect hive off these activities to independent businesses. But this still involved sharing some of the surplus value extracted from their workers with these hived-off businesses.

Banks make their profits out of providing some services for other capitalist businesses, but essentially out of lending money to them and getting a share of the surplus value as interest. The money they lend could be their own or, more likely, it could be money they have themselves borrowed, though at a lower rate of interest. While some capitalist firms have a need to expand production, others will have a temporary cash surplus; the economic role of banks is to channel money from those who don’t need it for the time being to those who want to invest it. They are economic intermediaries.

The share-out of the surplus value produced by the productive section of the working class comes about through the averaging of the rate of profit. Different amounts of surplus value are produced in different industries, but if capitalist firms were able to keep as their profit all the surplus value produced in them then some industries would be more profitable than others. To the extent that this tends to happen the higher rate of profits attracts more capitalists to the industry, leading to more being produced and to prices and profits falling. In the end the equilibrium position (which is never reached) is when capital invested wherever, including in non-productive activities, would make the same rate of profit.

It’s as if all the surplus value produced in all industries was pooled and that capitalist firms of all sorts compete to withdraw from it as much profit as they can. This gives rise to the illusion that it is the business acumen of the directors or managers that determines the amount of profit a firm makes. This is true only to a certain extent.

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Who's Tax is it Anyway?

(The Socialist Standard Archives Department recently came across a very old document concerning William Pitt the Younger, inventor of income tax, which appears to be part of the memoirs of some obscure 18th century official. We are unable to say whether the document is genuine, but the argument contained in it is plausible and may well have taken place in some form. We reproduce it here because it has some bearing on current debates about what 'public money' is used for.)

A Capital Notion

Being a true account of intercourse lately passed between Mr Pitt and one Edgar Crutchley, Comptroller in the Office of Customs and Excise, Whitehall, June 1796.

Mr Pitt (afterwards WP): I am informed that you wait upon me for purposes of discussing the war with our French brethren?

Mr Crutchley (EC): Indeed sir. I have an idea how you can raise the money to fight Napoleon.

WP: Pray enlighten me, I am all ears.

EC: Well, you know that whereas it is always easy to tax the poor, to separate the widow from her mite, as it were, the rich manage to squirm out of every tax you can concoct, and thus deprive the state of any meaningful revenue?

WP: Ah, t'is ever so, more's the pity.

EC: You tax windows, they brick them up; you tax shoe buckles and hair powder, they adopt new fashions; you tax offices, they change the names...

WP: Yes, yes. The gentle classes are most assiduous in such evasions.

EC: And when you try to tax their land and business income directly, they cry pompously about invasion of privacy and then hide their money.

WP: Well? Get on with it, man. Now you are taxing my patience.

EC: There's a form of purchase only the rich can make, and one they can't hide or change like their wigs – that is when they hire workers. What if you create a tax on wages and force the workers, not the employers, to pay it?

WP: Tax the workers? What nonsense. Where will they find the money to pay a tax? They are destitute, with scarce enough to live on. Indeed, they are sucked as dry as they can be sucked!

EC: Precisely sir. So wages will have to go up, won't they? It stands to reason.

WP: You mean, visit upon workers an insupportable tax which employers must needs supply the money for? And the point of this device, my good man?

EC: The point is, workers can't get out of paying the tax, and employers can't get out of increasing their wages to pay for it, or else they'll get no

workers. So it's a tax on the rich, not by the front door but by the servants' entrance, if you like. One they won't be able to evade like they evade everything else.

WP: I suppose it might settle present accounts with Boney. But I could hardly make such a thing permanent. There would be pandemonium in the House, by God.

EC: Well then, sir, call it a temporary measure. Like as not, a man of your noble intellect can find reasons to keep introducing it every year. One day you may even make it permanent, and your revenue thus secured.

WP: Hmm. T'is true, an enforceable tax on the rich would answer our lamentable want of funds. We could have a proper civil service at last, an efficient administration of the state. Ah, but I perceive a problem.

EC: Problem, sir?

WP: The labouring classes will think that they are paying this tax, out of their own money, will they not?

EC: Yes sir, they certainly will believe it to be so. It will even say so on their payslips.

WP: Why then, they will think themselves entitled to parlay every purpose we put this tax money to. They will say that our institutions are really their institutions. We shall have a caterwauling mob every time we use the money to finance a war, build a government office, or bail out a bank. We shall have their damnable interference at every transaction, as if they were the true holders of the purse strings!

EC: That may be, sir. But you shall have a reliable source of revenue from the rich, which is no small thing. And it may be that a working class which believes itself to be the source of state money will tend to ally its interests with that state, instead of being arraigned as outsiders against it.

WP: Can such a working class, thus flattered above its degree, be kept in due station, I wonder?

EC: That is for history to unveil, sir. I merely cast accounts in the present. But I believe a class which thinks itself already in power will see no need to seize power. By such grand illusions is true power maintained.

WP: Are they all as smart as you in the Treasury? I shall have to watch out.

Transcribed by PJS



Capitalism in action

In A speech in January David Cameron talked about using “this crisis in capitalism to improve markets, not undermine them”. At least he admits that capitalism does have crises, which is progress compared to the previous Prime Minister. He said he wanted “these difficult economic times” to “lead to a socially responsible and genuinely popular capitalism. One in which the power of the market and the obligations of responsibility come together. One in which we improve the market by making it fair as well as free, and in which many more people get a stake in the economy and share in the rewards of success. That’s the vision of a better, more worthwhile economy that we’re building”.

By “a socially responsible capitalism” and a “fair market” all he seems to mean is that the top executives of capitalist corporations don’t line their pockets so much, while everything else goes on as before, with profits coming before people and market forces enforcing the economic laws “no profit, no production” and “can’t pay, can’t have”. More a nightmare than a vision.

He went on:

“We are the party that understands how to make capitalism work ... Because we get the free market we know its failings as well as its strengths. No true Conservative has a naïve belief that all politics has to do is step back and let capitalism rip. We know there is every difference in the world between a market that works and one that does not.”

It would be interesting to



know what he thinks the market’s failings are. But he didn’t say. Nor did he elaborate on how he was going “to make capitalism work”. He can’t have been claiming like Gordon Brown to be able to make it work without it leading to other economic crises in the future. No politician dares do this now.

But, then, why does he not come out and say that there will always be crises from time to time under capitalism as that’s the way it works, as many other open supporters of capitalism have done? Such as HSBC chief economist, Stephen King, who has written of “capitalism’s inherent instability” (*Times*, 7 February). Or *Times* columnist (and former Tony Blair speechwriter) Philip Collins who has commended to Ed Miliband’s attention Marx’s “picture of capitalism as creative, destructive, radical, disruptive and prone to cycles of boom and bust” (*Times*, 7 January).

Or Tory grandee William Rees-Mogg stating that “no theory can stop recurrent boom and bust” (*Times*, 22 September 2008). Or the *Times* whose editorial (17 September 2008) observed after the collapse of Lehman Brothers that the “profitable parts of the business will find a new home and the weaker parts closed down. This is painful and worrying but the opposite of a disaster. It might be brutal and unforgiving but this is how capitalism works. The market ensures that those who make mistakes are accountable for them. What critics are too hasty to see as capitalism in crisis is, in fact, capitalism in action”.

Falling living standards and cuts to social amenities, needed in a crisis to help restore the profitability that drives capitalism, are equally brutal and unforgiving but that’s how capitalism works. Yes indeed, his is the “party that understands how to make capitalism work”. And, no, it doesn’t believe in just stepping back and letting capitalism rip. It believes in intervening, as at present, to help let capitalism rip.

OBITUARY

Bob Marshall

Sadly Bob Marshall died on 30 December at the age of 89. He was a long-standing member of the Party having joined the old Southend branch in 1945. Later he was a member of West Ham branch. He was a man of many talents and dedicated to the Socialist cause. He had been called up for military service when he was 17 and registered as a conscientious objector, but his case was not upheld and by his refusal to enroll got a prison sentence which he spent in Feltham Young Offenders prison. On his release he had to do alternative service and opted for land work and he, along with other COs were directed to work on various farms. He worked mainly in SE Essex, the Rochford and Southend area. Collectively the COs were not very productive. They spent most of their day debating with each other, as they held a rich collection of attitudes to war in particular and to varied social and political ideas in general: there were pacifists and believers as well as anarchists and socialists. He said this was the happiest period of his life except that he was strapped for cash.

When he finally left the land he joined the Crown Agency helping to look after the Empire. Prior to the war he had been apprenticed in high class hand-made leather ware, and after the war continued to ply his trade in his spare time to augment his income, making wallets etc for Harrods and folders for Rolls Royce. He

was a keen sailor and DIY enthusiast so he decided to design and build his own ten metre yacht in his garden. His ambition wasn’t to sail the oceans but to just potter around the creeks and backwaters of Essex. Unfortunately he wasn’t able to devote the necessary time to complete his boat until his retirement, some twenty years later, when it was lifted over the roof of his house on a huge crane and transported to the coast where it was launched to the cheers of dozens of his family and friends.

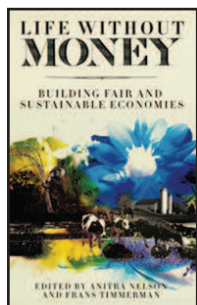
On his retirement he fulfilled another ambition to visit his twin brother in New Zealand by train. Trains, especially steam engines, were another passion, so he and his wife Daphne caught a train from London and with many changes arrived in Moscow, for a short stay before flying eastwards to join the Trans-Siberian Railway for three days to the Pacific coast, then by ship to Japan and air to New Zealand. They continued their circumnavigation after spending a few months with his brother by flying to the west coast of USA and crossing America by train. In his retirement in the 1990s he took on the post of Head Office assistant at Clapham for a number of years. He then had time to read a lot and to indulge in another love, painting. He was a talented artist in oils and acrylic, painting landscapes and seascapes featuring trains and boats.

He was a very gentle, private and quiet man who saw the inequalities in capitalism and contributed what he could to help change it. He will be greatly missed by his wife, family and friends.

DD

Gifts and Giving

Life without Money. Anitra Nelson and Frans Timmerman, eds. Pluto £16.



Several of the chapters in this volume are based on work which has appeared elsewhere. For instance, the chapter by Socialist Party member Adam Buick re-uses passages from the *Socialist Standard*.

It is certainly refreshing to come across a book that deals seriously with the idea of a world without money. As the editors say in the first chapter, ‘for us non-market socialism means a money-less, market-less, wage-less, class-less and state-less society that also aims to satisfy everyone’s basic needs while power and resources are shared in just and “equal” ways.’ A number of different perspectives on such a society are presented, some of which are more persuasive than others.

Two chapters look at small-scale attempts to live without money. One deals with the Twin Oaks intentional community in Virginia (<http://twinoaks.org>), which relies on a very complex system of labour credits. The other covers the squatter community in the Barcelona area. The squatters live by, for instance, recycling food (which would otherwise be dumped) from the port area, but they do need small amounts of money.

John O’Neill and Adam Buick deal with the economic calculation argument that in socialism there can be no single unit by means of which alternative actions can be compared (such as prices supposedly provide under capitalism). They point out that no such unit would be needed, since decisions can be taken by considering alternatives directly. Nor is some vast central plan needed.

Terry Leahy contributes an interesting essay on a gift economy where ‘products are either consumed directly by producers or made available to others as gifts’. This is a standard concept in the work of anthropologists looking at pre-modern (and some modern) societies, and it’s worth entering ‘gift economy’ in an internet search engine. It might be acceptable as a partial characterisation of socialism, except that in a complex industrial society producers cannot consume much of their own products, and most goods

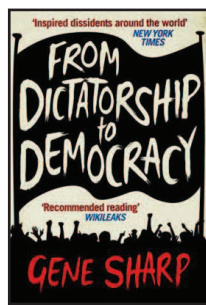
are produced by many different workers co-operating at different stages. Leahy also emphasises the role that might be played by hybrids of a gift economy and capitalism, developments which involve increased control of production and distribution by producers on some basis other than profit. The idea is that these hybrids could gradually be expanded so that ultimately a gift economy could take over from capitalism completely. Now, it’s possible that, as the socialist movement grows, hybrid-type arrangements will become more common, as people increasingly reject wage labour, but it will hardly be possible for this to replace a revolution to make the world’s resources common property.

A final chapter by the editors reinforces this notion of a gradual changeover, including the idea of ‘non-monetary exchange’ (as opposed to the socialist proposal to abolish exchange entirely). Despite this, though, the volume as a whole offers a refreshing look at alternatives to capitalism.

PB

Defying dictatorships

From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation. Gene Sharp. *Serpent’s Tail*, 2011.



Gene Sharp is an American scholar who has already published several works about non-violent popular action or – the term he now prefers – “political defiance” as a strategy to weaken and eventually

“disintegrate” dictatorial regimes or as a civilian-based defence against military occupation. This latest book, written at the request of an exiled Burmese dissident, summarises the conclusions he has reached over forty years of research. It has appeared in over thirty languages and is said to have influenced many of the recent anti-dictatorship movements throughout the world.

Sharp does not play down the enormous difficulties facing any non-violent movement that takes on a well-entrenched dictatorship. Those who start such a movement must

be prepared for a long struggle, with setbacks and numerous casualties (after all, only one side is committed to non-violence). Nor is there any guarantee of success, even in the long run.

All the same, he argues, violent resistance (other things being equal) entails even larger casualties and has even poorer prospects of success. That is because it strikes at the strongest point of a dictatorship – its capacity for violent coercion. Non-violent defiance aims at a dictatorship’s weakest point or Achilles heel – its need for the cooperation of the people it rules.

A dictatorship can manage without broad *active* support, but its functioning does depend on a certain minimum of passive toleration and compliance with its demands. Beyond some point, the withdrawal of cooperation undermines the effectiveness and cohesion of a regime and the reliability of its armed forces to such an extent that it just falls apart.

Much of the book consists of advice about how to design and implement a strategic plan of political defiance. On the whole, the advice seems sensible enough. For instance, Sharp urges activists to develop a campaign by gradual stages, maintaining non-violent discipline and avoiding premature mass protests that expose protestors to wholesale slaughter.

In practice, however, the scope for such careful strategising is limited. Popular protest tends to spread spontaneously, influenced less by rational calculation than by emotion, including a desire to copy movements in other countries where conditions may be very different. Thus, imitation of the successful non-violent movements in Tunisia and Egypt led to massacre and civil war in Libya and now Syria.

Sharp points out that the disintegration of a dictatorial regime does not necessarily lead to democracy. Another possible outcome is a military coup. However, he does not face the fact that far from all anti-dictatorship activists merit the label of “democrat”. In quite a few places – not only Moslem countries but also Russia, for instance – many of those protesting against an existing dictatorship merely seek to replace it with a dictatorship of a different type, one they hope will be less corrupt and have stronger nationalist or religious credentials.

This brings us to a problem that Sharp mentions but never tackles head on. What attitude should anti-dictatorship movements take toward possible assistance from

foreign governments, whether financial, diplomatic or military (e.g., no-fly zones)? Sharp encourages movements to seek such assistance, on the principle that they need to mobilise whatever resources they can. Yet he also suggests, though without explaining why, that it is best to rely on foreign governments as little as possible.

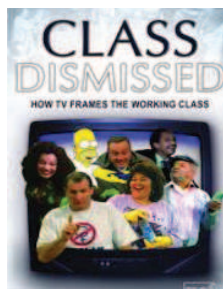
When the American government (to take the most important case) promotes “regime change” abroad, it does so for strategic and economic reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with democracy. Perhaps Sharp knows this. If so, why would he be so coy? One thing is for sure: an honest analysis of U.S. foreign policy would hardly have earned his book the rave reviews it received in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Despite these criticisms, I recognise the importance of Sharp’s basic argument about the potential of non-violent political defiance and its advantages over armed struggle. Indeed, it is relevant in a much broader context than that of the struggle against dictatorship.

Although there is a significant difference between democratic and dictatorial regimes, political democracy under capitalism is bound to be limited and unstable because capitalism is inherently anti-democratic as an *economic* system. In recent years, democratic rights have been seriously undermined in Western countries under the pretext of the “war against terror”. So non-violent action is needed not only to establish democracy where it does not exist, but also to

► page 22

Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6ZS91cqpa8>



It’s almost taken for granted that television doesn’t accurately reflect how we live, but it’s not always easy to articulate how it distorts the real world. *Class Dismissed: How*

TV Frames The Working Class is a useful examination of the ways the goggle-box deceives us. The film was made in 2005 by Pepi Leistyna of the University of Massachusetts - Boston, and is easy enough to find on the internet. It only discusses American television, but the trends are recognisable elsewhere.

To follow the film, you have to tune in to the definitions of ‘class’ used. When its talking heads refer to the ‘working class’ they use the narrower meaning of people with low incomes, little power and less “cultural capital” (or what could be called sophistication). This is contrasted with ‘middle-class’ people who are a notch above on each of these scales. The ‘middle class’ is living the American Dream of gleaming affluence and clean-cut leisure.

According to Leistyna, ‘middle class’ characters on television are depicted as empowered, independent and sassy because the social and economic forces which often prevent these traits are downplayed. These characters only need to struggle

against aspects of their personality which might stop them living the American Dream. Programme makers are less interested in showing issues relating to wider social forces or being dealt with collectively.

So, TV tells us how we should define success and that this is to be achieved individually, rather than through political action. An exception to these trends was *Roseanne*, an early nineties sitcom which retained some left-wing ideas thanks to the persistence of its show runner Roseanne Barr. However, even in this show, the family ‘made it’, and became wealthy. A British equivalent would be the Trotters becoming millionaires in *Only Fools and Horses*.

Leistyna gives another example of how ‘middle-class’ culture is shown on television in ways which hide wider problems: if a television show depicts a well-off black family, then this disguises the real inequalities that exist between communities. Programme makers would see it differently, of course. They would say that minorities can be shown in a positive way to challenge stereotypes and to improve how they are represented. However, Leistyna would reply that television only depicts successful characters from minority groups in ways compatible with ‘middle class’ values. He’s saying that television tolerates minorities as long as they are living that American Dream.

This depiction of those who have ‘made it’ differs from how ‘working-class’ people are presented on television. When a ‘middle-class’ character makes a mistake, it’s seen



Point and Sneer

‘Did you see those tacky dresses worn by those gypsy girls? One had a big pineapple on it. The other was shaped like a palm tree. Ridiculous,

they were, and they cost thousands. I bet they didn’t pay for them by hard work. That’s my taxes paying for their benefits, it is’.

This seems to be the reaction expected by the makers of Channel 4’s fly-on-the-wall docusoap *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*. It’s one of those programmes churned out for bored office workers to talk about at the water cooler. It wants us to be voyeurs, pointing and sneering at the funny gypsies in their funny clothes.

The whiff of prejudice hanging around behind the cameras became more noticeable with the stink caused by the latest series’ advertising campaign. Billboard posters promised that the show would now be ‘Bigger. Fatter. Gypsier’. In a complaint made by the London Travellers Unit and two members of the London Assembly, it was rightly pointed out

that Channel 4 probably wouldn’t promote a programme as ‘Jewishier’ or ‘blacker’. Why do they feel they can get away with advertising this show in this way? The answer is that prejudice against gypsies and travellers is seen as acceptable by many people because of the misplaced assumption that they are ‘spongers’. Gypsies continue to be scapegoats for several of society’s problems, much like Jewish and black people have also been. So they remain, almost by definition, marginalised in capitalist society. It seems that the gypsy communities’ younger members have overcompensated for this by lapping up society’s excessive demands to focus on image. Those appearing on *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* don’t do themselves any favours by dressing up young girls like Barbie dolls and instilling a fierce competitiveness to be the most ‘attractive’. But, of course, the programme makers are using their favourite tool for moulding the truth – selective editing. There are a few token mentions of those in the gypsy community who aren’t image-obsessed, but the overwhelming emphasis is on false-tanned bling-addicts. *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* brings together these misrepresented gypsies and cynical programme makers in what is best described as an unhappy marriage.

Mike Foster

as an aberration from the confident, successful person they should be. When a 'working-class' character makes a mistake, it's because that's just what they're like. Leistyna reels off a list of characteristics associated with 'working-class' people on television: bad taste, lack of intelligence, reactionary politics, poor work ethic and dysfunctional family values. Imagine a racist Homer Simpson who pushes Marge around, and you get an amalgamation of these traits. Leistyna describes how the 'working class' is portrayed as an underclass of hillbillies, rednecks and trailer trash whose lives are there to be ripped open on *The Jerry Springer Show*. Or its closest British counterpart *The Jeremy Kyle Show*.

Leistyna's argument could be boiled down to saying that television reinforces 'middle-class' ideology as an attack on the working class. This is television as propaganda to sell the American Dream and distract us from thinking about how capitalism really works. While his argument has merit, it would be more accurate to say that the mindset Leistyna associates with a 'middle class' is just mainstream capitalist ideology. 'Middle-class' people are also alienated and exploited within capitalism, even if they don't always have the same pressures as those lower down the social scale. The film ends by recognising that changing the ideology presented on television requires changing the society which creates that ideology. And that's something else worth switching off your television for.

MIKE FOSTER

Book reviews continued

preserve it where it is at risk.

The class struggle has mostly taken forms consistent with Sharp's concept of "defiance" – expanded to include defiance of employers as well as the state. This applies to strikes and picketing, which Sharp includes in his list of "methods of non-violent action", as well as to the methods used, for instance, to resist house foreclosures.

Non-violent popular action can also play an important role in moving forward from limited political democracy to full social democracy, which is what we mean by socialism. Not as a substitute for electoral and constitutional action, but as an additional guarantee that the socialist majority will achieve its goal under any conceivable circumstances.

STEFAN

The Socialist Party Summer School:

6 - 8 July 2012
Harborne Hall, Birmingham

Meetings

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

CLAPHAM

Tuesday **6 March**, 8.00 pm

IDENTITY. Opener: Danny Lambert

Sunday **18 March**, 3.00 pm

BEYOND THE GLASS CEILING

Speaker: Pat Deutz.

Sunday **1 April**, 3.00 pm

APRIL FOOLS. Speaker: Paddy Shannon.

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

(nearest tube: Clapham North)

Glasgow

Wednesday **21 March**, 8.30pm

A WORKER LOOKS AT HISTORY

Speaker: R. Donnelly

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

Manchester

Monday **26 March**, 8.30 pm

Discussion on The Crisis

Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre, M4 1PW.

East Anglia

Saturday **31 March**, 2.00-5.00 pm

CAPITALISM: AN UNHEALTHY OPTION

Speaker: Dick Field.

Premier Inn, Norwich Nelson Hotel (opposite the train station), Prince of Wales Road, Norwich NR1 1DX (The meeting room can be accessed by going through the Costa Coffee Café and down the stairs. Once downstairs, the room is set back, Prince of Wales Road end) .

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.

50 Years Ago

Expensive Royalty

MANY TONGUES were clucked at the news that the Royal Family is to have some more money spent on them.

It must cost around £400 a year in fees to send the Prince of Wales to Gordonstoun School. The fees, says the school vary with the parents' financial circumstances; which does *not* mean, of course, that the school is full of clever, deserving boys whose parents pay no fees because they cannot afford them.

It will cost about £85,000 to renovate the wing of Kensington Palace where Princess Margaret and her husband are living - £15,000 more than the original estimate.

Some critics say that Prince Charles should be sent to a comprehensive school, like a sizeable part of his subjects. Others think that the Princess should be content to live in a council semi-detached, which to them seems roomy enough for a couple with only one child.

These views are way off the mark. The Royal Family stand for the possessions, rights and privileges of the British ruling class. It is, therefore, only appropriate that they themselves should live in lavish privilege.

And nobody has yet explained how sending a prince to a council school, or sticking a princess in a small house, would help the working class parents who struggle to keep their children at school past the age of fifteen and who have to renovate *their* house during their summer holiday.

These problems are typical of what faces workers all over the world, under monarchies and in republics.

While the tongue-cluckers do their measly, pointless sums, Capitalism grinds merrily on, providing a fat living for a few of its people and condemning the rest to dull poverty.

(From "The News in Review", *Socialist Standard*, March 1962)

Socialist Party to contest London elections

In the elections for the Greater London Assembly on 3 May the Socialist Party will be contesting 2 of the 14 constituency seats, giving the chance for those in four London boroughs with a total population of over one million who want socialism to vote for it.

Further information, offers of help or contributions to the election fund, contact us at spgb@worldsocialism.org or at 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN. You can also follow the campaign on our election blog at: <http://spgb.blogspot.com/>

ACTION REPLAY

Kitted Out

MANY SUPPORTERS, especially in football and rugby, like wearing the same shirts as their clubs wear, perhaps with their own name on the back. And kids in particular want the very latest design, not last year's, which is why clubs often change their shirts every season or so. Teams may well have two or even three designs and colours to cope with potential clashes when playing away.

A recent absurd example of a sports goods company cashing in on shirt-mania was to do with the kit of the British team (Team GB, as they're called) for the 2012 Olympic football. Late last year, Adidas released a 'commemorative shirt' for supporters. Mind you, it's not the one the actual team will be wearing when they play. It has a nice design, with union jack, lions and Britannia. It costs a nice £52, so the

company will no doubt make a very nice profit out of it.

And just as you can buy cast-offs from some singer or film star, you can even buy the actual shirt worn in a game from some years ago – at a price, of course. For instance, the shirt 'believed to have been worn' by Alan Hudson for Stoke City in 1975–6 was recently available from an online company for £499.99! As their website says, 'why not make yourself stand out from the crowd with a vintage football shirt and relive the old times, and have a great investment for the future too.' (<http://www.classicfootballshirts.co.uk>).

PB

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Voice from the Back

The Socialist Alternative

It is difficult to imagine someone disputing Professor Hawking's views on cosmology or theoretical physics, but some of his other views are open to challenge. 'It is possible that the human race could become extinct but it is not inevitable. I think it is almost certain that a disaster, such as nuclear war or global warming, will befall the earth within a thousand years,' Professor Hawking, the Cambridge University cosmologist and theoretical physicist said. 'It is essential that we colonise space' (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 January). Rather than wait a thousand years for space colonisation we think a more realistic view is to change the basis of society now from one of production for profit to one of production solely for use.



The stamp weighs about the same as ten malaria mosquitoes

Malaria And Social Madness

There are many reasons for the world's working class to get rid of capitalism. Here is one of them. 'Worldwide malaria deaths may be almost twice as high as previously estimated, a study reports. The research, published in the British medical journal the *Lancet*, suggests 1.24 million people died from the mosquito-borne disease in 2010. This compares to a World Health Organisation (WHO) estimate for 2010 of 655,000 deaths' (*BBC News*, 3 February). While billions of dollars are spent world-wide



in armaments to destroy human lives, capitalism refuses to spend a few pennies on mosquito nets that could save over a million lives a year.

Distorted Values

For want of a few pence, children are dying of lack of clean water and millions die every year from malaria when all that is needed to prevent it is a mosquito net. Yet millions are spent by parasitic capitalists on their stamp collection. 'Printed in Sweden in 1855, the tiny Treskilling Yellow is thought to be the most valuable thing in existence by weight and volume. Weighing just 0.03 grams, the three-shilling stamp is now worth £5m. It is so prized because it was printed in yellow by mistake, and should in fact have been green' (*Daily Telegraph*, 21 January). It speaks volumes for the values of capitalism when the health of millions is valued less than a scrap of paper.

Behind The Diplomacy

The Philippines is in talks with the Obama administration about expanding the American military presence in the island nation. An arrangement would follow other recent agreements to base thousands of U.S. Marines in northern Australia and to station Navy warships in Singapore. Under each scenario, U.S. forces would effectively be guests at existing foreign bases. 'The sudden rush by many in the Asia-Pacific region to embrace Washington is a direct reaction to China's rise as a military power and its assertiveness in staking claims to disputed territories,

such as the energy-rich South China Sea' (*Washington Post*, 7 February). Behind the niceties of diplomacy lies the naked economic drive of modern capitalism.

A Strange Sort Of Advance

Some years ago with the advent of advanced technology many workers were promised that the working week would be cut drastically, but capitalism just doesn't work that way. 'Workers in the digital era can feel at times as if they are playing a video game, battling the barrage of emails and instant messages, juggling documents, Web sites and online calendars. To cope, people have become swift with the mouse, toggling among dozens of overlapping windows on a single monitor. But there is a growing new tactic for countering the data assault: the addition of a second computer screen. Or a third. This proliferation of displays is the latest workplace upgrade, and it is responsible for the new look at companies and home offices - they are starting to resemble mission control' (*New York Times*, 7 February). For many office workers the advance of technology has meant more arduous working conditions, not easier ones.

Rolling In It

At a time when unemployment is rising and many companies are feeling the economic pinch it is not all doom and gloom for investors. 'Another year another bumper set of figures for investors in Rolls Royce. ... Analysts have pencilled in £1.2 billion of profits on £11.4 billion of sales, increases of 16% and 5%, respectively' (*Sunday Times*, 5 February). It is reassuring no doubt for the unemployed that the owning class can still lord it over us in their splendid new Rollers.



FREE LUNCH

