

# socialist standard

September 2021  
Vol.117 No.1405  
£1.50

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



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# socialist standard

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## Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin air, and explains why actions to prevent the depredation



of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with developing Russian

capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different-- and unattractive-- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The *Socialist Standard* is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is-- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

## Divide and Rule

No one can deny that many young workers are having a tougher time of it. Many see their future prospects fading and find themselves in low-paid positions or on zero-hours contracts. With the relentless rise in property prices, even relatively well-paid young workers are priced out of the property market and have to make do with paying extortionate rents. Those who have been through the higher education system are facing crippling debts. In the current pandemic, many have lost their jobs in the hospitality sector.

It is no wonder that young workers feel that the economic system is rigged against them. This has given some capitalist media commentators the opportunity to pit the younger generation against the older one. While 'Generation Rent' struggles to pay their rents, the baby boomers, who own property, bask in their rising values. The older generations benefited from free further education which was taken away by a Labour government run by baby boomers in the 1990s. The Conservative/LibDem Coalition government of 2010-2015 tripled student tuition fees while also introducing a triple lock on old age

pensions, where the state pension would rise each year either by the inflation rate, average wage growth, or 2.5 percent, whichever was the highest. To top it all, in 2016, the vote to leave the European Union, supported disproportionately by older voters, deprived younger workers of access to job opportunities in the EU job market and the Erasmus Programme, an EU student exchange programme.

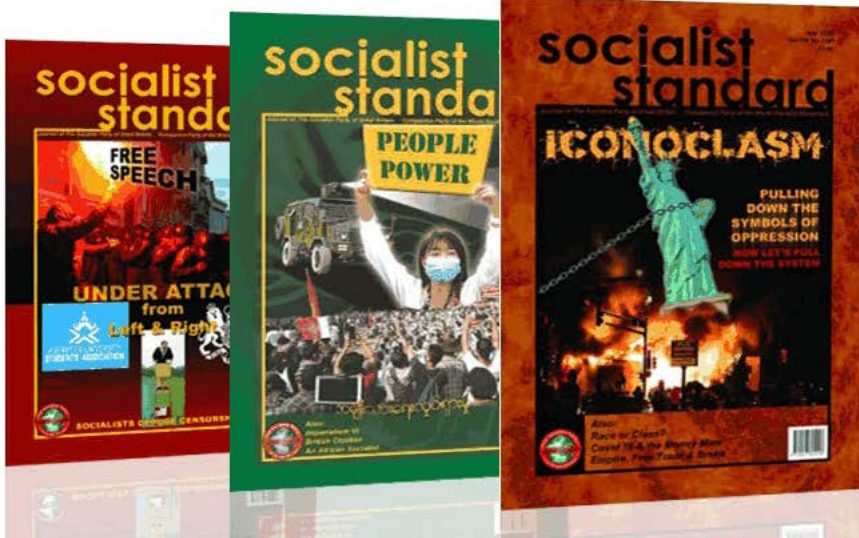
Simon Heffer in the *Sunday Telegraph* ('Natural Justice demands an end to the triple lock', 1 August) states that due to the pandemic, earnings could rise by 8 percent next year and that this would create an increase of £3 billion in the annual tax bill to pay for the rise in the state pension necessitated by the triple lock. He then argues that it would be young people, with their own financial struggles, who would have to shoulder this burden. So, for the sake of fairness, the triple lock should be scrapped. In fact, the tax burden falls not on the working class, (whether old or young), but on the capitalist class. The suspicion here is that this is where Heffer's concern really lies. Polly Toynbee in the *Guardian* ('The pension triple-lock is an

insult to the UK's young people', 1 July) makes similar arguments for abolishing the triple lock on pensions, but, unlike Heffer, acknowledges there are poor pensioners, who, she believes, should receive higher pension credits.

These divide and rule tactics draw attention away from the real cause of young peoples' woes, which is not the selfishness of older people hogging society's wealth, but from their position as workers in the capitalist system itself. The children and grandchildren of capitalists, such as Jeff Bezos or Warren Buffet, do not face the same problems as mentioned above. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class who produce the wealth of the privileged minority owning class, which leaves them in relative or absolute poverty. It also generates economic crises, such as the 2008-2009 downturn, which disproportionately affects younger workers, especially those who have just left school or university. Workers of all ages have an interest in abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism.

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# PATHFINDERS

## Say It Loud



IF YOU want to take a pessimistic view of humanity's future, there's no shortage of evidence. And because the news cycle feeds primarily off bad news, it's the easiest evidence to find. You have to look a bit harder for the positive news stories to back an optimistic view, but they do exist.

Like the story about the massive expansion of sharing app Olio, where people go out of their way to provide free stuff for people who are in need. Volunteers collect unsold produce from Tesco supermarkets, list it all in an app, and then superintend the hand-out process as local people come in to collect whatever is available ([bbc.in/3goRIQa](https://bbc.in/3goRIQa)).

What's in it for Tesco? Cynically, one might say it's good optics, as they are being seen to care, plus it saves them the costs of disposal. Less cynically, they are to some extent undermining their own profits by giving stuff away, so this is at least a concrete act that is a world away from the empty rhetoric and vapid virtue signalling of most capitalist companies.

What's in it for the volunteers? A nice feeling, presumably, of doing some good in the world, to counteract all the loudly advertised bad stuff. 'If everybody did something small but meaningful, we'd live in a much, much better society,' says one volunteer, who gets up at 7am every Saturday to collect Tesco cast-offs. And he's right, of course. But any sentence that starts with the phrase 'If everybody did...' is really a political statement about how the world ought to be, and as we know, politics is about more than people just being nice to each other. It's about thinking big.

Socialism is about thinking on the largest, global scale. And we know that's a problem because a lot of people don't seem able or willing to think at that scale. Not even when it comes to an existential threat like climate change. Even though the capitalist money-machine has blindly bulldozed its way across the planet destroying lives, cultures, landscapes and wildlife, people still have a dogged faith in the market system and its governments and politicians to find solutions to the very problems they're causing.

And here's a little anecdote about Glasgow and the run-up to COP26 in November which is nothing if not ironic.

Property owners in Glasgow are

exploiting the shit out of COP26 by hiking their rents to astronomical levels during the conference period, in a bid to make big bucks out of a climate emergency. Greedy, grasping bastards indeed, but this is capitalist logic at work. If you've got a commodity that's in high demand, you charge the maximum price you can get for it, and never mind scruples.

So it turns out that many climate activists from around the world who want to go to Glasgow to demonstrate their belief in the market system's supposed magical ability to clean up its own mess, now can't afford it because of the normal operations of the market system.

Fortunately, not everyone is a greedy, grasping bastard, even when capitalist logic tells them they ought to be. A network of Glasgow house owners has come together to express solidarity with climate activists by offering them very cheap accommodation over the course of the November climate summit ([bbc.in/3mnSIbc](https://bbc.in/3mnSIbc)). There aren't enough of them, and they're already oversubscribed, but still it's some comfort to know that, destroy whatever else it may, capitalism never quite manages to destroy the capacity of humans to treat each other with decency.

Given this, the failure of people including climate activists to engage with the concept of a decent society at a global scale is astonishing and alarming. All kinds of cognitive biases are at play here, as people perform mental contortions to rationalise the irrational world around them, when it would be so much easier to say 'you know what, capitalism is turning into a catastrophe, let's get rid of it.'

The problem is the alternative. Influential environmental campaigner George Monbiot has publicly acknowledged the fact that capitalism is the problem, 'a weapon pointed at the living world', a conclusion he freely admits he came to slowly and reluctantly, after he had run out of ways to excuse it. Unfortunately he is under the impression that the only alternative is state (ie. soviet-style) communism, a prospect he is understandably not attracted to and which he recognises had 'more in common with capitalism than the advocates of either system would care to admit' ([bit.ly/381QB4p](https://bit.ly/381QB4p)).

In fact, soviet communism is no alternative at all, it's a travesty. We said so in 1918, mere months into Lenin's coup d'état, but it seems our voice is not loud enough to reach Monbiot's mighty ear. Meanwhile he's wrestling with a mishmash of trendy behavioural and economic models that stand little chance of being put into practice and in any case don't address the core problem, the existence of private property and markets, which results in a tiny class who own all the world's resources and enrich themselves by impoverishing the rest of us and the planet.

People just can't say the unsayable, which is that we have to abolish private property and markets, and dispossess the capitalist class. Why can't they say that? In Monbiot's case, as a regular writer for the *Guardian* newspaper, he must be aware that the *Guardian* is known for dumping writers who say anything too radical, as it dumped comedian Jeremy Hardy and even award-winning journalist John Pilger ([bit.ly/37ZYFme](https://bit.ly/37ZYFme)). Science journalists are in a similar position, depending on employers for their wages. Ditto academics. Ditto social media influencers. No one can speak their mind who relies on the 'king's shilling'. Ever wondered why we don't take commercial ads in the Standard? That's why.

So there is a lacuna of silence surrounding the biggest question of humanity's future on Earth. It's not some deep-state conspiracy. It's just the normal workings of capitalism. It creates an artificial dependence on money, and then pays everyone money not to question the money system.

As Black Panther activist Assata Shakur famously remarked, no one is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. People are starting to question capitalism like never before. Well, it's about time. But capitalism is not going to encourage that conversation. That's why socialists need to be vocal, and not just vocal but loud, as in Glasgow this November. The world's people need an alternative to the market system that plays to human strengths of cooperation and mutual support. It's up to people like us to show them there is one.

PJS

# UBI: Red Herring or Wild Goose Chase?



There are some critics of capitalism who realise that something more radical is needed than the ‘baby steps’ that common or garden reformists have been reduced to campaigning for. They can see that such tinkering will not solve the problem they are concerned about. However, instead of proposing socialism (common ownership and production for need), which they dismiss as unrealistic, they advocate something else that they regard as more achievable. Actually, it is the other way around. It’s what they propose that is unrealistic and, in any event, would probably take as much time and energy to get enough support for, if it is to be fully attempted, as would getting support for socialism. Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a case in point.

This is the proposal, also known as Citizens’ Income, that the government should pay everyone a regular monthly income of a given amount as of right, i.e. unconditionally and without means testing.

The idea is to free people from worry over not being able to meet their basic needs and having to accept a crap job to do so, and to give them a wider choice of how to organise their life. Some advocate it as a way of dealing with the hypothetical mass unemployment they are expecting to occur as AI is applied to more and more jobs.

The bolder amongst them see it as a first step towards breaking the link between work and income, a way of gradually abolishing the wages system with the proportion of a person’s income paid by the state increasing at the expense of that paid by their employer.

The obvious first question is: where is the money to come from? It would cost a huge amount, the more so the greater the payment agreed on. Governments have no income of their own and depend, for what they spend, on taxation and borrowing. Since workers are on average paid only enough to maintain their particular working skill – i.e. to keep themselves in working order – the taxes they pay, whether direct or indirect, get passed on to employers in the form of a higher money wage and so ultimately fall on profits.

So, UBI is basically a proposition to massively tax profits to pay everybody a free income. And its advocates dismiss socialism as unrealistic!

It is true that, if this were ever to happen, employers would be compensated by not having to pay wages at the same level, since a part of the cost of keeping a worker in working order would then be paid by the government. Some UBIers attempt to deny that their scheme, if implemented, would lead money wages to fall, but this goes against all the evidence of the effect of other payments by the state to people in work.

Others pull in their horns and publish detailed calculations showing that their scheme would not lead to much more being spent on government payments to people than at present, since many existing payments (eg unemployment pay, sick pay, family allowances) would be abolished. So, they end up with a UBI payment at the low end (perhaps not even as high as £500 a month) and so are in effect proposing what used to be called a ‘redistribution of poverty’.

Talk of employers, wages and money income shows that UBIers envisage their scheme being implemented in a society that will continue to be divided into employers (owners of a productive resource) and workers (driven by economic

necessity to sell their working skills to an employer for money).

As to gradually increasing the state payment until most of a person’s income is paid by the state and a diminishing proportion by the employer, it’s hard to think of a more unrealistic proposal. Capitalism is based on the wages system, on most of the population being forced by economic necessity to obtain the money to buy the things they need to live by selling their capacity to work to an employer. No capitalist state will ever agree to undermine the wages system by weakening that pressure, as giving everyone a sum of money at anything much more than a minimal amount would. It’s just not going to happen.

The aim of breaking the link between work and the amount you get to live on is laudable; socialism will in fact bring this about by allowing the implementation of the principle ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs’. But this is not something that can be introduced gradually under capitalism. It can only be implemented after capitalism has been ended through replacing class ownership of productive resources by their common ownership by society as a whole. This – socialism – has to come first.

The most that could happen to the UBI is that the idea of an unconditional free basic income is taken up by the state for certain groups it considers deserving and who would otherwise be destitute. Experiments involving this have already taken place. Of course, this would not be UBI as these payments would not be universal. It would completely emasculate the original idea of paying everyone a basic income. Also, the level would be more or less the poverty line which most states bring destitute people up to. Administrative costs would be saved by not having to means-test recipients and check that they continue to be eligible. In the end, then, as a ‘realistic’ proposition UBI would be reduced to a tweak to the Poor Law System (aka the Welfare State). Just another ‘baby step’, but to nowhere.

Rather than waste their time and energy pursuing something that is impossible under capitalism and unnecessary in socialism, those dissatisfied with capitalism are better advised to work for socialism. This will provide the framework in which the problems they are concerned about can be lastingly solved since, with the common ownership of resources by society, the economic laws of capitalism which render reforms such as UBI impossible will no longer operate.

**ADAM BUICK**



# COOKING THE BOOKS

## QE didn't work

Quantitative Easing (QE) was originally introduced by the Bank of England in 2009 with the aim of stimulating a revival of the economy after the Crash of 2008. The Bank bought government bonds, so increasing cash in the hands of the sellers. Depending on who they were, the idea was that they would either invest the money in their business or deposit it in their bank which would then have more money to lend.

It hasn't worked like that, as a recent House of Lords report confirmed:

'We conclude, on balance, that the evidence shows quantitative easing has had limited impact on growth and aggregate demand over the last decade. To stimulate economic growth and aggregate demand, quantitative easing is reliant on a series of transmission mechanisms that operate primarily in and through financial markets. There is limited evidence to suggest that these increase bank lending or investment, or boost consumer spending by wealthy asset holders' (parliament.uk, paragraph 50- bit.ly/3lOqDcG).

The Report did make the lesser claim that if QE didn't make things better at

least it stopped them getting worse, by helping to prevent 'a reoccurrence of the Great Depression' of the 1930s. This is pure speculation as there is no way of proving it since that might not have happened anyway, whereas that QE didn't stimulate the economy is self-evident.

However, QE benefited some people: 'the mechanisms through which quantitative easing effectively stabilised the financial system following the global financial crisis have benefited wealthy asset holders disproportionately by artificially inflating asset prices. On balance, we conclude that the evidence shows that quantitative easing has exacerbated wealth inequalities' (paragraph 68).

By 'asset prices' their lordships did not mean the prices of the physical assets used in production such as plant and machinery but the prices of bonds and shares.

This is also the opinion of Catherine Mann, who has just been appointed to the committee that fixes the Bank Rate. She told the Houses of Commons Treasury Select Committee that financial markets:

'have pocketed much of the recent stimulus (taking QE to £895 billion and rates to a record low of 0.1 percent) and left the real economy a few coins in loose change. Financial markets have absorbed

monetary stimulus in "higher asset prices and greater financial stability risks ... rather than transmitting [it] to the real economy" since QE became the Bank's active policy, she said.' (*Times*, 27 July).

If she is suggesting that 'wealthy asset holders' deliberately refused to invest in producing more real wealth then she has got the wrong end of the stick. The reason the extra, cheap money made available by the Bank of England hasn't found its way into productive investment is because it couldn't all be invested at a sufficient profit. That is why it has been used instead on stock market gambling and speculation. As long as it is not profitable to invest the extra money, this situation won't change. The capitalist economy is driven by business investment with a view to profit, not by abundant money or low interest rates.

Even if the government had spent the money directly into the real economy that would not have stimulated a revival but would have caused stagflation as in the 1970s. QE must have seemed a good idea as it avoided that, but it hasn't worked as intended and has had the effect of enriching 'wealthy asset holders'. That's how it is. Governments can't make capitalism work the way they want. They propose, but capitalism disposes.



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# Key work, key workers and shorter hours

One effect of the whole Covid experience was so many people discovering the concept of key workers. With the country locked down it was shown just how much work it took to keep the population supplied with food and energy. Of course, this was a reduction to the very core of economic activities, and many of the furloughed or otherwise-reduced occupations remain essential in the longer term. But the experience overall did shed some light on how we could restructure work if we were to rid ourselves of the requirement for each employee to make a profit for an employer.

One consequence of that approach to organising work is that a number of people find themselves working more intensively, while other people are thrown into enforced idleness. One of the goals of the socialist movement is to decrease the burden of work and win more time for us to freely live and meet with each other. That would be a truly meaningful increase in human freedom.

Capitalism has promised to help lift that burden. There is an inbuilt incentive for capitalists to reduce labour: Being able to produce the same products as their rivals with less labour (by employing more or better machinery) enables capitalists to make higher profits. The result of reducing labour though is not leisure, but unemployment, and with unemployment comes a fall in wages generally. That in turn opens up the possibility of making previously uneconomic activities profitable. For example, while automated car-washes are available, when labour is cheap enough, a hand wash becomes more economically viable.

At the turn of the last century, some 1.4 million people were employed in UK agriculture. These days there are some 400,000. The trend worldwide is for agriculture to be shrinking as a share of overall labour activity.

This points to the possibility of lightening the burden of work, generally. Of the 30 million people in employment in the UK, just over 1 percent are involved in producing food. Many more are involved in unnecessary occupations. 60,000 people are employed by the HMRC: a society of common ownership would have no need for taxes or taxation administration. Likewise, we'd have no need for 79,000 to work in the Department for Work and Pensions. For each of those people, at least as many are employed as tax accountants, finance planners and benefits advisers.

If we directly put our efforts into producing useful wealth – food, clothing, housing – then we could create an abundance without needing the cheeseparing restrictions on wealth that capitalism demands. So, that being said, we could free up many of the 3.7 million people employed in retail, who are only there to deny people access to the goods unless they pay. Obviously, stacking shelves and doing stock checks are essential tasks, so not all those people could be redeployed to other work: but many of them might also be part of the 2.5 million underemployed in the UK (that is, people who would work more hours if they could find them).

1.4 million people work in finances and pensions (beyond those involved in taxation above), almost all of whom could do more useful productive work if the opportunity presented itself. We could also add in the 149,000 or so vigorous and able people being kept out of productive work by being in the armed forces.

Of course, these figures are simply coming from the UK alone. If we expand the scope, we can see that there are 15 million unemployed in the EU. Socialism is necessarily a worldwide system, and so will be able to utilise all of the skills and talents of all those millions of people, and thus allow them to develop themselves. The end of borders and sharing the wealth of the world would mean that people could come together to get the most out of our natural resources.

Obviously, there are real world limits to how we can apply labour; we need the productive resources that can

accommodate all this available labour. The availability of machinery, land and transport will still limit who can work where, along with educational resources and geography.

After all, we can't move whole populations easily (nor would we want to) and any economic activity would require pleasant homes for the workers carrying them out, and adequate transport links (after all, would we want to keep the dreary experience of the daily commute? One outcome of Covid has been to free some people from that by promoting home working).

These will all still need administering and co-ordinating: not everyone can be doing the spade work. Instead

of administering to make the most profit, they would be administering to reduce the burden of labour on everyone and ensure that everyone has access to the things they need.

For example, agriculture in the UK is currently administered via around 210,000 holdings. Each one of these must do its own accounts and paperwork (as well as compliance with regulations and environmental standards). There may well be good reasons (transport, environmental, etc.) to keep these as distinct holdings, and so, even with a reduced administrative burden, they may delimit how people can be deployed on the land most efficiently (and conversely, they could, much as when farmers buy or sell land today, be altered to make administration easier). To get the best out of this would require co-ordination.

That is why common ownership matters and can be the only basis on which we can get ourselves meaningful freedom. We can all become key workers, so that, by sharing the necessary burden of keeping society running, we can all also benefit from the free time that would result. People ask why would anyone work in socialism without wages or salaries? One answer is that if we can, say, reduce the working week to a couple of days each, why wouldn't anyone work to secure their own and their friends and family's access to the means to continue to be able to live well?

**PIK SMEET**



**UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS**

All meetings online during the pandemic. See page 23.

**LONDON**

**North London branch.** Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 [nlb.spgb@gmail.com](mailto:nlb.spgb@gmail.com)

**South London branch.** Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

**West London branch.** Meets 1st Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)

**MIDLANDS**

**West Midlands regional branch.** Meets last Sat. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 01543 821180. Email: [stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk).

**NORTH**

**North East Regional branch.**

Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

**Lancaster branch.** Meets 3rd Mon, 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, [spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org).

**Manchester branch.** Contact: Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. 0161 860 7189.

**Bolton.** Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

**Cumbria.** Contact: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.

**Doncaster.** Contact: Fredi Edwards, [fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk)

**SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST**

**Kent and Sussex regional branch.** Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: [spgb.krsb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.krsb@worldsocialism.org).

**South West regional branch.** Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR.

Contact: Stephen Harper [spgbsw@gmail.com](mailto:spgbsw@gmail.com)  
**Brighton.** Contact: Anton Pruden, [anton@pruden.me](mailto:anton@pruden.me)

**Canterbury.** Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

**Luton.** Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

**Cornwall.** Contact: Harry Sowden, 16 Polgine Lane, Troon, Camborne, TR14 9DY. 01209 611820.

**East Anglia.** Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.

**Essex.** Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. [patdeutz@gmail.com](mailto:patdeutz@gmail.com).

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**NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Belfast** Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

**SCOTLAND**

**Edinburgh branch.** Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. [jimmymjmoir73@gmail.com](mailto:jimmymjmoir73@gmail.com)  
Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

**Glasgow branch.** Meets 1st and 3rd Tues. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105.

[peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk).

**Dundee.** Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.

**Ayrshire.** Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. [rainbow3@btopenworld.com](mailto:rainbow3@btopenworld.com).

**Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA.** Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

**WALES**

**South Wales Branch (Swansea)**

Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

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Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. [botterillr@gmail.com](mailto:botterillr@gmail.com)

**Central Branch**

Meets 1st Sun, 6pm (UK time) on Discord. Contact: Paul Edwards [rainbow3@btopenworld.com](mailto:rainbow3@btopenworld.com)

**INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS**

**LATIN AMERICA**

Contact: J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

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**Japan.** Contact: Michael. [japan.wsm@gmail.com](mailto:japan.wsm@gmail.com)

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Contact: Trevor Clarke, [wspa.info@yahoo.com.au](mailto:wspa.info@yahoo.com.au)

**EUROPE**

**Denmark.** Contact: Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, Floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J.

**Germany.** Contact: Norbert. [weltsozialismus@gmx.net](mailto:weltsozialismus@gmx.net)

**Norway.** Contact: Robert Stafford. [hallblithe@yahoo.com](mailto:hallblithe@yahoo.com)

**Italy.** Contact: Gian Maria Freddi, Via Poiano n. 137, 37142 Verona.

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# MATERIAL WORLD

## Afghanistan: another empire fails

AFGHANISTAN'S CAPITAL, Kabul, fell to the Taliban last month, with every other provincial city having already capitulated in what can only be described as a rout. Now the Taliban are in full control of Afghanistan. At the time of writing, the USA and the UK were rushing troops to facilitate the hurried evacuation of foreign nationals and diplomats from Kabul. Already Turkey, Iran and Tajikistan were reporting the arrival of refugees fleeing the threat of the Taliban.

The invasion of Afghanistan was the first action of America in what it called the 'war against terror' in response to the 9/11 attack in 2001. Afghanistan had been the base of operations for Al Qaida with the Taliban's complicity. It has now become yet another embarrassing military defeat for the world's greatest superpower.

In July as American forces departed Bagram Airbase without any advance notice to their Afghan allies, the United States' top military general, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Mark Milley said to reporters, 'This is going to be a test now, of the will and leadership of the Afghan people, the Afghan security forces and the government of Afghanistan' ([tinyurl.com/u3r7y9ns](https://tinyurl.com/u3r7y9ns)).

We now know the result. Despite being a formidable force of 2-300,000, well equipped with some of the best US weaponry and trained by expert NATO instructors, and despite receiving continued American air support, the Afghan National Government army and police have melted away with a surprising lack of resistance.

The USA had invested almost \$83 billion on just the training and arming of Afghanistan's forces. From 2001 to 2018, the U.S. spent \$730 billion on the war, the U.K. spent \$28.2 billion, Canada \$12.7 billion, Germany \$11.1 billion, Italy \$8.9 billion, and France \$3.9 billion, all filling the coffers of the armament industry.

In addition, from 2001 to 2018 they each provided billions of dollars in foreign aid to Afghanistan which still remains one of the world's poorest countries. The US donated \$32.32bn, Germany gave \$5.88bn, the UK's contribution to aid was \$4.79bn, Canada, \$2.42bn, Italy, almost one billion and France, just over half a billion in foreign aid, with much of it going into the pockets of the profiteers and corrupt Afghan officials.

Of course, there will be other Great Powers ready and eager to take advantage of America's defeat. After all, Afghanistan's potential mineral wealth is still there to be mined and remains to be exploited. While China's Belt and Road project will be viewing the trade routes through Afghanistan with great interest.

General McChrystal, the former Joint Special Operations Command and Afghanistan War commander, when asked if the 'War on Terror' had been worth it answered, 'It would be impossible to argue that it was. The outcome just hasn't been positive enough to argue that...' ([tinyurl.com/a9hvf56](https://tinyurl.com/a9hvf56)).

While McChrystal may view the war through the lens of military strategy and the geopolitical context, socialists think about the human cost of this Afghan war

and the consequences to come. What for governments is the price in the blood of the innocents, the pain of the wounded, the suffering of the displaced refugees?

An estimate is that the war has killed 171,000 to 174,000 people but the fatalities are an underestimate as deaths by disease, loss of access to food, water, infrastructure, and other indirect causes from the war are not fully included.

Atrocities were conducted by all sides in this war and no country held the moral high ground although each claimed it.

There are millions of refugees from Afghanistan who comprise the largest refugee population in Asia, and the second largest in the world. Now those figures can be expected to rise sharply.

While some on the left may take a feeling of 'schadenfreude' from the West's humiliation and claim another victory for 'anti-imperialism', our sympathy goes out to all our fellow workers.

A few Afghans who cooperated with the Afghan government and the occupation armies are being fast-tracked through the asylum-seeker process but many more who the Taliban, not known for their mercy, consider collaborators will face a very uncertain and insecure future. We can be sure that the Taliban will not be keeping to any conciliatory promises made to the USA back in 2020 during their peace talks at Doha.

Socialists can confidently predict that civilians will still be paying a terrible price for the actions of Osama Bin Laden back in 2001 and the American miscalculated response to it, and will

continue to bear the cost of the 'War on Terror' for a long time to come. The best way to halt all the killing and maiming is to finish the fighting and we hope that the hand-over of power may reduce the extent of the conflict. But, as with all conflicts in capitalism, don't expect any permanent end to human misery and tragedy.

**ALJO**



Credit: Defense One/REUTERS

# Countdown to COP - Part Two

## DO ENVIRONMENTALISTS KNOW WHAT CAPITALISM IS?

November's COP26 at Glasgow draws closer and many organisations are preparing to attend to make their proposals and arguments known, and we in the World Socialist Movement will be doing likewise to present our case for socialism as the solution to global warming and all its accompanying crises.

Capitalism is the root cause of most of the environmental problems we face, and is also the biggest obstacle in implementing the solutions. Yet few recognise the culpability of capitalism, and if they do, their remedies involve little more than passing legislation to regulate the capitalist system such as the proposed New Green Deal, and encouraging small life-style changes.

Many activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion and the Sunrise Movement consider our proposition of a world without states and borders, markets, prices or money, as something for science-fiction writers.

Nevertheless, the more radical environmentalist campaigners will concede that a revolutionary change on a world scale is required, a revolution to overthrow capitalism. On marches there are certainly enough placards and banners with the slogan, 'System Change, not Climate Change.'

Believing themselves to be radical progressives they talk of co-operatives run in a decentralised manner, and advocate that such a system can solve pollution and global warming. However, on further investigation, it becomes clearer that this sustainable society is not socialism, for the continuance of money and the market is assumed, together with private ownership. The aim is a localised economy, based on small-scale enterprise, with a greatly reduced dependence on the world market, yet still wedded to a form of capitalism and holding to a belief that capitalism can be reformed so it can be compatible with achieving an environmentally sustainable society.

Bandyng around terms such as anti-capitalism without fully comprehending their meaning doesn't get us anywhere. These protesters define capitalism so vaguely that if they did successfully accomplish the abolition of their form of 'capitalism', the actual fundamentals of the capitalist system would remain intact and still be exerting its harmful effects upon our society and our ecology. Capitalism is the nefarious cycle of endless growth and expanding markets for the ceaseless accumulation of capital to provide profits. As a system it must continually grow or go into crisis. Consequently, human needs and the needs of our natural environment take second place to this imperative. Capitalist investors want to end up with more money than they started out with. The cycle is thus money—goods for sale—more money—more products to sell—even more money.

Capitalism won't disappear with a few reforms and some greenwash. Those who think it will should be aware that they are setting out to impose upon capitalism something that is incompatible with and contrary to its core ethos.

So not many in the environmentalist movement actually reject capitalism outright. Their underlying philosophy is 'small is beautiful'.

However, as the name says, global warming is a global phenomenon and not a localised effect. Capitalism worldwide is despoiling the environment, changing the weather patterns, degrading land and water, extinguishing animal species. Capitalism is polarising the planet, making a few fabulously wealthy while impoverishing the many, seizing the best land and evicting small farmers and devastating rural communities, leaving destitution in its wake. The capitalists sacrifice the balance of nature for the sake of plunder.

Essentially, if capitalism is the reason why we have the climate change crisis, then any attempt to halt it must by definition be anti-capitalist and, therefore, the socialist

prescription is to scrap rather than reform capitalism. A cooperative commonwealth of the associated producers, rationally interacting with nature for mutual benefit is the precondition for a sustainable planet.

As Marx pointed out:

'a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, [beneficiaries] and, like *boni patres familias* [good heads of households], they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.'

The environmental threat to human survival must come to occupy central place among the concerns that inspire people to work for socialism. Our collective well-being is contingent on the establishment of world socialism. The







longer capitalism continues, the more our prospects worsen. The sooner we establish socialism the better, and better late than never.

The only sure protection against climate change is the replacement of a society based on accumulation for profit with one based on production for need. That will not come about by futile appeals to governments and corporations to mend their ways. Environmental activists must make a choice between global catastrophe or revolutionary change.

When we see the priorities of capitalism, we can understand why politicians have failed to seriously reduce emissions. Capitalism is a barrier to reducing emissions, not simply because of the system's historic reliance on fossil fuels, but also because of its reliance on market forces.

Capitalism is an economic system, incompatible with human aspiration for sustainability. It is a global economy that requires constant expansion and increasing exploitation. We will have to operate in a fundamentally different manner than we do now. By concentrating its labour resources on the real needs of people, socialism would be able to stop vast numbers of wasteful and destructive jobs that are only needed by the profit system. With the end of commercial competition, socialism would not be constantly driven to use the cheapest and dirtiest production methods, but could instead apply eco-friendly methods. A cooperative worldwide commonwealth would put an end to the unchecked power and authority exercised by both governments and corporate powers.

New technology, transportation and communication will facilitate a world in which the entire population could participate in the creation of a sharing society. Perhaps, if we come to understand how to deal with climate change and

the consequences of the pandemic it will be the irreversible tipping point for social revolution.

Climate change could have a radicalising potential, for many people have started to question the prevailing economic system and its detrimental effect upon the environment. However, mainstream environmental groups don't present a coherent critique of capitalism's ecological consequences nor do they do the spadework of offering an alternative.

What is required is transformational change, a mass mobilisation of peoples for an entirely new society based upon a fundamentally different economic system. Those intent upon defending the environment must organise worldwide for socialism which is the antidote to the despair and despondency that prevails in many people's attitudes to the global warming threat.

Our fight is to show that for almost all our current and future material requirements we produce at sufficient levels already. Abundance exists and to provide plenty-for-all need not involve the intensification of the extraction process to the detriment of the environment. Production can be geared to satisfying human needs which, contrary to the mythology used to justify capitalism, are not limitless and can be met without over-stretching nature's resources. Imagine a society where each individual has the means to live a life of dignity and fulfilment, without exception; where discrimination and prejudice are wiped out; where all members of society are guaranteed a decent standard of life; and where the environment is protected and rehabilitated. This is socialism — a truly humane world.

**ALJO**



## Sci-Fi, Utopias and Socialism

*'We have described a World-in-which-we'd-love-to-live... The way we see it, this is a world where creative labour is the ultimate satisfaction and the source of happiness for people. Everything else is built on the foundation of this principle. People are happy there when they manage to actualise this main principle. Friendship, love and work are the three main pillars that support the happiness of such humankind. We could not imagine anything better than that, and why would we want to?' Boris Strugatsky.*

What kind of society would appeal to a socialist? What kind of life would we actually enjoy once the logic of capitalism driving the world of today releases its grip only on the resources of Earth – material or human – but also on the minds of its inhabitants? I believe that in order to promote the socialist cause, we need to have a clearer understanding of answers to these questions. There is a caveat there, of course, that what is appealing to people today may not stay the same in the future.

### Dystopias

I have to confess, I am a sucker for sci-fi. And when it comes to sci-fi, I am omnivorous, reading and watching anything I can get my hands on. There is probably a hidden yearning for a better future in this passion, as I am particularly interested in the fiction about Earth-like worlds, especially those that are more developed than ours. But I have recently noticed an interesting feature of the vast majority of the sci-fi visions of the future: they are overwhelmingly dark, presenting rather a failed world than a successfully developed civilisation. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* or his post-World War II fascist America in *The Man in the High Castle*... Cyberpunk is a good example of a genre that produced enormous quantities of dark sci-fi works, and post-apocalyptic fiction writers have been prolific on this topic as well. Seems like the future people foresee in fiction as the most likely is not very bright at all. Beginnings like 'after an ecological catastrophe wipes out most of humanity...' or 'It's the future, and the planet is a dusty, radioactive wasteland...' sound like a cliché in a film about the future. And technological breakthroughs gone horribly wrong are a really popular theme, with many examples brilliantly shown in the *Black Mirror* series.

Of course, there is a sub-genre that focuses specifically on the stories about 'perfect' worlds - Utopias. Ironically, when searching for utopias on Google, it is quite hard to find any – the search engine stubbornly shows 'best dystopias', and even articles on utopias often discuss mostly dystopian books and films. My first several 'utopian books' searches returned the *Vulture's 100 Great Works of Dystopian Fiction*, *Tales About A World Gone Wrong* and a BBC article *Science Fiction: How Not To Build A Future Society*. Maybe a good drama needs suffering, and this is why tragedies have always enjoyed more popularity than comedies? Whatever the reason, the number of utopian worlds seems to be surprisingly small. Do any of them offer appealing visions of a socialist or a socialist-like world?

There are some notable examples, such as Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*. These and some other novels describe interesting social innovations, which are often very close to socialist ideals. For instance, the utopian world in *Woman on the Edge of Time* promotes such values as common ownership and (gender) equality; the inhabitants of the *Walden Two* community are free to choose their vocation and have no police force that could enforce their will through violence; and on the moon of Anarres in *The Dispossessed*, everyone is free to

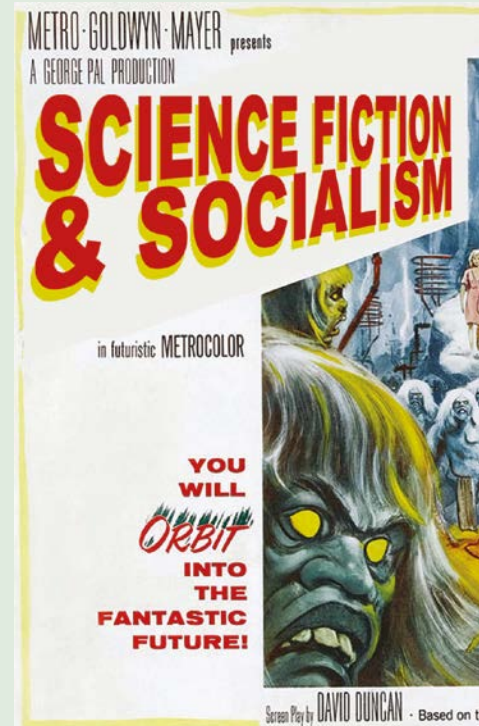
start their own productive enterprise, where there is no incentive to grow production or compete since there is no market, so all production is aimed solely to fulfil everyday needs.

While many ideas described in these and other books are worth discussing and thinking about, some details are questionable or even disturbing. For example, Skinner's Walden community has a set of guardians who are somehow wiser than the 'common people'. Skinner himself believed in the need for elitist rule: 'We must delegate control of the population as a whole to specialists – to police, priests, teachers, therapies...'

(John Staddon, *The New Behaviorism*, 2014, p.125). The utopian agrarian community of Piercy's *Mattapoisett (Woman on the Edge of Time)* shows a governmentally decentralised egalitarian society, mostly based on feminist and anarchist ideals. The world of *Mattapoisett* at times comes through as a fantasy, a feverish dream in the mind of a person in a mental institution under the influence of heavy tranquillisers, propelled by the feelings of powerlessness and grief. We are never told in the book if the visions the protagonist had are true or not. Would I want to live in *Mattapoisett*? Probably not. It seems quite focussed on offering the alternative to the patriarchal and exploitative capitalist ways of life, but more in the way of renouncing something negative rather than by offering something viable and attractive in its own right.

Importantly, it is still not clear on how this set of communities (or the one on Anarres in *The Dispossessed*) is supposed to work: both rely on self-governance and the structures of meeting and discussion, which might function well on the level of a town but certainly not a planet. Ursula Le Guin is perhaps more realistic in her novel, because Anarres in *The Dispossessed* is not shown as a Garden of Eden. It is a barren and dirty world, where life is decidedly hard for its inhabitants. Do any of them offer appealing visions of a socialist or a socialist-like world? They also have problems with their PDC (*Production and Distribution Coordination*), which exhibits some signs of government. In any case, it is probably not the best example to illustrate the advantages of a socialist society. But I guess my biggest problem with most utopias is that they simply don't appeal to me; I wouldn't want to live there myself.

I understand, writing utopias is hard. Unlike dystopias, it is not as simple as to show some horrors of destruction or societal decay (which could be easily borrowed from a daily tabloid). New ideas have to be created and, on top of this, put together in a coherent system that would look realistic. When thinking them up, authors would undoubtedly lean on their own life experiences, environment and cultural upbringing. For many of them, the best vision of a progressive society not corrupted by consumerism or greed would be inspired by communities in the countryside, or perhaps by stereotypes of preindustrial self-sufficient settlements. Many utopias share these elements of 'environmental wisdom' or even a pre-technological biblical paradise, for example, in Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, citizens







aim for a balance between themselves and nature. Callenbach himself said of his book, in relation to Americans: 'It is so hard to imagine anything fundamentally different from what we have now... [But] we'd better get ready. We need to know where we'd like to go.'

### 'Noon Universe'

There are a couple of authors – two brothers – who borrowed their ideas from a different cultural environment: that of the post-war Soviet Union, and about how their utopian world came out different as a result.

The Strugatsky brothers, Boris and Arkady, wrote their books collaboratively.

They needed to pass Soviet censorship in order to get published, so they came up with an 'approved' setting for many of their books, called 'Noon Universe', in which communism has triumphed globally. Of course, they both loathed the constraints of state capitalism and totalitarianism on the lives of Soviet people, so their utopias went much further, painting a world free of money or coercion – a world where they would themselves want to live and work. Most of those books were written in the 60s and 70s, but to this day a more compelling, believable fictional world of the future where people are happy and lead dynamic lives has yet to be written – at least in the Russian science-fiction literature.

The Noon Universe, named after *Noon: 22nd Century*, chronologically the first novel from the series, also features in the following books: *Hard to Be a God*, *The Inhabited Island*, *Space Mowgli*, *Beetle in the Anthill*, and *The Time Wanderers*, among others. To give you an idea of some features of the future social organisation Arkady and Boris Strugatsky presented in their Noon Universe, without giving away any spoilers, here is a brief overview:

- unequivocal victory of socialism: no monetary system, all production for common good
- absence of institutionalised coercion, such as police or military
- advanced technological progress, ubiquitous robotic assistance
- everyone is engaged in a profession that inspires them

This fairly common set of features then goes on, now with a somewhat different focus:

- the system of education is given utmost importance: students spend at least as much time or more at school than at home; they have very small class sizes and have personal Mentors that lead them on the path of learning about both the world and themselves; they must reach a high level of scientific knowledge, societal responsibility and creativity (arts and humanities)
- ethics/morality is given a very important role, on par with technological competence
- a new kind of human (intellectually and ethically superior to most modern humans; importantly, much more socially responsible) is raised, who deeply cares about the planet and all its life forms, and is thus willing to both drive and accept societal progress

Finally, what makes this world both believable and appealing, is this combination of on the one hand a democratic and science-based social system without exploitation, and on the other, individuals raised to support such socialist society:

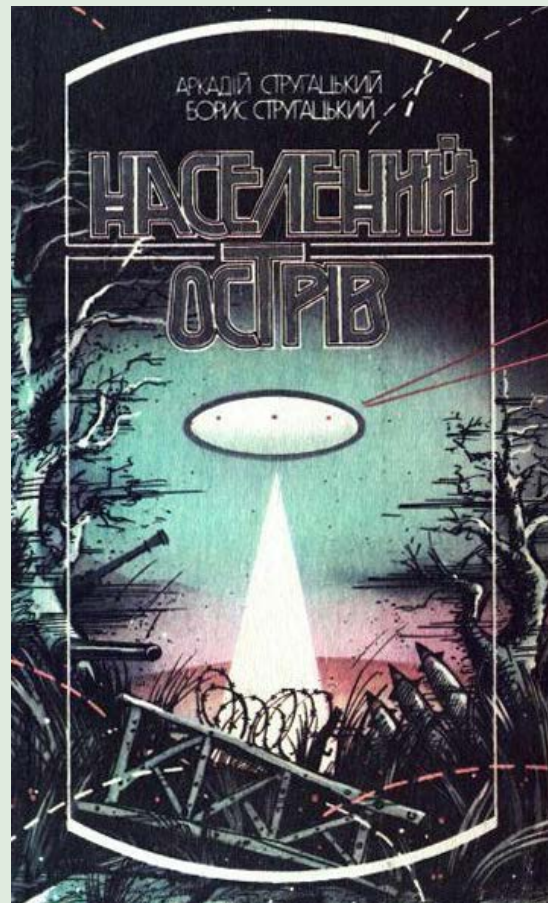
- this way of raising responsible individuals makes it possible to avoid coercion and resolve issues collaboratively, based on evidence and rationality
- this society does have some structure / governance where a number of meritocratic High Councils composed of the world's leading scientists in each particular field of specialisation provide guidance and rules of functioning

Unfortunately, apart from *The Gulag Archipelago*, the legacy of Soviet literature is largely unknown in the Western cultural sphere, and the Noon Universe with its bright and highly optimistic vision of the future has not been popularised through films or comic books. I have tried to search for similar utopian universes in English or American books, or shown in films, but, as described in the beginning, found mostly dystopian sci-fi or stories of societies that went backwards 'to the cradle of nature' in their attempts to invent a fairer and wiser world. Perhaps the closest to the creation of the Strugatsky brothers comes the Earth in *Star Trek: The Original Series*, and even that is rife with militaristic and patriarchal themes.

From the vantage point of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are several issues that could also be improved in the Noon Universe, of course. For example, we might want to introduce some features of Marxist feminism and gender equality, and environmental considerations could have been described more convincingly. But the main features seem to all be there: technological progress comes hand in hand with societal progress, which is in turn driven by personal betterment of every member of that society. It might seem utopian, but I think it is fully socialist in spirit, more coherent and credible, and it really makes me want to step into that world and start living there right now.

(Talk given at the Socialist Party Summer School last month..)

**LEON ROZANOV**





# Parasites

## Will we ever see the end of these airborne parasites . . .

**T**here can be little doubt about the impact this dreadful virus has had on predominantly the world's working class.

Nowhere has escaped this awful pandemic. With some parts of the world faring worse than others, and so much loss of life and suffering – much of it down to the gross incompetence of world governments and their inept ministers trying to grapple within the financial considerations and restraints of life under capitalism. Nearly everything boils down to costs and affordability.

But could and would things have been handled any better within socialism?

It would be crass to suggest that viral outbreaks such as coronavirus could never happen within socialism. However, it's also fair to say that in a society where all due care and attention will be given to the living conditions and welfare of farmed animals, and the preparation and storage of agricultural foodstuffs for human consumption stored in careful conditions, this should reduce the chances of any such occurrences considerably. Moreover, in the event of an outbreak, humankind will have developed a much quicker and more effective way of dealing with the issue. Without being burdened by considerations of costs and the search for profits, response time in closing down the spread of the virus in the shortest possible time would take priority, without the dither and delays that have impacted on the efficacy of dealing with pandemics under capitalism.

The past 18 months of living through lockdowns and restrictions has been difficult for most people. Each of us have had different experiences, with some finding the quiet routine of lockdown and staying at home actually bringing some comfort and respite from, amongst other things, the daily commute. Meanwhile others have been craving for the social contact and routines of life before COVID-19. With most restrictions now lifted in the UK, it's understandable for some to feel nervous about the new challenges we're facing, such as the anxiety of returning to the office or finding it difficult to socialise in groups again.

Although some people may seem excited about the lifting of restrictions, rest assured that for many the uncertainty and potential insecurity of employment and a regular income is

a source of great anxiety. Socially it might be about when we should or shouldn't wear a mask, how close to get to people or where to go and what to do in any given social situation.

And let's not forget the ongoing impact on our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world where coronavirus is every bit as severe now as it ever was. Countries such as India, where the government there saw fit to export 66 million doses of vaccines overseas. Enough to have inoculated the major cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. While the virus was still raging and people were still dying in very high numbers. All in the name of profit before people.

Life has changed unimaginably since the beginning of the pandemic. The idea of 'going back to how things were' may feel completely impossible. Our mental health has been affected by the financial pressures of being furloughed and the reduction of income, and your life may have changed so much that it can be hard to see a positive way ahead.

As socialists we understand the pressures that workers around the world are facing, not only because of the impact of the pandemic, but because of the social system that underpins it. As a party we kept in regular contact with each other through online communication platforms such as Discord and Zoom. These modern sources of digital technology have enabled many of us to share, learn and laugh together in a way that only a generation ago would not have been possible.

Although still very much with us, COVID-19 is gradually becoming less of a threat. More and more people are surviving this dreadful disease, thanks to the ingenuity of science and scientists, through widespread vaccination. This naturally gives us hope as a political party that we can once again resume our programme of various activities and reconnect with our fellow workers in the physical environment, including for example the forthcoming COP26 conference in Glasgow later this year. Something we have been preparing for with much anticipation. And should you wish to participate in that particular event in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Your input would be most welcome. We have a world to win and nothing to lose but our chains.

## . . . . and of these heir-born parasites?

As one of the oldest extant monarchies in the world, the British royal family seem to have survived the test of time – so far.





Whilst its immediate existence is reasonably secure despite Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle's recent claims of racism, the cultural rifts exposed by the row could signal trouble ahead. The revelations certainly do raise questions about whether the monarchy can or should survive at all.

Queen Elizabeth, on the throne since 1952 (no quips about constipation please) is now 94 and still remains reasonably popular with the general public, with a 79 percent approval rating that many a politician could only dream of. A recent Ipsos Mori poll also indicated that only 17 percent of people believed the country would be better off without a monarchy. This despite a year in which Harry and Meghan quit the royal family and questions swirled about Prince Andrew and his involvement with convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein. A closer look at the poll also reveals a much less favourable opinion of the queen's oldest son and heir Charles, particularly amongst younger generations, making him a potentially greater risk to the future of the monarchy. The reason for this must in part have been the characterisation of his uncaring attitude, as disclosed by his son and one-time piss artist and party animal formerly known as Prince Harry, during his recent infamous interview with Oprah Winfrey. This generational attitude also bodes ill for the royal image overseas, with the under-40s in the USA far more supportive of Harry and Meghan's version of events, than that of the other royals who tried to play down the allegations.

Meanwhile further charges of racism against an 'unnamed senior royal' particularly resonated with Britain's younger generation, who have grown up in an increasingly diverse country. Only 29 percent of the 18-34-year-olds polled said Britain would be worse off if the monarchy was abolished, while 45 percent said it would make no real difference- a view we largely share, and 19 percent saying that it would make the country better.

So while the British monarchy's immediate survival is relatively secure despite Harry and Meghan's claims of racism, the cultural rifts exposed by the row could signal trouble ahead. The revelations do raise questions over whether the monarchy can or should survive at all, with Charles next in line to the throne and not scoring well for general popularity.

While we as socialists might sense an opportunity as the current monarch's reign draws to a close, we still face the prospect of persuading many of our fellow workers that these blue-blooded spongers, malingerers and work-shy freeloaders have outstayed their welcome. One only has to observe the

absurd out-pouring of grief from so many misguided flag-waving subjects whenever a member of the royal family dies and the BBC's royal correspondents begin their sanctimonious arse-kissing rituals, crocodile tears and fake platitudes, to realise what a challenge we have ahead of us.

And while as a party of the working class we may not have been around for anything like as long as the monarchy, we should all rise to the challenge to stop this outdated institution from reigning over us, and look forward instead to the day that their position of privilege will come to an end. When the castles and palaces they inhabit become little more than museums, we might look back in wonder and incredulity at a period in our history when we lived under that kind of rule and all the other insane rules and regulations of capitalism.

**PAUL EDWARDS**



# LETTERS

## Principles of the future communist society

NOTHING IS more wrong than the view that we need not worry about the basic structures of the future communist society. On the contrary, only the attractiveness of the capitalist alternative creates, among other conditions, the preconditions for overcoming capitalism.

Despite its enormous destructive effects, the capitalist form of rule and mode of production managed in many ways to bind the majority of the population to itself. Many dependent employees today are of the opinion that capitalism has a number of weaknesses, but that there is no desirable alternative to it in view of the negative experiences with real socialism. Therefore, all efforts must be made to tame the capitalist system and make it socially sustainable.

This pro-capitalist imprint on consciousness, which is inherent in capitalism, can only be lifted if, in addition to the existing discontent and the associated everyday struggles, there is a well-founded and convincing concept of a communist future.

Capitalism contains endogenous levers that point to a post-capitalist society. These include its economic, financial, hunger, poverty, refugee, agricultural and state crises, its climate and environmental catastrophes, its wastefulness, its exploitation and undignified working conditions, its permanent wage pressure, its mass unemployment, its pandemics, its lack of sustainability and plundering of resources, its huge gap between rich and poor, its regional inequality, its technological developments, its overwhelming corporate power, its elbow mentality and its social exclusions and loneliness. But these levers will not bring about a change in the system unless wage-earners act as the gravediggers of capitalism and free themselves from its shackles. An overcoming of capitalism is only possible if the majority of the population loses confidence in the capitalist mode of production and fights for and builds up the communist system against all odds. It is the emancipation struggles of the wage-dependent population that bring about a sense of togetherness, strengthen their consciousness of power and their courage to fight, and break the capitalist shackles.

This gravedigger function arises

- a. by their own unbearable plight,
- b. by the resulting discontent and protest movement,
- c. by the insight into the inability of capitalism to reform,
- d. by the insight into the superiority of a post-capitalist society,
- e. by the existence of a revolutionary workers' party, and
- f. by the subsequent politico-economic struggles of wage earners to overcome the system.

The workers' party has the task of enlightening, convincing, coordinating, showing solutions and supporting the revolutionary struggles.

In view of the negative experiences with real socialism, confidence in the communist society of the future presupposes knowledge of its principles. Marx and Engels themselves did not describe communism in detail, but stated the following principles:

1. the means of production belong to the community,
2. there is a council (direct) democratic society,
3. the economy is organized in a planned and democratic way,

4. income consists only of labor and social income,
5. gainful employment is reduced step by step to a minimum,
6. money is abolished in the long term and everyone can increasingly consume according to his needs.
7. in the transitional period, in the consumer market, money is replaced by labor vouchers, with the value of the goods and the income being based on the labor time incurred.

These principles are to be supplemented today by others, such as zero growth and the circular economy, but they remain the decisive measures by which the capitalist forces of destruction can be overcome.

They are not only valid in the distant future, but are already to be introduced and further developed within capitalism. It is not storming the government or waiting for the distant future, it is direct democratic transformation steps that overcome capitalism and lead to the communist mode of production.

What does this mean in concrete terms?

**First**, direct democracy must be introduced in all spheres of life and extended until it comes to power. Direct-democratic structures must be established in workplaces, companies, daycare centers, schools, universities, the military and retirement homes, and the population's individual and collective self-determination must be substituted for external determination.

The direct-democratic transformation path demands a departure from parliamentary democracy and the struggle for comprehensive direct-democratic forms of work and life. In contrast to radical left and anarchist ideas, the direct-democratic path does not mean abandoning parliamentary work. Parliamentary activities serve the purpose of enlightenment, to implement minor improvements for the broad population and to support extra-parliamentary struggles. However, participation in parliaments excludes participation in government, because the revolutionary left in government has no choice but to defend capitalism and thus abandon the overcoming of the system due to the constraints of the situation.

**Secondly**, it is not green market socialism that is to be striven for, but the repression of the market through an increasing supply of free goods and through the extension of national economic planning. According to the motto: planning as far as possible and market as far as necessary, digital planning systems are to be promoted, tested in practice and used. The market cannot be abolished immediately. It must be pushed back to the extent of free goods and macroeconomic planning expansion.

Taking their cue from bourgeois economics, many leftists criticize the planned economy. They argue that it is inefficient, leads to a scarcity economy and centralization. Under today's technical and political possibilities, however, democratically organized macro-planning is more efficient than the anarchistic market mechanism. It improves the supply and leads to the extension of democratic decision-making processes. Only the democratic planned economy makes it possible to involve everyone in the shaping of the economy, to abolish the crises and unemployment, to avoid the climate catastrophes and to shape the way of work and life in a sustainable, peaceful and just way.

Those who continue to believe in the healing powers of the market (like the neoclassics) and/or in the healing powers of





the capitalist state (like the Keynesians) are on an erroneous path that is incapable of reversing the destructive effects of the capitalist mode of production.

**Thirdly**, a progressive reduction of working hours causes working people to extend their leisure time and thus increasingly to shape their lives according to their own needs and to lead a fulfilled life. If this expansion of leisure time is increasingly coupled with the free supply of goods, a society will develop in which it is no longer money but individual freedom, based on solidarity, that determines well-being.

**Fourth**, the abolition of property and power income leads to a reduction of income differences to a small gap, and income development is determined by productivity progress and income distribution by respective area tariffs. Those who are unable to work for health reasons and who have ended their working lives receive an adequate social income.

**Fifth**, the climate and environmental catastrophes require us to say goodbye to economic growth and to shape the economy in a way that is compatible with the climate and the environment. Since neither is possible under capitalism, an effective climate and environmental policy presupposes a communist society.

For Marx and Engels, communism is both a social goal and a social movement. The principles outlined formulate the set of goals and the movements result from the struggles to abolish the capitalist condition. Marx and Engels did not depict the future post-capitalist society in detail like the utopian socialists. The details will emerge in the transformation process and will change with the historical and regional conditions. But those who renounce the recognition and implementation of the principles of the future communist society will remain in the capitalist swamp and the struggles will not get beyond the critique of capitalism.

The process of direct democratization will not fail because of the resistance of capital, as long as it is supported by the broad population. It is a necessary and successful way to replace the rule of capital by the rule of the people (the dictatorship of the working class). Those who today renounce the direct democratic path and seek their salvation in parliamentary work inevitably end up with Bernstein and his politics of the further development of capitalism.

Only in the practical implementation of communist principles is there a chance to dissolve capitalism and to build a new peaceful, just, crisis-free, environmentally friendly and needs-oriented society.

**Alfred Müller, Germany**

**Reply:** We agree with your criticism of capitalism and that a communist (or, as we normally call it, a socialist) society can only come into being if, and when, a majority have come to want and understand it and have organised themselves democratically to get it. We also agree that the socialist movement should contest elections with a view to entering parliament. However, you seem to be suggesting that some 'communist principles' could be gradually implemented 'within capitalism' by 'direct-democratic steps'; that workers should form more and more democratic councils until the point is reached where they are so widespread, including in the military, that the state is dissolved. We don't think this is a realistic scenario.

No doubt, as more and more 'dependent employees' come to want and understand socialism, they will organise outside parliament in the sort of ways you suggest, both to wage the day-to-day class struggle and to take over and keep production and essential services going once capitalist ownership is ended. But the state cannot be ignored or by-passed as that would leave it, and the coercive power it is able to wield, in the hands of those opposed to socialism. It needs, at the very least, to be taken out of their hands. Incidentally, insistence on the need to win political control is a key omission from your list of Marx and Engels's principles.

This does not involve 'storming the government' in an insurrection. It can be done by turning universal suffrage from an 'instrument of dupey' into an 'instrument of emancipation'. Since you say that socialism can only be established when a majority understand and want it, and also that socialists should contest elections and enter parliament, then a socialist majority outside parliament will reflect itself as a majority in parliament. This, where political democracy exists, will be enough to give the working class political control which they can use to formally abolish capitalist ownership of the means of production, allowing workers in useful production and essential services to take over their workplaces without hindrance and begin to run them on behalf of society.

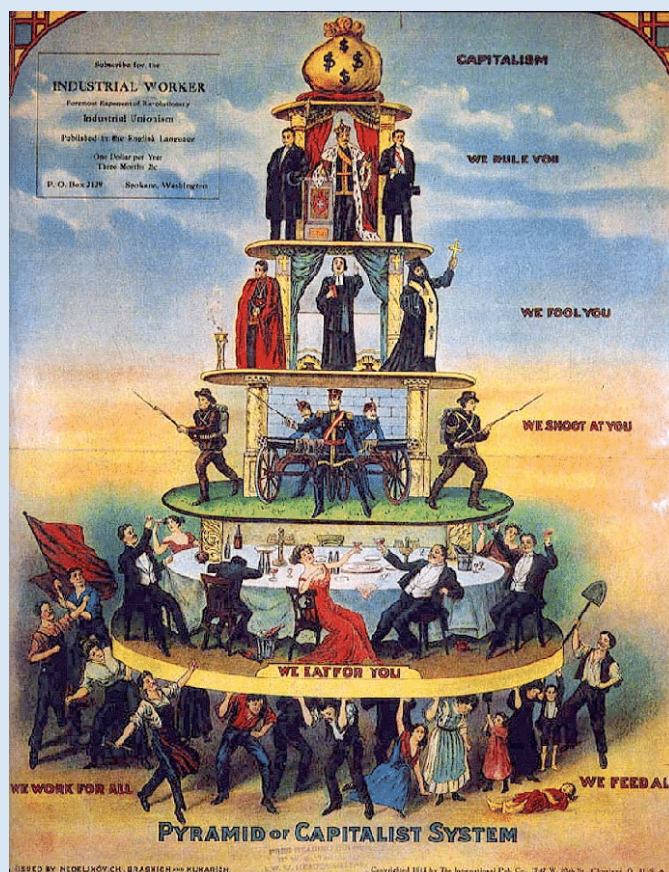
Your list of Marx and Engels's 'principles' is a mixture of principles (the first three) and an obsolete proposal for labour vouchers, as an expedient for dealing with need-based consumption, that would only have been relevant if socialism had been established in the nineteenth century.

It is not clear what 'transitional period' you are talking about – that between capitalism and socialism or that between a first phase of socialism (when distribution according to needs would

not have been possible) and a higher phase (when it would be). Unless you regard labour vouchers as money (which Marx didn't) then it doesn't make sense to envisage money existing in the second period.

In any event, we ourselves have never supported the idea of labour vouchers and have never considered such a system as being either necessary or workable. It wasn't necessary as there were other ways of bridging the gap between there not being enough, and full free distribution. Direct rationing, for instance. That would have avoided the need to give consumer goods a labour-time 'price' and so have a quasi-market for them, with the danger of this degenerating into a real market and an evolution towards state capitalism rather than socialism.

It is now nearly 150 years since labour vouchers were first suggested. In the meantime the problem they were put forward to deal with no longer exists. Socialism (the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources by society as a whole) can be introduced just as soon as a socialist-minded majority wins political control. Capitalist ownership today is not individual possession but through limited liability companies and corporations. Since these are legal entities created by states they can all be abolished in one go. Similarly, the forces of production have developed to such an extent since 1875 that, right from the beginning, free distribution according to need can be introduced immediately for the vast majority of goods and services. So, despite what you say, money and markets *can* be abolished immediately. Today socialism can be a post-scarcity society from the start –Editors.



## COOKING THE BOOKS

### Accumulate, accumulate!

In an article in the *Times* (14 July) David Smith, Economics Editor of the *Sunday Times*, mentions that he is revising a book of his which has a chapter on Marx:

'Marx, you may recall, thought he had pinned down what drives capitalists. As he put it: "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets . . . Accumulate for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake." By accumulation, Marx meant investment and that the tendency of capitalists to over-invest condemned them to a future of declining profits and, ultimately, the fundamental crisis of capitalism.'

This is accurate enough until the word 'investment'. After that it's wrong.

Marx certainly thought that investment to make profits (most re-invested in expanding productive capacity, hence 'the accumulation of capital') was the driving force of capitalism. In a boom, capitalists in some key industry tend to 'over-invest', resulting in overproduction in relation to its market; this has a knock-on effect on other industries, causing a general slump in production. But this is not the end of the road for capitalism. It is a phase of the boom/slump cycle that is part of the way the capitalist system works. Slump conditions, by eventually restoring profitability (as by the clearance of stock,

depreciation of capital, low interest rates, lower real wages), pave the way for a recovery leading to a boom, and the cycle repeats itself.

What is ironic about Smith's criticism is that Marx would have agreed with the article's heading 'Without investment the recovery we're seeing is built on sand' precisely because he saw investment (for profit) as the driving force of capitalism.

In writing 'the tendency of capitalists to over-invest condemned them to a future of declining profits', Smith is presumably referring to what Marx called, in chapter 13 of Volume 3 of *Capital*, 'the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall' (often miscalled, by opponents and some supporters of Marx, 'the law of the falling rate of profit').

Marx's point here was that as capital accumulation proceeded there was a tendency for a greater and greater proportion of new capital to be invested in plant and machinery relative to labour power, whose application in production was the only source of surplus value and so of profits.

Marx called the ratio of surplus value to labour power purchased (the amount of profit produced per worker) 'the rate of exploitation'. The rate of profit was the ratio of profit to total capital. If the rate of exploitation remains constant, it follows mathematically that, when

production becomes more and more 'capital intensive', then the rate of profit will fall – because the amount of profit comes to be related to a larger and larger amount of capital.

In practice, however, the rate of exploitation does not remain constant but increases; in which case the rate of profit does not necessarily fall. It depends on how the rate of exploitation moves. It was because there was no way of predicting this that Marx spoke of the fall in the rate of profit being a tendency rather than an iron law.

Smith is confusing the rate of profit with the amount of profit. Marx pointed out that it was possible for the amount of profits to increase even if the rate fell. In fact this is what he expected to happen as capital accumulation meant that more workers were employed and so more profits were produced. He even called this a 'law', writing 'this double-edged law of a decrease in the *rate* of profit and a simultaneous increase in the absolute *mass* of profit arising from the same causes' (his emphasis).

Smith is mistaken, then, in saying Marx expected capitalism to end in a 'fundamental crisis' due to fewer and fewer profits being made.



# PROPER GANDER

## Between the Lines

MICHAELLA MCCOLLUM, when aged 19, left her home in rural Northern Ireland for the flashy bars and clubs of Ibiza. She soon found that its clubbing culture was fuelled not only by booze, but also by drugs, especially cocaine, traded openly but illegally. Michaella met 'a really easy going' man and, while at a party on an LSD trip, agreed to pick up a package for him which she realised contained drugs. The following morning she was sent off to Barcelona on the Spanish mainland, where she was surprised to find that she and another woman, Melissa Reid, would be travelling on to Lima under the guise of being tourists. Text messages from one of the gang she was now involved with aimed to reassure her and distract her from how much she had lost control. The two women collected the package from their contact, which turned out to be 11 kilos of cocaine disguised as sachets of porridge. As Michaella said, 'if you think taking coke is a rush, try walking a million quid's worth of the stuff into an international airport'. Nervously lugging heavy suitcases across the concourse drew the attention of the security guards, and the two were caught.

BBC Three's documentary series *High: Confessions Of An Ibiza Drug Mule* told Michaella's story, with a caption at the start of each episode describing it as 'based on the testimony of a convicted drug smuggler'. Alongside Michaella detailing what happened, the series included dramatisations and interviews with lawyers, journalists and people involved in drug trafficking, although Melissa presumably chose not to take part.

The police didn't believe the women's story that they had been coerced into smuggling the drugs, and they were locked in a grim cell to await their trial. The media latched on to the story, dubbing the women the 'Peru Two', and reporters flew out to South America, one even posing as Michaella's boyfriend to get to see her in jail. At their trial they admitted they were complicit in order to get a lighter sentence, which was set at six years and eight months imprisonment after a plea bargain. A reporter from the Belfast Telegraph, Patricia Devlin, said that the 'public mood' changed after the women confessed they knew what they were doing. The 'Peru Two' then became a silly season story,

jokey memes, and a target for criticism.

They were sent to Ancón 2, a crowded, oppressive maximum-security prison north of Lima; 'everything about it was toxic' said Michaella. To try and make her time there more bearable, she learnt some Spanish, worked in the jail's salon and was voted in as her block's representative. She made enough money from prison work to afford the bribes to bring her parole court date forward and get the necessary proofs towards it. Her release was granted after almost three years behind bars, and Melissa was able to leave soon afterwards. Michaella says that her story is a lesson for others, and the documentary ends on an uplifting note about learning and growing, with appropriately rousing music.

In framing what happened as a personal journey, the documentary tries to turn the wider issues into incidental details along the way. Money is really a main player of the story. Michaella herself said she was motivated by financial gain, although what she was promised was much, much less than what the higher-up dealers make. According to lawyer Alexandro Tirelli, the cocaine business in Ibiza alone involves up to half a million Euros each day. This is why the cartel wouldn't have been too concerned at losing even the 11kg the 'Peru Two' were found with, as to them, this was only a small amount. That the women were easily captured suggests that it was expected, acting as a useful distraction while larger amounts of drugs were smuggled through. The women were manipulated by the cartel throughout, after being identified as impressionable and groomed in a calculated, well-

rehearsed way, still under implied threats when in prison. They were used as a means to make money, which happens in mainstream employment, of course, the difference being that here, the methods used are more extreme due to the high financial stakes and the drugs industry's illegality. So the other main player in this story is the legal system which the industry has to work around, embodied by the judges, lawyers and police, and with Ancón 2 as its squalid end-point for those convicted.

The law is also shaped by money, especially in how a case's outcome can depend on how much the defendant can pay out. The legal framework is there to protect the state's interests, and limit the wealth and power of cartels competing with the elite. Drug laws aren't officially presented to us like that, though, being instead supposedly there to protect the public against the risks of drugs, dangers which are amplified by their being manufactured in secret, and likely diluted with other substances to reduce costs. Even if drugs were made legal, as they have been to varying extents elsewhere, their production would still be driven by maximising profits for whoever owns the means to make them in bulk, and capitalism's pressures would still push some people into problematic use. Both the money system and the legal system, as integral parts of capitalism, have shaped the drug industry and drug culture into the dark, seedy scene which Michaella and Melissa fell victim to.

**MIKE FOSTER**



Credit: BBC

# REVIEWS

## Superstitions



**Superstition.**  
**A Very Short Introduction.**  
By Stuart Vyse. Oxford University Press. 140 pages.

Superstition is basically a belief in magic, that future events can be influenced by invoking or placating some mysterious force. On one level it is relatively harmless, as in the case of lucky charms, star signs, and not walking under a ladder.

Vyse shows that it has a more sinister history. In the West for over 1500 years superstition meant practices that tried to invoke mysterious forces other than those of the dominant religion, which led to those involved being persecuted and/or tortured. He cites the case of Ancient Rome where, when there was an emperor who believed in the traditional Roman gods, Christianity was denounced as a superstition. But, when an emperor embraced Christianity and proclaimed it as the state religion, the boot was on the other foot and the old religious practices became superstition. In fact, both were based on the supposed existence of mysterious forces (gods, angels, demons, spirits of the dead). Superstition is not just part of religion but other practices such as fortune telling, curses and consulting astrologers.

From the 16th century onwards Protestants denounced the practices of the Roman Catholic Church as superstitions, but they still retained some, such as the belief in God and the Devil and that praying to their god could work; and they engaged in more witch-hunting than the Catholics.

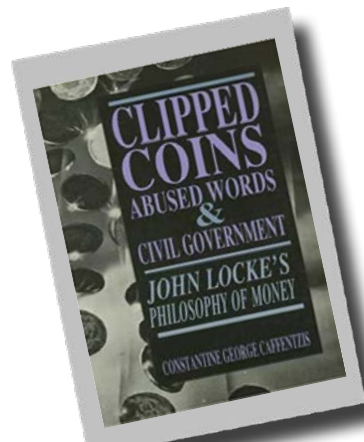
The next step was the rise of Science which led to some regarding all religion as superstition. Vyse is reluctant to go

along with this, letting religion off lightly despite the fact that the two religions most followed in the world – Catholicism and Islam – encourage and justify superstitious practices, the former in particular. He sees the main problem today as superstition as ‘bad science’ based on unproven mysterious physical forces as in homeopathy, acupuncture and other quack remedies.

Vyse is a psychologist and discusses why some individuals are superstitious. One theory is that it has to do with a feeling of not being in control while personal superstitious practices (gestures, lucky numbers, etc) give an illusion of control. He cites experiments which have indicated this, with superstitions being more prevalent amongst women and the worst off. If so, this would mean there would be a lot less superstition in a socialist society.

**ALB**

## Capitalist philosopher



**Clipped Coins, Abused Words, and Civil Government.**  
By George Caffentzis.  
Pluto Press. 2021.

This is a slightly revised, second edition of a book that originally came out in 1989 in which Caffentzis argues that John Locke, who lived from 1632 to 1704 and whose writings all university students of politics and philosophy are required to study, was ‘the philosopher of primitive accumulation’. Even supporters of capitalism recognise, in fact hail, Locke as an early advocate and ideological defender of their system. This is because of the justification he provided for the private ownership of land and industry and his view that the basic role

of governments is to protect property ownership.

Locke’s argument was simple enough. Accepting the traditional Christian view that God originally gave the Earth to humanity for its members to use to satisfy the needs of all of them and not to waste, he argued that in a ‘state of nature’, i.e. before governments and laws were established, individuals worked the land to satisfy their needs and were entitled to what they mixed their labour with – his so-called ‘labour theory of property’. However, at first this was only up to the point where their needs were satisfied; if they produced more than they could consume themselves, they couldn’t let it go to rot but were obliged to give it away or let others use it. This changed, Locke went on to argue, with the emergence of money as a means of exchange and a store of value as it meant that any surplus could now be converted into something that would not rot – the precious metals silver and gold.

This – what Caffentzis calls a ‘state of money’ – led to a ‘social contract’ between people to set up a government to protect the property of property-owners, especially of the wealthier among them. Locke used the ridiculous, in fact outrageous, argument that in agreeing to the use of money the non-wealthy had tacitly agreed to its consequence of ‘a disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth’ and ‘an inequality of private possessions.’ This, argues Caffentzis, shows that Locke supported not only some members of society becoming landless but also the accumulation of wealth in the form of money, the two conditions Marx pointed to for capitalism to get going as an economic system.

Locke was not just a philosopher. He was involved in government. For instance, he drew up a constitution for the Carolinas, then still a British colony, which condoned chattel slavery. He was also involved in monetary policy, a discussion of his view on which is the theme of Caffentzis’s book. The main currency in England in Locke’s time was silver coins of a given weight. By the mid-1690s, due to clipping, most no longer contained their face-value weight of silver. To remedy this, which had become a hindrance to trade, it was decided to call in all existing silver coins, melt them down and re-coin them. The question was at what rate. Some wanted to devalue the pound and the shilling by defining them as a smaller amount of silver. Locke was against this. Caffentzis interprets this as meaning that Locke realised that, without a currency



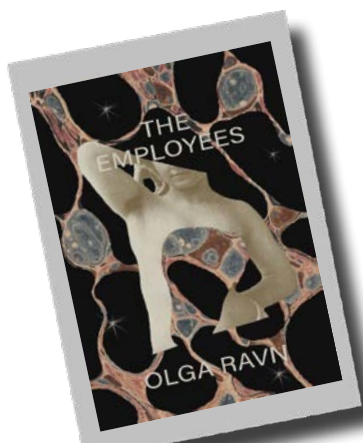
free from government manipulation, Britain would never come to dominate world trade. He also links this to Locke's theories of knowledge and language.

Caffentzis presents his case in a clear, easy-to-follow style. The same cannot be said of the 23-page Introduction by Paul Rekert. This should be skipped or read afterwards in case its academese puts you off going on to read Caffentzis himself.

In a Preface Harry Cleaver writes that 'escaping money has only recently returned to the agenda of revolutionaries' as events 'have made growing numbers of those looking beyond capitalism conclude that decommodification of life and escape from money are essential to the conceptualization and building of new, non-capitalist worlds' (that could be said simpler too). Which is all to the good, though for some revolutionaries it has never been off the agenda.

**ALB**

## A Novel Workplace



**The Employees: a Workplace Novel of the 22nd Century.**  
By Olga Ravn. Lolly £12.99.  
(Translated from Danish by Martin Aitken)

The workplace in question is a spaceship, with a crew of humans and humanoids, which has travelled far from Earth and is orbiting the planet New Discovery. Some peculiar objects from the planet have been taken onboard, objects with strange fragrances and which are given unofficial names, such as 'the Gift' and 'the Half-Naked Bean'.

The novel begins with a statement by a committee that interviewed the employees, which is full of management-speak, such as how the impact of the mysterious objects 'might be said to precipitate reduction or enhancement of performance', so 'illuminating their specific consequences for production'.

Gradually the reader discovers why the committee exists and what the reactions of the workers have been. This applies to

both humans and humanoids, and it is not always obvious to which category an individual belongs ('Does it say in your files what I am?', asks one interviewee). One humanoid says they were 'made for work', and cannot understand how a human could be more than their work, yet a human says their job means everything to them. One human misses shopping back on Earth, while another wants to hold a child in their arms again, and a third is grateful for being able to spend time with a hologram of their son. One humanoid feels sad, and one human prefers to spend time with the humanoids. Another interviewee (human? humanoid?) begins to feel disloyal towards the organisation behind the voyage: 'it pains me because there's no place for me other than inside the organisation'.

A central theme of the book, then, is the role and importance of work in a person's life, in a setting where it seems there is little else to do other than work. Humans and humanoids become harder to distinguish, even though they stop talking

to each other. One worker notes that it takes twenty years to produce a capable human employee, and a lot can 'go wrong' in that time, whereas it takes just two years to produce a humanoid worker. Humanoid bodies are more valuable than human ones, being more durable and open to software updates.

The organisation's board of directors is primarily concerned to preserve the ship and its cargo, especially the weird objects, and it turns out that the directors are themselves humanoid, though this was not conveyed to the human crew, as they would be likely to react more positively to fellow humans.

All in all, an interesting if difficult reflection on such topics as the role of work, what makes someone human, what activities other than work are needed. Not a socialist science fiction novel, but one with noteworthy comments on some aspects of capitalism (even though that word is not used).

**PB**

## What use are politicians?

WE ARE lucky in the West, there's no denying it. We don't have a war to face, we're not slaves, we're not starving, our kids get an education, public health, a choice of food, a measure of security and comfort.

But are we having a good time? Are any of us? Many of us don't have jobs, or careers, or prospects. Those of us who do work are forced into the regimentation of the workplace, of bosses, of timesheets and production quotas, reports, key performance indicators, the nine to five, the bills, the mortgage, the stress. Our kids are now being made to work harder and from a younger age to become skilled and employable. Kids of five are now being given homework.

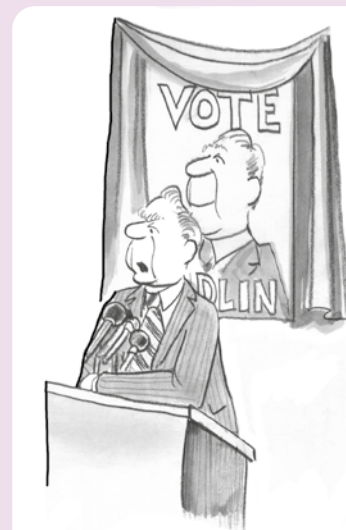
We live in the world of capitalism, and everybody knows that capitalism is not perfect, that it has problems. Everybody knows that what we have to try to do is fix the problems. That's why we vote for politicians. They're supposed to be fixing it for us.

Capitalism is like a car that's permanently on blocks, with some politician underneath it and another one in the bonnet, shaking his head saying 'Oh dear oh dear, that looks bad, that does.' But what can you do? Capitalism may not be perfect but it's the only thing we have and after all it does work, sort of.

'Sort of'? We have the most technologically advanced society that's ever existed. But when it comes to doing something useful like feeding the people in it, or limiting pollution and global warming, we can only manage 'sort of.'

Politicians talk about this problem or that issue – within capitalism. The real reason why politicians all sound the same, and why people find it so hard to be interested in politics, is that they all have this same frame of reference. If you question capitalism itself you automatically put yourself outside that frame of reference, and that's when the politics of capitalism suddenly becomes meaningless to you.

The experts in charge of decision-making are not 'expert' at all. No more than you are. You keep paying the bills but the car never gets fixed.



**"I'm a snivelling ignoramus with questionable hygiene ... but I'm still better than that other guy!"**

Illustration 20677266 / Political Cartoon © Andrew Genn | Dreamstime.com

# 50 Years Ago

## China and America

After more than twenty years of waging a propaganda war against each other and working up suspicions and hatred among their respective working classes, the American and Chinese mobster politicians are to seek some kind of reconciliation.

To those numbered in their millions all over the world, who mouthed and continue to mouth the slogans of Chinese capitalism denouncing “American imperialism”, and equally to all those who mouthed the phrases of American capitalism denouncing “Chinese expansionism”, it must seem as bewildering as were the Catholic church to suddenly get together with the League of Militant Atheists. After mountains



of vitriolic propaganda, oceans of hate and the widespread belief that a real and unbridgeable ideological chasm separates the two sides, what explanation can there be for such a momentous reversal of attitudes?

Such about-faces are far from unheard of in the double dealing world of lies and hypocrisy which is capitalism. Stalin and the Bolshevik heads of Soviet capitalism got together with Nazi Germany and, after denouncing the war as imperialist, wound up on the side of British and American imperialism against their former Nazi friends.

Conversely, Churchill who had spent twenty-five years denouncing the Soviet regime as a “cancerous growth”, wound up as head of British capitalism, supporting Soviet state-capitalism against Hitler and Mussolini (whom he had formerly admired).

Russia and China are capitalist countries, whose foreign policies, quests for world markets, world investments and military power only make sense when seen as part of the world-wide rivalry that characterises capitalism everywhere. (...)

Regardless of the public face they show, Russia, China and America will watch each other very closely. They are each in the same game for what they can get. The fact that friendly relations may exist for a time between each of them, should delude nobody. Trade does not mean trust. They will continue to spy on each other. Investments do not receive peace. They will each maintain their nuclear and other weapons.

Only the working class can get rid of this system of mutual suspicion, rivalry and war. This will involve establishing a world community where trade and investments and military force will have no place. Neither will the cynicism and hypocrisy of politicians.

**(Socialist Standard, September 1971)**

# School Report

The Socialist Party’s Summer Schools have been held at Fircroft College in Birmingham for many years, although last year the pandemic shifted the event online. So it was with both relief and eagerness that we were able to return to Fircroft in August for a weekend around the theme ‘After The Revolution: Life In A Socialist World’. Just over thirty of us made the journey to Brum, both regulars and new faces, party members and others interested in socialism.

The event included five sessions, starting on the Friday evening with Richard Field, who in his thought-provoking talk ‘Socialist Recipes’, considered some of the freedoms which will come in a socialist society where everyone has equal access to goods and services. The following morning, Glenn Morris discussed William Morris’ novel set in a post-capitalist society, *News From Nowhere*, ending his talk with a well-received update he had written, a conversation looking back on the struggles of living in capitalism. The topic of utopias and science fiction was continued by Leon Rozanov, who asked what ideas about a socialist future can be found in works such as Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, *Walden Two* by B F Skinner, Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and the series set in the ‘Noon Universe’ by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky. For Saturday evening’s session, Carla Dee ran a fun workshop where we could use our imaginations to design the kind of socialist town or high street we would like to see, with features such as free 3D printer booths and communal allotments. Paddy Shannon rounded off the weekend by

asking us to consider an alternative model of democratic decision-making, based not on elected representatives but opting-in to decide on whatever issues we can relate to. Each of the talks was followed by plenty of lively and thoughtful discussion. As the first ‘hybrid meeting’ for the Socialist Party, the talks were broadcast live through the Discord platform, allowing those who couldn’t make it to Birmingham (some in other countries and continents) to take part. Recordings of the talks are now available on our website.

Between the sessions, there was plenty of time to explore the venue’s gardens, browse the bookstall, read the event’s publication and look at the exhibition on what the Party has said about a future socialist society over the decades. In particular, the weekend was also a great opportunity to catch up with friends and comrades who we haven’t been able to see in person for much too long. After other meetings, we have to make the journey back home or, more recently, just switch off our computers. Being a residential event, Summer School lets us chat over a meal or while sitting in the lounge until the small hours, with only a short amble to our rooms afterwards. And Fircroft College is an ideal setting, with excellent facilities and catering, and a timely ethos of reducing its impact on the environment. When the event came to a close on Sunday, we left with happy memories of an enjoyable weekend in good company. Plans have already begun for next year’s Summer School, with Fircroft booked for 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August.



# World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

To join contact the admin at  
[spbg.discord@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spbg.discord@worldsocialism.org).

## SEPTEMBER 2021 EVENTS

**Sunday 5 September 12 noon (BST)**

Central Branch: Regular first Sunday of the month meeting

**Sundays at 19.30 (IST)**

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

**Friday 3 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)**

**Did you see the news?**

Host: Howard Moss

General current affairs discussion

**Friday 10 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)**

**"Keep out the oss road"**

Speaker: Dave Coggan

A not too serious journey through the Black Country, taking in its history, culture, peculiarities, and dialect. Stopping off to visit its manufacturing, its canals, its beauty spots and, of course, its folk. No passport needed!

**Friday 17 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)**

**From socialist calculation to political ecology**

Guest Speaker: John O'Neill

Ludwig von Mises claimed that 'socialist calculation' (as calculation without money) was irrational. The current ecological crises show that it is capitalist calculation that is irrational and harmful.

**Friday 24 September No meeting**

**Sunday 26 September 10am BST (GMT + 1).**

Close up with state capitalism in China

Andy Thomas talks about his personal experience of doing business in China, where tightening bureaucratic control is clashing with the aspirations of the rising capitalist class.

**Friday 1 October 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)**

**Did you see the news?**

Host: Paddy Shannon

General current affairs discussion

**Sunday 3 October 12.00 noon BST (GMT + 1)**

Central Branch: Regular first Sunday of the month meeting.

**Yorkshire Discussion Group**

Party members, sympathisers, readers of this journal, we are pleased to advise the formation of a Yorkshire Discussion Group.

If you are living in the Yorkshire area and are interested in the Socialist Party case you are invited to attend our forums which currently alternate on a monthly basis either on

Zoom or physical meetings in Leeds. For further information contact: [fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk)



**Cardiff Street Stall,  
Capitol Shopping Centre,  
Queen Street (Newport Road end). 1pm-3pm every Saturday,  
weather permitting.**

## 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

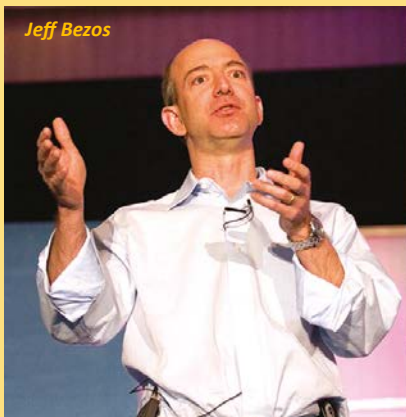
the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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.



## It's not rocket science

Following his trip to the edge of space, billionaire Branson asked us to 'Imagine a world where people of all ages, all backgrounds from anywhere, of any gender, or any ethnicity, have equal access to space' (free-media.info, 18 July). Indeed. Iain M Banks's Culture series is a highly recommended imagining of such a post-capitalist/scarcity society. But to get there, we need to abolish capitalism on Earth. We could make a start by understanding where one-time Democrat Party Ohio State Senator, Assistant Professor Nina Turner, errs. She recently criticised billionaire Bezos who, following his first rocket trip, said 'I also want to thank every Amazon employee and every Amazon customer because you guys paid for all of this.' But the 'Blessed By God! Wife, Mother, Sister, Host of Hello Somebody Podcast, Ohio State Senator, Professor' @ninaturner (20 July) disagrees: 'Correction: employees didn't pay for this — their wages were stolen to pay for a billionaire's space vacation. Jeff Bezos can thank his workers by treating them with dignity and paying them fair wages....and he can thank us all by paying his damn taxes.' Oh no, not again — a call for 'fair' wages and taxation! There is nothing fair about wage slavery. We work, they take and do their best to avoid paying taxes which serve to maintain this system of legalised robbery. On the 25 July Turner tweeted to remind us that the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 has remained unchanged since 2009. An earlier re-tweet proclaims, correctly, another world is possible. She, unlike Marx, fails to join the dots. He wanted us to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon us, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto: 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work' we ought to inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword: 'Abolition of the wages system'.



Jeff Bezos



Nina Turner

## A Professor of the dismal science

'If the Socialist Party of Great Britain is an authority on such things, it is official: in light of recent anti-communist protests and civil unrest, Cuba has been demoted to "Not Real Socialism" and reclassified, along with the USSR and other failed socialist experiments, as "actually state capitalism"' (independent.org, 20 July). The author of this ahistorical drivel is Art Carden, an Associate Professor of Economics at Samford University. For the record, in the December 1906 edition of the *Socialist Standard* we stated: 'We are not concerned with State capitalism. We are concerned with Socialism. Socialism is the negation of capitalism. Consequently State capitalism cannot be the ideal of any Socialist. Ergo those who preach State capitalism or collective exploitation are not Socialists.' Further, we said Russia had state capitalism in 1920 and similarly Cuba in 1968. Ironically, the

island's present dictator made a speech recently (liberationnews.org, 11 July) that was surprisingly succinct and free from mention of communism or socialism! This did not deter the loony left, eg. workers.org, from proclaiming 'U.S. HANDS OFF CUBA! END THE BLOCKADE! DEFEND SOCIALIST CUBA!' or the rabid right from declaring 'Cuba is a tragic case, but it is not our problem.... Except for China and North Korea, after the fall of the Soviet Union communist regimes have all ultimately collapsed' (vdare.com, 19 July). Even the moribund middle contributed: e.g. 'Biden Says Communism Is A 'Universally Failed System,' And Socialism Is No 'Useful Substitute'' (dailycaller.com, 15 July).

## Doctor in need of a second opinion

Another professor, Jody Rawles, M.D., writes: 'Homelessness is complex...

Anybody claiming to have a plan to fix this problem with only one remedy is like a mechanic claiming to be able to overhaul your engine with only one tool — it won't work' (yahoo.com, 20 July). Yes, homelessness is a complex issue. For every homeless person there is a raft of interrelated reasons why they may be in that situation. Some are simple: loss of housing through relationship breakdowns, inability to pay for housing, drink, drugs, mental health issues, abuse and domestic violence. For some, all they really need is a house or flat. For others, more complex social help is required from specialists perhaps in drink and drug rehabilitation, or social workers to support individuals through crises. The US-based professor of psychiatry and human behaviour recognizes that individual human needs can be complex as well as unique, but he is

clearly ignorant that we are existing in a sick social system which responds only to market rather than human needs. Consider, there are on any given night over 500,000 homeless in the US alongside over 17 million vacant homes. The Ending Homelessness Act of 2019 which provides additional funding for, and otherwise addresses, assistance

to homeless individuals and families will fail. There is in fact a housing shortage for those most in need. Nearly 150 years ago Frederick Engels wrote: 'This shortage is not something peculiar to the present; it is not even one of the sufferings peculiar to the modern proletariat in contradistinction to all earlier oppressed classes. On the contrary, all oppressed classes in all periods suffered more or less uniformly from it.' Engels saw that there was no possibility of a rational approach to housing within capitalism. 'As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself' (*The Housing Question*, 1872).