

World Socialist



BE REALISTIC: DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE.

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Introduction



The *World Socialist* is the official quarterly publication of the World Socialist Party of the United States, featuring regular contributions from other parties in the World Socialist Movement.

Founded in 1916 — 12 years after our first sister party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain — the WSPUS still stands for the original conception of socialism and firmly against its reformist and state capitalist perversions. We understand that socialism is nothing less than a moneyless, commodityless, wageless, classless, leaderless, stateless, global society. All natural resources would be owned in common, with production being directly for use and products being distributed according to need. It can only be established democratically by an absolute majority of citizens who understand and want its establishment.

We hope this journal will illuminate many of our current problems, their causes, and — more importantly — their solutions.

Editorial

The UN's IPCC released their Sixth Assessment Report on August 7 and UN Secretary-General António Guterres called it "a code red for humanity." One of the many take-aways of the report is that warmer oceans and higher sea levels caused by climate change will lead to intense storms becoming more frequent — such as the Category 4 Hurricane Ida, which hit Louisiana this past Sunday — noting that the proportion of Category 3–5 hurricanes has rapidly increased over the last 40 years, along with more intense rainfall and flooding, such as the floods which killed more than 200 people in Belgium and Germany earlier this summer. President Biden pledged to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, which is almost

double our previous target under the 2015 Paris Agreement, in which the Obama administration committed to cutting emissions at least 26% below 2005 levels by 2025 — a goal which the U.S. currently isn't even halfway to meeting. Even with this clear communication of urgency, if I had to bet \$1 guessing whether this new commitment is just empty posturing that'll inevitably lead to the can being kicked further down the road, I'm pretty sure I'd win that dollar.

Aside from that, easily the biggest news piece right now is that President Biden finally pulled out the last of our troops from Afghanistan, marking the end of the longest war in U.S. history. While this definitely doesn't mean the end of U.S.

involvement in Afghanistan entirely, since the CIA will undoubtedly still command the Coast Protection Force and the National Directorate of Security's Special Forces in the country, the immediate question is whether this is less of a retraction from imperialism and more of a re-focusing of attention and resources to what the U.S. government sees as the rising threat of China. With Iran soon becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization — which is sort of like an Asian NATO — joining China, Russia, India, and Pakistan, among other countries, tensions may run even higher geopolitically. One can only hope that the majority of humanity realizes world socialism is our only solution before the climate crisis or political tensions boil over.

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Paris Commune 1871

BY JORDAN LEVI

A brief analysis of possibly the first serious attempt at a dictatorship of the proletariat

May 28 marks the 150th anniversary since the French Army captured the Communards' final positions, officially marking the end of the Paris Commune, the first living example of workers in control of political power. Preceded by the Franco-Prussian War, which ended after Prussian forces besieged Paris for over four months, the Commune began on March 18, 1871, following a failed attempt by the French Army to seize 400 cannons that the Government of National Defence deemed 'state property', even though Parisians themselves paid for the cannons via a subscription. The French Army retreated to Versailles and Paris's National Guard then took control of the city for over two months before the French Army could gather enough reinforcements to return and slaughter the Communards during Bloody Week. Along with the Prussian Army, who'd just defeated the French, they injured as many as 10,000 Communards and massacred as many as another 10,000, with 147 alone being shot at what's now called Communards' Wall in Père Lachaise cemetery the day before the French and Prussian armies fully suppressed the uprising. The French Army captured over 43,000



This painting is called 'A Street in Paris in May 1871' by Maximilien Luce

prisoners during and immediately after Bloody Week, 13,500 of whom were either sentenced to imprisonment, deportation, forced labour, or death.

The Paris Commune arguably stands out as the first peek at what the last phase of capitalism might have looked like, as well as what challenges the working class might face in attempting to surpass it. Though the Commune was ultimately foiled, events like this are always worth analysing for any lessons that can be learned, whether good or bad, and applied to the future.

The Good

One of the best aspects of the Commune was that it was leaderless. Leaders necessarily imply followers placing all their faith in them, even though no one's infallible. Having a leader also allows an easy target to be picked off, incapacitating their followers at the drop of a hat. Rather than leaders, the Commune had mandated delegates, elected by the Communards

themselves, who were recallable any moment the people felt a delegate wasn't carrying out their will — a direct democracy. They also had plans to implement the same structure of self-government across the rural areas of France, having district assemblies in the central towns and having those send delegates to the National Delegation in Paris — decentralised self-government. Magistrates and judges were elected and immediately revocable, as well.

The Commune also passed a decree which implemented a separation of church and state, as well as another allowing everyone to attend school free of charge, with some arrondissements giving out free school supplies, clothes, and food for children — mutual aid. The police were also made revocable, and they abolished conscription, along with the standing army, declaring the National Guard — which included all citizens able to bear arms — as the Commune's only armed force. Much to the surprise of the bourgeois government,

there was no violence between Communards during the entire two months. Pensions were also granted to the unmarried companions and children of national guardsmen killed in active service. The death penalty was abolished and the guillotine was even brought out by the National Guard and publicly burned as the crowd celebrated.

It's said that the highest salary given to an employee of the Commune was 6,000 francs, though that claim has been contested. Regardless, they abolished child labour, as well as night work for bakers, since it's very difficult to get sleep while you're cooking bread. Employees were given the right to take over and run any businesses that were abandoned by their

owners and any fines imposed by employers on their employees were prohibited. All workmen's tools and household items that were given to pawn shops during the siege, valued up to 20 francs, were returned for free and, later, the Commune ordered the closure of all pawn shops themselves, since they were deemed a private exploitation of labour. There was a moratorium on all rents during the siege, meaning they were supposed to be paid back afterward, but the Commune forgave all rent for homes from October 1870 through April 1871, with any amounts already paid counting instead towards future rent, along with a postponement of commercial debt obligations, and the abolition of interest on any debts.

The Bad

It's much easier to play Monday morning quarterback with uprisings rather than actually participate in them, but it's always important to take a critical look at these kinds of situations to parse out any decisions made due to bad circumstances from those made due to bad foresight. One of the first that stands out is the fact that, despite many women playing important roles in the Commune, they weren't allowed to vote in the Commune elections. Only three countries had ever granted women suffrage before this, but — considering the fact that the Communards were seeking economic equality — it wouldn't have been much of an ideological leap to extend that equality to women, too. An-

This painting is called 'The Execution of Varlin' by Maximilien Luce



other drawback was the fact that they opted to keep the Commune Council's meetings secret, citing war with the bourgeois government as their reason. They obviously should've tried their best to prevent any sensitive information from getting back to the French Army, though perhaps a reasonable middle ground could've been reached.

Aside from those decisions, there were a couple made that were pretty useless. One was the adoption of the French Republican Calendar. Considering the Commune was

still at war, finagling with the date should have been the *last* thing on anyone's mind, if only because it could complicate communications with allies outside the city. Communards also took to burning various buildings and monuments, two of the most prominent being the Vendôme Column and the home of Adolphe Thiers, the chief executive of the French government during the Commune. While individuals may decide to do that themselves, the only things the Commune administration should have been focused on at that time were keeping Parisians alive and surviving as

a political institution— and burning buildings assists with neither of those.

As far as the financial decisions go, the Communards decided to take a loan from the Rothschild Bank to cover their expenses, rather than seize the 254 million francs in gold coins and banknotes left inside the vaults of the Bank of France — essentially leaving their greatest bargaining chip on the table. Had the Commune threatened to collapse the French currency, they might have got Thiers to do anything they wanted. Not only did they neglect



to exploit that opportunity, but if employees took over a business, they also recognised the previous owner's right to compensation. Employers rob employees for their surplus value and, by virtue of that alone, would have no reasonable right to compensation in this circumstance. That money could instead be used for more mutual aid.

Another big issue was censorship and repression. The Commune banned multiple pro-Versailles newspapers and created a Committee of Public Safety to hunt down and imprison enemies of the Commune, in the same vein as the Committee of the same name which committed the infamous Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Considering how many times efforts like this had taken a turn for the worse before, the Commune should have avoided them at all costs. They also issued a decree which accused the Catholic Church of 'complicity in the crimes of the monarchy', arresting roughly 200 church officials afterward, along with another decree later called the Decree on Hostages, which stated that for every prisoner of war or Commune official that was executed by the French Army, the Commune would execute three hostages. However, it's worth noting that, despite this decree and the fact that the French Army executed multiple Communards beforehand, the Commune executed none of their hostages until after the start of Bloody Week — and even then it was only 63, which pales in comparison to the roughly 10,000 Communards murdered in cold blood during that same week by the French and Prussian armies.

Arguably, there were also more than a few mistakes made on the military front. A major setback happened when the National Guard tried to march on the French Army in Versailles. The National Guard took power after the French soldiers refused to fire on them once instructed to during the soldiers' attempted seizure of the cannons. The Communards naively assumed the same thing would happen again and advanced without cavalry, artillery, food, ammunition, or ambulances. Not only that, but they didn't even scout the area ahead, subsequently passing a line of forts on the way that they thought were occupied by more national guardsmen but which had actually just been re-occupied by the French Army, causing the National Guard to suffer heavy artillery fire as a result.

As the French Army was returning to recapture Paris, divisions arose within the Commune about whether to give absolute priority to military defence, or to political and social freedoms and reforms. This decision honestly should've been a no-brainer, considering that any reforms would be undone if the Commune were to be drowned in blood. A key fort, Fort d'Issy, was captured by the French Army and the National Guard left the fortifications undefended by one part of the city wall at Point-du-Jour, allowing 60,000 soldiers to enter the city within a few hours. Without an overall planned defence or many barricades having been prepared in advance, it quickly turned into a bloodbath. To add insult to injury, when the Commune Council found out the walls of Paris had been breached, they were holding a trial for a former General — something

that clearly could've waited until the war was over — and the last military commander they'd chosen, Louis Charles Delescluze, was a journalist who had absolutely zero military experience.

Most importantly, though, even if the Communards had done everything correctly, they were still acting prematurely. Not only was the majority of the working class still not socialist, but the majority of the Communards weren't socialists in the proper sense, either. Aside from that, capitalism was still in its relative infancy, far from the complete global hegemony we've reached now and any developments that are bound to happen in the future. As frustrating as it may be, we have to remember that, no matter how badly a minority of the working class may want to establish socialism, they'll fail until the material conditions have developed for them to succeed — two key conditions being productive forces capable of sustaining a socialist society, as well as a vast majority of the global working class understanding what socialism is and what responsibilities it would entail, while actively wanting to establish it. Nonetheless, the Commune was a noble effort that will surely go down in history as one of, if not the greatest, attempt at liberating the proletariat. ☺

We Don't Need This War

BY IVAN LEVCHENKO

When the rich wage war it's the poor who die

Note. Members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, our companion party in the UK, have recently been engaged in discussions with members of the Russian group Left Socialist Action (LSA), whose Russian-language website is levds.ru. This is a translation of one of the articles on that website, by Ivan Levchenko, a member of the Petersburg branch of LSA. It was posted on May 1, 2021, at a time when open hostilities between Russia and Ukraine appeared to be imminent. The original is here.^[1]—SS

As military equipment is moved closer to the border [with Ukraine—SS], the constant noise of propaganda assaults us from all sides. Pro-government experts and journalists, politicians and TV commentators promise gullible people that the start of a new war will inaugurate a long-awaited new era. Yet again they will present this war as “the will of the people.” As an experiment, however, try asking your friends and acquaintances or simply passersby whether they want it, and I am sure that the overwhelming majority will say no. Yes, there are also quite a few people who still believe in the policy of “ingathering the lands” and “we can do it again” but are convinced that if hostilities begin they will be unaffected and, as Zhirinovskiy said, “the whole of your America



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will end up underwater.” However, the further we get from the tragic turning point of 2014 the less there remains of such enthusiasm. Endless sanctions, a destructive crisis, an isolation that seems everlasting.

But this is not even the most terrible thing. The grimmest and bloodiest images of the past are being romanticized. Parallels, sometimes terrible and sometimes absurd, are drawn between current and past eras. In this way they try to persuade us that there is no development and no change, no future, no progress, no peace, no democracy, no human beings as independent personalities. There is nothing except eternal state power and eternal war. But when we encounter cruel reality without the mask of sacred mystique, we see that the almost deified “tsar” and “leader” is really no more than a highly placed corrupt bureaucrat. Instead of the materialization of some sort of metaphysical “struggle of good against evil” we find cynical political moves to improve their own ratings. There is abso-

lutely nothing to which they will not resort in order to preserve this illusion. They will imprison scholars and activists; they will corral us into the confines of their senseless laws while themselves violating them; they will impose their obscurantism on absolutely everyone, even school students; they will pervert everything within their reach; but in the final analysis they will deceive themselves. And this will be the cause of their downfall.

Today we not only observe but also sense this agony of the imperial project, which has reached the point of self-negation and inner dissolution. This could have been halted had Putin and his supporters at the top found the strength to withdraw in time and sacrifice their power for the sake of the country's future. But they have decided to go in the opposite direction and sacrifice the future to the past, the lives, freedom, and happiness of the people to their own ambitions. Of course, eventually this will all end. But least of all do we wish that people — including young people,

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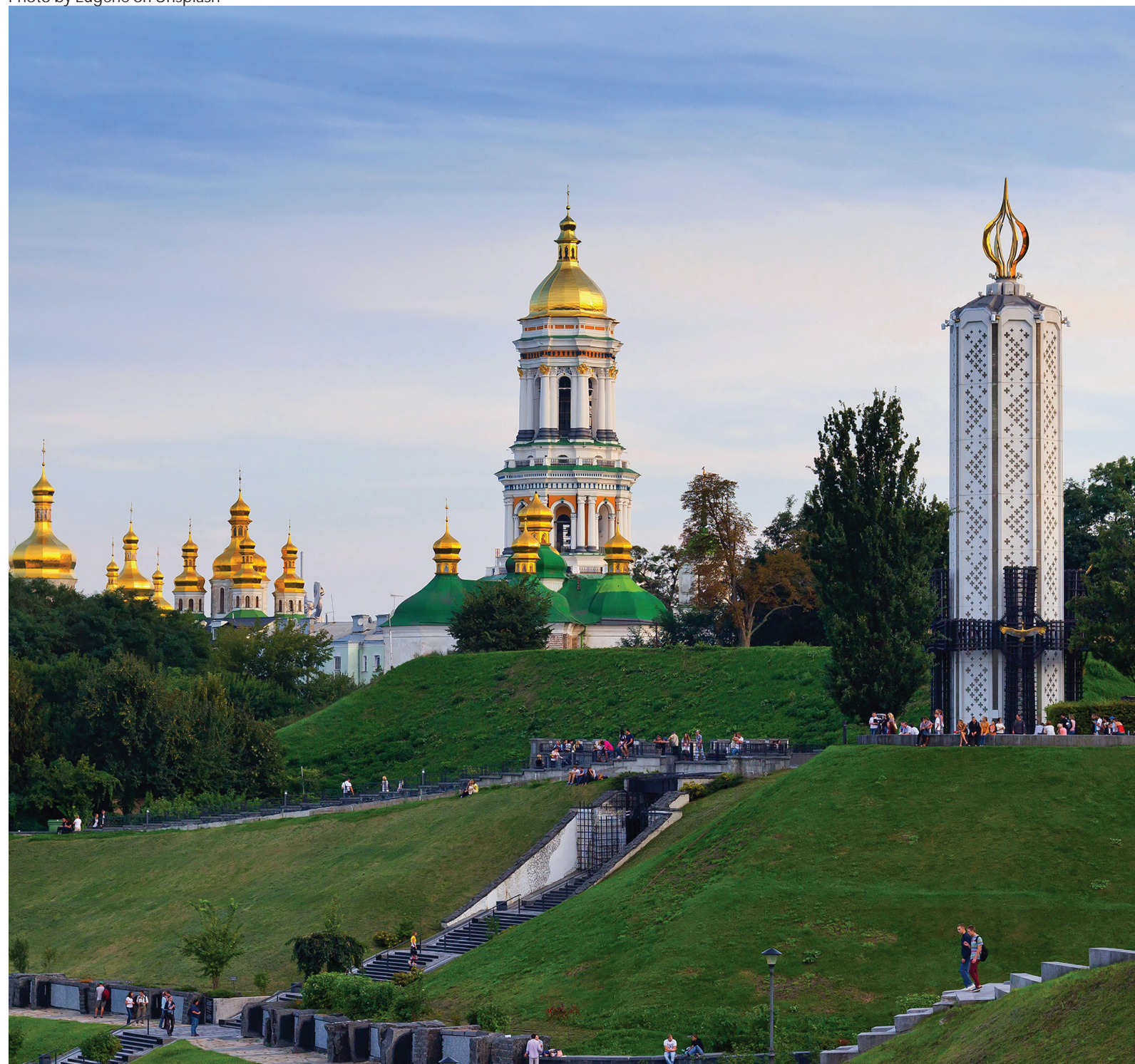
who will have to build a new country — should again be sacrificed in geopolitical games.

What then can we say to our generation, as well as to those older or younger than us? Value life and defend it against those who will try by means of force or deceit to turn you into their tools for use in their in-

trigues. There are people who will always treat you as equals, share woe and joy with you, and love you as you are. And there are also those whom you have never seen — and are hardly likely ever to see — in the flesh, although they tell you that you must sacrifice your own happiness for the sake of theirs. Neither they nor their sons nor their grand-

sons will be with you in the same dugout. They will not even remember you. They will betray you, just as their predecessors betrayed the soldiers in Chechnya, because the true essence of this state power, alas, remains the same. And as the *Lumen* band sing: "Those who send you into the final battle will not die together with you." 🙏

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Will Socialism Need a System of Economic Calculation?

BY STEPHEN SHENFIELD

Why socialism's economic calculation will be objectively different

Will the socialist commonwealth need a system of economic calculation? That is, will it need a method for assessing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action in terms of a common measure? Many socialists think that this will not be necessary. I would like to explain why I disagree and suggest how such a common measure might be devised.

Let me clarify my position at the outset. While I agree with the view that there will be a problem of economic calculation in socialism, I reject the conclusions that economists have drawn from this. Some have concluded that rational decision-making is impossible in socialism. Others — notably, Oskar Lange — have proposed that planners should set prices to simulate the operation of a competitive market. Although Lange considered himself a socialist, he accepted the claim of his openly pro-capitalist opponents that the market provides the optimal solution to the economic calculation problem.

While rational decision-making will indeed be essential to social-



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ism, it must always be emphasized that socialism will have a *different* rationality. It will not try to imitate capitalism but solve problems in its own way, in accordance with its own values and priorities. Otherwise why bother to establish it?

Misunderstandings

I would like to avoid misunderstandings that arise from the ambiguity of certain words.

Take the word *economic*. In capitalism this word is inextricably linked to the idea of saving money. In fact, *economics* has been defined as the study of a system of production based on production for sale. As socialism will be a non-market system with production directly for use, it will not be an economic system in this sense. It will, however, still have to make choices about the use of resources, seeking to economize them in the sense of not wasting them. In a broader sense of the word, economic calculation and economic decision-making may therefore still exist in a socialist society.

Take the word *costs*. In capitalism this word has a very specific and narrow meaning — money expenditures that cannot be avoided in some business activity. But in everyday usage it also refers more broadly to any undesired effects associated with doing something. In this sense production in socialism will also entail costs — effects that people will not want and will seek to minimize (where they cannot be prevented altogether). Examples are unrewarding labor, pollution and the depletion of non-renewable resources that might be needed by future generations.

There is an overlap between the two concepts of cost, but there are also major discrepancies. Thus, cost-benefit analysis (CBA) as applied today to compare the costs and benefits of a project — say, a canal, a dam, or an airport — leaves out of account effects that cannot be expressed in terms of money. For instance, loss of human life is valued merely in terms of income foregone. In socialism such effects will have their due influence on

decision-making. Conversely, certain things that in capitalism come under the heading of costs, such as interesting and satisfying work, may be reckoned as benefits.

A similar ambiguity surrounds the word *efficiency*. We associate this word with the capitalist drive for profit, and this may make us feel that there is something inhuman in the concept itself. However, once efficiency is defined as the ratio of full social benefits to full social costs, it makes good sense to aim at its maximization.

‘Scarcity’ and ‘Abundance’

The view that socialism will not need economic calculation is based on the idea that economic calculation is a way of coping with scarcity while socialism will be a society of abundance.

When we speak of socialism as a society of abundance we mean that people will have free access to the things they need. They will live a comfortable, secure and satisfying life. At the same time, we reject the absurd claim that desires expand without limit and do not expect people to make unrealistically extravagant demands on the production system.

In this sense I too envisage socialism as a society of abundance. But such a society will not come into being instantaneously as soon as capitalism is abolished. It can emerge only as the successful outcome of massive efforts to overcome the legacy of waste and misery inherited from capitalism. So at its initial stage socialism will *not* yet be a society of abundance.

Some socialists admit this point

but play down its importance by arguing that the initial stage will be brief. That is hard to judge: it depends just how bad the situation will have become by the time socialism is established. But for the sake of argument let us suppose that the initial stage does last only a few years. It is, nevertheless, the *crucial* stage. The new society will mature only if the problems of this stage are handled effectively. Therefore I take the view that when we think about socialism we should concentrate mainly on the initial stage.

Moreover, the words *scarcity* and *abundance* are also ambiguous. In theoretical economics they are given ‘technical’ meanings. *Abundance* refers to a hypothetical state of affairs in which the superfluity of resources is so great that it is never necessary to make choices or set priorities. All technically conceivable projects can be carried out, and all at once. Anything less than this counts as *scarcity*, however well people might be living. In this special sense, even mature socialism is not likely to be a society of abundance. In fact, economical use of non-renewable resources, rooted in awareness of ‘scarcity’ in the technical sense, may well be a condition of achieving ‘abundance’ in the everyday sense.

Overload

Some socialists argue as follows. Yes, socialist society will have to make choices and set priorities. But this does not mean that diverse social costs and benefits will have to be reduced to some common measure. People will survey and discuss the full range of social costs and benefits of various options. Costs and benefits that cannot be prop-

erly quantified will be assessed in qualitative terms. Then a decision will be made among the options by referendum or some other democratic procedure.

But how well will this ‘qualitative’ approach work? It is difficult for people to make up their minds when called upon to choose among options that all have both important advantages and important disadvantages. So debates would tend to be lengthy, frustrating and inconclusive. And there will be many such matters awaiting resolution.

The likely result is *overload* of the decision-making system. Urgent decisions will be delayed, but attempts to move forward more quickly may undermine the quality of the decisions taken, so that not all significant factors are given proper consideration. Moreover, the numerous and complicated debates will make such heavy demands on the time and effort of participants that many people will be deterred from participating. Decision-making may become the province of a minority of enthusiasts, who would not necessarily be representative of the general public. Overload is therefore a potential threat not only to the effectiveness of decision-making in socialism but also to its democratic nature.

I conclude that the qualitative approach will work only if it is confined to a relatively small number of issues — let us say, to the most important strategic issues facing society. A shortcut is then needed to allow other issues to be handled expeditiously — by means of standardized procedures, without

the need for long debate. For this it must be possible to make direct comparisons between different costs and benefits and calculate the net benefit (benefits minus costs) or benefit-cost ratio for alternative options. That in turn requires attaching a set of weights to different costs and benefits so that they can be expressed in terms of a single common measure.

Which of these two variants — net benefit or benefit-cost ratio — would be better? I suggest that each may be more appropriate under certain circumstances. Ratios would be more convenient in comparing different methods of achieving a given purpose, while the net benefit expected from a project would be crucial in deciding whether or not to undertake it.

It is likely that certain limits would be placed on the scope of decision-making based on calculations of benefits and costs. In particular, certain kinds of costs and risks, especially pertaining to the en-

vironment and to human health and safety, may be ruled out in advance, irrespective of the magnitude of compensating benefits.

Decentralized but Consistent

Devising a common measure for economic calculation in socialism will be no easy task, and I do not claim to have a fully worked-out solution. The adoption of a common measure will itself be one of the most important decisions ever made by humanity.

Although objective criteria — for example, energy, land-use, and labor-time requirements — will provide indispensable data for economic calculation, the common measure cannot possibly be derived solely from such objective criteria. First of all, it will be necessary to choose a manageable subset of the numerous objective criteria that could be used, and there will inevitably be a subjective element in this choice. The same is true of the manner in which the chosen

objective criteria are combined. The method by which the common measure is determined will reflect the values and priorities of a socialist society, defined democratically following extensive discussion and research, including in-depth analysis of the values and attitudes of representative samples of the population and the use of focus groups. Thus the measure will be only partly and indirectly of an objective nature. It will be essentially inter-subjective, or subjective with the subject being the democratically organized human community,

Economic calculation in socialism will facilitate decision-making that is expeditious and rational in relation to the society's own values. Because its method will embody the values of the society as a whole, the great bulk of day-to-day decisions can be taken at the local level or even entrusted to small teams of responsible specialists. The functioning of socialism will be mostly decentralized but consistent in reflecting the guiding values of the community. ☺

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IMAGINE

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No, Socialism Will Not Need a General Unit of Account

BY ADAM BUICK

A comrade from our sister party, the SPGB, offers a rebuttal to Stephen's previous article

"The question of economic calculation in socialism is an important one. I am completely convinced that the only form of calculation available to socialism is calculation in kind and that to argue for the need for a universal unit of account — be it labour time, money or energy — is a fallacy. There are no grounds for saying that factor inputs need to be made commensurable in order to ensure allocative efficiency. On the contrary, the only reliable way of ensuring that is via the route of calculation in kind, inventory control and more elaborate applications of the same such as linear programming. The relationship between an approach based on a universalistic metric of accounting and allocative efficiency is at best oblique and in any case, allocative efficiency is just one of several criteria that need to be taken into account. That is a question of values that cannot really be quantified/weighted in a cardinal sense — what price tag would you put on the conservation of a piece of woodland, for instance? Any figure you came up with would be arbitrary and unsatisfactory. Values require an ordinal scale, not a cardinal scale. However, calculation



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using a cardinal scale is precisely what calculation in kind permits." - Robin Cox, SPGB

Calculation in kind — in physical amount of the materials, energy and types of work skills required to produce something — is not at issue. It has to take place in all human societies and will in socialism, too. The question is: Does this need to be duplicated in socialism, as it is under capitalism, by an additional calculation in some common unit?

There are three circumstances in which a society might use a general unit of calculation:

1. To put a "price" on goods and services used by individuals to meet their individual needs (consumer goods).
2. To put a "price" on materials and machines used in production (producer goods) to work out the least "costly" way of producing them.

3. To decide how to use land.

Why Capitalism Uses Monetary Calculation

Capitalism is a system where money is invested in production with a view to ending up with more money. The means of production — materials that originally came from nature and the buildings and machines (themselves constructed from materials that originally came from nature) used to transform them into something different — are "capital"; not merely wealth used to produce other wealth but wealth used to produce other wealth with a view to making a monetary profit.

It should be clear from this why a general unit of account is essential in such a system and why it is money. Money existed before capitalism and arose, in societies where some products were bought and sold, when one of these products came to be the "universal equivalent", a product that could be exchanged for any other. This could

only happen if an amount of the universal equivalent was "worth" the same as the amounts of the other products with which it was to be exchanged. The measure of this was the length of time normally taken to produce both.

Originally, then, money was a product of work, just like everything else that was exchanged, and was used as a common unit to measure what both had in common: a given amount of labour-time. In saying that capitalism is a system in which money is invested with a view to ending up with more money, we are saying that capitalism is a system in which the aim is to end up with a product incorporating more normal labour-time than that

incorporated in the products used to produce it.

There are various reasons why such calculations under capitalism cannot be done directly in units of labour-time, primarily because the amount of labour-time required to produce the materials and instruments of production varies due to productivity increasing over time. It is not the actual labour-time that was taken to produce a good that needs to be measured. It is the average time that would be needed to produce them at the time they are used. It is this rather than actual labour-time that money attempts to measure; in fact there is no other way in which it could conceivably be measured, and it is the imper-

sonal working of the market that does the measuring.

This is why calculation in kind is duplicated under capitalism by a monetary calculation whose purpose is to calculate monetary profit, the increase in invested money that is the aim of capitalist production.

Why Might Socialism Need a General Unit of Account?

It should be clear why socialism, where production will be geared to meeting people's needs and not to realising a monetary profit, can dispense with monetary calculation, but might it still require some other general unit of account? Let us go through the three circumstances

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mentioned earlier that might require this.

1. Good and services consumed by individuals to live. To satisfy people's consumption for this will be the aim of socialist production. Here, given the present high state of development of the forces of production and given the elimination of the waste of capitalism (money transactions, wars and preparations for war), enough could be produced to satisfy everybody's likely needs. In these circumstances, socialist society could very quickly go over to free access to consumer goods and free provision of services. It is always possible that, in the very early days, it might not be possible to apply this

to all goods and services. There could also be natural disasters that could mean that this might have to be temporarily suspended even when socialism has been going for years.

The best way to deal with both of these situations would be direct rationing, free distribution of the goods affected but in limited amounts. There would be no need to set up a complicated system involving goods being given a pseudo-price and people being given an all-purpose voucher that could be used to acquire them. One example of this would be the labour-time vouchers Marx mentioned, for illustrative purposes, in some private notes. Unfortunately

some later socialists tried to develop this into a fully worked-out scheme to be implemented in socialism. But it wouldn't work (nor would any other all-purpose voucher scheme) and isn't necessary. But this is not at issue here as nobody here is proposing it.

2. Would socialist society need a general unit to work out the "cost" of the materials, energy and labour used to produce consumer goods, with a view to deciding which production method to use as the least costly (in terms of the unit)? There will of course be costs in socialism but these would be measured in kind — so much of such and such material or particular kind of working skill.

Peter Joseph and the Zeitgeist Movement propose that the production method used to produce what is needed by individuals, as well as to produce materials and machines used in production, should be what is technically the most efficient. In other words, you decide what you want produced and then you decide the most efficient technical way to do this. This seems reasonable as the default position.

It is true that, as with consumer goods, some resource required for maximum technical efficiency might be in short supply. In fact this is more likely than in the case of consumer goods; there might even be some resources that are permanently in short supply. In which case, direct rationing could again be applied. There would be no need to construct a system which puts a pseudo-price on all the other resources needed to produce a particular good. Robin Cox, in his "The 'Economic Calculation' Controversy: Unravelling of a Myth" (tinyurl.com/uk2uedjf) has gone in more detail into how one possible way of such rationing might work.

3. Finally, land use. This is the one circumstance where there can be no abundance. Using land for one purpose precludes it from being used for another. So a choice of land use will have to be made in socialism and some criteria to guide this choice will be needed.

This is a problem under capitalism too and it is instructive that letting

the market decide is regarded as irrational by many theorists of capitalism. Land is not a product of work and so cannot be measured in the way that products of work are, i.e., by labour-time and its proxy, money. However, it generally is and this leads to irrational decisions as far as the functioning of the capitalist economy is concerned. The monetary price of land is determined purely by demand and this can result in a highly-demanded piece of land not being used as a place on which to build a productive unit that would otherwise be profitable but is not because one of its costs would be the high price of the land. To avoid this distorting effect was why some intellectual defenders of capitalism have advocated that land should not be subject to market forces but should be nationalised (J. S. Mill) or the rental income taxed away (Henry George).

It is also why even under capitalism other, non-monetary methods of deciding land use have been developed — cost/benefit analyses (plural) which do indeed measure "costs" and "benefits" in terms of a common unit. I don't see this being a problem in socialism, though of course measurements in this unit would not then be converted into the money unit of account. It would just be a points system. This would avoid having to put every particular land use decision to a vote (and having to decide who was entitled to vote). It would be, as Stephen Shenfield says in his contribution, a "shortcut" that would "allow other

issues to be handled expeditiously — by means of standardized procedures, without the need for long debate."

However, this would not be a general common unit of account applied across all production but just for certain decisions (on land use). In fact there is no reason why the common unit for measuring costs and benefits need be the same in all parts of the world. A different points system could be used in different parts reflecting the different traditions, priorities and preferences of the people living there.

Brief Counter-Response From Stephen Shenfield

I am glad that Adam Buick accepts the need for a general measure, at least in decision making on land use. I don't in the least mind calling the general unit of measure a *point*. But I would stress that this sphere of decision making is extremely broad in scope, encompassing key areas of social production and consumption — in particular, agriculture, housing, and transportation — as well as the location of production facilities.

I agree that the points system need not be uniform throughout the world, except insofar as land use decisions affect the sustainability and rehabilitation of the global ecosystem. Here consistency is essential: decisions that shape the future of the whole world community cannot be determined solely by local needs. ☺

Knights in the Service of King Capital

BY STEPHEN SHENFIELD

The professional money launderers for the bourgeoisie

Brooke Harrington, *Capital without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Harvard University Press, 2016.

Chuck Collins, *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions*. Polity Press, 2021.

Jessie H. O'Neill, *The Golden Ghetto: The Psychology of Affluence*. The Affluenza Project, 1997.

These books are about the wealthy — not even the 1% but the 0.1% of multimillionaires and billionaires. But indirectly. Their direct focus is on the professional advisers who help the wealthy preserve and manage their wealth and pass it on to their heirs — people who though paid well are (with rare exceptions) by no means wealthy themselves.

Brooke Harrington, who teaches economic sociology at Dartmouth College (New Hampshire), has written by far the better of the two books. What makes the other book nonetheless worth reading is the unusual personal story of the author, a young man who feels 'queasy' about inheriting a fortune he has done nothing to earn and despite the best efforts of friends to reassure him ... gives it away.



Photo by Jingming Pan on Unsplash

The wealthy have an array of specialized advisers at their beck and call: lawyers, accountants, bankers, etc. But many prefer to rely on a single general adviser who will consult others as necessary, and this is the niche filled by the 'wealth manager.' Indeed, the term fails to reflect the full scope of the advice that may be sought from this personage. For example, he — or, increasingly often nowadays, she — may be asked to devise and supervise a treatment program for a drug-addicted nephew. The felicitous expression of one of Professor Harrington's informants is 'social work for the rich.'

Intimacy in One Direction

To do her job, the wealth manager-cum-social worker needs to know about all aspects of a client's life, including matters that he keeps secret from almost everyone else. Thus, a client may want to make financial provision for a mistress and children she has had with him — without his wife being able to find out about it. So between a

client and his adviser there often develops a long-term personal relationship of some intimacy. The relationship may extend to successive generations, with the adviser becoming *almost* a member of the family.

Almost — but not quite. Because everyone knows very well that the adviser remains merely a servant — better paid and respected than other servants, but still a servant. A special servant, like a butler — a link and buffer between the master and the ordinary servants. And the intimacy, I venture to guess, is in one direction only.

The 'wealth manager' can boast a long historical pedigree. Charles Dickens has such a character, named Mr. Tulkinghorn, in his novel *Bleak House*. Professor Harrington traces the origins of the wealth manager all the way back to the medieval knight. She keeps alive the knightly ethos of selfless personal loyalty to the liege lord. Who said the age of chivalry is dead?

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The knights who serve King Capital might like to consider adopting the motto of the SS: *Meine Ehre heisst Treue* (My Honor is Loyalty).

Professionalization

Only recently, however, has wealth management begun to win recognition as a *profession*. The process started in London in 1991 with the establishment of a professional association — the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP), which soon acquired a sizeable global membership. Then in 2011 the first degree course in wealth management was offered by the University of Manchester.

STEP has been active in lobbying governments and drafting legislation in the interests of the wealthy — more active than most of the wealthy themselves. For instance, it helped create a new institution for preserving wealth — a combined trust and corporation that appeared first in the British Virgin Islands and from there spread across the world.

Wealth managers strive to preserve the wealth of their clients from all who might stake a claim to part of it — from tax authorities, of course, but also from creditors, litigants, spendthrift relatives, and

ex-wives. For this purpose they convert wealth into a wide variety of forms, such as gold, unoccupied apartments, and works of art, and conceal its ownership inside complicated networks of shell companies, trusts, and foundations.

Crucial to these shenanigans are the 70–80 financial centers usually referred to as ‘offshore’ jurisdictions, although a few of them, like Switzerland and Panama, are actually onshore. Several are in the Caribbean, a few in the Pacific, two in the British Channel, and one in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius). Hong Kong and Singapore are increas-

Photo by alevision.co on Unsplash



ingly important. The governments of these tax havens find it advantageous to welcome wealth managers and ensure optimal conditions for their work.

Concentration of Wealth

Professor Harrington argues — and we socialists agree — that inequality of wealth has a much greater social and political impact than inequality of income. And inequality of wealth is much more extreme than inequality of income. In the US the top 1% have 17% of total income but 35% of all wealth (\$15 trillion in 2015 and growing rapidly). At the global level the top 1%

own half of the wealth.

But such figures are unreliable. The real concentration of wealth is greater than this, perhaps much greater. Available data are sparse. After all, the same tricks that hide wealth from ex-wives and the taxman also hide it from statisticians. This is just what the wealthy (a few mavericks apart) want: accurate information on the distribution of wealth would be 'politically dangerous.'

What Is To Be Done?

Extreme concentration of wealth in tax havens wreaks havoc through-

out society. The loss of tax revenue jeopardizes public services, while the use of real estate as a means of preserving wealth pushes the cost of housing in cities like London far beyond the reach of working people.

What is to be done? Attempts at reform undertaken at the national level are stymied by the competition among 'offshore' tax havens. When some jurisdictions respond to pressure to give foreign tax authorities more information about their hosted wealth, as Switzerland and the Channel Islands have now begun to do, the owners of the

Photo by Victor He on Unsplash





Photo by Juan Marin on Unsplash

wealth simply move it elsewhere. Short of world socialism, it is hard to envision effective remedies.

The Ultimate Purpose

But what is the ultimate purpose of accumulating and preserving all this wealth — wealth often far in excess of what would be required to support the luxurious lifestyles of its owners and their families?

Chuck Collins recounts a conversation with a wealthy lady who had taken him under her wing and was trying to persuade him not to give away his fortune. To do so, she admonished him, would be foolish, naïve, and selfish. By this time he was used to being called foolish and naïve, but the accusation of selfishness puzzled him. What could be selfish about giving his money to people who had more need of it? She explained that he was being selfish in relation to his future children and grandchildren, who would no longer have a family fortune to inherit.

Both Collins and Harrington conclude that in the moral world

inhabited by the wealthy and their servitors the preservation of family fortunes or ‘dynastic wealth’ serves no extraneous purpose but is an end in itself.

*

The author of the third book, Jessie O’Neill, is herself a wealthy person — granddaughter of a past president of General Motors and secretary of defense. She is also a licensed psychotherapist who treats addicts and children of dysfunctional homes. Many of her clients are children of wealthy families, who suffer from conflict between their parents and from neglect, their care often being entrusted to employees for whom it is just a job.

The reader learns a lot about the psychological problems of being wealthy, such as guilt feelings and anxiety about whether ‘friends’ may really be interested in your money rather than you. Why then do so few of the wealthy solve their problems by giving their money away, as Collins says he did? Strangely enough, this is an option

that O’Neill does not even mention. Frankly, I am puzzled.

Golden Ghetto?

I question the use of the word ‘ghetto’ in the book’s title. A ghetto is an area to which a stigmatized group is confined by outside forces. Wealthy people may *choose* to segregate themselves in gated communities and the like, but no one forces them to do so and some do not, apparently including the author, who repeatedly dwells upon her difficulties in romantic relationships with men poorer than herself.

O’Neill identifies the ailment that afflicts the wealthy as ‘affluenza’ — an obsession with the accumulation of wealth for its own sake. That is fine as far as it goes. Unfortunately, her perspective as a therapist concerned with individual psyches prevents her from realizing that this ailment is the psychological reflection of a far-flung system of real social relations — the system that we call capitalism. ☺

Principle Two

BY JORDAN LEVI

An explanation of Clause Two of the WSM's Declaration of Principles.

In the last issue of the *World Socialist*, we elaborated on Clause One of the World Socialist Movement's Declaration of Principles, which deals with private property and the enslavement of the working class. In this issue, we'll touch on Clause Two, which states 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.

To reiterate from the last article: there have been two main economic classes in every mode of production following the neolithic revolution about 12,000 years ago. One class owns the means of production, along with the surplus product, and lives solely off that ownership, exploiting the labor of the other class by extracting surplus value. In society's current mode of production — capitalism — the former class is called the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and the latter class is called the proletariat or working class. Of course, some workers can save enough money to live off for a period of time in case they get fired and some may even have relative success investing in the stock market, but if they're forced to submit to wage-slavery again to cover living expenses



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

once their savings have run out or their stock market dividends aren't enough to survive on alone, then they're still a member of the working class.

In order for a worker to continue working, their wage — on average — needs to be enough to survive on and raise children who'll eventually replace them in the workforce, aside from their working conditions needing to be safe enough for them to survive, too. Of course, workers want much more than the bare minimum to survive, so if wages and/or working conditions aren't adequate, the most common means for workers to collectively improve them is by forming or joining trade unions, bargaining with employers, and, if necessary, striking. At the same time, for the system to reproduce itself, capitalists — over any considerable period of time — need to recoup the production cost of each commodity — which includes the worker's wages — as well as extract enough surplus value to reinvest

on an increasing scale, as well as cover rent, interest, and profit for the capitalist's living expenses. Of course, capitalists want their surplus value to be as high as possible and workers want their wages to be as high as possible, too, so this conflict becomes a class struggle that manifests itself in two ways: economically and politically.

The class struggle manifests itself economically through workers' unions bargaining with employers for better conditions or striking if that fails, as I mentioned earlier, but it also manifests itself politically through the election of representatives to legislatures with jurisdiction over a given area. Election campaigns can be expensive, so much of the average candidate's funds come directly and indirectly from capitalists, who — by various legal means — exchange funds for political favors and allegiances. This allows our legislatures to act more or less as employers' unions, with the vast majority of political candidates being subservient to

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the whims of the capitalist class, even if their allegiances may lie with different factions of it. This has led to most major political parties across the world being filled with representatives who figuratively hold water for capitalists.

Many workers realize this and decide to stop voting because they see no meaningful difference between candidates who are ultimately indebted to the same capitalist minority. I understand the frustration that leads to this decision, but I think the mainly anarchist position of abstaining from voting under all circumstances is

fundamentally misguided. Yes, it's bad for workers that most major political parties across the world are completely subject to their national capitalist classes because that makes it much more difficult to effect any meaningful change for the workers of each country. However, it's also good in a sense because if a politician claims to stand for the working class and chooses to run as a member of the US Democratic Party, for example, then genuine socialists who want to fight for the emancipation of the working class will know that they're either delusional or grifting. Yes, an independent socialist party's

bound to face more obstacles, but — just like we unionize for workers alone on the economic field — we need to unionize for workers alone on the political field, only voting for vetted socialists who are part of a genuine socialist party (or writing 'SOCIALISM' across our ballot if one isn't an option) if we ever want to overthrow the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

In the next issue, we'll cover Principle Three, which deals with the emancipation of the working class.



Photo by Fleur on Unsplash



Frederick Douglass: The Scottish Connection

BY ALAN JOHNSTONE

The Black Douglas on slavery

During the recent G-7 summit, Boris Johnson, the UK's prime minister presented the US president, Joe Biden, with this photograph of a mural of Frederick Douglass in Edinburgh, Scotland. Both politicians deserve to be reminded of a genuine advocate of freedom, but it is doubtful whether either is capable of emulating the courage of Frederick Douglass.

It is time for workers who oppose capitalism to step up and speak up. As Douglass said:

The general sentiment of mankind is that a man who will not fight for himself, when he has the means of doing so, is not worth being fought for by others, and this sentiment is just.

Frederick Douglass arrived in Scotland on a speaking tour in 1846 from the United States, 13 years after Britain enacted the Slavery Abolition Act.

Colonial slaves had gradually been freed and Britain's slaveowners were financially compensated for the loss of "their property."

Douglass's 19-month visit to Britain and Ireland began in 1845 — seven years after he himself fled slavery in



Photo by Melissa Highton

the US South.

"One of the things about his travels in Scotland was his Scottish surname," said Alasdair Pettinger, author of the forthcoming book *Frederick Douglass and Scotland, 1846: Living an Antislavery Life*.^[1] "He picked up the fact that Douglas [or Douglass] was a name that resonates in Scottish history."

Douglass often connected with Scottish audiences by referring to himself as "the Black Douglas." The original "Black Douglas" — so named on account of his black hair — was Lord James Douglas, one of the commanders in the 14th-century wars of Scottish independence.

The new "Black Douglas" was born around 1818 as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. When he arrived in Massachusetts as a fugitive he needed a new name. Nathan Johnson, a free person of color who gave him shelter, had been reading

The Lady of the Lake, a narrative poem by the Scottish author Walter Scott, which had a 16th-century character named James Douglas. So he renamed himself Douglas(s).

Douglass impressed Scottish audiences with powerful speeches against slavery in the US, which had yet to end the practice. He worked as Scotland's anti-slavery agent from an address in Edinburgh, where there is now a commemorative plaque in his honour, and toured the country's cities and towns — including Glasgow, Paisley, Dundee and Perth — between January and October 1846. Delighting in the warm Scottish welcome, he described a "conglomeration of architectural beauties" in Edinburgh, and even contemplated settling there with his family.

He demonstrated his literary knowledge of Scotland by visiting the birthplace of Robert Burns. According to Pettinger, the first

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book Douglass bought after escaping from slavery was an edition of Burns, and he was known to quote the 18th-century Romantic poet as another way of engaging with Scottish audiences.

Douglass arrived amid controversy over the separation of the Free Church from the Church of Scotland. The Free Church required funds, which saw it accept donations from pro-slavery churches in the US. Douglass latched on to the issue and denounced the Free Church by repeatedly calling to “send back the money” on his tour. His talk at Edinburgh’s Music Hall was attended by 2,000 people.

The Scottish capitalists’ appetite for making money fed off the back of human misery. Scottish merchants and doctors often staffed Africa-bound British slave ships that took enslaved African people and transported them to colonies in the Caribbean. By around 1800, a staggering 30% of slave plantations in Jamaica, where there are still Scottish surnames and place names, were owned by Scots. As Scotland’s Tobacco Lords reaped great wealth from their investments, Glasgow boomed. Glasgow street names mark city merchants who amassed extraordinary wealth from the transatlantic slave trade, like Glassford Street, named after Scottish Tobacco Lord, John Glassford. Other connections include Jamaica Street, named after the island where slave plantations saw the city’s industrialists grow fat on the proceeds of sugar and rum. In Edinburgh, Henry Dundas, a prominent Scottish politician who infamously delayed Britain’s abolition of slavery by 15 years, is immortalised by a statue.

As for Douglass, he visited Scotland again between 1859 and 1860. After his first tour, he arrived back in the US in 1847 a free man, after supporters in England made provision to buy his liberty.

“I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason,” he explained in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845).^[2]

Most honest observers would concur with Frederick Douglass when he said:

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants brass fronted impudence; your shout of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanks-givings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy — a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

Here are three extracts from Douglass’ *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855):^[3]

When Col. Lloyd’s slaves met those of Jacob Jepson, they seldom parted without a quarrel about their masters, Col. Lloyd’s slaves contending that he was the richest, and Mr Jepson’s slaves that he was the smartest, man of the two. Col. Lloyd’s slaves would boast his ability to buy and sell Jacob Jepson, Mr Jepson’s slaves would boast his ability to whip Col. Lloyd. These quarrels would always end in a fight between the parties, those that beat were supposed to have gained the point at issue. They seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves. To be a SLAVE, was thought to be bad enough; but to be a poor man’s slave, was deemed a disgrace, indeed.

Were I again to be reduced to the condition of a slave, next to that calamity, I should regard the fact of being the slave of a religious slave-holder, the greatest that could befall me. For of all slave-holders with whom I have ever met, religious slave-holders are the worst. I have found them, almost invariably, the vilest, the meanest and the basest of their class. Exceptions there may be, but this is true of religious slave-holders as a class.

When Douglas goes to work as a caulker in a shipyard in Baltimore and works besides white wage workers, he writes about the resentment of white workers towards the black slaves:

In the country, this conflict is not so apparent; but, in cities, such as Baltimore, Richmond, New Orleans, Mobile etc; it is seen pretty clearly. The slave-holder with a craftiness peculiar to themselves,

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by encouraging the enmity of the poor, labouring white men against the blacks, succeeds in making the said white men almost as much a slave as the black slave himself. The difference between the white slave, and the black slave, is this: the latter belongs to ONE slave-holder, and the former belongs to ALL the slave-holders, collectively. The white slave has taken from his, by indirection, what the black slave had taken from him, directly, and without ceremony. Both are plundered, and by the same plunderers.

Once again Frederick Douglass demonstrates his social insight:

The old master class was not deprived of the power of life and death, which was the soul of the relation of master and slave. They could not, of course, sell their former slaves, but they retained the power to starve them to death, and wherever this power is held there is the power of slavery. He who can say to his fellow man, "You shall serve me or starve," is a master and his subject is a slave.


More than a century and a half ago Douglass said:

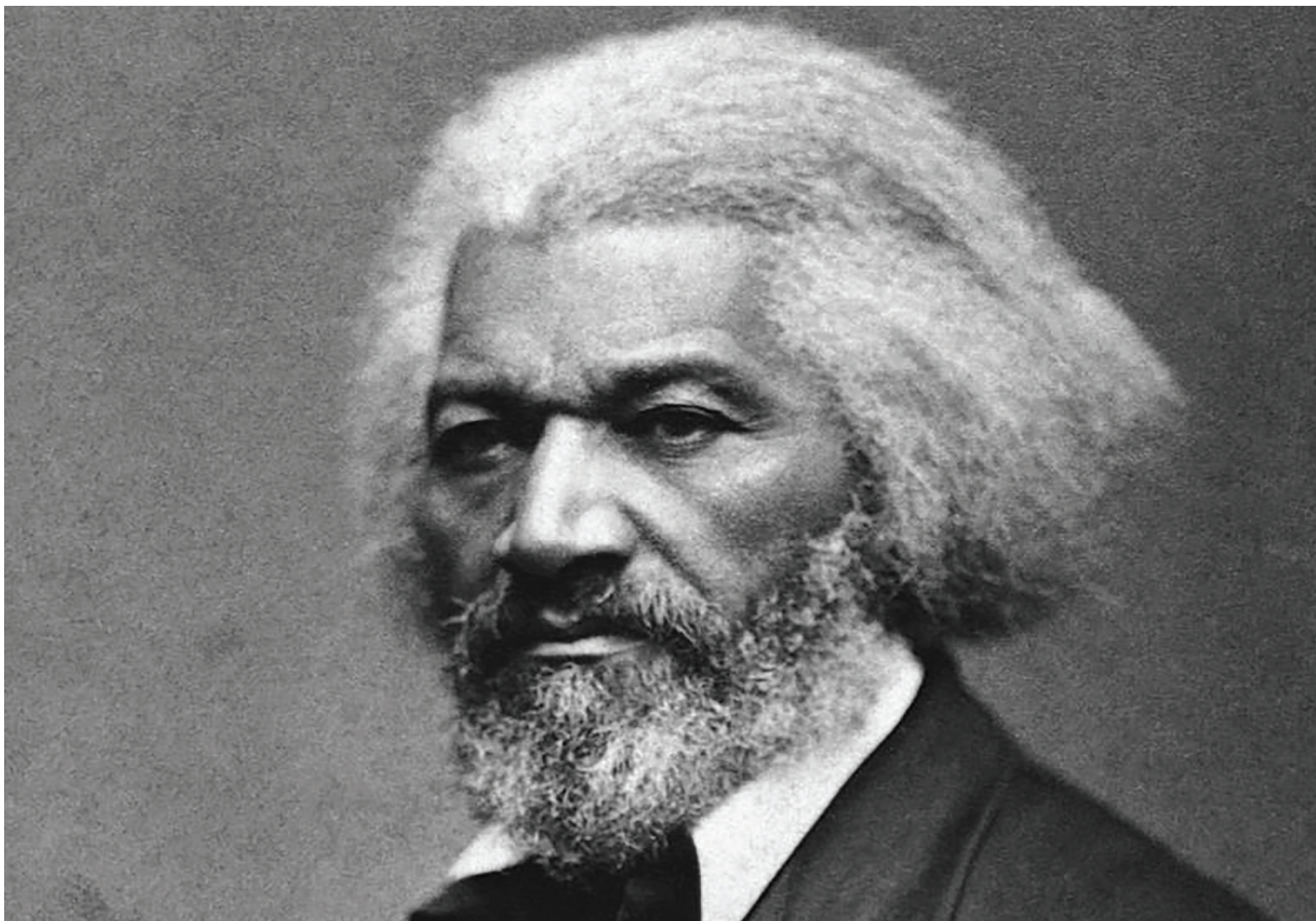
If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops

without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

We end this article with Frederick Douglass advising us:

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.

For a general article by Michael Schauerte on the life and work of Frederick Douglass, see here.^[4] 





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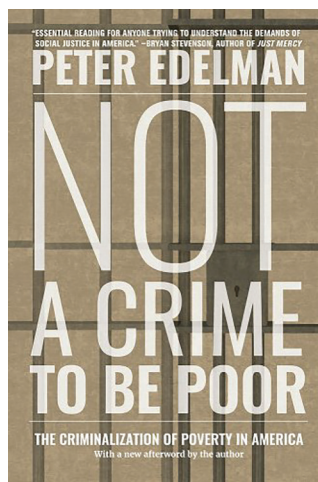
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Reviews



Not a Crime To Be Poor: The Criminalization of Poverty in America

by Peter Edelman

No, debtors' prisons are not a thing of the past. In today's America vast numbers of people are jailed for the crime of being poor. The author of this book explains how it happens.

If you are charged with an offense, you will have to wait, perhaps quite a while, for your case to be heard in court. Whether you wait in jail or at home usually depends solely on whether you have the money to pay bail.

If the offense is a minor one, the judge will probably impose a fine. If you don't have the money to pay it, he or she will send you back to jail.

Many poor fathers end up in jail because they cannot afford to pay child support. The problem is that no one takes the trouble to find out their actual income. The amount they are expected to pay is based on 'imputed' — that is, assumed — income. For many it is impossible

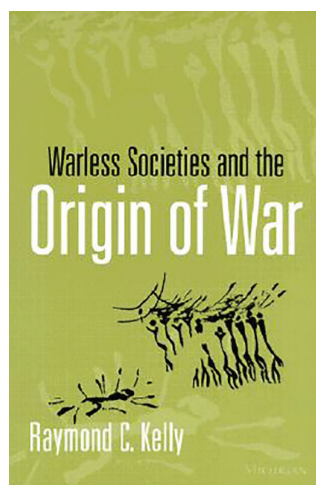
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to pay the full amount and still have enough left for their own survival.

Quite a few city governments have made homelessness a crime by enacting ordinances against things like camping on public land, sitting, lying down, or eating on public sidewalks, and sleeping in vehicles or out of doors. As hardly anyone chooses to be homeless, this too amounts to jailing people for being poor.

There are other ways you can get jailed for being poor. Some are rather complicated. To learn about them you may need to read the book.

- STEPHEN SHENFIELD



Warless Societies and the Origin of War

by Raymond C. Kelly

This is one of the best books I've read in a while. I found out about it after an exchange with a Twitter mutual of mine, in which he argued that humans have always engaged in war. I mentioned that I read in a couple of articles that humans didn't start engaging in war until after the neolithic revolution, then he said I was wrong, so I went to dig for a reference on Wikipedia and found this. The author does a

fantastic job of building from basic facts and concepts, then tying those into his ultimate conclusion that, contrary to popular belief, humans haven't been engaging in warfare for the vast majority of our species' history.

I believe the first major point he touched on was that anthropologists who've determined that a warless human society's never existed tended to have too broad of a definition of war. All human societies have participated in violence, but violence isn't synonymous with war and a key custom that eventually leads to the latter is what the author calls "social substitution" — the act of retaliating against a member of a perpetrator's social group, rather than against the individual perpetrator. This generally starts as a blood feud between families, then gradually escalates into war between tribes over time. He compares murder rates between warless and warlike societies, as well as what he calls segmental and "unsegmented societies" — societies which have no organization beyond their local group — and shows that, while both segmental and unsegmented warless societies have seemingly high murder rates, that's ultimately only because of their low populations, and murders themselves are chronologically rare, with a significant number of victims being innocent bystanders who were trying to break up the conflict, for example.

The best insight of the book is the author's conclusion that the origin of war is almost certainly resource competition. He explains that when population density exceeds a sustainable level, tribes can usually spread out to avoid conflict, but

conflict frequency increases along with population density when spreading out becomes impossible. To illustrate his point, he analyzes the behavior of the Andamanese — a group of people who live on the Andaman Islands, about 81 miles (130 km) southwest of Myanmar. He compares the conditions of the Andamanese to those likely experienced by the Qadan people at Jebel Sahaba, Sudan, which has the oldest evidence of warfare on record, dating to about 11,000–12,000 BC. We know that this cemetery site is evidence of warfare due to multiple women's and children's skeletons showing clear signs of intentional murder, almost certainly due to social substitution. It's a dense read for only four chapters, but it's extremely informative, and I'd consider it a must-read for anyone interested in the historic development of warfare.

- **JORDAN LEVI**



(My) Song of the Season
Grace Park Legend
(Norfside)
by Huey Briss

One of the most slept-on cities in California, music-wise, is Long Beach. It's the hometown of Sublime, Vince Staples, and Snoop Dogg, of course, but they've also got a lot of prolific MCs who are more or less underground — who haven't gone mainstream yet. One of, if not the best example, is Huey

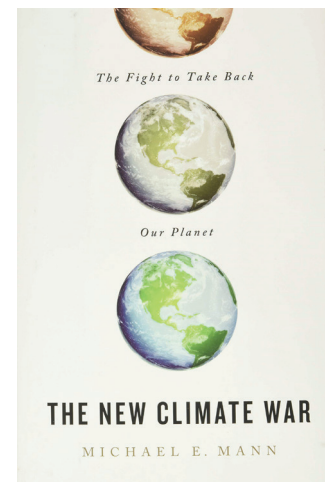
Briss.

I basically found out about Briss through a friend. I can't remember the friend's name off the top of my head, but I let him perform at a show I set up, and he ended up telling one of his homies about that, a rapper named OHSEA, who's from Long Beach. OHSEA hit me up to get on a show in the future and although his music was dope, that just never came to fruition for some reason, but we did follow each other on social media to stay in contact. One day, OHSEA posted a clip on Instagram of Huey Briss's music video for 'Gil Scott Never Lied' and I probably played that 10 times a day for a week. I've been keeping up with Briss since then and, despite all his recent wins, like his music video for 'Regardless' getting posted on No Jumper's YouTube channel (which is no easy feat), he hasn't let any of them get to his head — if anything, he's been grinding harder.

Briss's latest album, *Grace Park Legend*, is filled with bangers, but the stand-out track is the album's namesake by far. The beat's got a heavy jazz influence with an even heavier bass and kick, along with a sample of a woman singing for the main melody, which Briss expertly incorporates into the end of each of his verses. Briss raps about various neighborhoods in the LBC and some of his experiences growing up there, with a fair amount of quotables in between. I might argue that the music video's even more entertaining than the song, since it has a documentary/visual memoir vibe to it that makes it feel way more personal. I've been playing it religiously and apparently Snoop Dogg must like it, too, since

he posted the music video on his Instagram story (which, again, is no easy feat). Keep an eye on him because I'm sure he's got even better work on the way.

- **JORDAN LEVI**



The New Climate War:
The Fight to Take
Back the Planet
by Michael E. Mann

Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, has been one of the most active climate scientists in publicizing the dangers of global warming and pressing for effective remedial action. He is perhaps best known for his 'hockey stick' graph, which dramatized the sudden rapid upswing in the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases.

In his latest book Professor Mann highlights a shift in the strategy of those who seek to delay if not prevent the transition from fossil-fuel to renewable energy — executives of oil, gas, and coal companies, extremely wealthy and reactionary families like the Kochs, Scaifes, and Mercers, Russia and other states that heavily rely on revenue from fossil-fuel exports. 'Hard denialism'

— the kind that denies either that global warming exists or that it is caused by human activity — is giving way to a ‘multi-pronged’ strategy of ‘soft denialism’ that pursues the same goal by other means.

The author points out that hard denialism is rapidly losing its credibility as people already suffer — or at least see in the news — early impacts of climate change (wildfires, droughts, heatwaves, superstorms, coastal flooding, etc.). The percentage of respondents in opinion polls who deny the existence of global warming has now fallen below 10%. This may surprise you if, like me, you have wasted time arguing with denialists on social media. Most of the ‘people’ we’ve been arguing with are hired trolls or robotic ‘bots’!

Soft denialists use a wide variety of tactics. Above all, they deflect blame and divide the opposition. They do this by emphasizing secondary sources of greenhouse gas emissions — air travel, meat production, or anything else *except* the burning of fossil fuels. At the same time, they constantly divert attention from public policy to individual behavior. Thereby they drive a wedge between activists who reduce their carbon footprint by going vegan and crossing the ocean by boat, like Greta Thunberg, and activists who eat meat and fly by plane, like Michael Mann. If you belong to the first type, you are ridiculed as an oddball; if you belong to the second type, you are pilloried as a hypocrite. You can’t win!

Soft denialists place undue emphasis on minor side issues, such as the danger to birds posed by wind turbines. They promote phony

solutions that are infeasible (e.g., ‘carbon capture and storage’) or would create new dangers (e.g., injecting sulfur aerosols into the stratosphere). Finally, they spread a sense of doom and despair by encouraging the belief that it is now too late to avert catastrophe. This belief, as the author shows, is unsupported by available evidence. On the contrary, there are grounds for cautious optimism.

Mann makes a major contribution to our understanding by placing climate change denial of both the hard and the soft variety in the broader historical context of lying for profit — that is, manipulation of public opinion in the interests of commerce, also known as Public Relations. Some of the same PR firms and pseudo-scientists being paid to deceive the public by oil and gas corporations were hired in the past to conceal the dangers of chemical pesticides or deny the link between smoking (sold as a sign of women’s emancipation) and lung cancer. The cause of fire prevention was exploited to divert attention from the toxic chemicals used in fabrics and furniture as flame retardants. So there is nothing new in denialism, though the stakes are now higher than ever.

Socialists will not fully agree with all of the author’s judgments. Nevertheless, this is an important and timely book — well worth reading.

-STEPHEN SHENFIELD



The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason

by Charles P. Freeman
&

The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World

by Catherine Nixey

Both these historians argue that the rise of Christianity to become the state religion of the Roman empire was the direct cause of a huge and long-lasting regression in the sphere of human thought and knowledge.

Although pre-Christian Rome required formal obeisance to the emperor, in all other respects diverse religions and schools of philosophy were tolerated. Greek philosophers, scholars, and mathematicians in particular made great strides toward logical and scientific thinking. The Church Fathers, by contrast, imposed a closely defined doctrinal orthodoxy, discouraged free inquiry, suppressed external critics, and persecuted Christian dissidents as heretics.

Freeman illustrates the regression in the paired epigraphs that introduce his book. In the fifth century before Christ the Greek playwright Euripides blesses those who ‘learn how to engage in inquiry’ and

‘perceive the order of immortal and ageless nature, how it is structured.’ In the late fourth or early fifth century after Christ — almost a thousand years later! — Saint Augustine warns Christians to beware ‘the disease of curiosity’ that ‘drives us to try to discover the secrets of nature, secrets that are beyond our understanding, that can avail us nothing, and that man should not wish to learn.’

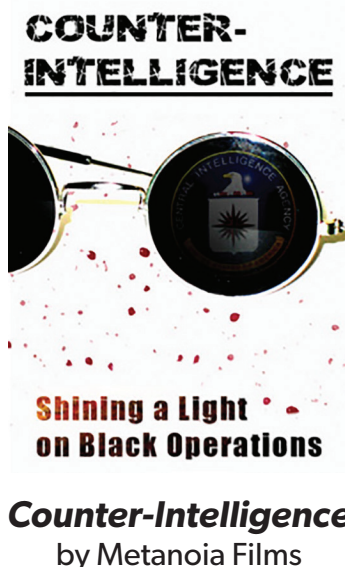
While the two authors argue the same thesis, they do so in complementary ways, so both are worth reading. Freeman analyzes and compares the ideas and modes of reasoning of ancient Christian and non-Christian (polytheist or atheist) thinkers. Nixey provides a much fuller account of how the Christians treated their opponents once they had the imperial government on their side.

Nixey describes how Christian gangs desecrated temples, toppled and defaced statues, burned books, and smoked out secret adherents of the old religion. From her we get an inkling of what it may have felt like to be a philosopher as ‘the age darkened’ — a story culminating in the savage murder of the eminent woman philosopher Hypatia by a mob of fanatical monks.

Of special importance for later ages was the destruction of books. It is estimated that only 1% of ancient works written in Latin and 10% of works written in Greek survived (many Greek works were preserved in translation by Arab scholars). It is true that those works which did survive this period were preserved by copyists in monasteries — Christian hostility toward intellectual endeavor mellowed

somewhat over time — but enormous and irreparable harm had already been done.

- **STEPHEN SHENFIELD**



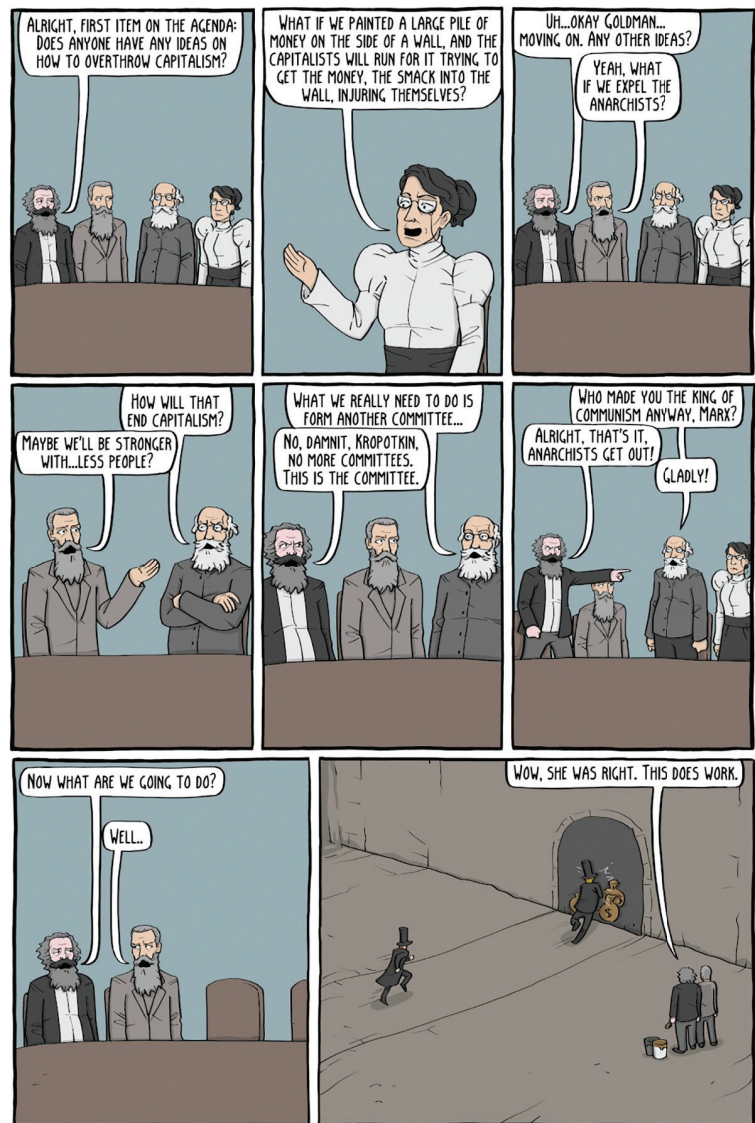
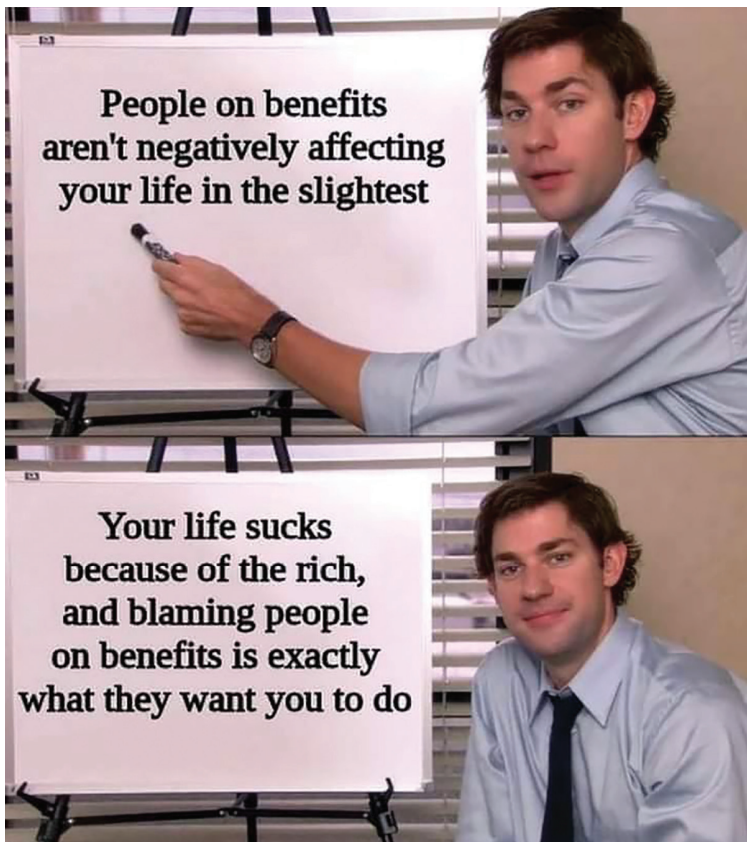
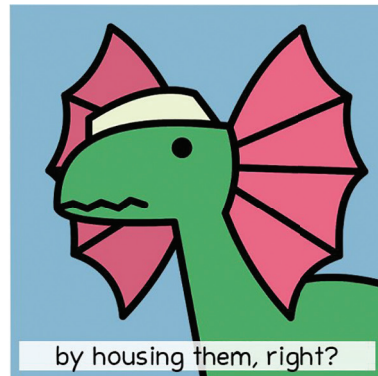
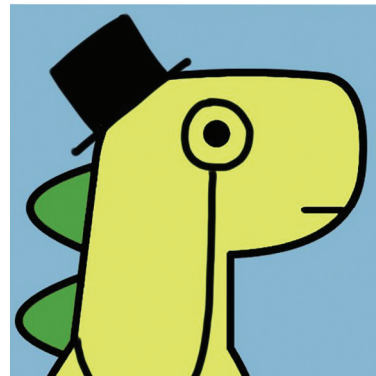
One of my favorite websites to dig around on is filmsforaction.org. It has a great collection of articles, short videos, and documentaries to choose from regarding a wide range of political topics from climate change to human rights abuses. I found out about this documentary while I was digging around on there for something to watch and the description intrigued me, so I decided to give it a shot. Once I started watching it, I realized it was made by Metanoia Films, the same company that made another documentary I love called *Plutocracy*, so I knew from there this would be fantastic. I wasn't wrong, and this is one of the most informative documentaries I've seen in a while.

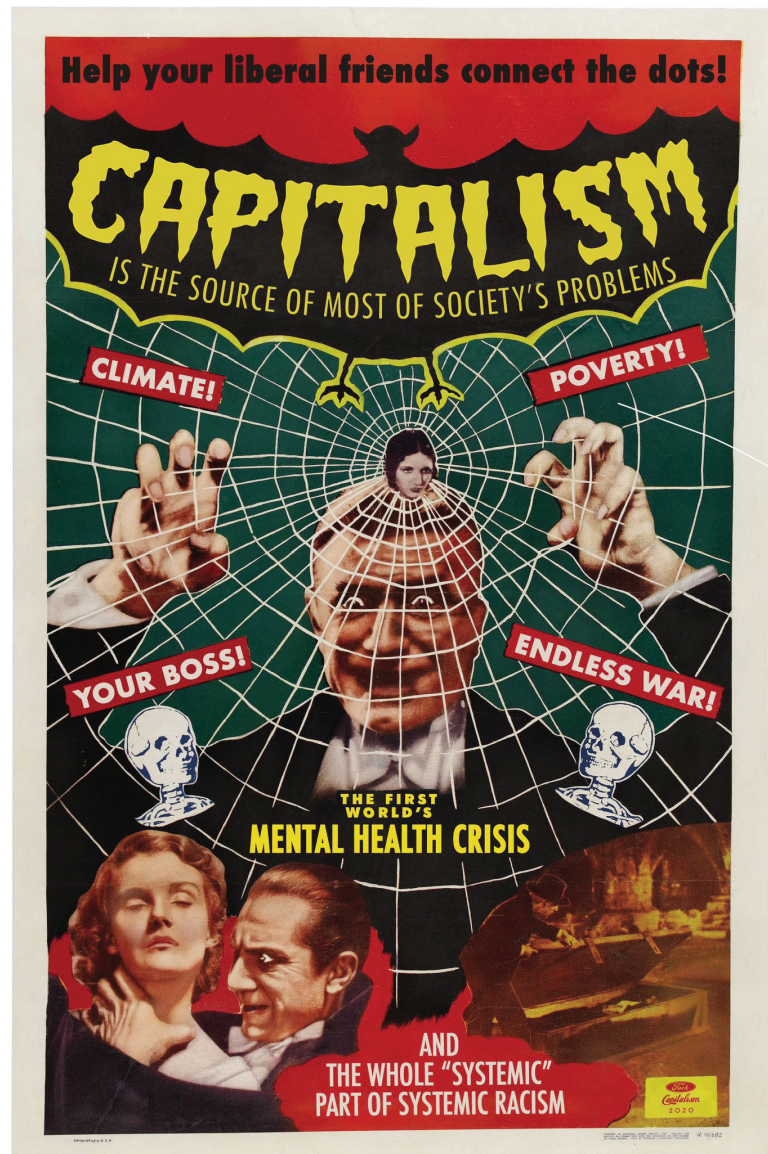
Counter-Intelligence is split into five parts, clocking in just under six and a half hours long altogether. The first four parts are my favorite, covering the development of the CIA, along with their vast network of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) they use to wash

and distribute funds and multiple different operations they've been involved in. Two of the most interesting covert operations they touch on in these parts that I hadn't known about yet are: 1) The CIA's involvement in conspiring against former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (it's pretty surprising, but not completely unexpected, that they'd conspire against an allied nation), and 2) Operation Gladio, which has been linked to multiple massacres and assassinations in Europe. Part five touches on Obama's drone program and the inherent injustice of the 2012 NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act), which authorizes the US armed forces to indefinitely detain anyone at anytime, anywhere, without due process. I learned a lot from it and it's a pretty long documentary overall, but it's well worth a watch.

- **JORDAN LEVI**

Funnies







Cops when dealing with left wing protestors



Cops when dealing with right wingers



Pls guys stop you're making a mess

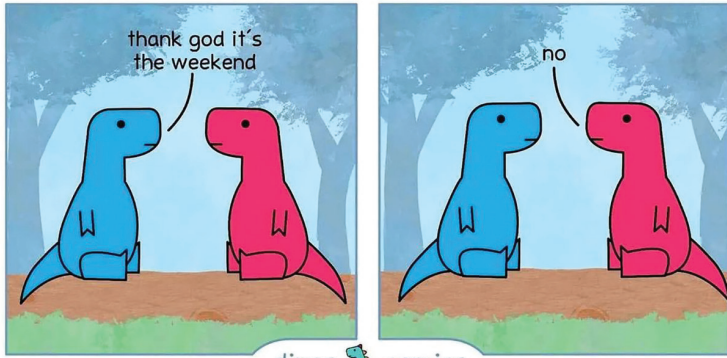
Attention African American 5 year old girl, please step away from the statue unless you want your other leg blown off



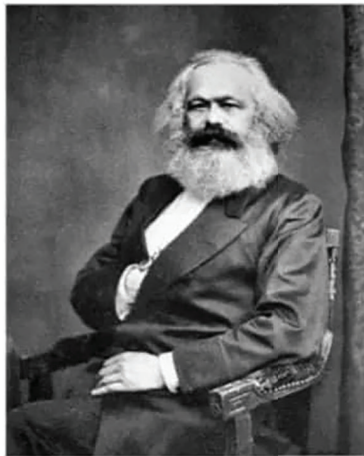
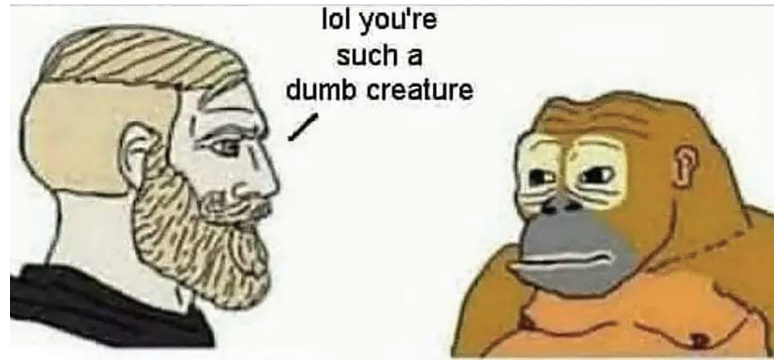
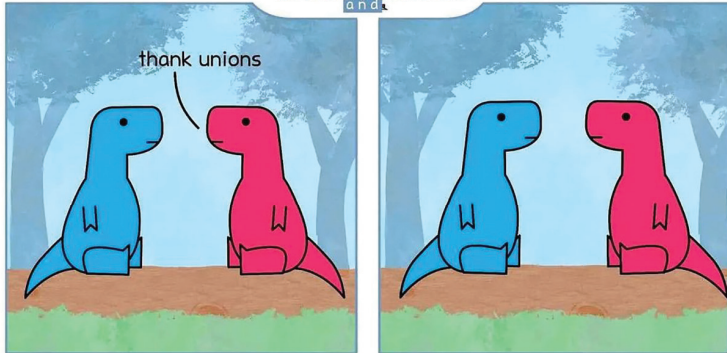
Lakota Man
@LakotaMan1

Someone needs to explain to me why we give Israel \$3 billion a year for "infrastructure"—when the Navajo Nation's water supply remains undrinkable?

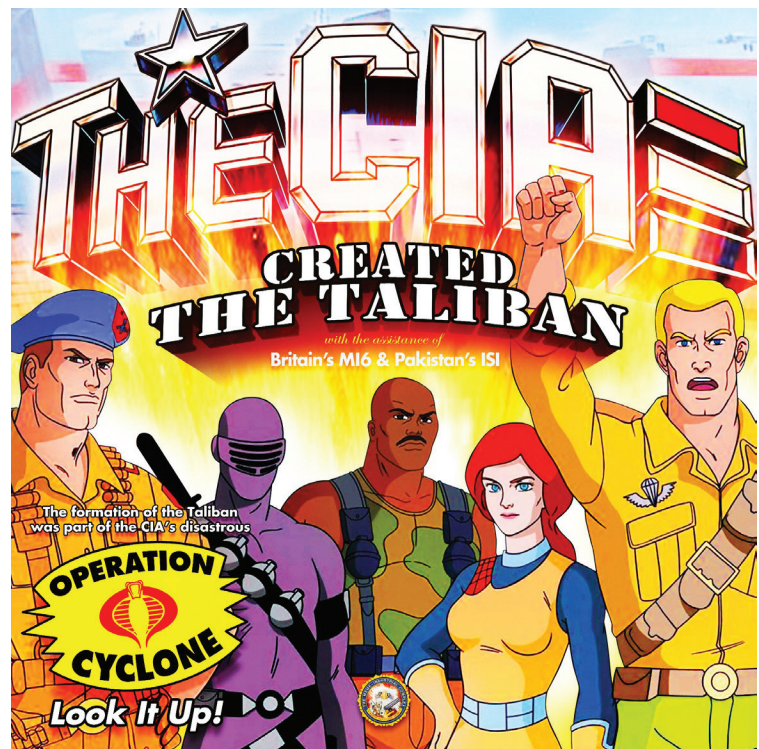




dinos and comics



i am literally the reason you can't enjoy anything anymore



Flashback



(*Socialist Standard*, March 2009)

Afghanistan's annual earnings from opium exports are estimated at \$4 billion. This is some 15 times larger than earnings from all legal exports combined (nuts, wool, cotton, carpets, etc.). Thus opium has greater dominance over the Afghan econ-

World Socialist

omy than oil, for instance, has over the economies of most oil-exporting states. The farmers who grow the poppies get about a quarter of the money, \$1 billion. The rest goes to traffickers and to the politicians, officials and military commanders who control the territory and protect the traffic (where they do not organize it directly).

(...)

The role of opium in US policy regarding Afghanistan is more difficult to assess. The illegal status of the trade prevents opium interests from exerting open influence on the US government, although secret influence — through links between politicians, officials and illegal business ("organized crime") — may be significant. However, the US market in illegal drugs is supplied primarily from other parts

of the Americas, not from Afghanistan.

Officially, the US government conducts a "counternarcotics strategy" in Afghanistan. Farmers have been offered assistance in switching from poppies to wheat. In practice, even if the intentions behind such programs are genuine and even if they were to be adequately financed, the conditions of war and the reliance of US allies on opium money would still militate against their success. It may be worth noting that the CIA, which has traditionally been quite willing to cooperate with foreign drug interests (for so long as they served its purposes) and even sell drugs itself to raise additional funds, plays no part in anti-opium measures.

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Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

- 1.** 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 consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- 2.** 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.** 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.** 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.** This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- 6.** 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, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- 7.** As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
- 8.** The companion parties of socialism, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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We Don't Need This War

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^[4] <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/2013/2010s/no-1303-march-2013/greateremancipator-frederick-douglass/>

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Photo by Mohammad Rahmani on Unsplash

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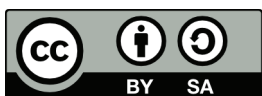
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Thanks for reading!



“The fundamental law of capitalism is not: both you and I; but: you or I.” -Karl Liebknecht