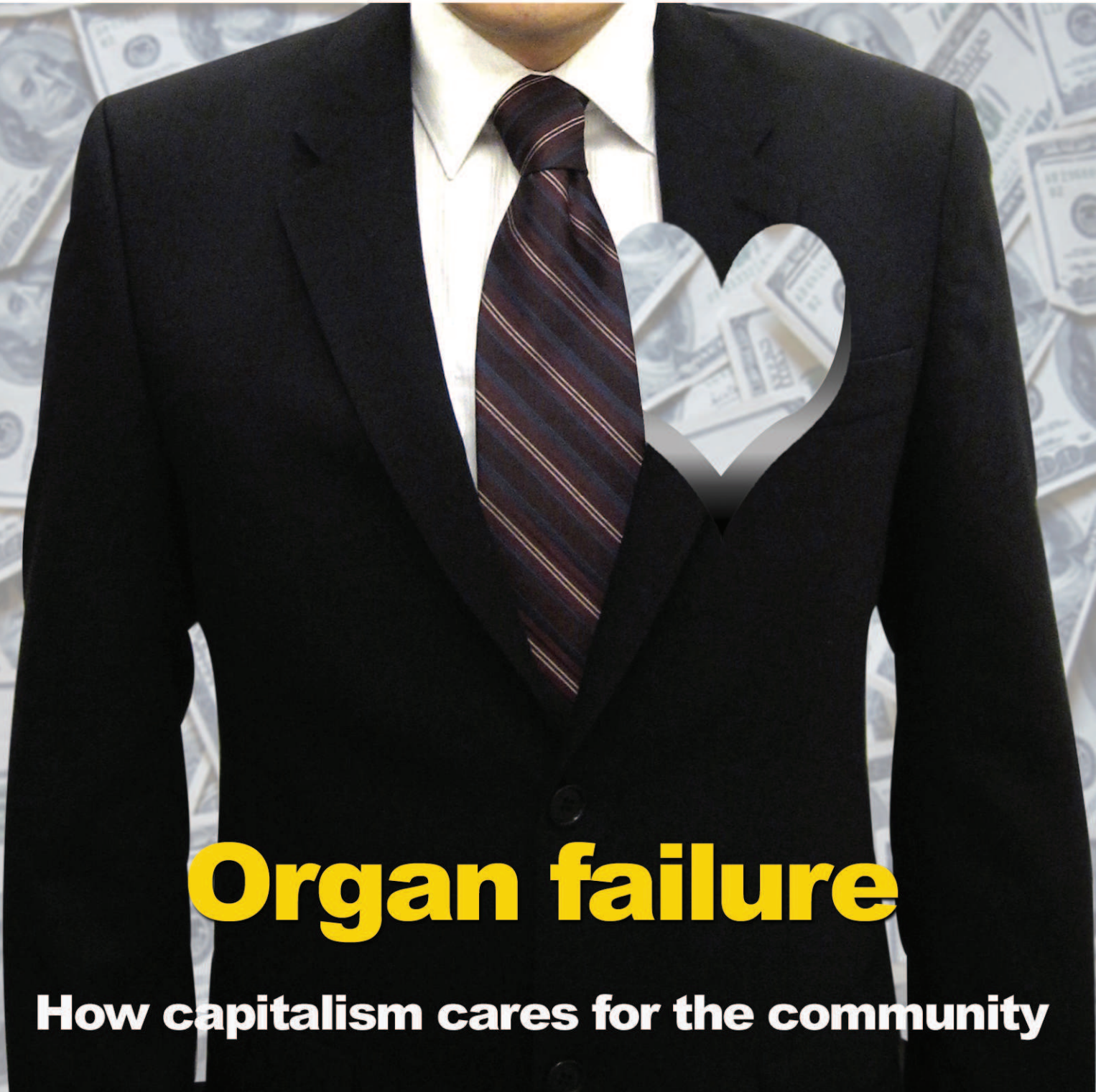


socialist standard

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Organ failure

How capitalism cares for the community



Angel Obama
page 6



Assets 4 Emma
page 10



Patriotism
page 16

socialist standard

MAY 2012

contents

FEATURES

After the Gold Rush	10
Care, or couldn't Care less?	12
Homelessness For Sale	14
Queen Capital's Jubilee	16
What about the workers?	17

REGULARS

Pathfinders	4
Letters	5
Halo Halo!	6
Brief Reports	6
Cooking the Books	7
Material World	8
Greasy Pole	9
Cooking the Books	18
Reviews	19
Proper Gander	21
Meetings	22
50 Years Ago	23
Action Replay	23
Voice from the Back	24
Free Lunch	24

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The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 2 June** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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Introducing The Socialist Party

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

We use every possible opportunity

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

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

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

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

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



socialist standard

MAY 2012

Editorial

Caring is not enough

A SYSTEM is not a thing which is capable of caring for anything or anyone, it simply performs the functions it was set up or adapted to perform. Capitalism is set up to enable the pursuit of profit for private gain, regardless of other 'external' outcomes. The chief beneficiaries of this system do care but only about protecting their interests. Their main concern is for the wellbeing of their own future, and short term gains always take priority over less profitable long term considerations. Such questions as the health and wellbeing of workers are treated as externalities, as is the state of the planet, now being plundered and abused to irredeemable levels through reckless use of its resources and pollution of land, water and air.

Governments don't care; corporations and shareholders don't care, except for upholding the status quo to protect the bottom line. Endless promises are made pre-election and endlessly broken afterwards. Elected politicians, unelected paid advisors and supposed experts working together deliver one failure or crisis after another, following policies and goals that usually fly in the face of public opinion. Meanwhile the electorate, who have no meaningful part to play in the decision-making process, are expected to meekly acquiesce.

Nevertheless, capitalist governments to some extent have to buy this acquiescence. Modern societies do not

consider it acceptable to turn out the old, the sick or the poor to die in the gutter, even if they are no practical use as workers, so state administrations have to invest in looking busy by funding a 'support' industry which is forever the subject of new approaches, paradigms and target-led initiatives. In this issue we have personal accounts by three socialists of their experiences in the caring and support services which show just how big a gulf there is between what governments say in their speeches and what they really care about.

None of this will come as any surprise to most Socialist Standard readers. But it is encouraging that the almost universal acceptance of the status quo by politicians, economists and the media is being challenged by growing numbers of people around the world who do care and who do believe there are alternatives. Many people are starting to realize that, if the whole world has to live with and bear the consequences of decisions made about it, then it follows that this decision-making process needs to belong to all the people of the world. And that means getting involved, and giving proactive support to the struggle for revolutionary change. A system embodying genuine participative democracy as a fundamental principle is in the best interests of everyone, but it won't come about if people don't work for it, however much they care.

More Monkey Business



FOLLOWING OUR remarks of last December's Pathfinders regarding the long-established link between status in a group and levels of stress, immunity levels and heart disease, a new study of macaque monkeys seems to have established in which direction the causal link travels (*BBC Online*,

10 April). There probably aren't many people confidently predicting that monkeys with naturally poor immunity, bad hearts and high levels of stress would somehow as a result end up at the bottom of the social pecking order, but so far it hasn't been possible strictly to rule this out. The new study however appears to do just that. It shows that while an examination of the activity level of immune genes gives a reliable estimate of an individual's social level, a change in that individual's social rank will spark off a change in the activity levels of the immune genes, more activity corresponding to higher status. The conclusion, in other words, is that 'status drives immune health, rather than vice-versa.'

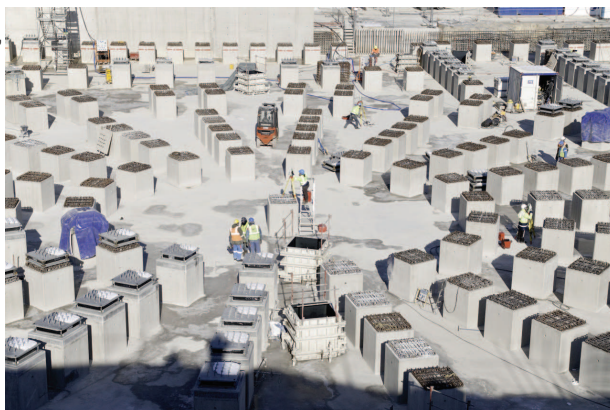
Though the findings might seem to suggest that

Golden profits of the sun

AT A cleared site near the town of Cadarache in France stand concentric rings of blocks that look like a modern Carnac or Stonehenge. These blocks are in fact electro-magnets, designed to be cooled to within a few degrees of absolute zero. Suspended above some of the coldest things in the galaxy will be one of the hottest things in the universe, a plasma ring shaped like a doughnut, a new sun on Earth.

This is ITER, an experimental fusion reactor, likely to be one of the most expensive science projects in history and therefore a joint collaboration of all the great powers, whose siting has been a bone of contention for a decade and whose completion is still decades away. ITER is being built to answer two key questions: how to contain a sun when no known element can withstand the heat, and how to extract a net surplus over the energy required to fire it up. The holy grail of this experiment is relatively clean and abundant energy that can among other things solve water shortage problems with large-scale energy-hungry desalination, but which more to the point cannot be held hostage by foreign powers.

A recent book on future technologies (*Abundance* – see review on page 19) curiously doesn't mention fusion at all in its section on energy. Much of the optimistic discussion revolves around collection processes (eg solar) and storage or conversion (eg batteries, hydrogen etc), but without ever considering the problems. Solar energy, for example, is of less use in northern countries and particularly questionable in an age which is debating whether to seed the stratosphere with sulphur in a bid to create global dimming in order to offset greenhouse warming. Solutions involving hydrogen as an energy vector or sodium as a battery component take no account of the cost of producing these hard-to-get elements. Of the methods of generating new energy,



low social rank, or a decrease in social rank, can lead to reduced immune health, the team said it was 'encouraging' that the effects can be counteracted by a change in the social environment'. While this is quite easy with monkeys, by changing the order in which they are introduced into a group – later arrivals being lower status – the question of how to do this in human society is politically somewhat more complicated. Since capitalism is essentially a hierarchical pyramid in which roughly 99 percent of humans have relatively low status and therefore by implication poorer health, the conclusion for a socialist is easy. Pro-capitalist reformers will have a struggle to figure out a workable solution, however.

Not that socialism will be an instant panacea for all human ills. A separate study last year revealed that 'Infant stress in monkeys has life-long consequences' (*BBC Online*, 18 August, 2011). Baby rhesus monkeys who had been separated from their mothers at birth continued to show signs of anxiety, depression and anti-social behaviour even three years later, suggesting that early trauma caused irreversible changes in the brain. Similar effects have been found in humans, with childhood stress or maltreatment being linked to a raft of adult health conditions including mental health problems, aggression, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and dementia. 'It appears that stress in childhood, for monkeys and humans, can lead to behavioural and health problems that can only be partially repaired in later life', the article states. From a socialist point of view the conclusion to draw is that the early years of socialism will be a period of withdrawal symptoms and recovery, with some effects caused by capitalism continuing to be long-term.

biomass is too land-hungry, wind and tide may have unforeseen effects on weather patterns, fossil is too dirty and fission too risky. Every solution brings new problems. Extracting shale gas deposits by hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' is currently causing concerns over polluting water tables, but somewhat worse is the recent discovery that it is destroying the very same underground shale fissures currently being earmarked for carbon capture and storage (*New Scientist*, 28 March).

Not that these are necessarily insurmountable obstacles. From a socialist perspective a judicious mix of small-scale energy production, collection and conversion systems may do very well, especially given the new parameters of an environmentally friendlier social system. But such DIY technologies may not necessarily be the most profitable solution for capitalism. Anybody can fit a few solar panels, run a compost generator or hoist a windmill, but it takes states and multinationals to build nuclear fusion plants. The power, for the ruling class, resides in being able to fence off what people need and supply it at a premium price, while depriving people of alternatives. Fusion potentially offers that chance for fat profits.

This raises a question for socialists. Often this column goes along with the straightforward assumption that what capitalism invents, leaving aside its obnoxious military research, socialism can usually find a use for. But would socialism really want

or need to run hundreds of mini-suns, at a huge ongoing cost in maintenance and risk, to say nothing of the gamma-riddled waste which, though not comparable to fission, would still be considerable? Cadarache is an attempt at a capitalist solution to a capitalist problem, but even if it succeeds, whether fusion technology would be considered necessary to socialism is not by any means a given, and will be one of the things socialists will have to think hard about.

Barmy Lammy

Dear Editors

In the March Greasy Pole – Baby David Speaks – Ivan wrote a witty and perceptive account about the August Riots and Tottenham’s MP David Lammy.

Lammy is a typical reformist Labour professional politician. It is bewildering that Lammy links the riotous behaviour to legal restraints on parents smacking children. It is quite obvious the antisocial behaviour by young people is caused by poverty and alienation endemic in the capitalist system (1 million 16 to 24 year olds unemployed also 50 percent of young black men are unemployed) and also harassment by the guardians of the state and private property, the police. I would like to add that as a Socialist I do not condemn the young people who 'looted' goods like Apple I-Phones and expensive trainers from shops last August. These are the branded goods/commodities that are fetishised in the capitalist consumer society and young people were only desiring the same commodities that the affluent can afford. Young people are surrounded daily by images of get rich quick, cutting corners, quasi- legal means of making money like in the banking sector and their 'looting' is chicken feed compared to the financial looting/terrorism of the financial capitalist class.

Steve Clayton, London SW8.

Sinking wages

Dear Editors

The crew members of the Titanic were employed by the ship and not by White Star Line. This meant their pay stopped when the ship sank. If they died and a next of kin had not been named on the ship’s articles (employment contract) any pay earned would be retained by White Star Line.

Fred Moore, Canterbury.

Economic power?

Dear Editors

Thank you for the Lloyd George commentary in the March edition of *Socialist Standard*. It is certainly important to get our historical lessons straight. I had thought that the upheaval in Russia, and the subsequent rebellious state of the interventionist force of England, France and the United States, would have had some influence on Lloyd George’s attitude

when he reputedly referred to the army as 'disaffected'. Indeed, I had heard that there was even strong sympathy for the Bolsheviks and that some British troops declared themselves the 'Yorkshire Soviet.' If this is true, it tends to demonstrate that at a time of extreme stress of the capitalist system state control of the engines of oppression can falter in their commitment to act as instruments of class rule. Perhaps this is what rattled your 'windbag'. But he was as 'innocent' of the power of industrial unionism as the union leaders were ignorant.

Aside from that, I found in my collection of dusty pamphlets a small item called *Craft Unionism versus Industrial Unionism*, by F.S. Budgen and L. Cotton. They wrote for the SLPGB, and in the 1934 edition of their pamphlet they had some relevant commentary to offer in a chapter entitled 'The Wage War of 1921 and the Triple Alliance Fiasco.' The thrust of their argument was that the reason the 'Alliance' folded was precisely because the prevailing structure of unionism at the time was based upon archaic craft divisions that divided workers rather than uniting them. 'Intrigue and treachery of the trade union leaders characterize 'Black Friday', they wrote, but did not explain it. 'By the masses it wields, and the political atmosphere it can create by setting them in motion, trade unionism is potentially capable of challenging capitalist rule in the workshops and the State, but it is entirely incapable of backing up that challenge with any effective action. All of their class instincts awakened by the approach of such a situation,

the capitalists entrench themselves behind their ownership of the tools and their possession of State power; and trade unionism, having totally unfitted the working class to assume control of the productive machinery, and having rendered them morally and physically incapable of facing the power of the State, has only the choice between a forlorn hope or surrender at discretion. In their own interests the trade union leaders capitulated.'

Union-wise, things haven't changed much but should.

Bernard Bortnick, Texas

Reply:

The old pamphlet you dug out exaggerates the power of workers' unions vis-à-vis the state. In the end, any government can, if it so chooses, see off any challenge to its authority by unions, whether these are organised on a craft or an industry basis. This is because they control the state machine and because workers can't hold out for more than a few weeks. In this particular case the leaders of the unions in the Triple Alliance backed down because they realised this and because they did not want to overthrow the government. Neither did their members. The lessons to draw from this failure are (1) the imperative need to first gain control of political power before trying to change the basis of society from class to common ownership, and (2) the equally imperative need for the majority of workers to want to do this and to be organised politically as well as industrially - *Editors*.

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Doing God

'WE DON'T do God,' Alistair Campbell famously said when he had to rein in Tony Blair from voicing his religious delusions from Downing Street. But of course politicians have always 'done' God. And as they jumped on the god bandwagon in the run up to Easter he was well and truly done. Done so thoroughly that if he'd actually existed his head would be spinning and there would be steam coming out of his ears.

It started with George Galloway posing for the cameras and thanking God for his victory in the Bradford West by-election. Galloway, it must be admitted, has quite a way with words but by thanking the Almighty it would appear that he is even able to persuade him to cast his omnipotent influence on the election results.

A popular view (among the tabloids at least) was that Galloway won because he was able to convince the largely Islamic local population that because he didn't drink, he had a beard and he was about to marry his fourth wife, he was in fact almost a Muslim. Whether that had an effect or not is anyone's guess.

Barrack Obama, meanwhile, gave an Easter address to re-assure gullible Christians that he most certainly wasn't a Muslim. To make sure they got the message he hit them with a sanctimonious speech packed with references to the 'redemption at God's hand', 'the gift of grace', a 'saviour who died so that we might live', and a 'blessed and happy Easter to all Christians celebrating the resurrection.'

An alarming load of codswallop from the President of the United States. But if



Americans don't believe he's a genuine U.S. citizen even after producing his birth certificate, perhaps they'll fall for that load of old cobblers.

Back here David Cameron showed that he, too, can pontificate with the best of them. During his Easter effort he droned on about when 'as Christians we remember the life, sacrifice and living legacy' of the invisible man in the sky. And in case anyone was sceptical about this fervent belief, he assured them that he welcomed a 'Christian fight-back'.

He also mentioned his disagreement with the Church over their opposition to gay marriage, but he added 'If this doesn't go ahead, to those of us who'd like it to go ahead, there will still be civil partnerships'. And 'I hope we won't fall out too much over gay marriage.'

The American 'Christian Post' website honed in on this part of Cameron's speech. 'British Prime Minister David Cameron has pleaded for Christians in the country to stick by him despite his attempts to legalise same sex marriage in the U.K.,' it told them.

Well God takes a dim view of this kind of thing in America. And so, too, do his barmy supporters at the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas. These are the people who picket the funerals of gays, U.S. army personnel, and anyone else that God doesn't like. They're a strange lot, but at least they're consistent. The god of the Westboro Baptist Church hates everyone. But especially gays.

They run a number of websites including: GodHatesTheMedia.com; JewsKilledJesus.com; and even GodHatesTheWorld.com. But their favourite seems to be GodHatesFags.com. And no, this is not a heavenly anti-smoking campaign. It's people's sexuality that drives God's pals at the Westboro Baptist Church nuts.

Having politicians interfering with every area of people's lives is bad enough, but when they want to appease the god squad as well it's bloody dangerous. **NW**

Brief Reports

David Cameron called for openness and a lifting of trade bans on Burma after visiting the capital Nay Pyi Taw, where he met President Thein Sein. Later he had a private dinner with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon. Speaking of his meeting with the great pro-democracy leader he said: 'It was a privilege to sit down with Ms Suu Kyi and try to flog her tanks and rocket launchers.'

A test rocket launched from North Korea which broke up after one minute was a resounding success, according to North Korean sources. The rocket exploded as a 'birthday firework' for the nation's long-dead leader Kim Il-sung. A spokesman for the NK Space Agency said: 'We have the technology to rain scrap metal upon any capitalist lickspittle within a twenty mile radius. Let our enemies tremble.' In separate news, South Korea reacted nervously to reports of NK tunnelling in preparation for an underground nuclear test: 'We want to know just how far they're tunnelling'.

Hosepipe bans affecting about 20 million customers have been introduced by seven water authorities in parts of southern and eastern England. Thames Water said this week that the bans were unavoidable due to the unprecedented drought of money for fixing leaks. In a statement the regulator, Ofgwat, said: 'If we fixed all the leaks we would save 3.36bn litres per day in England and Wales, but then we'd make no profit at all so clearly sacrifices need to be made by the great unwashed by, um, not washing.' Meanwhile the water minister Richard Benyon has hit out at claims he left his hosepipe running the day after the hosepipe ban came into effect: 'I didn't leave the ruddy thing on. I

was teaching the kids how to water-cannon the local oiks'.

Iran has blocked access to the official website for the London 2012 Olympic Games, after previously stating it might boycott the Olympics over claims that the official logo spells the word 'Zion'. The logo designers reject this, saying instead that the logo represents an exploded diagram of the religious fundamentalist brain. It now seems likely that no information about the 2012 London Olympics will reach anyone in Iran. Bookings from Heathrow to Tehran are expected to increase by a factor of 9000 as a result.

A London 2012 official has admitted Olympic events could be disrupted by 'one idiot' after the University Boat Race was halted by a swimmer. British Olympic Association chairman Wanda Gold said it would do all it could to protect athletes in the Games: 'I can assure sports fans everywhere that Boris Johnson and Francis Maude will be kept indoors with a bottle of gin and a games console throughout the proceedings.'

The Law Commission has proposed the abolition of 800 antiquated laws, although these do not include the many imaginary 'laws' such as the law against eating a mince pie on Christmas Day, or the right to shoot a Welsh person with a longbow on a Sunday in Chester. According to British urban legend, says the Law Commission, there is an ancient law which allows a single individual to wear a metal hat, wave a wand and own every strip of land in Britain. This mythical person would be known as a 'King' or 'Queen' and would be entitled to lord it over everyone as if they owned the place, which indeed they would. A legal spokeswoman said 'I really don't know how these myths get around. It's on a par with the one about taxis having to keep a bale of hay in the boot. It's amazing that people still fall for it.'



Banking demystified again

IF WE keep banging on in this column about banks only being able to lend money they have, it's because the opposite view – that they can make loans out of thin air – is so widespread amongst critics of capitalism.

Here are two examples taken from leaflets posted on a wall near the Occupy camp at St. Paul's. One called for "an end to creating money out of thin air on computer screens and charging interest on it." The other claimed that "Money" is created as borrower debt to banks. Most of today's so-called 'money' is actually bank credit, just numbers in a bank account. "These numbers are created simply by borrowers promising to pay these numbers back to the bank!"

And here are two counter-examples. Last year *The Times* (21 November) reported on the situation in the Inner Mongolian city of Ordos in China:

"Money made from the region's huge coal reserves or land compensation has made many residents rich, people who, instinctively, have looked for ways to invest that money as real interest rates from bank savings have slipped into negative territory. By way of loan sharks and other methods of underground financing, that money has been churned back into property investment and more building."

What you had there was people with money to lend and others who wanted to borrow money. Because the official banking system was unable to satisfy this, an 'underground lending market' developed. Even if those who acted as intermediaries between the lenders and the borrowers were shady individuals and gangs, they were acting as banks everywhere do: borrowing money at one rate of interest and lending it at a higher rate, making a profit out of the difference after their expenses had been settled.

If banking could create loans out of thin air you can be sure that the underground bankers of Ordos would have done this as, with no interest to pay the people lending them the money to re-lend, it would have been much more profitable. The only reason they didn't was because they couldn't. Nobody, whether above board or shady, acting as a bank can conjure up money to lend from nowhere. They have to have the money before they can make a loan.

The second example is that of the high-class pawnbroker Borro which last year proclaimed in an advertisement in the London *Evening Standard* (13 December):

"Borro provides short-term loans from £1,000 to £1 million against valuables, including Jewellery, Luxury Watches, Fine Art & Antiques, Gold and Prestige Cars. Their service is discreet and flexible with no credit checks. Money can be provided within 24 hours."

One of the claims of those who say that 'money is debt' is that money is created by a bank as a counterpart to the IOU signed by the borrower by simply keying in some numbers into a computer. But if banks can create money to lend simply on the basis of an IOU signed by the borrower, why can't pawnbrokers? But they can't. They must have the money first. *The Times* (28 December) revealed the source of the money Borro lends: "Loan funding has come from Kreos Capital, which also backs Wonga, the payday loans company whose high interest rates provoked controversy recently."

Banks are no different in this respect. They, too, have to get "loan funding", whether from those who deposit their savings with them or from what they themselves have borrowed on the money market or from their own resources.

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POLITICISED HINDUISM or 'Hindutva' has not attracted the same attention – outside India at least – as similar movements in Islam and Christianity. But it is no less remarkable. The social forces underlying Hindutva are analyzed by Meera Nanda in her books *Prophets Looking Backward* (Rutgers University Press, 2003) and *The God Market* (Random House India, 2009).

Invented 'traditions'

What is happening in India may look like the revival of old traditions, but Nanda points out that many 'traditions' were invented quite recently. For example, a 'brand new hybrid god' has been created by combining the head of the elephant god Ganesha with the features of the ape god Hanuman. A high school science teacher has recast Mariamman, who used to be the goddess of smallpox, as the goddess of AIDS.

New ceremonies have also proven popular – and money spinners for the priests who preside over them. Thus, many temples have installed 'golden cars' – chariot-like vehicles in which an idol 'is taken around the temple perimeter in a procession led by priests, musicians, elephants, etc.' Huge crowds watch re-enactments of the divine wedding between Meenakshi and Sundareshwara.

Ritual for the upper strata

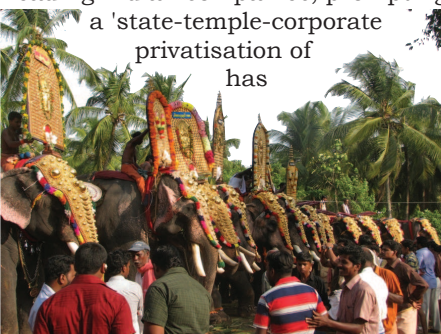
In the early and mid-twentieth century it was common for educated Indians (if religious at all) to take pride in their 'philosophical' approach to Hinduism, as opposed to the superstitious practice of the benighted masses, centred on idol worship, rituals, fasts and sacrifices. By contrast, the current fashion for religious ritual is strongest among the upper strata of society. A 2007 survey found that educated urban Indians are more – not less – religious than rural illiterates.

Why should this be? Part of the reason may well be simply that only the relatively well-off can afford the costs associated with ostentatious religious observance. By no means everyone, for instance, can afford to go off on long pilgrimages, though the numbers who do are still mind-boggling. (The Balaji temple at Tirupati was visited by over 23 million pilgrims in 2004.)

The state-temple-corporate complex

Whatever else it may be, the god industry in India is a big business with enormous political clout. Priests and gurus receive generous material support from the supposedly secular government, such as land and infrastructure for new temples, and ashrams and schools for training priests. In some provinces, priests are now paid directly by the government. All this is justified in the name of promoting culture, tourism and economic development.

Religious institutions also get financial support from leading Indian companies, prompting Nanda to speak of



a 'state-temple-corporate privatisation of

has

the higher education enabled the priests to make major inroads in this sector.

A game for everyone

The ideology of Hindutva, which

fuses Hinduism with Indian nationalism, is associated most closely with the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or, in English, Indian People's Party) and its allies. It is, indeed, these forces that are most adept at exploiting religious sentiment to mobilize political support.

Since the late 1970s, however, the other main national party, the Indian National Congress, has increasingly compromised its original commitment to secularism and tried to use religion in its own interests. Even the 'communists' and other 'leftists' play the same game. Thus, in 2007 top officials of the Left Front government of West Bengal participated in a ceremony to bless land that they had forcibly taken from farmers in order to build a car factory for Tata Motors.

The atomic elephant

Hindutva also serves the great-power ambitions of the Indian state. The BJP stands for 'a foreign policy driven by a nationalist agenda' and 'a strong national defence' (www.bjp.org). The 'Indian nation' is imbued with sacred qualities, while 'Greater India' is conceived of as a Hindu realm extending over all of South Asia and much of Southeast Asia.

When India conducted a successful nuclear test, idols of Ganesh appeared at festivals around the country with guns in the elephant's hands and atomic orbits in place of the halo traditionally placed around his head. There was a plan to build a temple dedicated to Shakti, goddess of energy, at the site of the test explosion, but fear of radioactivity led to its abandonment.

What about globalisation?

The rise of a religiously based Indian nationalism is at variance with the stereotype of globalisation as a process leading to cultural homogenisation, with American culture becoming global culture – the Macdonaldisation or Coca-Colonisation of the world. Let us note here that in the economic sphere the BJP enthusiastically embraces globalisation. The BJP, according to its website, favors 'small government and free-market economic policies.'

The stereotype is vulnerable to criticism on several grounds. Globalisation facilitates the expansion not only of American or Western corporations, but also of sufficiently competitive companies based in other regions. That includes at least some Indian companies, as shown by Mittal's takeover of East European steel mills. The same applies to the religion business: witness the success of various Indian guru-entrepreneurs in Western markets.

Nanda develops another interesting argument. She observes that during the early Nehruvian period of Indian independence (1947 - 1975), when Indian nationalism had real material content (a national development strategy based on a strong state sector, protectionism, etc.) religious nationalism was very weak. When economic nationalism was abandoned, religious nationalism rushed in to fill the ideological vacuum. That is, economic and religious-cultural nationalism are functional substitutes not complements.

Socialists do not take sides in the contest between national capitalism and global capitalism. We are not just against capitalist globalization but capitalism in all its various forms.

STEFAN



Maude Gone Mad?



APART FROM their bodyguards, Ministers of the Crown are protected by 'special advisers' whose job is to advise them on how they might make governmental policies, however difficult, more presentable. So what went wrong with the system recently, when the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General informed motorists that they could ease the pain of a petrol shortage by the highly dangerous practise of filling up some jerry cans with the fuel to store at their home? The most promising route towards answering that question is to examine the minister himself.

Francis Anthony

Aylmer Maude came into politics with high expectations – not least of himself – partly through his pedigree as the son of the late Tory MP Angus Maude, (described by one political correspondent as 'caustic, dismissive - even arrogant' - he was, after all, a determined politician - and who in 1981 decided to give it all up to help his son's developing political career.)

Re-shuffle

Maude arrived in the House of Commons in the big Conservative victory of 1983, with the voters in a kind of jingoistic coma after the success of the Falklands gamble. Very soon he was, as a Political Private Secretary (PPS), at the lower reaches of the Greasy Pole. At a time when some big Tory guns were said to 'hate' the Iron Lady, Maude was hailed as one of her committed supporters. He even impressed the spiteful scheming Alan Clark who saw him in 1984 as '... much the best of the PPSs, sensible and quiet, but in good mind and sense of humour.' Clark did not seem to feel that this opinion needed to be re-assessed a couple of years later when Maude told a 'jolly dinner' party of Parliamentary Tory bigwigs in discussion about a pending re-shuffle by Thatcher that Nigel Lawson could not be moved from Chancellor of the Exchequer to Foreign Secretary 'as a Jew'.

In fact there was a re-shuffle of a sort in the following July which left Maude, again according to Clark, disappointed: 'tearful...looks terrible...quite altered from the narrow-faced, fresh youngster who used to whip Employment'. Through his tears Maude whined that he had '... thought that at least I might have some recognition for all my work in the Financial Services field' (he had been Minister for Corporate and Consumer Affairs but had not learned that in his chosen career rewards do not unfailingly sprout from achievement). Any resentment was absent when, in 1990, Thatcher was

under terminal pressure about her resignation. Maude was the first of the men in grey suits to visit her: '...a reliable ally' was how she described him; he '...told me he passionately supported the things I believed in, that he would back me as I went on but that he did not believe I could win. He left in a state of some distress.'

John Major

Thatcher recalls that whatever the effect of this episode on Maude it did nothing to cheer her up. In any case he seems to have quickly become less passionate about her to the extent that he was able forcefully to promote John Major as the most likely winner, an act which provoked anger among those Thatcher supporters who were still capable of resentment at being double-crossed. With Major in Number Ten, Maude received his reward with the grand post of Financial Secretary to the Treasury. But he did not have long to savour this because in the 1992 general election the voters in North Warwickshire threw him out – a 'terrible blow' to him, when so many of his rivals had survived and clung to their prestigious jobs.

With millions in the dole queues, Maude made one of his sillier statements: he felt 'the pain' of the unemployed – while he was enjoying the income from jobs like Managing Director at the bankers Morgan Stanley and director of Salomon Brothers. But to prevent his agony being too intense he was found a safe way back to Westminster in the sweet Sussex constituency of Horsham and after the 1997 election he was again available for a place on the Tory front bench under the new leader William Hague who made him Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer and then Foreign Secretary. But he did not live up to the promise implied by those two appointments and declined into minor jobs such as party chairman and the one he now holds.

Section 28

At the Tory conference in 2005 he was not warmly received for his strictures on the need for the 'cleaning up' of the party's 'brand', as if he had had no responsibility for it. He has provoked irritation at the inconsistency of being a member of a Cameron-style 'family friendly' government while being chairman of a company with interests in pornographic DVDs. While he was ranting about the reckless policies of the banks which preceded the credit crunch he was holding a well-paid job as director of a company (now out of business) which dealt in sub-prime mortgages. In 1988 he voted for the infamous Section 28 but now says that '...it was very wrong – very wrong...' and that section 28 had become '...an emblem of intolerance'. He is now a supporter of gay marriage as 'a deeply conservative idea... part of the glue of people making a deep commitment to each other,' but this conversion came too late to help those who were condemned by that same repressive measure. Among

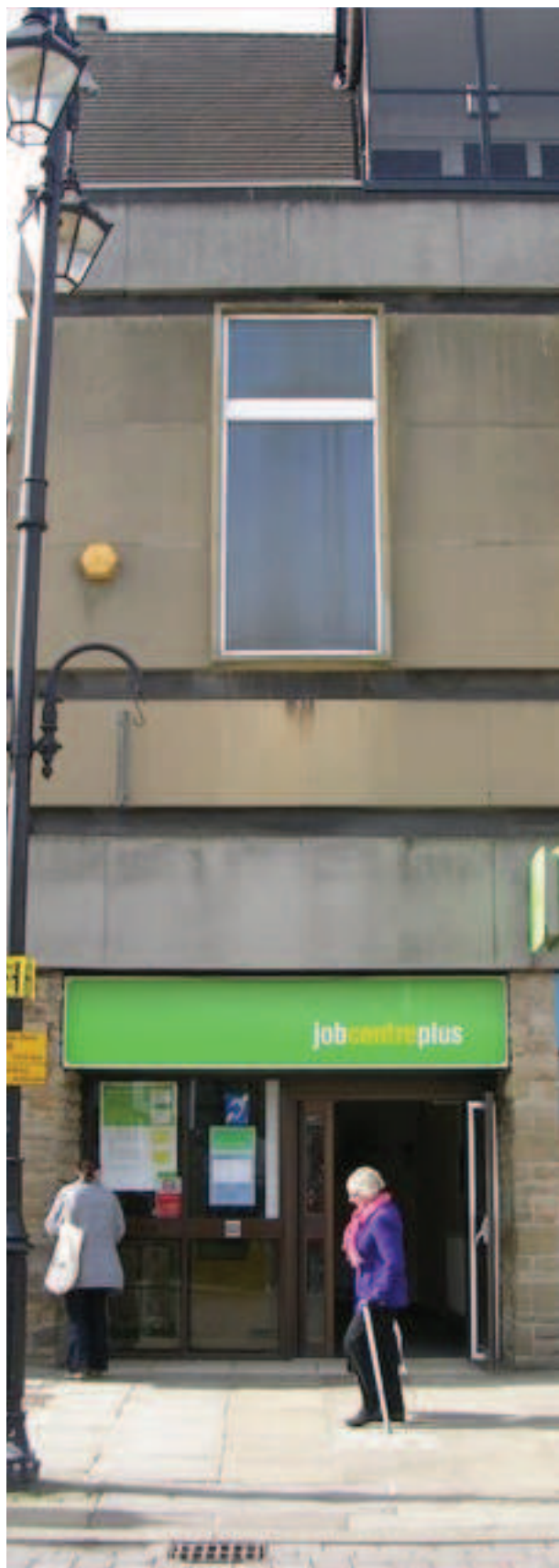
them was his brother, who died of AIDS when he was 42 after a long struggle to prevent his family knowing that he was gay.

Maude's 'special advisers' might have foreseen that his suggestion about storing petrol at home would have loosened a flood of calls for his removal from office. Except that this was only the most recent offer of futile and damaging ideas about capitalism and its dangers.

IVAN



After the gold rush



Scandals abound in the private 'employability and work-based training' sector. The latest of these involves the company A4e, whose workers are up before the beak on fraud charges, much to the outrage of the self-righteous press, while the former proprietor Emma Harrison has walked away clutching millions. Just who is being defrauded here, and what exactly goes on in these companies?

Once upon a time unemployed people signed on at the Benefit Agency, which would administer their unemployment benefit payments, and then were sent to the Jobcentre, run by the Employment Agency, where they would look at rows of vacancies on cards and receive advice on CVs and applications from Jobcentre staff.

Around 2001, as part of my work with local charities, I attended a briefing by Jobcentre staff who explained with much chagrin that these two offices were to be merged, many of them put out of work, and much of the heavy lifting formerly done by trained staff now farmed out to regional call-centres using untrained workers on minimum wage following printed scripts. The unemployed, now termed 'customers', could look forward to a streamlined conveyor belt service that had neither the time nor the expertise to give them any worthwhile advice at all, while high-need users could expect to fall through the net altogether. This was the great Jobcentre Plus 'rationalisation' of 2002, in which Treasury money left the equation and the slack was expected to be taken up by the employment-oriented European Social Fund.

What none of us anticipated at that briefing was the longer term effects of this cost-cutting exercise by the Department of Work and Pensions. Just as companies who farmed out their IT requirements end up hiring 'experts' at vast contract rates, often to deliver trivially simple upgrades, so the DWP in trying to save money had created a vacuum of 'employability support' into which a blizzard of private companies rushed, hoping to cash in on the bonanza. Such was the unregulated confusion of this early gold rush for DWP and ESF funding that a good number of cowboy start-ups got in on the act, aiming to take the money and run. Almost anyone, it seemed, could pretend to be a college or training centre and pull down state cash for doing nothing. As each scam was exposed rules were tightened up, but the employment services industry has been rocked by successive waves of scandal ever since.

The initial swarm of gold-prospectors have mostly left the field, either bankrupted, busted or bullied out of the way by a few big players, whose national reach attracted ever larger DWP grants. Small charities were early casualties, as was the risible notion that small and local organisations were best-placed to find jobs for people in the local area. A few big corporations, mostly college-backed, mopped up the market and all the money while farming out the donkey work to these same local organisations who then had to deliver higher targets for less money than ever.

Contracts were awarded by the DWP or the ESF for starts on work-based training, backed by retention, and for job or qualification

outcomes, all of which was to be exhaustively evidenced by signed documentation. Since most contractors had their own documentation systems, and few spent money on computerisation, this soon developed into a bureaucratic paper-based nightmare that meant workers spent more time 'evidencing' their work than actually doing it. Inevitably the cracks appeared, and workers increasingly had to 'fiddle' the paperwork to meet the requirements of nit-picking inspections.

Failure to pass these inspections could mean funding being 'clawed back', and my not unusual experience was having to stay up all night forging hundreds of 'attendance sheets' for long-gone volunteers simply because funding requirements dictated full attendance and conscientious form-filling - in flagrant defiance of the practical realities of dealing with the long-term unemployed.

Workers though tried for the most part to avoid genuine fraud over job documentation, partly because of the heavy penalties but mainly because unlike the ruling class workers are not generally comfortable with criminality. But the competition for contracts being intense, the bids were always excessive, and thus the pressure to cheat was built in. Rarely could a job outcome simply be invented out of thin air, because the individual would have to sign off benefits. But other 'target-buster' methods could be employed. People were signed up as starts who already had guaranteed jobs to go to, creating an instant outcome. In cases where jobs had been obtained after the end-date of eligibility, dates could be massaged. Sometimes an employer would refuse to sign a job declaration even though it was for a genuine job, so these were liable to be forged. Where more than one funding provision was offered, people were daisy-chained from one to another, picking up duplicate funding on the way. Then as a bonus, if they got a job, each of the provisions could claim the same job, effectively doubling or tripling the outcome figures. Most notoriously, under instructions from senior management, workers would 'traffic-light' clients, giving most help and attention to 'greens' who were most likely to succeed, while largely ignoring the extensive needs of the 'ambers' and the virtually unemployable 'reds', thus defeating the whole point of such schemes and fully justifying the accusation that firms were being paid for jobs that people would have got in any case.

Unemployed people, it is fair to say, sometimes get something out of these schemes, either through volunteering for charities and getting some useful work experience, or by gaining a few low-level qualifications. While the principle is that the firm finds them work, in practice they usually find their own work, largely by their own efforts, with the added incentive of being



... a tale told by an idiot, full of reviews, action plans and assessments, signifying nothing...

hounded by the firm whose targets are their real focus. Where the schemes were voluntary or quasi-voluntary, relations were reasonably good-humoured and often constructive, but where they are compulsory, as in the Work Programme, staff and clients are polarised in a palpable class-war tension with frequent eruptions of anger and frustration. Those who most need help get the least, and swirl round a never-ending gutter of government schemes delivering the same inadequate provision in the same inadequate way.

Hardly surprising that morale is pretty low among staff, faced with impossible monthly targets, short contracts, a management which couldn't care less about the people involved, a penny-pinching lack of equipment or training and an endless sea of largely meaningless paperwork designed merely to keep up appearances. Workers who are caught cheating (ie doing their job) will be cold-shouldered by the firm and prosecuted by the state, the sacrificial lambs of an industry that is systemically fraudulent.

Who is being defrauded? Not the state, which gets what it wants, the appearance of action plus deniability, and is so cosy with contractors that it refuses Freedom of Information requests even to divulge the names of fraudulent companies (*Private Eye*, 6 April); not the private companies which coin it while passing on the labour and the risk to others. No, it's the abused, under-paid and under-resourced staff who are being defrauded of their mostly well-meaning intentions and made to risk jail on behalf of their masters. It's the unemployed who are being defrauded, mere pawns in the game, there to have their time wasted and their self-respect demolished. It's workers everywhere who are being defrauded in the belief that the capitalist state cares about the unemployed, or the low-skilled, or the sick or the needy, when really the capitalist state spends extravagant sums simply to maintain that appearance. Private investors quietly make off with criminally record sums while workers just get the criminal records. All in all, it's the sort of work-based experience that should open a lot of eyes and dispel a lot of illusions. If capitalism were a worker, it would get banged up in no time.

'Ronnie Biggs'


Care, or couldn't care less?

Care is a fairly unambiguous word: to look after, to feel affection, and concern for somebody or something. A recent inquiry by the Scottish Parliament into care begins with the opening statement: 'One test of the morality of a society is how it treats its elderly'. How do you determine morality in a society that has seen ruling class consent to brutal dictatorships and the mass slaughter and starvation of millions upon millions of our fellow human beings?

reduced their capacity for work. As an afterthought, and out of piety, a 1900 Poor Law directive allowed for less punitive workhouse conditions for the elderly: elderly couples could now share a room together, and single elderly paupers were given separate accommodation from younger paupers.

As capitalist society advanced so too did bourgeois ideology—the cloak that conceals the realities of life. Care for the elderly was set to become a central issue in the war of ideas. In the UK the hub was the welfare state. We are told that after the 1906 General Election the British Liberal Party enacted certain social reforms that led to the birth of the modern welfare state. It is argued that New Liberals, and Lloyd George in particular, overturned the earlier ideology linked to Gladstone that the population should trust its fate to the market and the 'invisible hand' that was at the tiller. Or in other words: work or starve.

During the Boer War of 1899-1902, the ruling class discovered that more than one third of those who volunteered to fight were medically unfit to defend their profits. Sickness amongst the remaining workers was also hindering the accumulation of profits, and thus competitors like Germany were gaining an edge. This tricky climate for British capitalists



Ours is a long history. In ancient societies the elderly were the chief sources of knowledge: Where was the best hunting to be found? What plants cured what sickness? How to make the tools to enable the tribe's survival. This led to various forms of Ancestor Worship. In China the practice of veneration for the wisdom of the elders dates back long before 1000 BC. And in Polynesian societies, the outlook is one of reverence for the elderly and the expectation of help and guidance; although it doesn't involve worship.

As property society began to evolve in the West so too did the status of the majority of the elderly during the brutal centuries of slavery and feudalism. The word *community* derives from the Latin *cum*, meaning *with* or *together* and *munus* meaning gift, which readily translates as *to give amongst each other*. With the advent of capitalism the word has become as hollow as the heads of those that nowadays chant it like a

mantra. *Community* has become another weasel word like *morality*.

As workers were turned off of the land pauperism became endemic for those unable to work hard enough to support themselves. From 1601, the Poor Law was enacted and each parish became liable to care for the 'deserving' destitute. The elderly were deemed 'deserving'. Care was as diverse as the whims of those that administered it. For a few, care consisted of paying a family member to look after an elderly or female pauper in their own home. For the majority, care amounted to begging from the moralising rich to stay out of the gutter.

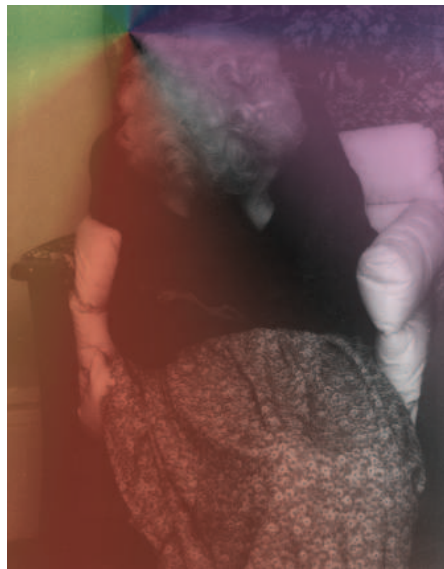
By 1834 The Poor Law was radically amended. And many elderly workers were consigned to the intentionally austere and punitive workhouses. By 1885 free Poor Law healthcare became available in some parishes, and in some boroughs free hospitals were built. Why? Because, finally a light had gone on in the darkness of the collective capitalist brain that sickness amongst the poor

led to an opportunity for a handful of reformers, notably the Fabians. They believed that the process of reforming capitalism by degrees in order to achieve socialism was more likely to succeed than the revolutionary means. In a changing environment they managed to push through a few reforms that restrained the old laissez-faire ideas and paved the way for the advent of the welfare state. Amongst the reforms were free medical checks for schoolchildren, and the provision of pensions for workers over 70 whose income was below £21 per year.

What seemed to many workers like pennies from heaven was in fact a relocation of a portion of the profits from the capitalist class's pockets back to those that had originally created them. Even the dullest of capitalists realises that you don't strangle the goose that lays the golden eggs.

However the ruling class has a maxim - not a penny more. By the 1960s several surveys discovered that hospitals and Homes for the elderly were in a 'deplorable condition'. Bourgeois sensibilities were offended, and a new idea arose: Community Care. Bourgeois ideologists busied themselves with the new concept. Reformers devised clauses and sub-sections. Rarely was it mentioned that community care was the cheapest option, a somewhat important concern as expenditure spiralled.

Community care went into warp drive in the 80s under the tutelage of the good housekeeping and parsimony of Maggie Thatcher. The 1989 White Paper, *Caring for People*, reaffirmed the importance of cost when it stated: 'The Government will expect local authorities to make use whenever possible of services from voluntary, 'not for profit' and



private providers insofar as this represents a cost effective care choice'. Thus capitalist profits were being protected, whilst new avenues of profit were to be explored.

Unsurprisingly the local authorities found it increasingly difficult with the available funding to provide a decent level of care. Thus, as the story goes, the private sector stepped in to lend a hand. In 1975 there were just 18,800 private sector residential homes. By 1990, 119,900 had rushed forward to offer support. God bless the entrepreneur, sang the ideologists.

Another ruse that gave impetus to the expansion of the private sector home was that from 1980 means-tested board and lodging supplementary benefits became available to independent care operators where once only local authority, public funded, voluntary sector homes received those benefits. During the '90s I worked part time at a residential home where 90 percent of the residents were receiving means-tested board and lodgings.

I was the cook for two days a week for over seven years. Virtually all of the residents during that period were in various stages of senility, dementia, or Alzheimer's. It was patently obvious why so many 'entrepreneurs' had moved into residential care - there was a lot of money to be made by those who knew how. In the home where I worked, costs were under a very tight rein. From the dilution of washing up liquid, to the barest minimum of staffing levels. No stone that led to an extra pound in the owners' purse and wallet was left unturned.

The regime began at 7am. There were usually 32 residents in our home, and it was the task of two night staff to get them up and toileted for breakfast by eight. After breakfast the 'liquid cosh' was administered to the disruptive ones,

and the remainder were removed to one or other of two day rooms and left with a television blaring till lunchtime. Lunch was at 12, then back to the dayroom and the TV until tea at 5. More TV and then bed by 8pm. The only respite from this was once a week, when a man came and played the piano for one hour. There was meant to be a weekly outing for eight residents in the minivan. The residents would sit, dressed and expectant, often up to two hours before they were due to leave. However the outings were frequently ditched because the owner, who was also building up a mini-empire of bedsits for people on benefits, needed the van to transport building materials.

Their final years spent in this home for Tommy, Maisie, and Rose and so many more that I cooked for were utterly miserable. If it wasn't for the often unpaid efforts of some of the staff, then their lives would not have been much better than the workhouse paupers of a century before. The owners went on to buy another far bigger, and grander Home, and to own numerous houses and flats in that area. Care had obviously benefitted them.

My observations are not isolated, and matters have not improved. In a recent article (*Telegraph*, 19 March) Professor Finbarr Martin, president of the Geriatrics Society, had this to say: 'The issue is that there is a negative about people in care homes. There is a nihilism about care homes that is completely unreasonable and unjustified.' Richard Lloyd, executive director of Which?, said: 'The government can no longer claim to be shocked as report after report highlights the pitiful state of care for older people.' Michelle Mitchell, of Age UK, commented: 'the system was putting the health and dignity of older people at risk.' I could fill a further page with quote after quote, from people high and low, about the appalling care for the elderly under capitalism today. But I don't believe that I have to do that. You already know. You also understand the true meaning of care. Don't you?

The question then becomes simple. What are you willing to do about it? Campaign for futile reforms? Or join us and help to build a new society where young and old can live out their lives with respect and real dignity in a world where the true meaning of community - from each according to ability, to each according to need - can become a reality rather than the fantasy it is under capitalism?

Andy Matthews



Homelessness For Sale



by the government's Supporting People programme, which is run by local councils. According to Homeless Link, there are around 9,000 bed spaces in English direct access hostels, those which provide emergency accommodation on the day someone becomes homeless ⁽³⁾. The economic crisis has not only led to increased demand for these services, but also to greater restrictions on who can receive help from them. Councils are now more choosy about who they agree to spend their funding on. In particular, they are more likely to enforce 'local connection' policies. These allow only those with a connection to an area to receive certain services, such as hostel accommodation. This means that if someone becomes homeless in an area they have only recently moved to, or where they have no close relatives, then they won't receive help through that area's council and will have to try elsewhere.

Another restriction which is increasingly affecting services is the length of time someone can live in a hostel. Over the last ten years, the maximum length of stay in many hostels has reduced from indefinitely to two years, to six months, to 28 days, sometimes less. One reason for this is to prevent people from becoming institutionalised. The longer someone stays in a hostel, the more they become acclimatised to being stuck-in-a-rut. Another reason is to increase the turnover at hostels to free up bed spaces for other people who become homeless. And because of the housing shortage, when someone's time in a hostel runs out, they are more likely to move to other temporary accommodation than to their own new flat. There are around 33,000 bed spaces in this kind of second-stage accommodation ⁽³⁾.

The services offered in hostels will vary. Most provide a small, sparsely furnished bedroom, with shared bathrooms. Some hostels will have a canteen, while others are self-catering. Some will have strict rules on, for example, visitors or alcohol use, or when residents can come and go. Most direct access hostels will be staffed 24 hours a day, while others may only have staff working nine-to-five.

As there's a wide variation in the services available, the quality of hostels will also differ. The worst places – bed-and-breakfast accommodation – don't offer enough help to residents to qualify for Supporting People funding or monitoring. Instead, they only receive funding through Housing Benefit claims, which brings in less money. As well as lacking in support, these places are often run-down, overcrowded and intimidating, making it much harder for anyone living there to improve their lives. Often, criminal behaviour becomes a coping strategy for people living with fewer opportunities. Some people cope with the pressures of homelessness by drinking alcohol or using

drugs heavily. According to Homeless Link, around half of those living in direct access hostels are affected by problematic drug use ⁽⁴⁾. Presumably a greater proportion of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation will have histories of substance misuse or criminal behaviour.

Most people who move into hostels adjust to the environment fairly quickly, although this means sacrificing a lot of independence and privacy, and coping as best they can. Even

The extent of homelessness is often used as a gauge for the state of the economy as a whole. In an economic downturn, people are less able to hold down jobs, keep up with payments on rent or other bills, or have savings they can fall back on. Often, a combination of factors like these will push people towards losing their homes. Figures released in early March show 12,830 new cases of homelessness being accepted by local councils between October and December 2011 – a rise of 18 percent since the same time the previous year. In London, there was an average 36 percent increase over the same period, with the biggest rise in Hounslow at 245 percent ⁽¹⁾. Predictably, sleeping rough has also increased. According to government figures, the number of people rough sleeping rose 23 percent between Autumn 2010 and Autumn 2011 ⁽²⁾. Undoubtedly it's no coincidence that the increase in homelessness is one consequence of the economic crisis.

When someone loses their home, if they are unable to stay with family or friends, they will often end up in temporary hostel accommodation. Most of these places are funded and regulated

“Many people are only one wage packet away from homelessness”



the better hostels can be noisy, unclean and frightening places to be. They can also be sociable and positive. Moving in to a hostel can be an opportunity to access support which might be difficult to find without the contacts and experience of hostel staff. And all hostel residents have been forced into the position of needing help. Virtually everyone living in a hostel will be reliant on state benefits for their income. Many will be refugees learning to manage in an unfamiliar country. Hostel residents are also likely to need advice or guidance about debt issues, mental health problems, training or employment, as well as help with finding long-term housing.

Despite the best efforts of both staff and residents, people can become trapped in hostel accommodation. If someone has rent arrears from a previous council or housing association flat, then they are unlikely to be rehoused until those arrears have been paid off. People who lack basic skills or who have health problems may find themselves stuck in hostel accommodation because there is a shortage of suitable supported accommodation. The longer someone stays in hostel accommodation, the more they end up relying on it. The economic situation has created an increase in demand for hostels and other homeless services, but it's also cutting them back.

Since April 2011, councils have reduced spending on Supporting People funded projects by an average of 10.3 percent. Homeless services were hit hardest by the cuts with 47 local authorities deciding to decommission some services⁽⁵⁾. This has led to increased competition between hostel and other housing projects wanting to qualify for dwindling Supporting People funding. To qualify for this money, the organisation which runs each project must show in detail what support it provides. If there isn't enough evidence on paper, then funding will be withdrawn. The service would then either close or have to survive with only the same limited funding as bed-and-breakfast accommodation. To avoid this, staff are swamped by paperwork used to justify their existences. In some hostels, staff are required to account for how they spend every minute on shift, under the threat of funding being withheld for any time not spent productively. And, of course, those projects which can offer to run the service cheapest are more likely to win funding. Supporting People requirements have also made hostels and supported housing projects more target-driven. Hostels risk funding cuts if particular percentages of those leaving the service don't improve their 'economic wellbeing', physical or mental health, or substance misuse. The effect of this on hostel staff is that the needs of individual homeless people become less important than making sure that the paperwork and statistics are in order. To use Marxist

“Is it a good thing that homelessness has become almost acceptable?”

terminology, the paperwork is fetishised.

The increasing regulation of hostels, and the competition between providers for funding, mean that homeless services are now more corporate and businesslike than they were twenty or thirty years ago. Then, hostels and advice agencies were seen more as an embarrassment, as somewhere shameful to send those who have been failed by society. Now, the emphasis is different. The upside of this is that many hostels are more comfortable and relaxed than they may have been in the past, and those who have been homeless are stigmatised less by society as a whole. But, is it a good thing that homelessness has become almost acceptable?

Capitalism is a society of haves and have-nots, of winners and losers. Homeless people are at the unlucky end of the social scale. Many other people are only one wage packet away from being drawn towards homelessness. So, to accept that homelessness is just a part of life is to accept the capitalist system which traps us all.

Hostels, supported housing and other homeless services may help some people to progress, but they can't solve the problem of homelessness itself. And nor do they aspire to. Instead, homelessness is a business opportunity for capitalist organisations to feed from. Every problem created by capitalism – debt, lack of opportunity, lack of skills, addiction, crime – has become a consumer demand for a service. Homeless people are customers, who staff are supposed to think of as targets and outcomes to be recorded and collated. And in the cut-throat competition for funding, homeless services are integrating further with the market-driven dynamics of the economy.

Clive Hendry

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An extra day's holiday is always welcome, but why should we be celebrate the diamond jubilee of a left-over from feudalism?

Queen Capital's Jubilee

Although not a deliberate decision by the British capitalist class – these things depend on historical circumstances – there are certain advantages in having a hereditary monarchy as opposed to an elected Head of State.

The capitalist class rule today through universal suffrage but this assumes that the voters will continually vote for politicians who will uphold capitalism. One way to ensure this is to inculcate a feeling of patriotism into the population, i.e. loyalty to the state. With a constitutional monarchy, this is ready-made (or rather, historically inherited). What can be cultivated is a loyalty to the monarch rather than directly to the state, as republics have to do.

In the US they cultivate loyalty to the flag. In France it's to the idea of the Republic. This it is easier to cultivate loyalty to a person can be seen in less developed capitalist countries where some individual dictator becomes the focus (with his photo everywhere) and where the dictatorship is often expected to be inherited by one of their sons (as with Kim Il Sung, Mubarak, Gaddafi, Assad, etc). The same phenomenon occurred in England: when Cromwell died the title of Lord Protector went to his son.

Britain has been a constitutional monarchy since the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 when parliament kicked out James II who had delusions about the divine right of kings. Parliament managed to find a Stuart who was a Protestant – one of his daughters, Mary – and, by Act of Parliament, appointed her and her husband, William of Orange, a Dutchman, king and queen. Who can (and cannot) be the monarch is laid down in the Act of Settlement of 1701, which still applies.

Mary was succeeded by her sister Anne. When she

died in 1714 without leaving an heir, parliament imported a German prince who happened to be a great grandson of James I and gave him the crown. The present royal family are the direct descendants of this prince. He couldn't even speak English. Nor could his successor. The first two Georges were not particularly popular amongst the population. Nor were their successors, George III, George IV and William IV, who were mercilessly



Queen Victoria, depicted by Charles Léandre in 1897

lampooned. But they served a purpose as a focus for the loyalty of the political class, allowing continuity of the state while governments changed.

It was only under Queen Victoria that popular support for the monarchy was cultivated. With some success. This was not an accident as her reign (1837-1901) co-incided with the extension of the franchise to more and more workers, so that after 1867 even without universal suffrage a majority of electors were workers. They had to be trained to be loyal to the British capitalist state so that they wouldn't use their votes to overthrow it. The cult of the monarchy served this purpose well and still does today. The gutter press may sometimes go for junior members of the royal family, even for Prince Charles, but they never go for the monarch or for the monarchy as such.

Socialists are of course anti-monarchists and opposed to everything the monarchy represents, from





Saluting the flag in Edwardian Britain

aristocratic privilege, bowing and scraping, silly titles and ceremonies to being exports salesmen and the symbol and head of the British capitalist state. But does that mean that we think there's some advantage in getting rid under capitalism of the monarchy and establishing a republic in its place? What would be the point? Conditions in republics such as the US and France are no different from those in constitutional monarchies such as Britain and the Netherlands. And wouldn't be in a republican Britain or Netherlands either.

It goes without saying that, if it hadn't already disappeared by then, one of the first acts of a socialist majority in control of political power would be to abolish the monarchy as part of the democratisation of society. And, on the other side of the Atlantic, there'd be a bonfire of American flags and in France the smashing of statues of Marianne.

ADAM BUICK

What about the workers?

Postal rates sky-rocketed on 30 April as a prelude to the privatisation of Royal Mail, but how will the workers there be affected?

The AGM of the postal workers trade union, the Communication Workers Union (CWU), in south-west London on 25 March was a very clear example of the reformist nature of much trade unionism, the limits on its power and the differences (or lack of) between state capitalism and private capitalism in an operation like the Royal Mail. We should also not be surprised by the cosy relationship between Royal Mail's Chief Executive Moya Greene and the Union Deputy General Secretary Dave Ward that showed at the meeting

The Postal Workers Union has a history of Labour right-wing leadership which has been useful to the capitalist class who need 'respectable' labour leaders to maintain industrial peace and to help them push through their 'reforms'. This was not contradicted by the 1971 national strike by Postal Workers who went "on the

cobbles" for 47 days! In 2009, in London, Postal Workers went on strike for 20 days over a 4- month period and the CWU took Royal Mail to the High Court because they were about to hire 30,000 casual workers to break the strike. At the eleventh hour Royal Mail and CWU came to an 'agreement'. The union sold out the workers which is an old story in working-class trade union struggles with the capitalist class. The CWU is a major financial contributor to the Labour Party, the same Party who wanted to privatise the mail a few years ago. (It was Thatcher's government that first mooted the selling off of the Royal Mail to private capitalists.) It is all rather ironic considering that the Labour Party originated as a trade union pressure group. The

Labour Party is just an alternative party to administer the capitalist system and exploit the working class.

The 2012 Postal Services Act is now in force and the Royal Mail pension





Moya Greene, Chief Executive of Royal Mail

deficit of £8.4 billion has been transferred to the state: i.e. the Government will take on the liabilities. The deficit was caused by previous Royal Mail management taking a “pensions holiday” when capitalism was booming in the 1990s and 2000s but it all came unstuck with collapse of western financial capitalism in 2008.

Moya Greene has been Chief Executive of Royal Mail since 2010 and is a hatchet-woman for the capitalist class. Her CV is not salutary reading for a postal worker. Greene was in charge of the ‘privatisation’ of the Canadian National Railway, the ‘de-regulation’ of the Canadian airline industry, and at Canada Post she *trebled profits* although revenues dropped, and injuries to Postal Workers went up 15 percent, days lost to strikes went up to 36, and workers’

grievances against their state capitalist bosses at Canada Post went up 60 percent under her regime. She is at Royal Mail to prepare the company for privatisation.

At the CWU AGM Greene said that we should welcome privatisation as it would mean “access to capital from an investor who wants the company to be successful,” and she stressed “We need capital”. She criticised the (state capitalist) system which currently operates Royal Mail with its “wrong-headed regulatory framework”, which restricts the amount of profits the Royal Mail can make. More profits will be made if the Royal Mail is owned by a private capitalist company. She offered financial carrots to the workforce by promising “a share in the success of the company” or “a stake in the year-on-year success of the company”, which is all that the CWU are asking for. The CWU campaign of ‘Keep the Post Public’ now has a lower profile as Dave Ward made no reference to it at the AGM.


Whether Royal Mail is a nationalised industry operated in the state capitalist manner or is run as private capitalist company ultimately makes no difference to the postal workers. They are being exploited by the state on behalf of capitalism or else by a private capitalist.

SC

“I’ve been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used” **DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**

Capitalism and Other Kids’ Stuff is a short film from The Socialist Party which questions some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7




Has money gone?

IN AN article “The decline of money” (*Weekly Worker*, 9 March) Hillel Ticktin argues that money did not exist in the USSR, does not exist in China and that fiat money issued by governments even in the West isn’t really money.

Marx saw money as having two basic functions: (1) a medium of exchange or circulation, i.e. the means through which articles produced for sale get bought and sold; and (2) a measure of value, i.e. a common unit in which the value of articles produced for sale can be expressed as a price, and is thus a standard by which they can be compared.

“The natural form of money”, Ticktin writes, “would be a commodity that could itself be produced with labour-power and would therefore have its own value.” This was certainly the typical form of money in Marx’s day and the form he discussed the most. This money-commodity (usually gold or silver) does not have to circulate itself and be used for payments. It can be replaced in circulation by tokens, including paper ones issued by the government.

Marx identified two kinds of paper token money: tokens that were convertible on demand into a fixed amount of the money-commodity and tokens which were not. The former created no problem. The latter, however, could create a problem if they were issued in a greater amount than the amount of the money-commodity that would otherwise circulate. In this case, if they circulated alongside gold or silver, the value of the tokens would depreciate, i.e. they would buy less than their face-value. If they were the only currency (as is the case today) this would result in a rise in the general price level, i.e. in a change in the standard

of price.

An inconvertible paper currency has to be managed by the government or some state institution such as a central bank which, to avoid depreciation or inflation, has to calculate the correct amount to issue. In Marx’s day the case where the only currency was paper token money was a hypothetical one which he only discussed in passing. He was rather sceptical that it would work, on the grounds that it would not be possible in practice for a government to get the amount right and so there would be no stable standard of price.

Marx scepticism proved to be misplaced. He was right that there was likely to be a changing standard of price, but not that capitalism would be unable to cope with this. It has, and in fact this has become the norm, with most governments aiming at a price level rising at 2-3 percent a year.

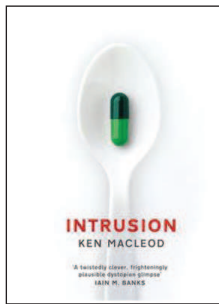
The difference between a money-commodity and paper money, says Ticktin, is “that paper money is issued by governments and controlled by governments. It is effectively a nationalised form of money. It is not a spontaneous form, as with gold.” That is so, but Ticktin goes on to claim that “this nationalised form means that money is not really money as we understood it. One cannot say that £1 is equal to so much abstract labour. It is decided by governments and whomsoever is actually dealing with the money supply.”

It may not be the form of money Marx knew, but it is still money. It is still the medium of exchange and still a measure of value and standard of price even if a changing one. Ticktin is concerned that this “nationalised money” is controlled by ruling class technocrats instead of democratically in the interests of the working class. As if it could be.

We want, like Marx, a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources and production directly to meet people’s needs instead of for sale and profit and where money would therefore be redundant.

Dystopia

Intrusion. By Ken MacLeod. Orbit. 2012



The science-fiction author John Wyndham was known for his creation of novels about what has been termed the “comfy apocalypse”: where great

catastrophes would wipe out all the “wrong” sort of people, leading to a renewed existence. Ken MacLeod presents us with what could be called a comfy dystopia: where a government forces people through intricate layers of pressure and compulsion to do what it judges to be in their best interest. Whether they want to or not.

The novel focuses on Hope, a woman who refuses to take “the fix” – a genetic medicine pill that would correct any genetic defects in her unborn infant. Everyone agrees it is in the best interest of the child, and totally safe. Yet, she still refuses, and refuses to give reasons for her refusal. The “social and free” society cannot tolerate such a refusal, in ways reminiscent of the totalitarian village of sixties TV show “the Prisoner” (where Number Six refused to say why he resigned from espionage).

The novel details the way in which people implement their own imprisonment (placing cameras throughout their own homes as protection from being accused of abusing their children, for example) and how their compliance is used against them. It is a skilful account of the ways in which surveillance technology and intrusive database and the erosion of civil liberties could be used to control people. It also, grimly, shows how a sense of solidarity, of wanting to do well by our fellows can be used against us, as time and again Hope is urged to comply for the sake of others: for her doctor’s insurance ratings, for the other kids at school and ultimately the child in her womb.

What makes it particularly chilling is that the story is so mundane: the incidents so everyday. There are no grand heroics or statements of high ideals, simply people trying to live in a claustrophobic paternalism. It deploys a touch of SF magic, though, to ambivalently suggest the outcome of such submission and control

might be a form of civilisation-ending nihilism.

Rooted in contemporary pre-occupations (even taking a *reductio ad absurdum* slippery slope view of them, such as the fear it suggests will come of fourth-hand smoking) it illustrates how the cheapening of the means of policing coupled with populist demands to “do something” and to use information against people irrespective of whether they are formally convicted of anything, can lead to levels of control undreamt of by the old totalitarian states. It thus shows how technology is a dual-edged tool that can enslave as much as it liberates.

PS

Abundance

Abundance. The future is better than you think. By Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler. Free Press. 2012.



In the 1960s there was a spate of books about how automation would usher in a world of abundance in which we would all only need to work a 20-hour week and be able to retire at 50. It never happened.

The post-war boom came to an end in the 1970s and pessimism set in, with for instance the Club of Rome famously predicting that many non-renewable resources would run out before the turn of the century. That didn’t happen either.

Doom and gloom is still the prevalent mood, with some predicting

the end of civilisation by the end of the century due to global overwarming. So it’s refreshing to read a book that’s rather more optimistic. Diamandis and Kotler set out to show that:

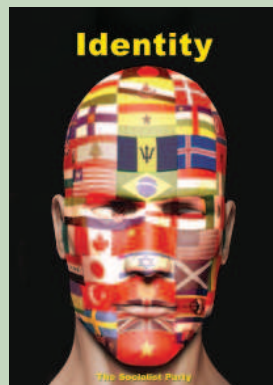
“Humanity is now entering a period of radical transformation in which technology has the potential to significantly raise the basic standard of living for every man, woman and child on the planet. Within a generation, we will be able to provide goods and services, once reserved for the wealthy few, to any and all who need them. Or desire them. Abundance for all is actually within our grasp.” (p. 9)

They anticipate that it is achievements and future developments in Artificial Intelligence, nanotechnology, digitisation and genetic engineering that will enable this. Chapters 8 (Water), 9 (Feeding Nine Billion) and 13 (Energy) provide the details.

Most of the Earth’s surface is covered by water so this should not be a problem if an efficient and ecologically-sound way of desalinating it can be found (they say it has) quite apart from developments in water purification permitting the re-use of dirty water. Food production can be increased through genetically-engineered plants, artificial meat (grown from stem cells) and vertical farming (employing hydroponic techniques). The obvious alternative to burning fossil fuels as a source of energy for industry, transport and households is the Sun. Until now a major problem has been how to store electricity. Diamandis and Kotler say this is in the process of being solved. Appropriate biomass can also provide a substitute for mineral oil.

The book’s big drawback is that this is supposed to happen

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Out of feudalism

Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death by Edward Bond.



This play, written in 1973 and put on recently at the Young Vic in London, is set in early 17th Century England at the end of the feudal social order and the beginnings of capitalism, a time of social unrest involving the Enclosure and Poor Law Acts, and the rise of the Protestant religion. The play is loosely based on the true story of the ageing Shakespeare's part in siding with local landlords against the peasantry.

Bond shows how the feudal open arable field system of common land was preventing the development of capitalism. His character, landowner William Combe, wants profits by enclosing land and thereby dispossessing the former serfs of their strips of land. Bond dramatises the antagonisms between the capitalist and the peasantry who tear down hedges and fill in ditches in their struggle with the bourgeois landowners. The capitalist mode of production will simplify the class antagonisms. The peasants become landless proletarians, subject to severe Poor Laws, and forced to move into the towns and seek employment in capitalist manufacturing enterprises where their surplus labour value will be robbed by the capitalist. Bond refers to the stringent Poor Law in the treatment of the vagrant young woman from another parish who after whippings engages in arson attacks on private property and ends up, in the shocking opening to Scene Three, hanged on a gibbet.

The new Protestantism and its hell-fire and damnation doctrines are espoused by the son of Shakespeare's servant. The son is also a peasant landholder who will lose his holding with the Enclosures. We first see the son as he launches a tirade at his gardener father who has been found in libidinous embrace with the vagrant young woman, thereby demonstrating his puritanical view

under capitalism through the pioneering efforts of DIY inventors and innovators and "technophilanthropists" such as Bill Gates.

There is no theoretical reason why capitalism cannot further "develop" the so-called developing world in the sense of providing more and more people there with some of the amenities (such as clean water and mobile phones) that people in the developed parts of the world have. But this would be able to be done more quickly and more rationally in a socialist world.

Under capitalism, too, the risk is always there that advances in technology will be abused; in fact have been abused and still are being. Drones, for instance, which could be used to transport medicines and spare parts to remote areas of Africa are being used to transport bombs to kill people. And it's only under capitalism that a group of terrorists could use developments in genetic engineering to concoct and use or threaten to use their own biological weapons.

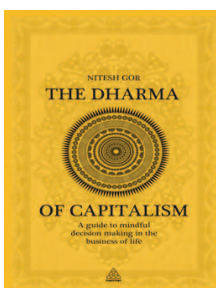
One thing capitalism won't be able to do is to remove profit-seeking as the driving force of economic activity; and so not prevent wars and preparations for war and the enormous waste of resources this involves, nor economic crises like the present when austerity not abundance is the order of the day.

Diamandis and Kotler fix a date by which abundance and "an end to most of what ails us" will be realised as 2035 (p. 25). That's a year before the UK government is preparing to raise the age of retirement to 67. Given the continuation of capitalism, it's the latter that's the more likely.

ALB

Fish Biscuit

The Dharma of Capitalism. By Nitesh Gor, Kogan Page, £12.99



The Dharma of Capitalism is primarily a plea for ethical behaviour in business. But it is also part of a concerted attempt to harness the forces of religiosity in the service of

an ailing and discredited capitalist system.

Gor begins with the premise that '80s style 'Greed is good' capitalism

has been discredited by the current economic crisis, and that proponents of capitalism must attempt to win back the "soul of capitalism" by good works and ethical behaviour. He goes on to elucidate a form of management ethics allegedly drawing on traditional Indian religious concepts. Businessmen, apparently, must aspire to achieve the Dharma ("higher purpose") of capitalism and regulate their behaviour according to what he terms the Mode of Goodness.

Now it has to be said that *enrichissez-vous* has always and will always be the spirit of capitalism, because making money is what business is all about. If you want to know, ask a successful entrepreneur like Alan Sugar rather than a failed businessman like Gor on the ruling class dole called management consultancy. Reading a purpose into capitalism beyond gelt is seeing something which just is not there. Interestingly, Gor is co-founder of the Dharma Index, a Dow Jones guide for Hindu investors (presumably promoting makers of Bloody Big Statues and dodgy nostrums). The Muslim counterpart is the Sharia Index (buy heavy black material, sell AK-47s). 'Ethical' investments yes, but money-making first and foremost.

As to hitching the capitalist buggy to the religious mule, this is by no means a new phenomenon and may well be part of the 'reinvention' of capitalism to remedy the growing but unfocused distaste for the system. But not in the clunky form presented here. The attempt to marry a few spurious and misapplied Hindu concepts and phrases to a fake happy clappy version of capitalism can fool no one. Hinduism, particularly the reformed ('nice') version promoted by the Mahatma, has a good press these days. However, the concept of Dharma, like much else in Hindu theology (and indeed any religion), has been used to uphold the status quo, particularly the reactionary and oppressive caste system. Dharma is probably most familiar to Westerners, however, from its use in the television series 'Lost'. And appropriately enough the fish biscuit – a reward which doesn't match the effort required to acquire it – is exactly how most workers experience capitalism.

KAZ

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2011

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of the flesh. This anti-sensuality is in contrast with Shakespeare and his bawdy revelry, growing out of Chaucerian merriment and the more relaxed feudal social order. Along with his puritanism the son is opposed to the Enclosures, but he is really an aspirant small capitalist who realises the anti-Enclosures rebellion will fail and who dreams of a place where a man can have land, the implication here being the New World of the Americas, since the Mayflower set sail at this exact moment in history.

Following the Marxian approach of the materialist interpretation of history Bond plays down the importance of the new Protestantism as an agent in the transition to capitalism. Marx pointed out that it was the “bloody legislation” of the Enclosures and Poor Law legislation that forced the landless proletariat into the centres of manufacturing. This interpretation came under attack with the petit-bourgeois ideology of Max Weber’s *Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), which asserted that the protestant belief of Calvinism caused the development of capitalism. Later, Henryk Grossman and his *The Beginnings of Capitalism and the New Mass Morality* (1934) refuted Weber and reaffirmed the materialist interpretation of history. He reiterated Marx’s point about “bloody legislation”, showing that the emergence of capitalism lies much further back than Calvinism and the Reformation, since merchant capitalism had existed within a feudal framework

since the 12th century. Meanwhile Calvinism tended to be associated with petit-bourgeois elements rather than the emerging big capitalist owners, and Protestantism was a result of developing capitalism and was its ideological justification. The landless proletariat were physically forced into wage labour by the “bloody legislation” of enclosures and poor law.

Edward Bond’s *Bingo* is a Marxist political drama that is set at a pivotal point in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Feudalism had existed in England for around 700 years since 1066, until industrial capitalism developed from about 1760. A serf in medieval England would have seen the feudal system as eternal, in much the same way as today the ruling capitalist class tell us that capitalism is eternal. But they would both be wrong.

STEVE CLAYTON

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



The Socialist Standard examines their case

OBITUARY

Bill Robertson

We are sorry to have to announce that comrade Bill Robertson died in Brighton in March at the age of 84. He first came across the Party through outdoor meetings in Hyde Park and originally joined in 1947. He trained as a wireless operator and in 1960 went to work for the British Forces Broadcasting Network in Singapore. He returned to Britain in 1981 and played an active role in the old Brighton branch but still retained an interest in the Far East. He visited contacts in Kerala and India and spoke at outdoor meetings (we have a recording of him speaking in English with his talk being translated into the local language). In 1984-5 he spent some time in Perth, in Western Australia, transferring to the World Socialist Party of Australia and helping to produce and write for their publication of the time *Socialist Current* which enabled him to display his considerable knowledge of Marxian economics. Later he returned to Britain again and settled in his home town of Brighton.

We extend our sympathy to his wife and children.



Camcordia

TELEVISION PRODUCERS don’t usually acknowledge that they’re competing with the growing millions of people with their own video cameras. So, when a TV show is made almost entirely of camcorder footage, it either

means that its producers are embracing a new trend, or they’ve found a cheaper way to make programmes. *The Sinking Of The Concordia – Caught On Camera* (Channel 4) probably wasn’t the first show of this kind, and it won’t be the last.

The programme knits together footage filmed by passengers on the cruise ship which ran aground in January. This has been mixed with recordings from the bridge and the rescue operation to give a narrative of the disaster. The programme starts with the last evening parties on the luxury liner, which looks even more gaudy when filmed on a smartphone. Then, after the vessel has hit the rocks, we see both staff and passengers milling around, confused about what’s going on. By the time the lifeboats are launched, the ship is starting to tilt on to its side. And when the survivors reached the shore, they found no organised help. The Captain had already left his post, and

we hear the angry phone calls ordering him to return to the liner.

The ubiquity of video cameras means that any significant event is likely to be recorded by dozens of people. So, now we can preserve and share experiences more than ever before. This has been useful to analyse what went on during events such as riots and uprisings, and no doubt footage from the Concordia has been used in the subsequent investigation.

But the readiness of some people to film their lives also dovetails nicely with the guilty pleasure of voyeurism. And this programme sails closely to being exploitative at times. It is particularly unnerving when we hear the screams during a botched launch of a lifeboat and when one of the passengers continues filming his scared young children as they cry in front of him.

We’re more used to seeing scenes like this in disaster films. So when we watch real tragedies, we often unwittingly associate them with blockbusters. The technique of using ‘found footage’ of disasters has also appeared in fiction, such as in the films *Cloverfield* and *Paranormal Activity*. And of course, when the disaster is the sinking of a luxury liner, we’re inevitably reminded of the Titanic, both the real event and the film which followed in its wake. These associations make *The Sinking Of The Concordia – Caught On Camera* even more disorientating to watch.

Mike Foster



Meetings

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

Edinburgh and Glasgow

Joint Day School

Saturday **12 May** 1pm to 5pm

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

1pm WHY THIS ECONOMIC

DOWNTURN?

Speaker: Adam Buick.

2.15pm IS GLOBAL WARMING

INEVITABLE?

Speaker: Brian Gardner.

3.35pm CAN WE AVOID A THIRD

WORLD WAR?

Speaker: John Cumming.

All are welcome to this meeting which is free of charge. During the afternoon free light refreshments will be available.

Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill

Road, Glasgow, G20 7YE

London

Chiswick

Tuesday **15 May**, 8pm

WHY HAS THE MONARCHY

SURVIVED?

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,

Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN (nearest

tube: Chiswick Park).

Glasgow

Wednesday **16 May** 8.30pm

THE POSITIVE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Speaker: Brian Gardner.

Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill

Road, Glasgow G20 7YE

London

Clapham

Sunday **19 May**, 3pm

MARXISM, PHYSICS AND

PHILOSOPHY

Speaker: Mike Foster

Sunday **27 May**, 3pm

BRITISH TROTSKYISM: THE SONS OF

THE PROPHET

Speaker: Keith Scholey

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham

High St, SW4 7UN (nearest tube:

Clapham North).

East Anglia

Saturday, **26 May**, 2 to 5pm

THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Speaker: Jacqueline Shodeke

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)]

Lancaster

8 - 9 September 2012

Members only Video Workshop and

Residential.

Yealand Conyers, Carnforth

£45 inc food.

Bookings accepted from May 15

On a first come first served basis

Please see Party lists for more details

The Socialist Party Summer School:

PROTEST

6 - 8 July 2012

Harborne Hall, Birmingham

Worldwide, people have reacted to the political and economic crisis with new forms of protest. From the Arab Spring uprisings to the Occupy Movement, activists are rejecting traditional forms of political assembly, and are looking for new ways of organisation. But what will be the consequences of these new battles in the class war? Will these protests result in any lasting, positive change for the working class? Could they point towards a revolution? Or will they go the way of all reformism and just prolong the capitalist system which traps us all? The Socialist Party's weekend of talks and discussion will examine protests in all its forms - its aims, methods and effects.

Talks include:

The Occupy Movement: Ian Barker

(Occupy Norwich) & Stair (SPGB)

The Arab Spring: capitalism, imperialism

and religion or democracy?: Janet Surman

What did the Romans do for us? Bill Martin

Protest and the Environment: Glenn Morris

Policing the Protests: Mike Foster

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £140. Concessions are available. To book a place, send a cheque (payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham B32 2PD. E-mail spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk with any enquiries

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

The Grim Liberal Record

IT IS 40 years since a Liberal headed a government, but as the opposition or as ministers in coalition governments they were always to be found backing up the employers and the government against the workers, and providing legalistic arguments and formulas to justify capitalist exploitation and repression. Liberals were in the MacDonald National Government which in the nineteen 'thirties actually did reduce the pay of teachers and civil servants without any sort of agreement on their part; just as Liberals had six years earlier helped to defeat the miners in the General Strike. And it was the Liberal Lloyd-George whose Geddes Committee in 1922 recommended saving money by larger classes, reducing teachers' pay, cutting down civil service staffs and giving postmen cheaper uniforms.



Asquith

In their *History of Trade Unionism*, Sidney and Beatrice Webb told how the workers were tricked by the Liberal, Lloyd-George, during and after the first world war, and by the Asquith Government before the war. (...)

No wonder Mr. Grimond does not want to claim continuity with the "great statesmen" of the Liberal Party's heyday. Perhaps a future Liberal Government would be less crude and more astute in its handling of strikes, but essentially nothing has changed and, like any other government committed to the maintenance of capitalism, a Grimond administration will be identical with Asquith and Lloyd-George in putting first the protection of capitalist property and profits.

(From article by H, *Socialist Standard*, May 1962)

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ACTION REPLAY

Dog Days

THE AMERICAN TV series *Luck*, starring Dustin Hoffman and dealing with the seamy side of horse-racing, has been cancelled after three horses died during production. You might say, though, that this was simply a case of unintended accuracy from the makers of the series, for horses dying during actual racing is by no means rare.

No fewer than five horses were killed during this year's flagship Cheltenham Festival. Numbers of deaths fluctuate from year to year, with nine at Cheltenham in 2006, though with fewer in the years since then. But the Grand National is the biggest killer, with twenty-three horses dying in this one race since 1984, including two last year and another two this year. There are constant attempts to make the Aintree course 'safer', but these are sometimes criticised as encouraging greater speed and so making any falls even more

dangerous.

The figures for racehorse deaths are far greater than usually claimed. According to Animal Aid, 'around 420 horses are raced to death every year. About 38 per cent die on racecourses, while the others are destroyed as a result of training injuries, or are killed because they are no longer commercially viable' (<http://www.horsedeathwatch.com/>).

Greyhound racing is another sport where animal welfare comes well behind human enjoyment and betting interests. When their useful racing existence comes to an end, or because they are just not good enough, many are simply killed – probably at least a couple of thousand a year in Britain, though the exact figures are not known. And many owners will not pay a vet to have a dog killed humanely but prefer to have them drowned or otherwise disposed of in some unnecessarily cruel manner.

Ironic that the TV series was cancelled for causing deaths while the activities it depicted are responsible for far more deaths but continue.

PB

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Voice from the Back

Taxing Your Incredulity

A study by HM Revenue and customs found that the extremely rich are using avoidance schemes to reduce their income tax rate to an average of 10 per cent – less than half the average level. The Chancellor personally studied the 'anonymised' copies of the tax returns submitted by some of the country's wealthiest citizens which showed some people are able to avoid paying income tax entirely. 'Mr Osborne told the *Daily Telegraph*: 'I was shocked to see that some of the very wealthiest people in the country have organised their tax affairs, and to be fair it's within the tax laws, so that they were regularly paying virtually no income tax. And I don't think that's right.' He said, 'I'm talking about people right at the top. I'm talking about people with incomes of many millions of pounds a year' (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 April). For a Chancellor of the Exchequer to be 'shocked' and state that he doesn't 'think that's right' is indeed incredible. Millionaires protecting their property is the very basis of capitalism.

Land of the Free?

Politicians in the USA like to depict America as the epitome of freedom and democracy and sneer at the repressive measures of totalitarian states, but their boasts are ill-founded. 'America which is



known as the freest country in the world has incarcerated more of its citizens than the rest of the world combined. 7.1 million Americans are either in prison,

on probation or under correctional supervision. The numbers continue to climb each year as more prisons are built nationwide' (*CNN*, 2 April).

Recession? What Recession?

We are supposed to be living in an economic depression but this does not affect large sections of the owning class. More than 200 real estate brokers and lawyers, filed into an Off Broadway theatre last month to discuss a real estate boom. 'While the brokers sipped wine and nibbled cheese, a panel of lawyers and a banker reviewed some of the biggest sales made to Russians, including the \$188 million spent on properties in Florida and New York by trusts linked to Dmitry Rybolovlev, who made billions from potash fertilizer; the \$48 million that a composer, Igor Krutoy, paid for an apartment at the Plaza Hotel; and the \$37 million spent by Andrei Vavilov, a former deputy finance minister, on a penthouse at the Time Warner Center. ... Over the past four years Russians and other citizens of the former Soviet Union have signed contracts to buy more than \$1 billion worth of residential real estate in the United States, according to estimates from lawyers and brokers' (*New York Times*, 3 April). As the number of billionaires in Russia and Ukraine has more than tripled since 2009, to 104, according to *Forbes*, it is far from a depression for them.



Squalor And Splendour

The awful poverty and downright squalor of the Chinese working class is amongst the worst in the world but the affluence of their owning class is equally obvious. 'The Chinese economy is booming at a blistering pace. It is driven largely by the Fudai: the superrich who call the superpower home. Many are just in their forties. From building 30-storey towers in just 14 days, to amassing a luxury fleet of sports cars or a private jet – China's million millionaires and 600 billionaires are helping to change the country's landscape. And China's mad rush to urbanisation is only helping these elites get richer and richer' (*Al Jazeera*, 10 April). That this country of billionaires and poverty can still claim to be communist is surely one of the world's greatest travesties.

Poverty and Plenty

Much is made of India's industrial and commercial progress, with daily reports in the media of the increasing wealth of its



FREE LUNCH *in the Future*

