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The ordoliberal and Adam Smith's invisible hand

LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Damaging

I'm sorry that Ruth Tenne (Letters, February 16) didn't appreciate, still less understand, my letter (February 2). Ruth believes I am engaged in a "crusade" against holocaust deniers, whose only crime, poor dears, is to deny that millions of people were deliberately murdered. It seems that Ruth's friends, despite their stated commitment to free speech, don't like criticism!

Ruth doesn't seem to appreciate that holocaust denial serves the interests of the Zionists, not the Palestinians. There is nothing that the Zionists want more than for supporters of the Palestinians to 'prove' Zionist accusations of anti-Semitism correct.

The fact that Ruth doesn't get it is demonstrated by her quoting the speech of Omar Barghouti, of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions national committee, condemning anti-Semitism at the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign conference. Does she not realise that this speech was aimed at those who have been playing with anti-Semitism and toying with holocaust denial within the Palestine solidarity movement?

Omar pointedly singled out Britain as the epicentre of the boycott movement. The last thing he and the Palestinians want is for the movement to be divided by racists and anti-Semites such as Gilad Atzmon. Omar Barghouti's speech had a subtext which has entirely eluded Ms Tenne and it is: 'Don't play with anti-Semitism; it can only do harm to the cause of the Palestinians.'

It goes without saying that the PSC opposes the Zionist misuse of the holocaust against supporters of the Palestinians. However, we were facing a new situation where elements of the Palestine solidarity movement, led by Atzmon, were beginning to accept the Zionist accusations and, in the words of the "alleged holocaust denier" and "purported anti-Semite", Frances Clarke-Lowes, were "proud to be a holocaust denier".

Ms Tenne confirms her own confusion by telling us, on the one hand, of relatives who died in the holocaust and then speaking of "self-searching questions" by those who are "confronting a sacredly-held narrative" which underpins the Israeli state. Ruth Tenne's capacity to hold, at one and the same time, two ideas which are diametrically opposed to each other, is a wonder to behold.

Red Scribe's scribbles (Letters, February 16) are no more convincing than Ruth Tenne's. I am not "ascribing the erroneous views" of those like Paul Eisen and Frances-Clarke Lowes to racism. Indeed I said nothing about causation and I'm perfectly willing to accept that their holocaust denial views originate in their support for the Palestinians, rather than racism.

However, holocaust denial in western society is certainly racist. Unfortunately, Lowes and co took Zionist accusations of 'anti-Semitism' to heart and began to claim them as their own. Amongst Arabs and people in the third world, holocaust denial is a different phenomenon, being reflective of the predominant anti-Muslim racism.

It is an unfortunate fact that, just as Zionism, a separatist reaction to anti-Semitism, accepted the idea that Jews didn't belong in non-Jewish society and claimed it as its own, so the separatist reaction to Zionism, instead of denying and rebutting the Zionist libel of anti-Semitism, also claims it as its own. The Zionists say that supporters of the Palestinians and

anti-Zionists are anti-Semitic, and Atzmon, Eisen and Clarke-Lowes say, 'We agree'.

Red Scribe says that I can't give a "coherent, convincing and political explanation" for why a tiny handful of Jews (Atzmon has, I understand, converted to Christianity) are anti-Semitic or holocaust denial believers. Not true. I perfectly well accept that some Jews are so horrified and ashamed by the actions of the Israeli state, carried out in their name, that instead of questioning Israel's self-description as a 'Jewish' state and the Zionist rationale for their deeds, they end up hating Jews and questioning the very fact of the holocaust.

None of this is new. Did not Marcus Garvey do something similar with his meetings with the Ku Klux Klan? Did not the Zionists collaborate with the Nazis? The road that a few anti-Semitic Jews travel on is well-trodden. But their motivation is unimportant. What is of more concern is the damage they can do.

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

Clearly defined

If I had been able to deliver my proposer's speech at the PSC annual general meeting, I might have helped Tony Greenstein and the Zionists of *Harry's Place* to avoid their misunderstanding. Below is the section of my speech explaining part of the motion they had problems with.

"I think some definitions within the definition may be called for. *Inherent*: existing in someone or something as a permanent and inseparable element, quality or attribute: for example, 'the inherent right of men to life, liberty and protection'. *Trait*: habitual patterns of behaviour, thought and emotion (Wikipedia).

"Note that neither of these words need imply anything biological or genetic, though those of a racist inclination might think so (I myself lean heavily to the nurture side of the nature/nurture debate). Moreover, the definition is describing the belief of prejudiced people, not that of the definer."

The definition used in the motion was adapted from that in Wikidictionary for racism. I think that prejudice and discrimination are the same two mental/intellectual phenomena, whatever their target; of course, the form of discrimination will be different, depending on its subject. My idea, with Ruth Tenne, was to encourage people to think about what makes something anti-Semitic, Islamophobic or racist rather than merely use these labels to condemn opinions they do not like.

Gill Kaffash
London

Proactive

Dave Douglass (Letters, February 16) would indeed have 'debunked' another of Arthur Bough's historical myths - this one on the nature of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 'work-in' - except for one minor problem: I never made any of the claims about it that he attributes to me!

His critique appears to be based on the idea that I have somehow portrayed UCS as a model of how workers can establish socialist production, but I have never said any such thing. In fact, on the anniversary of the occupation, I wrote a three-part blog on the lessons of it, which set out all of the inadequacies of the struggle, in large part stemming from the reformist, Stalinist nature of the leadership. The fact that this leadership merely sought to find an alternative owner - though from the beginning the main emphasis was on the idea of the yard being nationalised - was only a part of that. The reality was that it was also a

sectional struggle, whose consequence was that jobs were saved at UCS at the expense of thousands of job losses at other shipyards around the country, under the rationalisation programme that came as the natural product of state ownership.

The only positive lesson I have ever suggested for workers from UCS is it showed that, rather than simply striking, rather than simply sitting outside the gates and placing their faith in intervention by the capitalist state, workers can occupy the factories, take over the means of production and thereby undermine the very nature of capital. As Marx puts it, that is no longer capital employing labour, but labour employing capital. It demonstrates that workers *can* provide alternatives other than those based on ownership by private or state capitalists.

It shows the only way, as with the occupation of factories by workers during the summer of 1968, that workers can exercise control. But that is all. For it to have gone any further, then the workers would have had to go beyond that, as the workers in the Argentinian occupations have done, and demand that their *de facto* ownership of the means of production be legitimised so that they can continue production as a cooperative. The Plessey occupation was another good example of that, in the way, like the Zanon occupation, it linked up with the local community.

But none of that, on its own, is adequate either. The reason the French workers restarted production in 68, the reason they restarted production at Zanon, was the fact that workers need to earn a living. But, of course, so long as this occurs within capitalism, it requires there to be a market for the things they produce. For socialists, that need is also combined with our desire that production should be socially useful. That is why, in the case of struggles such as Bombardier or BAe, it is necessary to combine not just those lessons, but the lessons of the Lucas plan, for workers themselves to be proactive in developing alternative production.

Furthermore, as Marx pointed out, such cooperatives could only be successful if they operated not as isolated enterprises, but combined in federations so as to benefit from economies of scale, from being able to coordinate their production, share best practice, centralise resources for investment, and so on.

Finally, of course, as Marx pointed out, beyond a certain point capital will not allow such developments to proceed without opposition. It will require the active support of trade unions and of a workers' party to defend the workers' gains against such attacks, just as the co-ops themselves - as happens with Zanon, and as happened with the Co-op in Britain when it supported workers during the General Strike - should act as an instrument of class struggle, by supporting other workers in struggle against capitalist owners.

Arthur Bough
email

Not my intention

Arthur Bough (Letters, January 19) is correct to suggest that my description of "nationalisation, welfare systems, pensions, social housing, free education and social security" as "transitional forms" has the potential to mislead. This was not my intention. If the phrase is interpreted to mean that state provision for workers' needs can evolve automatically into a socialist society without the overthrow of capitalism on a global scale, then it could be used to reinforce readers' illusions in social democracy, Labourism, Stalinism and

other historical blind alleys.

I guess that Bough's criticism of my statement that state provision contradicts capitalism is informed by a rejection of left Keynesian solutions to the crisis. He is therefore right to argue that welfare systems and policies of full employment were introduced in order to stabilise capitalism at times of previous crises. Bough's argument would have been stronger if he had mentioned the political and economic circumstances informing past strategies for systemic stability. Thus the chief source of state revenue used to finance state provision in the imperialist countries was derived from the export of finance capital abroad and the extraction of surplus value from the labour-power of African, Asian and Latin American workers in the colonies or semi-colonies. This required trade unions to abandon a global perspective on proletarian emancipation and support nationalism.

Moreover, the high point of welfare expansion in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with increased arms expenditure and the imposition of bureaucratic controls over workers' activity. In the west, this entailed the incorporation of trade unions into enforcing wage and price controls on their members. In the east, it meant continued atomisation of workers and their exclusion from democratic participation in setting targets for production, distribution and consumption. It needed a cold war and the threat of nuclear extinction to discipline workers.

Bough reminds readers of the contradiction between value and use-value within the commodity form. However, he seems unaware of how state provision has changed the nature of the use-value of labour-power. Labour-power exchanged for state revenue is no longer productive of value or surplus value. Whilst public sector workers remain alienated, unproductive labour-power loses its character as abstract labour. It is subject to political and bureaucratic controls. Workers in the public sector are politicised and bureaucratised as a result.

State revenue also subsidises the value of labour-power through free education and health. Subsidies to employers and the provision of pensions and social security politicise the regulation of wages, making market mechanisms less efficient. Stabilising the process of capital accumulation through social provision therefore comes with risks. These are a diminution of the control the commodity has over workers and a malfunctioning industrial reserve army of labour. These risks can create new forms of instability. They can lead to deeper and more prolonged crises of the system.

If workers gain more confidence in campaigning for more concessions, then the law of value will be further impeded in its operation. It was this sense I intended to convey when I wrote that state provision contradicts capitalism. In hindsight, rather than calling state provision for workers' needs "transitional", it would have been better if I had described it as a form of management of the contradiction between the value and use-value of labour-power in a period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

This period is transitional because capital is no longer strong enough to impose its will on all aspects of social relations, and labour has yet to develop forms of collectivity sufficient to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism. Presently, the ruling class has abandoned the funding of state provision as a strategy for the survival of capitalism. It is attempting to restore the conditions that existed

prior to the rise of imperialism in the 19th century.

It follows that the only way workers can ensure that society provides for their needs is through mobilising from below and the creation of Marxist parties. Some of the roles of these parties will be to counter propaganda that denies capitalism is in decline, educate workers in the nature of a socialist society, support their taking power and assist the transference of control of the surplus product into the hands of the ordinary worker. This will ensure that the transition to socialism involves the democratic participation of the majority of the population.

Paul B Smith
email

CPGB directors

Mark Fischer is quoted in 'Centralism and autonomy' as follows: "But democratic centralism means that the party can instruct members in lower committees and other organisations to 'act in accordance' with the decisions of higher bodies" (*Weekly Worker* February 16).

The type of rules suggested above were appropriate to the underground Bolshevik Party prior to 1917. However, for us to act like an underground organisation today, when our work in most countries is primarily that of a propaganda group, is almost comical. The rules of the party we need to build should not be copied or fixed in concrete. A revolutionary party should be flexible - as our tasks change, so should the organisational process change within the party.

There, of course, has to be a division of labour in any serious organisation. But that does not require "higher" or "lower" levels of organisational hierarchy, which only copy corporate structures. The PCC of the CPGB, hopefully, is not the board of directors of the CPGB Corporation.

Earl Gilman
email

One-sided

I find Eddie Ford's article on Europe very one-sided ('Danger of default catastrophe remains', February 16). His pessimism on the euro is shared by the Eurosceptic political class in the UK - the whole spectrum of little Englanders from left to right. While he is right to oppose austerity measures that hit frontline services and working class wages, we should take a leaf from Iceland and their austerity measures against the banks and put them through bankruptcy.

The British left's priority should be opposing the bailouts and the quantitative easing which is a bailout by stealth. Bloomberg reported on February 17: "Gold may gain in London ... on speculation that a bailout for Greece will hurt the dollar and boost demand for the precious metal as an alternative asset." Ford seems to be blind to the currency war propaganda he is spouting on behalf of the pound and the dollar. He does not seem either to recognise the euro as a rival reserve currency while China is biding its time. Also according to Bloomberg, China has pledged to invest in Europe's bailout funds and sustain its holdings of euro assets.

Railing against the loss of national sovereignty of Greece is also top of the little England agenda. While the project of the euro zone ultimately protects Greece from US hedge funds massively shorting a devalued drachma, this devaluation for export reasons is the supposed purpose, as far as I can tell, for ditching the euro.

The financial crisis on the periphery of Europe, and its corollary in the UK and the US, is plagued by a lack of transparency in the off-

balance sheets of the major banks and their investments in credit default swaps, and other complex betting arrangements. The shadow banking system with its offshore accounts is at the heart of these never-ending bailouts, while they are at the same time attempting to eat up the real economy of all countries, including Greece. Europe, with the backing of the powerhouse, Germany, along with the emerging Brics with their large industrial bases, act as a bulwark against this dominance of fictitious capital, which is at the root of modern US/UK imperialism.

Ford, with his one-sidedness, like most of the Atlanticist pundits, cannot hide how much of a basket case the UK has become. The dollar has more to it, for at least it is keeping its status as the world's reserve currency for present. The BBC's Robert Preston on November 21 told us: "... by the end of March [2011], the aggregate indebtedness of the UK - that's the sum of household debts, company debts, government debts and bank debts - had risen to 492% of GDP, or almost five times the value of everything we produce in a single year."

Paul Anderson
 email

All Greek

I'm writing to offer some criticism of Eddie Ford's recent articles on Greece and the euro zone crisis. I'd really like to see more actual analysis from him, as opposed to rehashed headlines and quotes from the previous week, which only constitute a narrative.

What is incumbent upon anybody writing about economics, financial markets and so on is to occasionally 'demystify' the jargon and explain the metaphors. An example from last week's article: "Ten-year bond yields for Greece have reached an utterly unsustainable 29.8%."

I'm sorry, but that's all Greek to me.

Damon Skinner
 email

List system

Regarding comrade Mike Macnair's article, 'Global fight for reforms' (February 16), here are my points for criticism that I hope to work on soon: 1. 'Palliatives' and 'state paternalism' - yes, I know of De Leon's use of the former term, but one person's state 'paternalism' is another's 'state aid' interventionism on behalf of labour. Politico-ideological independence is a goal, but economic independence 'this side of revolution' is illusory. 2. The usual dichotomy between industrial capital and financial capital is tiresome. The real dichotomy is between industrial capital and trade capital, one of which finance capital subordinates itself to at any given point in time. 3. There are no mentions whatsoever of post-Keynesian economics and public policy. 4. The commentary on 'global money' is too long. 5. "Suppose we demand a 30-hour week, or indeed a 20-hour week. This in no way involves a nationalist-mercantilist policy. It is a demand which can be applied across the board globally, and not a demand which involves forcing the state to spend more money." Why isn't 'without loss of pay or benefits' mentioned? 6. Defending is not advancing, with regards to 'health and safety'. It doesn't satisfy the questions posed in my previous letter (February 16). 7. On for-profit cooperatives, 'self-help', etc, this is too much a British fetish, not really relevant to the Social Democratic Party of Germany's alternative culture model.

In Lassalle's day, it was the liberals who employed 'self-help' rhetoric. Again, this goes back to the illusion of economic independence. My preference is for the non-profit

organisational 'business model' over the for-profit co-op 'business model'. At the end of the day, such a model would stress what the Eisenach programme combined: demands for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for politico-ideological independence and for state aid for economic reform.

Jacob Richter
 email

Free the six

Six Zimbabwe socialists remain charged with "inciting public violence", following the dismissal by the magistrate of their application for a discharge in Harare last week. They were arrested on February 19 2011, while meeting to watch video footage of democracy protests in Egypt and Tunisia. Forty-five comrades were originally charged with treason for attending the International Socialist Organisation film screening, and one, David Mpatsi, died following a rapid deterioration in his health while he was imprisoned and denied medical treatment. Although the treason charges were eventually dropped, inciting public violence carries a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment.

The lawyer for the six had applied for the discharge at the close of the state's case, on the basis that it had failed to produce sufficient evidence to require putting a defence. But the magistrate ruled, without giving any explanation, that the state had established a prima facie case, so the trial is set to continue on February 27. Hopefully the defendants will finish giving their evidence on March 2, but we are now aware of the state's deliberately frustrating delaying tactics.

It is clear that the state aims to continue with its harassment of any opposition voice despite what transpired during the trial with its 'star witness'. He called himself Jonathan Shoko and said he was a police officer attached to the Criminal Investigation Unit, but was exposed to be from the dreaded Central Intelligence Organisation (secret police) and his real name was Rodwell Chitiyo. He took an oath under a false name.

The main purpose of this witness, who had attended the ISO meeting, was to incriminate innocent people. But his evidence, upon which the state is relying, lacked any credibility. He not only lied about his identity, but also about what happened, and it is interesting to note that even the state-sponsored Herald newspaper pointed to the loopholes. The same magistrate could be seen laughing

during the time 'Shoko' was giving his hilarious, made-up and rehearsed evidence. Any magistrate in an open and democratic society would surely have dismissed the case immediately. When he was handing down the ruling, he avoided looking at the six - an indication that it had been decided by someone other than himself. The trial is just one example of the harassment of any opposition. On February 14 the police violently broke up the march on parliament organised by the radical Women of Zimbabwe Arise, and a week earlier dozens of armed riot police prevented an academic lecture on 'The global financial crisis and implication for the third world: the case for Zimbabwe' from taking place. It was to be addressed by professor Patrick Bond from South Africa at a city hotel, but the police turned away anybody they thought might be participants. All this sends a strong message of intimidation by Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, as we move towards the proposed constitutional referendum and, possibly, elections this year. The intimidation is meant to silence any opposing voice, as the Zimbabwean political crisis nears its climax.

We were saddened by the court ruling not only for the sake of our six comrades, but for the sake of all Zimbabweans who are willing to fight against the system. Though they had hoped to celebrate the first anniversary of their arrest as free people on February 19, they remain optimistic that they will come through - especially with the support that they continue to receive from families, friends, comrades in Zimbabwe and throughout the world.

We are stepping up our campaign to put the government under pressure to drop the charges against the six and we appeal to comrades outside the country to help us in doing this. The ruling showed that the state thinks it can do anything and, if pressure is not put on them, the six will find themselves sent back to Chikurubi prison. We are appealing to comrades to help us raise funds.

Please use these details when making donations to the solidarity fund in South Africa. Account name: CDL-MINE-LINE Worker Solidarity Fund. Bank: Nedbank, PO Box 87157, Houghton 2041, South Africa. Branch code: 191 60535. Account number: 100 185 3784. Swift code: NEDSZAJJ.

James Chiwenga

Fighting fund

Trend-breaking

Our February fund has been boosted by two generous additions: the fantastic £230 from SK - a regular donor - and £200 from PM, made by bank transfer. I must also mention the £75 from MM among this week's standing orders, plus the PayPal donation of £13 from MS and the fiver that PM added to his resubscription.

Altogether we received £583 over the last seven days, which definitely takes us within sight of our monthly £1,500 target for February. There is just under a week remaining to make the extra £223 we need - this month's fund will close at 5pm next Wednesday, February 29. But, of course, I am hoping for another week like this last one, so we not only smash through the £1,500 barrier, but go on to make up for January's deficit

of £147 - and more.

These past few weeks I have been reporting a steady rise in our online readership and I am pleased to say the trend seems to be continuing - with more than a thousand extra web readers compared to last week. But, although there were 24,748 visitors to cpgb.org.uk, MS was the only one to make a donation. This tiny ratio of donors to readers is also a continuing trend, unfortunately.

But negative trends are there to be broken. And it won't take that many of you, will it?!

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast of commentary on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.podbean.com>.

Northern Communist Forum

Sunday February 26, 3pm: 'Communists and the trade unions'. Speakers: Chris Strafford and Peter Grant. Room 3, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester M2. Organised by CPGB Northern Communists: <http://northerncommunists.wordpress.com>.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday February 28, 6.15pm: 'The politics in African ethnomusiological field recordings'. Speaker: Noel Lobley. St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (two minutes from Camden Town tube). Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Marx's Capital

Thursday February 23, 5.30pm: Reading group, Open University, Milton Keynes. Discussing *Capital* chapter one. Organised by Milton Keynes CPGB: milton.keynes@cpgb.org.uk.

Israeli Apartheid Week

Thursday February 23, 7pm: Film, Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Screening of documentary, *The Gaza breathing space*.

Friday February 24, 5.20pm: Film, Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H. Screening of *Izkor, slaves of memory* followed by a Q&A with film-makers.

Friday February 24, 8pm: Social, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, WC1. Night of music, dance, food and poetry. Organised by Israeli Apartheid Week: www.london.apatheidweek.org.

March against the Tories

Saturday February 25, 10.30am: Demonstration, Assemble Woodhouse Moor, Leeds. Oppose council cuts at the Tory local government conference. Organised by Leeds Against the Cuts: www.leedsagainstthecuts.org.

Global capitalism and crisis

Saturday February 25, 10am to 5pm: Conference, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2 (nearest tube: Holborn). Sessions: 'Marxism and the crisis' (Hillel Ticktin), 'The death of the west?' (Michael Cox), 'Greece and the decline of Europe' (Savas Michael-Matsas), 'Hugo Chávez, oil and petro-socialism' (Ben Blackwell), 'The Arab spring' (Yassamine Mather). Also: István Mészáros. Organised by *Critique*: www.critiquejournal.net.

Unite Against Fascism

Saturday February 25, 10am to 4.30pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn). £12 waged, £6 unwaged. Organised by Unite Against Fascism: <http://uaf.org.uk>.

Stop deportations

Saturday February 25, 3pm: Activist meeting, Peckham library, second floor, 122 Peckham Hill Street, London SE15. Making links to build resistance against migrant detention and deportation. Organised by Stop Deportations: stopdeportation@riseup.net.

Lambeth anti-cuts

Wednesday February 29, 6pm: Demonstration, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2. Lobby the council against local cuts. Organised by Lambeth Save Our Services: <http://lambethsaveourservices.org>.

Celebrate LGBTQ activism

Wednesday February 29, 3pm: Debates, performances, photography, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Organised by Sertuc LGBT Network for LGBT History Month: <http://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk>.

Stop the War Coalition

Saturday March 3: Annual conference, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: <http://stopwar.org.uk>.

Kill the NHS bill

Wednesday March 7, 6pm: Rally, Westminster Central Hall, London SW1. Fighting to defend our NHS. Organised by Trade Union Congress: www.tuc.org.uk.

Right to Work

Sunday March 11, 12 noon: Annual general meeting, Canterbury and Hughes Parry Halls, 12-26 Cartwright Gardens, London WC1. Organised by Right to Work: www.righttowork.org.uk.

Socialist films

Sunday March 11, 11am: Screenings, Renoir Cinema, Brunswick Square, London WC1. Eyal Sivan's *Jaffa: the orange's clockwork* (2010, 86 minutes); Serge Avédikian's *Barking Island* (France 2010, 15 minutes). Organised by London Socialist Film Co-op: www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

Wednesday March 21, 7.15pm: Rally, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Launch of Tusc GLA campaign with Bob Crow. Organised by Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition: www.tusc.org.uk.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

RELIGION

Secularism is hostile to state religion, not religion

Separation of church and state is a basic democratic demand bitterly resisted by the British establishment, writes **Eddie Ford**

If you were to believe some sections of the establishment, a terrible threat to the British way of life has emerged. A peril so deadly that the beloved customs and rituals which define us as a nation could be swept away - relegating centuries of glorious history to the rubbish heap.

What is it? A new wave of Polish plumbers or armies of New Age travellers? Underground Islamist terrorist cells maybe? No, "fundamentalist" secularists and "aggressive" atheists, we are told - of which Richard Dawkins is the ultimate personification, of course. The secular bogeyman. For example, this fear or paranoia was recently articulated in the pages of the high-church *Daily Telegraph* - where else? - by baroness Warsi, the Tory Party co-chairwoman. She painted a near nightmarish picture of a British society suffocating under a rising tide of "militant secularisation" that was reminiscent of "totalitarian regimes" - where "religion is sidelined", "marginalised" and increasingly "downgraded" in the public sphere.¹ Warsi may be a Muslim, but she found it "astonishing" that the European Union constitution makes "no mention of god or Christianity" - as if you could "extract these Christian foundations from the evolution of our nations".

Instead, she argued, Europe needs to be "more confident in its Christianity". However, the secularist rot has gone deep - so much so that in "recent years", she writes, a succession of governments have "undermined" and even "attacked" religion/faith: Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, John Major, etc are all presumably to blame for this insidious spread of irreligion. Now, if we are to believe the baroness, this "militant secularisation" is eating away at British society like a cancer. Apparently growing in size, its aggressive and intolerant advocates can pop up anywhere - spreading their alien and dangerous doctrine. Even in places where you least expect it.

Council prayers

Such as Bideford. Yes, you heard right. *Bideford* in North Devon (population 14,599), where the New Year's Eve tradition is attempting to run across the Long Bridge in the time it takes for the bells at nearby St Mary's church to chime midnight and whose only claim to fame, perhaps, is that Stuart Anstis - one-time lead guitarist with black metal band, Cradle of Filth - went to school there.

What so rattled the establishment and its loyal press was the decision on February 10 by Mr Justice Ouseley in the high court to rule in favour of Clive Bone, a former member of Bideford council and a local hero to some if not for others. Supported by the National Secular Society, Bone - a life-long atheist - objected to the fact that five years ago he was *summoned* to prayers as a formal part of the council's duties (ie, item number one on the agenda). Indeed, he was "shocked and horrified" when he first discovered that prayers were said at the beginning of every council meeting - and that you had to participate, regardless of whatever belief or non-belief you

had. However, when proposing that the practice be ended, he was voted down twice by the council.

In Bone's opinion, quite correctly, such a system of institutionalised Christianity was authoritarian and inherently anti-democratic. For him, a regime of compulsory prayers - apart from turning everyone into a hypocrite - sends out the wrong signal: that local government is just for "particular types of people" and "not for everyone". Especially younger people, Bone explains, who may lose all desire to get involved in local politics or stand for elections when they hear about such anachronistic nonsense.

Justice Ouseley agreed with Bone and the NSS. Or, rather, he ruled that whilst the holding of prayers did not breach 'human rights' or equality laws as such, Bideford council had no *statutory* powers to hold prayers during council meetings. Specifically, Ouseley decided that local authorities have no powers under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to hold prayers as "part of a formal local authority meeting" or to "summon councillors to such a meeting at which prayers are on the agenda". Continuing, he said that prayers *before* a formal meeting of such a body are lawful, "provided councillors are not formally summoned to attend". In other words, the state - local government in this case - could not or should not *impose* a religious duty (or burden) upon an individual or discriminate in favour of any faith or denomination. Believe it or not, not everyone in Bideford - or every other small British town - is a Christian.

Naturally, Keith Porteous Wood - the NSS's chief executive - welcomed the "ringingly secular decision" made by the court. If Ouseley's ruling was acted upon throughout the UK, stated Wood, then "no-one will be disadvantaged" or "feel uncomfortable" in performing their duties as an elected councillor in meetings. Inclusivity, not exclusivity. Wood is hoping, along with communists, that the high court judgement will act as a precedent - given that as many as half of local councils in the UK are believed to hold prayer sessions as part of their formal proceedings. With regard to Bideford, the prayers were actually minuted. Absences noted.

However, Bideford's secular revolution has generated outrage, both locally and nationally. Instant theocratic counterrevolution, UK-style. The Christian Institute, which has given "financial support" to Bideford town council, lamented how the practice of saying prayers at Bideford council meetings dates back to the days of Queen Elizabeth I and how "extraordinary" it was that Justice Ouseley - and the NSS - believe that local councils "have no lawful authority to choose, if they so wish, to start their formal meetings with prayers". It bitterly added that the "logic" of the ruling is that councils would also be "going beyond the law" if they "decided to start each formal council meeting with the national anthem". If only.

Tony Inch, a Bideford councillor, was more forthright about the "shock" ruling. Such decisions are

"eroding the whole basis of Christian life" in the country, he claimed, making out he was "baffled" that anyone could object to prayers being said. After all, he went on, on the evening before the judgement a group of Quakers was invited to attend the town hall - who led a few minutes of contemplative silence. "This is what we do" in Bideford, he declared, a happy town where "all faiths are welcome to come along and say prayers" at council meetings and other 'official' occasions. But in his bucolic description of town life where everyone dances around the Maypole - cider with Tony - there seems to be no place for non-believers or atheists.

The mayor of Bideford, Trevor 'man of steel' Johns, was blunter - "Anyone who does not want to enter the council chamber until the prayers are over is being disrespectful to the mayor," he fulminated, and "until I have a writ or a document in my hand with the seal of the queen then I don't see why I should be compelled to ban anything."²

The right reverend Michael Langrish, the bishop of Exeter, meanwhile informed BBC Radio Devon listeners about the NSS's sinister agenda - which was "inch by inch to drive religion out of the public sphere"; a malignant desire to deChristianise the UK. If the likes of the NSS get their way, worried Langrish, it would have "enormous implications" for prayers in parliament, Remembrance Day, the jubilee celebrations, etc. Nothing would be sacred. Urging rebellion against the lawmakers, our troublesome priest said he would "encourage" councils in his diocese, including Bideford, to continue to say prayers before the meeting began. A senior member of the Church of England inciting law-breaking? A theme repeated by his former boss, so to speak, Lord Carey of Clifton - once archbishop of Canterbury - who pronounced, albeit slightly cryptically, that "these sensitive matters can no longer be left in the hands of judges". Presumably, Carey wants the central government to step in and reverse the Bideford ruling - save the country from atheism and spiritual ruin.

Saviour

If so, then the anti-secularists like Langrish and Carey may have found a saviour in the rotund shape of the communities secretary, Eric Pickles - though maybe only a temporary one. Ringing the alarm, Pickles said the Bideford council case was a "wake-up call" - for reactionaries and small-minded bigots everywhere, he forgot to add. For too long, he ruminated, the public sector has been used to "marginalise" and "attack faith in public life" - in the process "undermining the very foundations of the British nation". The "right to worship is a fundamental and hard-fought British liberty", he added - overlooking the fact that no-one is trying to undermine that right and conveniently ignoring the right *not* to worship. But such Christianophobia will no longer be tolerated, said Pickles, who announced that he was "effectively reversing" the high court's "illiberal ruling" on Bideford.

By which he meant he is invoking the Localism Act 2011,

which legally enables councils to do anything an individual could do unless specifically prohibited by law. That part proffering to give councils "greater powers" and "freedom" will be brought in early, Pickles fast-tracking the parliamentary order which activates the power on the basis that it will "give councils that want to continue holding formal prayers the confidence and legal standing to do so". This new power to prayer, to coin a phrase, can henceforth be exercised by all major local authorities in England and should be available to smaller town and parish councils - like Bideford - by the end of March.

Needless to say, the NSS and a number of senior lawyers have cast doubt on the legality of Pickles' latest statement - especially the implicit notion that the communities secretary has virtually untrammelled powers to pass legislation, almost on a whim. There is a very good chance that the NSS will challenge Pickles, and the British government, in the European Court of Human Rights - adding more grist to the Tory mill and the rightwing press, which will have the opportunity to rage about the Brussels bureaucrats interfering in the ancient British way of life as well as the "militant secularists" and "aggressive atheists".

Of course, the idea that the UK is drowning under an intolerant secularist-atheist tide is pure fantasy. A fantasy, however, that reveals the insecurity of the British establishment - which cannot abide *any* sort of challenge to its power or moral legitimacy, not matter how minor or relatively inconsequential. Like forbidding Bideford council from imposing Christian prayers on its members.

In reality, as communists are the first to point out, the UK is far from being a secular state. We have an *established* church, the Church of England, which has 26 bishops ("lords spiritual" or "spiritual peers") permanently sitting in the House of Lords on the *government* benches, no matter how they vote. The head of state is also the "defender of faith" and the supreme governor of the Church of England, thus formally making her superior in status to the archbishop of Canterbury within the church hierarchy. The original Latin phrase, *fidei defensor*, is referred to on all current British coins by the abbreviations, FD or FID DEF. In all manner of ways, the established church tries in turn to semi-incorporate other churches, faiths and denominations. Even a non-believer like Ed Miliband bends over backwards so as to not offend religious sensibilities - to the point where he ends up privileging religion.

Then we have Warsi's rewriting of history - an alternative universe where British governments are doing everything they can to suppress religious sentiments. Who is she kidding? Under the government of 'his holiness', Tony Blair - first a devout Anglican, then an even more devout Catholic - we had an explosion of faith schools. About one third of the 20,000 state-funded schools in England fall into that category. Some of them converted to academy status - the most notorious example being the four academies that comprise

the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, started up the evangelical Christian and businessman, Peter Vardy, and which quite unashamedly taught that biblical creationism is a legitimate "theory" and that evolution is a mere "faith position". As for Gordon Brown, he never tired of telling us about how his father had been a minister in the Church of Scotland and hence, of course, transmitted his moral righteousness to his dutiful son. The stifling presence of institutionalised religion is everywhere in the UK, from top to bottom, and is central to the maintenance of ruling class power.

Communists, on the other hand, call for the strict separation of church and state - meaning, to begin with, the disestablishment of the Church of England. Which is why we welcomed the initial Bideford ruling, whether it gets reversed or not. In its own small way, that points to the sort of society communists fight for - where the state/government does not privilege one faith or denomination over another and there is a fundamental *equality* between followers of all faiths and none.

Yet for Marxists this is only half the story. Not being liberals, we do not just want freedom of religion. We want the right to struggle against religious ideas and so - ultimately - freedom *from* religion. We agree with the sentence recently added to *Socialist Worker's* 'What the Socialist Workers Party stands for' column - "We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference" - even though it omits the *main* issue in Britain: the need for secularism; equality between all citizens in the eyes of the state. But what about the SWP itself? What does the 'party' think when it comes to the struggle against religious backwardness, an issue which revolutionaries cannot be neutral or 'diplomatic' about? Exactly the point made by Marx, of course, in his *Critique of the Gotha programme*.

As it stands, the SWP's position is totally one-sided and represents mere bourgeois liberalism - something along the lines of the United States constitution of the late 18th century. Communists have a duty to promote atheist propaganda in order to overcome religious prejudice and ignorance, which in the last analysis diverts the class struggle and is used as an antidote to socialism.

We most certainly do not envisage this as some sort of 'war against religion', however - nothing like it. We are adamantly opposed to both theocracies and *atheocracies*. Nor do we favour the narrow, pedagogic approach adopted by Richard Dawkins at times: the great man who wants to educate the poor, ignorant masses and take them on the path to rationalist enlightenment. By contrast, Marxists emphasise how liberation comes through the *collective* struggle - the class struggle - to free yourself from all exploitation and oppression ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. *The Daily Telegraph* February 13.
2. www.thisisdevon.co.uk/Mayor-says-council-prayers-continue-despite-court/story-15245176-detail/story.html.

IRAN

Hague claims mask new threats

Foreign secretary William Hague's absurd claim that the world faces a "new cold war" if Iran does not give up its aim of acquiring nuclear weapons might not stand up to examination, but Hague was undoubtedly given a boost on February 22 when a team from the United Nations-sponsored International Atomic Energy Agency returned from a two-day visit to Iran.

The IAEA announced that Iranian regime officials had denied its request to inspect the Parchin complex near Tehran, where it is alleged a secret underground nuclear facility is hidden. Last November an IAEA report stated that some experiments conducted by Iran could have "no other purpose" than the development of nuclear weapons. A new report due next week is sure to add to the current campaign being conducted in Washington, London and Tel Aviv to open the way for likely military action against the Islamic Republic.

IAEA director-general Yukiya Amano said that no agreement had been reached on the holding of talks to "clarify unresolved issues", although the previous day Iran's "supreme leader", ayatollah Ali Khamenei, insisted that Tehran's nuclear programme was entirely peaceful: "There is no doubt that decision-making establishments in countries that stand against us are quite aware that Iran does not seek nuclear weapons, since the Islamic Republic of Iran regards the possession of nuclear weapons as a great sin, in terms of thought, theory and religious edict, and also believes that holding such weapons is useless, costly and dangerous."¹

Hague's inane warning of a "new cold war" came in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* last week.² He added to the absurdity by implying that this time things would be even worse - in Cold War II there would be no "safety mechanisms", you see. The following day the foreign secretary told the Commons: "If Iran sets about the development of nuclear weapons, then other nations in the Middle East would do so as well."

Let us examine Hague's claim by comparing this "new cold war" with the genuine article. The post-World War II extended stand-off between the USA and the Soviet Union saw a massive arms race resulting in the accumulation of enough nuclear weapons to destroy the entire world several times over. Each side had hundreds of formidable intercontinental ballistic missiles pointing at the other and no-one doubted that they had the capacity to deliver them effectively. This produced a scenario known as MAD - 'mutually assured destruction' - where the state that launched a nuclear attack would have to be literally insane, since such an act would guarantee its own obliteration.

That vast armoury - today in the possession of Russia and the US - still exists, having been 'modernised' and extended continuously, although, of course, the two powers no longer regard each other as mortal enemies. While in current circumstances Russia would not participate in coordinated western military action against Iran, a relatively tiny number of US warheads would suffice to wipe out every major population centre in the Islamic Republic.

As for the latter, if, despite the supreme leader's solemn words, it is indeed attempting to commit the "great sin" of joining the nuclear weapons club, then it could possibly equip itself with half a dozen warheads and some sort of means to deliver them



Nuclear-capable: president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inspects a civilian research facility

within a few years. But would it be able to fire a missile across Europe and the Atlantic that explodes in the centre of New York or Washington? It seems a ludicrous suggestion, but even if it were possible, what would it achieve? Iran's assured destruction - there would be nothing mutual about it. Theocracy would really have to be mad to contemplate the idea.

Slightly more realistically perhaps, Iran might be able to hit Israel, but in the absence of any worthwhile testing there is no guarantee a missile would land with any accuracy - perhaps it would not even make it to Israel's borders. But Tel Aviv is known to possess at least 160 nuclear warheads and, what is more, has efficient means to deliver them, including Cruise missiles, for example. So even a "cold war" restricted to the Middle East is a laughable proposition, given the huge imbalance in weaponry.

But if we take Hague's words at face value and accept that the acquisition of nuclear weaponry by one country would inevitably spark an arms race with rivals, then why is that not already the situation in the Middle East, where there is already one (heavily armed) nuclear power, or on the subcontinent, where there are two? India and Pakistan might not be the best of friends, but they tend to lob cricket balls at each other rather than nuclear warheads. Meanwhile, it goes without saying that the nuclear weapons of the US, Russia, Britain, France and China are totally benign - there are, of course, "safety mechanisms" in place.

No, Hague's claim is part of the ratcheting up of imperialist threats against the principal remaining 'rogue state' that still refuses to recognise the 'new world order'. We know that an attack on Iran would particularly serve Israel's interests. Tel Aviv is delighted to make use of the impotent statements emanating from Tehran about Israel having "no right to exist"

or being "wiped off the map" to claim it is under dire threat. In reality it is looking for an excuse to drive out its own 'enemy within'. In Israel proper there is a 20% Arab minority, while in 'greater Israel' - the whole of Israel/Palestine, including the occupied territories - there is rough population parity between Arabs and Israelis. The project to complete the ongoing Zionist project and permanently secure the West Bank in particular requires the removal of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. The confused reaction in the region to a military attack on Iran might provide the opportunity Israel is looking for.

Israel has previously been under pressure from the US to hold back, but things now seem to have changed - at least judging from statements like Hague's, combined with stories that have started to appear recently about a whole range of attacks that Iran is said to be planning. Not only will there be more retaliation killings of Israeli diplomats following the alleged assassination by Mossad of Iranian nuclear scientists, but there could be Iran-inspired terror attacks on the London Olympics, or even on New York. Most incredibly of all, unnamed "terrorism experts" have suggested that such attacks might be carried out in conjunction with al Qa'eda. The idea that the Shia Islamic republic would give "new funding and additional support" to Sunni al Qa'eda is really stretching incredulity to its limits.

Still, Hague is nothing if not restrained: sanctions - part of his "twin-track" approach along with negotiations - should be given "more time", although, of course, "all options must remain on the table" (after all, Britain could be within range of Iranian nuclear weapons, you know, and nuclear technology could fall into terrorist hands). The same 'restraint' applies with regard to Israeli assassinations, etc: "We do not take part in such things." Of course not

(although, in any case, that is not the same as saying we do not know about them beforehand). But, you see, it is just "not our way of dealing with this to have assassinations or to advocate military action".

Hague is using such language to mask UK complicity in any attack by Israel, which US defence secretary Leon Panetta has predicted could take place in the period April-June - although general Martin Dempsey of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said such a strike would be "premature". Like the UK, the USA wants to appear entirely reasonable and moderate.

But the signs are ominous. The whole thing is reminiscent of the build-

up to the attack on Iraq - even down to the "disappointed" UN weapons inspectors. The job of organisations like Hands Off the People of Iran and the Stop the War Coalition is to pull away Hague's 'moderate' mask, debunk his ludicrous claims and do everything in our power to alert the entire working class and democratic movement to the increased danger ●

Peter Manson

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://english.iriibnews.ir/newsbody.aspx?ID=17502>.
2. *The Daily Telegraph* February 18.

End exclusions

The Stop the War Coalition annual conference takes place in London on Saturday March 3. It comes at a time when a military strike against Iran is looking more likely by the day, so the conference could provide a useful rallying point for anti-war forces in Britain. However, the STWC steering committee has impaired the unity of those forces by refusing to allow certain groups to affiliate - most pertinently in current circumstances Hands Off the People of Iran.

The CPGB is therefore proposing the following motion on March 3:

1. Conference notes that the first point of the Stop the War Coalition's 'Aims and constitution', adopted in October 2001, defines the organisation's key purpose thus: "The aim of the coalition should be very simple: to stop the war currently declared

by the United States and its allies against 'terrorism'."

2. Conference also notes that the second point clarifies that "supporters of the coalition, whether organisations or individuals, will of course be free to develop their own analyses and organise their own actions".

3. Further, the coalition defines its membership as "open to the affiliation of any organisation that accepts those objectives" and calls on "all peace activists and organisations, trade unionists, campaigners and labour movement organisations" to join.

4. Conference therefore regrets the exclusion from our ranks of two organisations that meet these criteria - Hands Off the People of Iran and the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) - and instructs the incoming steering committee to overturn these decisions ●

Submitted by CPGB

The ‘big society’ is not such a new idea, argues **Werner Bonefeld**. This is an edited version of his talk at



Now amidst the crisis of 2008 and austerity, we have David Cameron. Not only does he think that there *is* such a thing as society; he also thinks this society is 'big'. The first distinction of the 'big society' is that it is not small. What is the 'small society'? The small society is one that lacks the 'bigness' to cope with austerity. It has no moral stamina to cope with the economic shock out of its own resources, by means of its own effort, and on the basis of its own self-responsibility. The small society, it is claimed, does not do that. The small society looks at the state and asks, 'What can you do for me in order to meet my subsistence needs?' For Cameron the small society is akin to

Adam Smith's invisible hand

at the CPGB's 'Fundamentals of political economy' school

the Keynesian welfare-state society. People in the small society lack ingenuity, entrepreneurship, enterprise and responsibility for themselves and others. That is the small society.

So the 'big society', first of all, is something of an aspiration; that which is small must be empowered to become big. In that sense the small society does not entail the small state, as it is made 'big' through the action of the state as a political project, as a form of government. What then does the 'big society' mean?

I will quote from David Cameron: "You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the big society."²

So we have liberalism, empowerment, freedom, responsibility. These are the important characteristics of the 'big society'. The 'big society' idea says you are empowered and free to look at your own circumstances as a self-responsible individual. Don't ask what government can do for you: ask what you can do for government. That is the sentiment and politics of the 'big society' as a project that seeks to balance the books of 'financial socialism' by taking money out of the pockets of workers, slashing public expenditure, slashing jobs in the public sector, governing the redundancy of a whole host of social individuals, and declaring progress is not just a measure of economic growth, but, rather, that it is measured by what the 'big society' can do for itself out of their own resources and on its own responsibility.

In the face of a desperate attempt to meet subsistence needs, it declares: 'Don't be small, don't whinge: be big! Look after your own affairs, be responsible. Don't ask others to subsidise you: subsidise yourself. Be an entrepreneur.' Red Toryism, particularly the people around the ResPublica think tank, say that the next increase in productivity will come from this entrepreneurial society, in which frugality and industriousness go together as the foundation and means of greater labour productivity.

Smith and the state

As I have said, my research took me to Adam Smith and what he has to say about the state (and the 'big society'). Smith, of course, was writing at a time that did not know the word 'liberalism' - I do not think you will find it in his work. Smith wrote in critique of mercantilism as a man possessed by things still to come. In *The theory of moral sentiments*, his first book (1759), he writes that a people is governed by self-love, and self-love oils the machinery of an ever increasing division of labour. But, he says, a society based only on self-love will destroy itself - I suppose the phrase, 'cut-throat competition', expresses this well. If you think about it - it cuts its own throat and bleeds to death. That is, self-love needs to be restrained to render it sociable.

So, he said, the moral sentiments also means that the society based on self-love has to be one based on sympathy, on regard for others. But in the tension between sympathy and self-love, he said, self-love wins. So you cannot trust the individual as a sympathiser of someone else's misfortune. No-one lives like Bill Gates, making billions, on the one hand, and behaving like some Mother Teresa, on the other. For many people this is an impossible position. So,

he says, the state is required as the impartial observer of the system of liberty, of the system of self-love. Of the system that gives us the law, of the system indeed, for Adam Smith, that provides us with the right sort of moral sentiments. A system based on self-love cannot succeed: it needs a morality that governs it. And this morality is in fact the marriage of Bill Gates and Mother Teresa. Not in the form of the person, but in a political institution - the state.

Why else is the state necessary in Adam Smith? He says the state is absolutely necessary in order to remove all sorts of impediments from the market. But what are these impediments? On the one hand, he says, there are capitalists who love themselves too much and fix the markets by mean of monopoly pricing - oligopoly - and they have to be reminded of the beauty of the perfect system of liberty by a politics of competition. Competition is good, he says, for workers. An uncompetitive system is not good for workers.

In other words, he determines an important state function by looking at the condition of the workers and the state's role. So, he says, the interests of the master and the worker are not the same; the former wants to give as little as possible to the worker; the latter wants get as much as possible from the master. Thus there is class struggle, he says. The workers will rise - their position is desperate. But risings, insurrections, riots, strikes are "false consciousness". They do not help employment prospects. They do not help the further division of labour. They do not help increase productivity. Therefore they do not help the trickle-down effect. How can we get the trickle-down effect going?

The masters, he says, have lots of money in their pockets. They can starve workers to death if they go out on strike. The masters are fewer in number and it is easier for them to combine against a big mass of people in turmoil, misery and hunger. The masters have the upper hand. So the masters need to be restrained too. Strikes and competition must be constrained according to a moral order which must be in place, Smith argues, for the benefit of the working class. The working class can only benefit if the employers are competitive, if the employer succeeds, if the employer can expand and absorb 'redundant' labour. That will lead to what the liberals call the trickle-down effect. The bigger the whole cake is, then the bigger is the slice for the poor. The rich might be getting richer, but the poor appear enriched as well!

In doing this, he says, we cannot trust the masters. The state is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, to use Marx's term, because, appearing as an impartial observer, it enforces the system of liberty that allows the constant increase in the division of labour and of productivity of labour. So the state operates not on behalf of a master, but on behalf of the system of liberty, of competitiveness, of lower unit labour costs, and thus on behalf of workers. So Smith says that the state is necessary to protect the rich against the rapacity of the poor expressing a false consciousness. The poor need to understand that a life of frugality and industriousness is in their own interest. Conditions will only improve for the better if they submit to the "system of liberty" (Smith's term). There was thus need for a system of education to instruct the people in what is

good for them. According to Smith, government should take pains to offset the socially and morally destructive effects of accumulation, by assuming responsibility for cultural activities to render society civil.

Is the Smithean state a weak state? Is the Smithean state the night-watchman state that liberalism tells us about? Or is his state one that governs for the invisible hand? For Adam Smith "the proprietor of stock is properly a citizen of the world, and is not necessarily attached to any particular country. He would be apt to abandon the country in which he was exposed to a vexatious inquisition, in order to be assessed to a burdensome tax, and would remove his stock to some other country, where he could either carry on his business, or enjoy his fortune more at his ease."³

What needs to be done? If things are at a standstill, Smith says in *Lectures on jurisprudence*, police are needed to secure the cheapness of provision. Policing is not an economic matter. It is proper to the state. The state is responsible, he says, for ensuring that society makes constant advances in competitiveness, in the productivity of labour, so that things do not come to a standstill. So that things progress. So that people are endowed with the right moral sentiments. So that they recognise human purpose as the purpose of economic progress. For Smith, the state is the strong, market-enforcing state. It makes society big. It governs for the operation of the free-price mechanism and, as such, the state is the political form of the invisible hand.

Ordoliberals

Let us turn now briefly to the German ordoliberals in the late 1920s-early 1930s. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment, so you can understand their point of view, their argument, their conception of the state as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Mass unemployment, mass demonstrations. Political assassinations, political violence. A severe regime of austerity by what was called the "famine chancellorship" of Heinrich Brüning. Entrenched class positions. An anti-systemic party system. And all of this against the background of the crash of 1929 and economic depression.

Now if you would have been a liberal would you have said, '*Laissez-faire - c'est la vie!* Let the market decide where it goes: if it crashes, then so be it. If the Bolsheviks succeed, then good look to them!' Is this a feasible liberal response? Is liberalism really apolitical, devoid of social values, etc? Or would you as a liberal in that position think that you have to stand up because things are going from bad to worse; something needs to be done, decisions must be made, order must be rebuilt so that the rule of law is restored? Does the law apply to chaos or does the application of the law presuppose social order? Does the law enforce itself? Or is enforcing an order itself a matter of ordering? Of policing? Does the invisible hand regulate the market without law, without order, without moral sentiments, without 'society' - that is, without a legal, moral, social framework? If, however, everything depends on order - good order, that is, not the bad order of Bolshevism; the order of liberal values - what in the late 1920s would you have declared for in the hour of liberal need? What kind of order must be enforced? *Who* enforces it?

The law does not enforce order. How to enforce order on a people who do not have the moral sentiments for the kind of social order that you call 'liberal'? What kind of education is needed for a people to internalise the moral sentiments of the market, of self-responsibility and willing compliance with the price mechanism? It's tough out there though - there are millions of people unemployed. What do you do? Are you arguing for a welfare state? Or are you arguing that these people need to acquire the moral stamina to succeed? What to do in the face of disorder and liberal emergency?

So German ordoliberals in the late 1920s-early 1930s called for order to be restored by means of a coup d'état that was to be led the conservative politician, Franz von Papen. They said that democracy needed to be suspended. They did not call for a sovereign dictatorship. They called for a commissarial dictatorship, which temporarily suspends the rule of law in order to reinstate it, once the liberal emergency is over. They said that society lacked the moral stamina to cope with economic hardship. In today's words, they declared for the creation of the 'big society'! One that is enabled to look after itself, empowered to face adversity in an entirely self-responsible manner, does not whinge and gets on with things in the spirit of the entrepreneur. For this to happen, they said, we need to make a decisive turn to the state - a state that makes decisions, governs and thus empowers society in the self-responsible use of economic freedom.

Alfred Müller-Armack argued that social policy is about the incorporation of competition into normal life. This is the same Müller-Armack who in 1946 introduced the term, 'social market economy', and who understood the 'social' in the social market economy to stand for decisions for the free market, because only the free market is able to increase the wealth of nations, improving the condition of the poor by means of the trickle-down effect. It is this trickle-down that characterises the free market as a social market. Or, as his colleague, Franz Böhm, put it, nothing is worse than a condition in which the free-price mechanism regulates the coordination of, and adjustment between, millions and millions of individual preferences - only for "the will of the participants to rebel against that movement". The formatting of this will defines the ordoliberal purpose of the strong state. Liberal society, says Böhm, loses its moral compass if it yields to demands for welfare, for housing, for subsidy, for care. Rather, what is needed is a state that governs the mentality of society to secure the will of the participants.

No 'moral stamina'

I would like to conclude with the issue of the proletariat in these writings. I talked earlier about the conception of the working class and class struggle in Adam Smith - the master wanting to give as little as possible; the worker wanting to receive as much as possible. As far as the ordoliberals are concerned, *laissez-faire* liberalism amounts to a theology of the invisible hand. It is thus blinded to the social consequences of free economy. If things are just given free rein, they say, then the gravediggers *will* turn up. Suddenly the workers are transformed into proletarians - and a proletarian,

they say, is someone that does not have the moral stamina to look after themselves in an empowered and self-responsible manner.

The proletarian is not a citizen of the free-price mechanism. Rather s/he rebels against it! The proletarian, they say, is someone who demands employment guarantees, who demands welfare guarantees, who demands public solidarity for their own subsistence - that is, the welfare state is the political outcome of a proletarianised society. For the sake of the common wealth, society needs to be deproletarianised. How? The proletarian, they say with reference to Marx, is someone who is doubly free. They have no means of market-independent subsistence and thus depend entirely on the sale of their labour-power. That makes the ability of the proletarian to respond to economic shocks in a self-responsible manner very difficult, as they are not able to fall back on alternative means of subsistence.

So what needs to be done, they say, is to transform the proletarian into a proper citizen of the world. Since the proletarian is characterised by the lack of private property, deproletarianisation means an attempt at private property provision or, as Sam Brittan called it in the 1980s, it means popular capitalism, including particularly home ownership. What else? Share ownership, they say. Private pensions. Everything that infuses the workers with the mentality of the citizenship of private property is a good thing. Private debt is also a form of property: it reduces the willingness to strike if people are desperate to hold onto their homes: they price themselves into jobs for the sake of debt service.

The market liberal social policy includes a whole host of measures that are not aimed at changing the proletarian position of the worker - that is bad for business - but at changing the *mentality* of the worker. To quote Wilhelm Röpke, the father of German social-market economy, to be a proletarian is not a "material condition": it is "an attitude". An attitude which must be changed for freedom's sake! For the neoliberals the state is the organisation charged with embedding these "psycho-moral forces" (Röpke) into society.

Finally, none of what I have described is the economy. The economy, according to the ordoliberals, has no independent existence. The economy has no force of social cohesion. The economy has no force of social integration. They say the idea of an invisible hand governing us is just theology, has no standpoint to defend, is subject to disorder and turmoil, is devoured by greedy self-seekers, and gives in to its proletarian gravediggers. For them the economy is rendered independent, as an automatic entity, by the state. The state forces order on society, provides for the rule of law, secures the moral make-up of society, polices disorder, and reminds us of our duties and obligations as an empowered people who look after ourselves and our own affairs in freedom and responsibility.

This is a definition of the 'big society' with which I began ●

Notes

1. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm.
2. www.number10.gov.uk/news/big-society-speech.
3. A Smith *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*: www.marxists.org/reference/archive/smith-adam/works/wealth-of-nations/book05/ch02b-2.htm.

MONARCHY

Holy trinity of reaction

The queen's jubilee is a timely event for the forces of reaction in an age of austerity, argues **Ben Lewis**. For its part, the workers' movement needs to rediscover the tradition of militant republican democracy



monarchy worship require a degree of historical blindness. After all, our very own Elizabeth Windsor is actually a direct descendant of the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha family - names that many British royalists would not even be able to correctly pronounce. That she is married to a Greek - who, unlike most of his beleaguered compatriots, certainly *is* 'lazy', at least in the institutional sense - is another irony for those who venerate the monarchy as part of their 'British' identity.

Indeed, the adoption of the name 'Windsor' actually came at the height of World War I, a time when words like Gotha and Saxe-Coburg jarred with the generalised jingoism demanded by the British war machine. While the working classes of Europe were urged to continue their mutual slaughter, the royals of the different warring states dutifully put the 'national interest' before family ties.

The 1917 example reveals something about an institution so painfully out of step with modern society: it must constantly reinvent itself, constantly pass off something as 'new' in order to preserve the 'old'. Hence the song and dance about David Cameron's proposals to allow first-born daughters to accede to the throne (we do, after all, live in an era of women's liberation, right?). Hence the particular *form* of the jubilee festivities. Certainly military pomp and circumstance will have to play a part - this is Britain, after all. But so will events like the huge rock concert in front of Buckingham Palace - the queen has to be seen as in touch with her subjects. No other than Mancunian pin-up Gary Barlow of Take That and *The X factor* (whose popularity is certainly up there with that of the queen) will be choreographing the huge event. This might be a Con-Dem government, but such contrived homages to 'Cool Britannia' are lifted straight from the New Labour textbook.

Austerity

Bolshevik leader Grigory Zinoviev once observed that the bourgeois press is able to lie effectively by constantly, insatiably and irrepressibly repeating untruths or half-truths until they are unconsciously assimilated by the mass of the population and become, to all intents and purposes, *true*. These 'truths' then set the agenda for further untruths, producing a web of further befuddlement and obfuscation. We are lied into submission.

So it is that 60 years of royal corruption, political meddling,¹ oppression and almost uninterrupted wars and military misadventures are quickly turned into their opposite: the queen, so the story goes, embodies the eternal British values of dedication, self-sacrifice, loyalty and unquestioning service. She and her hangers-on are dedicated to ensuring we all can enjoy a better life.

As the current Con-Dem government engages in unabashed class warfare against the majority of the population, there is quite clearly enormous political capital to be gained by appealing to the notion of national identity and common cause with the institution that symbolises it - the monarchy. After all, if we as a *nation* - black and white, young and old - can tighten our belts in the name of the national good and unite behind our dear monarch, then this spirit of the blitz might see us through the other side of the huge economic

Republicanism: more than getting rid of the monarch

Every possible avenue is being exploited to promote the 60th anniversary of the supposedly glorious reign of our monarch, Elizabeth Windsor. The events for this summer bear all the hallmarks of slick marketing and promotion, and result from years of detailed advance planning. Given the sheer ubiquity of news items, features

and banal commentary on the royal family, one could be forgiven for wanting to remove oneself from it all and retreat to a desert island.

Anniversaries are often contested sites of struggle - struggles decided on the battlefield of historical memory. Two such battles can be expected within the next few years, as we approach centenaries of two events

that helped define the 'short 20th century' - World War I and the Russian Revolution. Publishers will have long commissioned books for 2014, for which the British state will be planning something beyond the usual round of poppy fetishism, and all media outlets will be seeking to outdo each other in historical falsification: documentaries, features, 'new historical research' and

all the rest of it.

Those who recoiled in disgust at the xenophobic Europhobia in the media following David Cameron's recent deployment of his European Union veto have not seen anything yet. After all, 'Two world wars and one World Cup' are what made Britain/England great.

Of course, British flag-waving and

crisis. Hand in hand with the unfolding economic crisis and assault on living standards comes this drive to reinforce the revoltingly abnormal institution of the monarchy.

Generally speaking, the monarchy does not enjoy the level of popular support that it did, for example, back in the 1980s. The royal wedding of Charles and Diana in 1981 had more purchase. Intervening divorces and sex scandals may have revealed that the royals are a bit more ‘like you and me’ than they would care to admit. Yet this, combined with the plethora of conspiracy theories about the untimely demise of the ‘People’s Princess’, may have played their part in the reduced support for the institution. But this is not some inexorable process - ultimately, the outcome will be determined by the battle of ideas. The ruling class has certainly laid down the gauntlet once again.

Last April’s wedding between Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge was obviously a propaganda coup for monarchists and other reactionaries. Who could argue that the monarchy was out of date, when these two people are so young, so hip and so wonderfully in tune with modern Britain? Since then the royalist propaganda barrage seems to have continued unabated. Look how popular Kate and Wills are in Canada! Look at the good our Kate is doing for *British* fashion by wearing *that* overcoat! Note how naturally she fits into the oh-so-demanding roles of shaking hands and drinking non-alcoholic cocktails - in boozy, feckless Liverpool of all places! And that without the support of her husband! Witness her selfless charity work for alcoholics and other down-and-outs!

And this is the point. Behind every handshake that the Duchess of Cambridge exchanges with somebody driven to destitution, or some poor young boy dying of cancer, lies a pernicious, reactionary political agenda that is rotten to the core. We may be faced with the prospect of real mass poverty and social exclusion, but the Tories are quite clearly hell-bent on dishing out the usual mix of carrot and stick to maintain the fragile social cohesion that their austerity undermines. On the one hand, state repression, the threat of unemployment and the removal of state subsidies. On the other, the royal circus.

And they certainly start such an agenda with the young. As our televisions and radios loyally report, children up and down the country are being asked to take part in school art projects and sports events, to sing the national anthem and all the rest of it.

There are further, ominous signs of what is to come. In the run-up to an official visit to the pope in the Vatican, Tory chair Baroness Warsi warned of the supposed “militant secularisation” of British society. This is quite clearly mendacious manoeuvring to increase the role and influence of religion. Note the imagery in her statement: “You cannot and should not extract these Christian foundations from the evolution of our nations any more than you should or could erase the spires from our landscapes.”

The cretinism of regal revelry and the bolstering of religion (both ideologically and in terms of the welfare and support offered by religious charities to those cut off from society), combined with the scrutinously policed orgy of nationalism and corporatism known as the London Olympic Games, will form a holy trinity of reaction this summer.

Any democrat or vaguely progressively-minded person will surely be sickened by the fact that in-depth discussions of Kate’s latest fashion choices appear alongside some of the shocking footage from Syria, Egypt and Bahrain. Many an object must have been hurled at the television or the radio, particularly when David

Cameron or foreign secretary William Hague then appear to make duplicitous noises about “legitimate democratic aspirations” in the Arab world.

All the while these types, along with the compromised and bribed media, are more than content to wax lyrical about the virtues of British democracy: the fact that we Brits have - in our own proudly eccentric fashion, of course - almost uniquely succeeded in marrying the demands of modern democratic society with the existence of our timeless, god-given monarchy. While the last 60 years have seen big changes in the world, we can sleep safe at night in the knowledge that the institution headed by our queen has stood the test of time.

Yet the notion that Britain is a genuine democracy, where the people really do rule, is a sick joke. The idea that such a travesty should be exported is even sicker. British citizens - sorry, subjects - are able to put a cross next to the name of a candidate every five years or so. All the while, the judiciary, the armed forces, the secret state, the police, the media, etc remain beyond our control.

Of course, in this country we - for the time being - enjoy far more democratic space and freedom to organise than in Syria, North Korea or Saudi Arabia. Yet this has not resulted from the benevolence of the monarchy, still less from the rise of the bourgeoisie and its class imperatives. Every right, no matter how much it may be taken for granted, has been won through blood, sweat and tears over centuries, in the process of mass struggle.

Our republicanism

There is a frustrating lack of anything approaching a critical response to this overwhelming royalist onslaught. Attempting to avoid accusations of bias, our wonderful ‘independent’ state broadcaster, the BBC (which has effectively agreed to avoid using the word ‘Palestine’), tends to put forward arguments along the lines of ‘Of course, the queen has made mistakes’, such as in her response to the death of Diana and so on. You will not find much time and space allotted to anyone making even the most fluffy of liberal cases for the abolition of the monarchy. Those who rock the boat are portrayed as party-poopers out of step with the real world and subject to patronising dismissal and marginalisation. This explains why so many politicians will be keen to join in worship at the altar of the monarchy. Their media reputation hinges upon it.

Communists can certainly agree with the liberal campaigning group, Republic, that June 3 provides “a unique opportunity not just to voice our opposition to an unaccountable and anti-democratic institution, but to promote the positive republican alternative”. We on the far left should surely now be looking to organise our own independent voice against the monarchy as a matter of some urgency.

But what precisely is this “positive republican alternative?” Republic boasts that its “diverse membership represents the full social and political spectrum ... bound together by a few simple principles and a single ambition: a republican constitution, the right to a democratic head of state and an end to the monarchy.”²

But our class deserves better than a situation like that in France or the USA. *Marxist* republicanism does not merely concern itself with the abolition of this or that post. We do not wish to simply see her majesty replaced by a “democratic head of state” like Nicolas Sarkozy or Barack Obama. Our republicanism is not one that merely seeks to substitute an elected monarchical president for the present incumbent of Buckingham Palace, but strives to achieve the victory of the

democratic principle in all areas of life in order to create the conditions for working class rule. Unlike that of liberals, our democracy does not stop halfway.

For Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky, Luxemburg and many more, the democratic republic was the form they envisaged for working class rule. This rule rests on the fulfilment of key political demands, the pillars of the minimum programme: the armed people, annual elections, all public officials to be paid no more than the wage of a skilled worker, the election of judges, self-government in the localities, the abolition of the secret-state apparatus and so on. Only with the achievement of such measures and thus the winning of a thoroughgoing, genuine democracy can the transition to a higher form of society take place.

Unfortunately, some of these cornerstones of Marxist political strategy have been lost in the defeats inflicted upon our class in the 20th century. So as to avoid falling into the trap of *bourgeois* republicanism typified by Republic, the working class movement must look back to its achievements of the past and begin once more to articulate a viable, practical vision for society as a whole. We unashamedly stand in the democratic republican tradition of 1848, 1871 and 1917.

The ruling classes are clearly on the offensive, and it will take more than well-meaning pledges about the dangers of heredity to hold back the tidal wave of reaction. The working class programme must constantly raise the question of the republic as the form of working class rule. We must fight for the federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales - crucially, as a key aspect of the strategic fight for a United Socialist States of Europe.

Communists can only echo Karl Kautsky in his seminal work on Marxist republicanism: “We are republicans for the very reason that the democratic republic is the only political form which corresponds to socialism. The monarchy can only exist on the basis of class differences and antagonisms. The abolition of classes also requires the abolition of the monarchy.”³

We look forward to that fine day when our working class movement can thoroughly humanise the goldfish bowl existence of those like Elizabeth, Charles, Kate and William - through the winning of human freedom and the emancipation of the whole of humanity. We have no reason to seek bloody retribution nor, as cleverly proposed by Susan Townsend in her novel *The queen and I*, do we wish to see old Liz slumming it up in a council house on the pittance offered by the state in benefits or by religious charities.

The working class project of self-liberation aims to emancipate *all* of humanity, creating the conditions in which even members of the royal family can become genuinely human. Conditions where everyone can think, love and create freely and equally with their brothers and sisters across the planet - satisfying these needs without seeing them submerged in greed, avarice and other manifestations of the profit system.

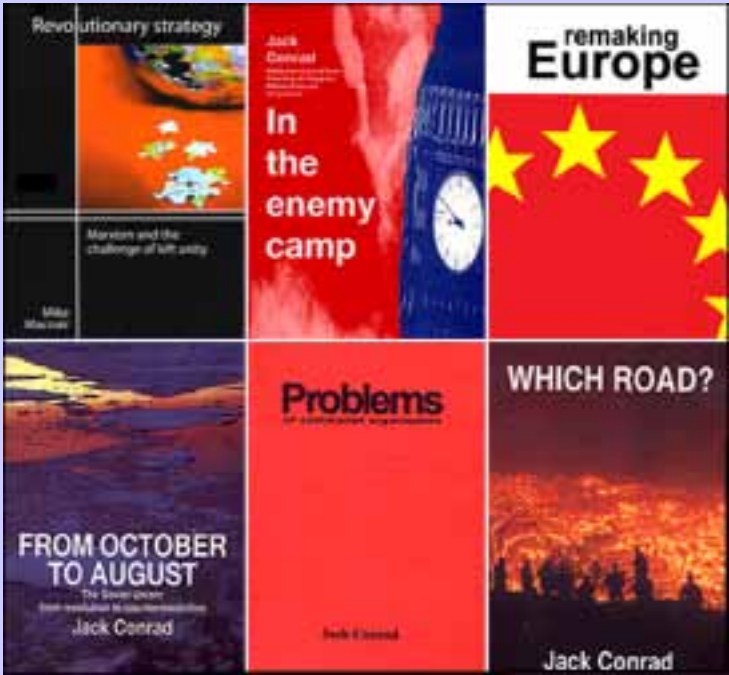
Now that is something worth throwing a party for - whether Gary Barlow is on board or not ●

ben.lewis@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. A recent example of this is the scandal of Prince Charles being offered a veto over 12 different pieces of government legislation since 2005 because they could have impacted upon his property portfolio: eg, the Duchy of Cornwall, worth a cool £700 million. See *The Guardian* October 31 2011.
2. www.republic.org.uk.
3. Quoted in K Kautsky, ‘Republic and social democracy in France’ *Weekly Worker* April 28 2011.

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REVIEW

Clear economics, weak politics

Paul Mattick *Business as usual* Reaktion Books, 2011, pp126, £12.95

This little book should be very widely read. It can be bought from Amazon for £8.80, or from some of the discounters who list on Amazon for under £6 (less than the average price of a couple of pints of bitter, according to the *Good pub guide*). In 75 pages, it gives beautifully clear Marxist outline accounts of the current economic crisis (chapter 1); of the history of crises and depressions, and theories of the business cycle (chapters 2-3); of the post-war 'golden age' and how it came to an end (chapter 4); and of the uselessness of mainstream solutions, and reasons for believing that it is unlikely that governments will return to large-scale 'Keynesian' demand-stimulus (chapter 5). The final chapter offers thought-provoking ideas about the future of capitalism and the possibility of an alternative.

I recommend Mattick's book for its brevity and clarity. Andrew Kliman's *The failure of capitalist production* (London 2012), which takes a similar line, is twice as long and a much harder work to read. Robert Brenner's *The economics of global turbulence* (London 2006) which in some ways reaches similar conclusions, is nearly twice as long as Kliman's book and lacks the theoretical coherence. I have not yet been willing to buy Guglielmo Carchedi's *Behind the crisis* (Brill/Historical Materialism 2010) in hardback at just under £90 from Amazon (it will be out in paperback in May). Most other Marxist books on the crisis are framed by 'underconsumptionist' theories of crisis or in other ways promote Keynesianism as a real alternative. Mattick's is a great book for a broad audience.

Caution

I have one substantial caution about the analysis. The long-term explanation which Mattick shares with Kliman and Brenner, albeit on different grounds, is that real profitability in *productive industry* never recovered from the decline of the late 1960s (which emerged into crisis in the form of 'stagflation' in the 1970s). If sufficient capital had been destroyed by a real slump, profitability in productive industry could have recovered. But instead what has happened is that states have borrowed and printed more money to bail out firms and the economy as a whole in and after the successive crises that followed (the 'Volcker shock' in 1981-82, 1987 and its aftermath, the 'east Asian crisis' in 1997-98, the 'dot-com crash' in 2001, and the current crisis).

Though *consumer* price inflation has not followed, there has been a very large *capital asset* price inflation, and this has allowed large paper profits in the financial and related sectors, which have given the *appearance* of a revival of aggregate profitability. In this account the process did not merely become a Ponzi scheme in its later stages (which is generally accepted): it has *always been* a Ponzi scheme, dependent in the last analysis on the ability of states to borrow and, hence, to lend at low interest rates, thus allowing capital asset prices to rise without a growth in real productive investment sufficient to generate profits on the scale of the 'golden age'. Hence the enormous growth in debts and in financial operations, and hence the turn to 'austerity' in the immediate past and currently, as it became apparent that there are limits to the creditworthiness of even



Paul Mattick: clear

the 'core' states.

This explanation is, quite properly, violently debated among Marxist students of political economy. Its correctness depends in part on the sort of detailed empirical-analysis arguments made by Kliman. A partial critique at this level has been offered by Deepankar Basu and Ramaa Vasudevan.¹ I would not pretend to have the skills to be able to assess the rival arguments at this level.

There is, however, a more fundamental and simpler criticism of the methodology. This is that the arguments are characterised by *methodological nationalism*. That is, that for the sake of getting clear numbers they focus down on the 'US economy' - or, in Brenner's case, the 'advanced capitalist economies' - as if these were 'closed economies' in which international trade and global financial flows could be disregarded for explanatory purposes. In reality, since World War II there have been enormous changes in centres of industrial production outside the 'advanced capitalist economies'.

Now it may be that the argument for an ultimate failure to recover from the profit decline of the late 1960s is in fact sound if the evolution of the global economy is properly addressed. But Mattick does not address it, any more than Kliman or Brenner, and the argument cannot be *proved* (or, indeed, disproved) on the basis of the study simply of the domestic production numbers for the US or for a group of countries (Brenner).

It might be the case - for example - that the relative stagnation of the US productive economy after the 1970s is analogous to the relative stagnation of the Dutch productive economy in the 18th century,² and results from relocation of the US's position in the world economy towards the role of *rentier*; and/or that large capital losses in Latin America and elsewhere in the 1980s enabled a new growth of productive industrial investment in China, leading to a real rise in *global* industrial profitability, merely *appropriated* in a financial form in the US. I put these suggestions forward not as firm objections to the thesis, but merely as speculative hypotheses of a sort which need to be countered to establish it.

This methodological choice is linked to the political background of the authors just cited. Paul Mattick, aka Paul Mattick Jr, is the son of the Paul Mattick Sr (1904-81) who was a prominent 'council communist', and shares the fundamentals of his father's politics. Andrew Kliman is associated with the Marxist-Humanist Initiative, one of the splinters of Raya Dunayevskaya's *News and Letters* group. Robert Brenner is associated

with *Solidarity*, the current descendant of (primarily) the left-Shachtmanite International Socialists (which had a long-term relationship with the British IS before the Cliffites in 1977 split the US IS to form the International Socialist Organisation).

There are two related links of these political choices to 'methodological nationalism'. The first is that both 'state capitalist' and 'bureaucratic collectivist' theories of the Soviet-bloc regimes *ex hypothesi* suppose that you can have, in spite of the global character of capitalism, a distinct social order in a single country. Both approaches in fact *refuse* any real explanation of the contradictory unity of the Soviet bloc and the 'west'. It then follows that capitalism has to be explained in terms of its national components rather than the global capitalist order.

The second and perhaps more important link is that 'official communism', Maoism and most of post-war Trotskyism all downgraded the significance of direct class struggles in the central capitalist countries relative to the phenomena of imperialism and forms of revolutionary nationalism in the 'periphery' countries. This was a legacy of the strategic line of the *Platform of the Communist International*, the *Twenty-one conditions*, and the Second Comintern Congress *Theses on the colonial and national question*. For 'official communists' and Maoists it was directly linked to the theory of the people's front; for Trotskyists it was more animated by the 'revolutionary' character of political movements in the 'third world' and the obvious conservatism of the socialist and communist parties. 'Third camp' lefts reacted away from this line by downplaying the significance of imperialism - though their political ancestors in the left wing of the Second International had played an important role in elaborating the theory of imperialism in the first place. This choice, too, played towards emphasising the political economy of single countries.

Future

In the light of this political background it is perhaps unsurprising that the last chapter of the book (on 'The future of capitalism'), while thought-provoking, contains its weakest elements.

The introductory part of the chapter (pp83-88) makes the correct points that a sufficiently deep depression and destruction of capital in the next period could restore the conditions of profitability, as the 1930s depression and World War II did in the past; but that China and India do not look like independent economic powers. The second section, 'Limits of capital' (pp89-95) similarly makes strong points: about the fact that privatisations and so on have not *in fact* rolled back the frontiers of the state, though states have become less good at fulfilling elementary functions; and about the endemic, as opposed to cyclical or artificial, large-scale unemployment, more than a mere 'reserve army of labour', in the late 20th-early 21st century world.

The third section, 'After the left' (pp95-100), argues that "The left that began with industrial capitalism in the 1800s, grew through the 19th century and reached its greatest development during the first quarter of the 20th, no longer exists" (p96). Mattick argues - correctly - that Marx believed that working class organisations would contain the elements of socialised

production within themselves, and would be driven to contest for power. He goes on to claim that August 1914 showed that this perspective was false: "workers' politics had turned out not to be a harbinger of the overthrow of capitalism, but an aspect of its development" (p98) - that is, its *initial* development. With the growing need of capitalism for state intervention, "what had remained of the left was swept away: into the politics of the welfare state, into sectarian insignificance or into some combination of one (or both) of these and service to the Russian state" (pp98-99).

This argument has a certain superficial attractiveness. Mass organised workers' movements were indeed usually created in the period in which, in any country, the working class as a class was formed out of dispossessed peasants and artisans. But it is a lot less plausible in Britain than it is in the United States.

The reason is that the mass Labour Party, cooperative movement and so on of the late 19th to early 20th century in Britain were *not* products of the immediate formation of the British proletariat as a class, which had taken place at least three quarters of a century - if not more - before. The British equivalent of the mass workers' parties which reflected the initial formation of the class was Chartism. After Chartism failed in 1848, and all the more after the concessions of 1867-71, British workers' movement politics was dominated by narrow trade unionism and an attachment to the Liberal Party very similar to the attachment of US workers to the Democratic Party today. A movement in the direction of independent working class politics emerged in response to the long depression after the 1873 global crash, and 'took off' when the economy again began to move forward in the 1890s-1900s. This can happen again.

Mattick's final section, 'The future of humankind' (pp100-09), offers further reflections on the limits to capitalist solutions. These include, first, possible difficulties in mobilising people for large-scale war as a solution; second, 'peak oil'; and, third and related, global warming. The overall result is that large-scale economic disaster is likely. Mattick's wager is that such a disaster will produce among broad masses reactions of solidarity and self-organisation of the type that are seen in (some) natural disasters, but promptly repressed by states. To quote at length from his positive conclusion:

"People will therefore have to develop new forms of organised activity, if they are to respond to the ongoing collapse of capitalism by constructing a new social system. Nineteenth-century names like 'socialism', 'communism' and 'anarchism', tied to the now-defunct left whose inspiring visions have been historically intertwined with conceptual inadequacies and institutional monstrosities, may no longer be useful for naming this new system the other world, anti-globalist protestors call for, which is as necessary for human welfare as it is possible. Whatever it is called, it will need to begin by abolishing the distinction between those who control and those who perform the work of production, by replacing a social mechanism based on monetary market exchange ... with some mode of shared social decision-making adequate to a global economic system" (p109).

The problem with this line of

argument is as follows.

First, Mattick is undoubtedly correct that we need to replace the monetary mechanism with "some mode of shared social decision-making adequate to a global economic system". He is also clearly correct that this has to involve overcoming "the distinction between those who control and those who perform the work of production".

Second, however, these are transparently problems of the *political ordering of collective decision-making*; and it does not have to wait for an economic disaster on the scale of a natural disaster for us to begin to work out proposals for solving them.

In fact, it would be an extraordinary Bakuninist leap into the kingdom of freedom if we were to believe that we could leap into cooperatively managing the world economy - without either the least practice in cooperatively managing our own organisations under capitalism, or carrying on now an agitation against the *political* dictatorship of capital and for alternative forms of decision-making.

Third, the "new forms of organised activity" can all too easily turn out to be the same old 'tyranny of structurelessness'.³ That has been the obvious fate of decision-making in a lot of direct-action initiatives. In the social forums movement around the turn of the century the 'new forms' produced the behind-the-scenes domination of particular large political parties - the Brazilian Workers' Party in the World Social Forum, Rifondazione Comunista in the European Social Forum, etc.

In this context, Mattick's rejection of the repulsive character of the dominant forms of the organised left - and the workers' movement, which exists in the form of trade unions at least in the US, and wider movements elsewhere - fails to recognise that the organised movements have not disappeared and will tend to hegemonise the unorganised movements of solidarity when they go beyond the immediate, even in spite of the enormous weakness of the organised left. If not by the organised left, unorganised mass movements will be hegemonised by other organised forces - Islamists, Christians or whatever.

Mattick's argument for the *impossibility* of renewing and rebuilding the workers' movement and the left disregards the late 19th century British counter-example. His wager on spontaneity disregards everything that has happened in large-scale crises and in smaller spontaneous (and spontaneist) movements not only before but also after 1991.

The problem is not to 'wait for Lefty' in the form of an economic disaster which will bring forth mass spontaneity. It is to fight to transform the existing left and workers' organisations from an obstacle to the workers' movement, which they now undoubtedly are, into an instrument to rebuild collective solidarity which can indeed - as Marx argued - foreshadow a future alternative to capitalism ●

Mike Macnair

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. 'Technology, distribution and the rate of profit in the US economy: understanding the current crisis': www.umass.edu/economics/publications/2011-32.pdf.
2. J de Vries, A van der Woude *The first modern economy* Cambridge 1997, chapter 13.
3. J Freeman *The tyranny of structurelessness* (1970): www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm.

ANNIVERSARY

The function of Dickens

The English literary establishment fully mobilised for the Charles Dickens bicentenary. But, wonders **Harley Filben**, why is it so in need of heroes?

It is, it seems, a time of anniversaries. The King James bible turned 400 a couple of months ago, to much hoo-ha; this year will also mark 60 years on the throne for Elizabeth II. For those nonplussed by either scripture or blank-faced toffs, there is the option of celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens.

Dickens is one of the most enduring novelists in English literature - his bicentenary is marked by yet another middlebrow BBC costume drama, the visible excitement of book vendors up and down the country, and a blanket of coverage in the 'quality' press (and elsewhere). His official authorisation by the literary academy has not blunted his very real impact on popular culture, which is sustained to this day.

Partly, this has to do with his membership of a particular club within English capital-L Literature - this country's great lineage of highly talented hacks. Like Shakespeare before him, Dickens wrote for a mass audience, and at a pretty impressive lick - 10 major novels in 20 years, almost all serialised in journals, with many instalments written to the rolling monthly deadlines themselves.

What obviously need to be unpicked here are the ways and means of constructing a literary canon which can offer that kind of official status to Dickens, Shakespeare and co. A good way into it is precisely this: how does the literary establishment deal with the fact that Dickens himself did not write, by any stretch of the imagination, for academically authorised posterity, but for a popular audience?

It does not repress this inconvenient detail; but one must note the stupidities that circulate on the subject. There is always one person to be found, in any setting of literary discussion, who will argue that if Dickens were alive today, he would be writing for *Eastenders* (never *Coronation Street*, for some reason). Someone else equally will be found who objects to that reasoning as a cringeworthy attempt to be 'down with the kids' - one that cheapens Dickens's enduring literary value; and a third will argue that, whatever he would or would not have written, it would have had the ineffable mark of his genius on it.

Between these three, admittedly stereotyped, responses, the problem is laid out. There is something historical in Dickens - born in 1812 to a clerk, into a literary career that spans journalism and popular fiction; the Dickens we might transplant to the *Eastenders* writing team. There is also the Dickens who is part of a fundamentally ahistorical system of succession - from 'genius' to 'genius'.

The interminable chatter of the quality press on his literary merits fundamentally rests on the latter dimension; and that is why the *Eastenders* scenario is so dishonest. The very structure of popular culture is utterly transformed since Dickens's day; wondering what he would have done today is meaningless, because our age does not produce the likes of Dickens.

The novel itself is no longer, in the age of film and television (and even the video game), the pre-eminent form of narrative fiction. Popular fiction today is not any sort of 'thing in itself' - it is carved up into a limited set of genres (crime, romance, 'chick lit', science fiction and fantasy, primarily). In order to become a 'publishing phenomenon', a book - be it *Harry Potter* or *The Da Vinci code* - almost invariably has to fit into one of the allotted spaces. Genre fiction is a thoroughly 20th century phenomenon; and posterity will perhaps anoint one or another writer of crime, fantasy and so forth with the same retrospective veneration afforded Dickens.

So, if the literary and cultural landscape is so very different in 2012 from 1812,



Charles Dickens: social criticism and charity

where does Dickens fit into things today? This is the question posed by Marx in 1857:

"Let us take, for example, the relation of Greek art, and that of Shakespeare, to the present time. We know that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also its basis. Is the conception of nature and of social relations which underlies Greek imagination and therefore Greek art possible when there are self-acting mules, railways, locomotives and electric telegraphs? What is a Vulcan compared with Roberts and Co, Jupiter compared with the lightning conductor, and Hermes compared with the *Credit Mobilier*?"

"...The difficulty we are confronted with is not, however, that of understanding how Greek art and epic poetry are associated with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable ideal."

The idea of an English literary canon is, like Dickens and Marx, a product of the 19th century. It hails back in some senses to Matthew Arnold, for whom the teaching of English literature as, in effect, a poor cousin of the classics would inculcate in the restive masses a sense of their place in the organic national community. The literary canon was born along with English Literature as an institution.

First of all, then, the Dickens-cult is part of a broader institutional formation which is fundamentally nationalist in character. It is an ideological means of wedding the English to England - *this* England, with all its peculiarities and horrors, and its definite social hierarchy.

Dickens exists today, also, as a literary reference - no end of authors and 'high' cultural figures, from Howard Jacobson to Simon Callow, can be found to put their oar in (Jacobson, in particular, is a scathing critic of BBC coverage he considers basically vapid)². As such, while the literary academy submits new names to the canon at an infamously glacial pace, an avowed commitment to canonical literature is one of the ideological supports of so-called 'literary fiction'. Now that the wild formal experiments of high modernism are somewhat out of vogue with jobbing literary writers, Dickens is an increasingly popular choice.

It would be wrong, however, to view literary canonicity as a vulgar transmission belt for bourgeois ideology. Ideology, among

other things, has to provide imaginary solutions to problems. In this respect, it is highly analogous with the practice of narrative. Any basic screenwriting manual or undergraduate creative writing course will tell you: narrative is about conflict, about problems; a 'good' narrative stretches a problem as far as it will go before offering a solution. Narrative, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty said of the body, is where there is something to be done.

What problem, then, does Dickens solve? His work is famously rooted in the city, in all its energy and squalor - from the great dust-heaps of *Our mutual friend* to the picture of a London joyfully preparing for Yuletide in *A Christmas carol*; and equally famously possessed of an intense moralism. Dickens's sympathy for the underdog is, in sophisticated leftwing opinion, slightly *passé* and paternalistic; nonetheless, it is his way into the life of his characters and literary worlds, and thus the source of his narrative power.

There is an instability at the heart of the literary canon. It wants to assemble a perfect lineage of English-language genius as a mirror image of an organic community of the English; but none of this work would exist if England were 'really like that'. There is no Dickens without cholera and tenement housing, and very little Shakespeare without the political and religious tumult of the 15th and 16th centuries. Narrative solves problems; but it also internalises and preserves them. The self-destructive greed of Scrooge lives again in all its misanthropic glory every time we turn back to page one.

'High' literary culture may seem to be the private property of the bourgeois establishment - and to a degree, it is. But in spinning a red thread from Shakespeare, through Austen and Dickens to Joyce and Woolf, it actually does violence to the texts it tries to promote, repressing both the history that produced them and the contemporary history (in which we might certainly recognise certain Dickensian features!) that gives them continued meaning.

Two hundred years after Dickens's birth, his work is preserved in aspic - but it remains alive, because it belongs to the masses as much as the professors ●

Notes

1. www2.cdde.vt.edu/marxists/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/appx1.htm.
2. *The Guardian* January 6.

What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be readied to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

■ All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.

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weekly Worker

Workers' movement needs its own media

Murdoch fights back

When the *News of the World* shut up shop last summer, amid mounting allegations of systematic criminality in its newsroom, many more of the more cynical commentators could be found wondering what all the fuss was about - surely Rupert Murdoch would simply launch a new Sunday title - *The Sun on Sunday* perhaps - and go back to holding the country to ransom?

Such people rather underestimated the sheer impact of the phone-hacking scandal, which has left the relationship between government, state and media somewhat chaotic. Nonetheless, those in the market for a new popular Sunday tabloid will be relieved to hear that *The Sun* is, indeed, going to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, from this weekend.

This is *not* a simple return to how things were before - even on the level of the 'new' paper itself. The hundreds of *News of the Screws* staff to be turfed out upon that paper's closure will not, on the whole, be returning to 'their' jobs. *The Sun on Sunday* is exactly what it says on the masthead - it will be edited by *Sun* editor Dominic Mohan, and produced, one assumes, on the cheap by *The Sun*'s newsroom.

This is hardly surprising. While the *News of the World* did turn a profit for Murdoch, it was hardly an enormous one by his rather gluttonous standards. Indeed, this is the general drift of the print news industry in this country. One could not look for a better example, ironically enough, than *The Guardian*'s sister paper *The Observer*, which is more and more reduced to a cut-rate annex of the daily. (Both papers run at an enormous loss, and are effectively subsidised by, of all things, *Auto Trader*.)

In that sense, then, the major casualty of the phone hacking scandal has not been resurrected - however well *The Sun*'s Sunday edition performs. 'Fake sheikh' Mazher Mahmood will not be returning to entrap luckless celebrities into snorting cocaine on camera, at ludicrous expense to News International (music industry grade charlie does not come cheap). This is to be a less extravagant outlet for the laddish, occasionally witty, reactionary gibberish that is the stock in trade of Murdoch's popular titles.

Nonetheless, it is not without significance. In spite of everything, Murdoch obviously feels he has regained enough of the initiative to go on the offensive. Without any truly scandalous new revelations, the phone hacking farrago is subject to the law of diminishing returns in terms of news coverage.

In any case, the Leveson inquiry into press ethics has returned us, as it were, to square one. For most of the duration of the phone hacking affair, all British newspapers - barring *The Guardian*, which led the investigation, and muck-raking stalwart *Private Eye* - maintained a conspicuous (and thoroughly guilty) silence on the matter. Grubby and semi-legal activities are part and parcel of journalism, after all; and, while *The Guardian* and the *Eye*, rightly or wrongly, felt confident of a public-interest defence of their disclosures and activities, the same could not be said of

the bulk of the rightwing and tabloid press. The latter resisted covering the scandal right up to the moment where it so dominated the news agenda that ignoring it was more conspicuous than half-hearted denunciations of the unscrupulous *Screws*.

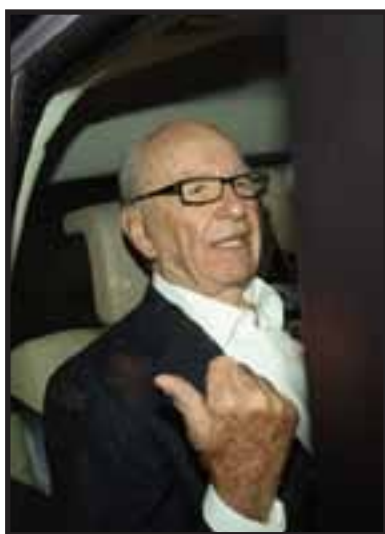
Now, however, months into the Leveson inquiry, which has heard evidence from (and against) potty-mouthed *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre, porn magnate and Express Newspapers boss Richard 'Dirty' Desmond, and all the great and the good of the popular press, the story is once again embarrassing enough to drop off the agenda. Forget, for one moment, phone hacking; the *Mail* has a track record of absolutely rabid defamation of character - Christopher Jefferies, the landlord of the murdered architect, Joanna Yeates, is one recent example - that is spared the attention of British libel law only on the basis that the latter is too expensive for the vast majority of the population.

Perhaps the viceroys of the Murdoch empire sense this change. For columnists on News International titles feel increasingly at liberty to complain about the terrible suffering doled out to them by the police - raiding houses unannounced at 6am, for example, scandalously leaving the hacks with no time at all to destroy evidence. Trevor Kavanagh of *The Sun* paints an outraged picture of his colleagues being treated like an "organised crime gang" (February 13); as if "organised crime" was not the most succinct description of the industrial-scale hacking operations on the *News of the World* ... Murdoch himself has been more circumspect on the matter than Kavanagh, as well he might be, but the latter would not have been allowed to mouth off on the matter without his superiors' say-so.

Special relationships

Assuming that to be the case, one wonders if Murdoch and his cronies *still* - in spite of everything - expect all this to somehow just blow over.

If so, he is to a considerable degree mistaken. His organisation, it should



Rupert Murdoch: predictable

be stressed, is hardly the only one guilty of the particular crimes and misdemeanours (phone hacking, suborning officers of the law) which have brought his empire to so much grief. The decisive questions are, firstly, that Murdoch's success in turning such methods into mass circulation is, in a twisted way, admirable; and secondly, that he has bought himself such enormous influence in the corridors of power.

Let us remind ourselves that barely a month before the *Screws* was revealed to have hacked the voicemail of murdered teenager Milly Dowler, all the main party leaders attended Murdoch's annual 'summer party'; that an erstwhile loyal lieutenant like Rebekah Brooks was on personal terms with the prime minister, as part of the now infamous 'Chipping Norton set'; that another, Andy Coulson, proceeded directly from resigning from the *Screws* over the conviction of Clive Goodman and Glenn Mulcaire to running David Cameron's press office. Similar stories, of course, abound when it comes to News International's relationship to the police.

And if the great and the good should not play ball with Murdoch - well, that was their right. His papers, however, had a way of *finding things out*, of

gathering dirt and slinging it at the most inopportune moments. In a society so utterly riven with corruption, hypocrisy and deception, rotting - as the old saying goes - from the head down, the threat of blackmail was, alas, all too real for spineless politicians and police to call Murdoch's bluff.

When this protection racket started to collapse, then, all manner of people were trapped, as it were, in the rubble. Not once in his short reign has David Cameron looked quite so disoriented as the week in which the Dowler scandal erupted; and Scotland Yard was shaken as badly as it had been since the Macpherson report, ultimately seeing its top two officers resign on one gory weekend.

This has produced a moment of considerable *instability* in the system of relationships that constitutes the bourgeois establishment. It is expressed in the parade of wronged celebrities (and, indeed, 'ordinary people') that troop to the stand at the Leveson inquiry; and also in the desperate scramble of the Met to reassert its authority. It must be a bitterly ironic experience for Rupert Murdoch - it is exactly the sort of situation from which an operator as savvy and ruthless as he is would normally turn into a fat profit; but he is in precisely the worst imaginable position to do so.

The attempt by the establishment to repair the damage contains dangers of its own. The most likely outcomes of the Leveson inquiry remain either some form of statutory regulation of the press by government or some kind of toughened-up 'self-regulation' - the infamous 'Press Complaints Commission with teeth' option.

We have repeatedly declared our opposition to both these options. We do not consider it prudent to sign over sweeping powers to determine what papers may or may not publish to the government, or some wing or another of the bureaucracy (including, of course, the legal bureaucracy of judges and so forth). These people are the enemies of political liberty - and, let us not forget, Murdoch found it easy enough to buy them, anyway.

As for the PCC, it will remain - for whatever is left of its miserable existence - the craven creature of unscrupulous media barons. The appointment of one or two 'non-media' members will change nothing, just as limited workers' representation on the boards of German companies does not exactly halt exploitation. As for the notional 'teeth', it is worth noting - *again* - that, had the PCC any serious regulatory power to begin with, it would have been brought to bear not on the *News of the World*, but *The Guardian*, which it censured for 'victimising' poor old Rupert Murdoch.

What 'code', moreover, will either body enforce? The exceptional use of phone hacking should not be ruled out *in principle*: a corrupt ruling class forever tries to hide its activities, and sometimes underhand methods are needed to bring things into the cold light of public scrutiny. This even goes for 'invading people's private lives' - as a commonly cited example goes, does a homophobic rabble-rouser have any right to keep his encounters with rent-boys a secret? For that matter, did Chris Huhne have the right to conceal his infidelity from the public, when the very woman with whom he was having an extramarital affair was involved in producing electoral material that painted him as an impeccable 'family man'?

The idea that state bureaucrats or the patsies of media moguls can be relied upon to call a case one way or the other is transparently risible. Intrusive celebrity tittle-tattle is irritating enough; but the proposed cures are certainly worse than the disease.

We demand, rather, the end to advertising subsidies, which afford the bourgeoisie in its collective existence an effective veto over the content of public discourse; meanwhile, the workers' movement needs *its own* press, its own mass media independent of the ruling class - something utterly incompatible with bureaucratic regulation of 'press ethics'.

James Turley

james.turley@weeklyworker.org.uk

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