

# CAPITALISM IS CLEARLY NOT COPING.

*It is necessary to discuss an urgent development. When viewing the supply chains, when viewing the pandemic, when viewing COP26, it is clear the capitalists are floundering. I have always maintained this decade will be the decisive decade for humanity, one where the question - socialism or barbarism or a lost planet - will be posed in technicolour.*

This article will focus primarily on the overripe capitalist economies reliant on parliamentary democracy. The reason being that this form of capitalist rule is rule by consent. This allows a degree of transparency which has revealed the discord in the ranks of the capitalist class, the futility of a society run on profit, and even a degree of public criticism. All of this is adding to the public mood that the governments of the world are increasingly inept and out of touch with the real world.

In the UK 60% of the population consider that Prime Minister Johnson is failing as a politician. Nearly half do not believe his promise to level up. In the USA President Biden's approval rating has fallen to 42% with some commentators saying the fall is the fastest of any President since 1945. Part of this has been caused by dissent within the Democratic Party itself which is paralysing law making. What is clear is that politicians are being chewed up everywhere by circumstances beyond their control.

The youth are the ones most demoralised. Numerous studies have shown the deep distress they are feeling at their stolen futures. *"A recent study led by the University of Bath found that 75% of young people surveyed believe the future is frightening because of climate change and 65% agreed with the statement that governments are failing young people. The survey looked at 10,000 youth between the ages of 16 to 25 years, from 10 countries: the United Kingdom, Finland, France, the United States, Australia, Portugal, Brazil, India, the Philippines and Nigeria."* <https://www.pri.org/stories/2021-10-19/study-finds-widespread-climate-anxiety-among-youth> Of course demoralisation, anxiety and the rest are by-products of disempowerment. These articles lament but do not provide a solution.

The antidote to all of this of course is empowering the youth, mobilising, and organising them around a programme of conscious change. And this does not only apply to the youth. Hopelessness and demoralisation are sweeping the land. Whole sections of society are being crushed, or if we were to mistakenly medicalise this social phenomenon, say they are succumbing to mental health issues. Our task is to organise and inspire change, to shout from the roof tops that it is better to die fighting on your feet than drowning helplessly in a rising sea.

## **The parliamentary road is melting along with everything else on this planet.**

More than a century has passed since when the debates raged about whether or not parliament could be used to transform society. Since then sufficient political experience has been garnered as to provide a definitive answer to this conundrum. Following the triumph of US imperialism and its reordering of the planet before and after the fall of the Soviet Union, one thing has stood out, capitalism sets up and abolishes parliaments without hesitation to suit its needs.

There have been hundreds of examples of how imperialism has crushed parliaments and assassinated parliamentarians and Presidents when they failed to follow their instructions. This has not only applied to the dominated nations (ex-colonies) but even to minor imperialisms such as Portugal and Greece. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Middle East with its innumerable coups and numerous invasions all

designed to neuter capital accumulation in the region on the back of oil wealth. It is no longer an open question, it is clear that capitalism will not allow a parliamentary road to socialism, they will not tolerate an enabling act which dispossess them, it will not allow the institutions it crafted to mould society in its own image to be used against the system it is designed to preserve. What lies at the end of the parliamentary road is not socialism, but a state of emergency, the suspension of the rule of law and a police state.

What we will not do and must not countenance, is the argument that a general strike or mass action of any sort could be used to browbeat parliament into an enabling act which dispossesses the capitalist class. This would be to miscast parliament and endow it with powers it does not have. It would be to substitute a signature for the clash of forces that always and everywhere decides history.

Of course parliament does legislate on issue that affect society, but this is predominantly on behalf of the capitalist class. True, in rarer circumstances and then only on more minor issues, has parliament in fact legislated in favour of workers, but then only to dilute what has been already won outside of parliament in workplaces and the street. Pretending that parliament can fulfil the interest of the working class would be to hold it back, to make it vulnerable to the power of capital which most certainly is not garaged in parliament but outside it, in the military, the police, the judiciary and the prison system.

And the more its institutions are threatened or fall under the spell of workers, the more the bosses will rely on the labour bureaucracy to preserve these institutions. At the end of the day, this bureaucracy with its deceptions and swindles are capitalism's last line of defence. A minority can only rule and fool the majority by cultivating allies within the majority, by nurturing ideologues and misleaders, actual traitors to hold back the majority. No doubt, until the eve of the revolution, these good gentlemen and women will instruct workers to bend the knee before the majesty of parliament.

Which is why we cannot ignore parliamentary democracy. If we engage with electoral politics it is not to show that parliament can effect fundamental change, but to show that it cannot. The more democratic parliament becomes, the more the hand of the capitalist class is forced. Introducing proportional representation makes it more difficult for the capitalist class to corrupt and manage the legislative process. Abolishing the restrictive laws that tie the hands of the working class, for example all the constraints on unions and strikes, the more the capitalist class is forced to engage in extra-parliamentary measures to break the working class. From being a blinding mirror, parliament can be turned into a window into the inner workings of the capitalist class.

The opposite would be the case if we were to boycott parliament and if we were to refuse to engage in united action with the Labour Parties of this world. They would brand us as undemocratic and marginalise us, giving free reign to these traitors to turn on us in the name of the majority of workers who still have illusions in parliament which paralyse their self-activity. In other words we would play directly into the hands of the bureaucracy and the media which will line up behind them covering there every move.

What no revolutionary party can do is to take responsibility for the capitalist system in parliament - to join the government or to accept cabinet positions. A revolutionary party would always be in opposition even if it was capable of or invited to form a government or if it held the balance of seats. This is a red line which must never be crossed under any circumstances even if the media create a storm accusing us of betraying our voters. Such a move would contaminate and discredit the party in the eyes of workers as it

has done thousands of times since the war in country after country. Such a move would be the equivalent of a political suicide note.

Nor can a revolutionary party be reduced from a campaigning party to an electoral party, one which is consumed by its focus on parliament. A revolutionary party capable of winning electoral seats in the face of capitalist opposition and media sabotage will have already sunk deep roots into the community, into schools, factories and elsewhere, and it will have done so by setting up grass root organisations. Its' focus must remain on organising and cohering these communities around a programme of change and in developing and promoting forms of struggle based on systematising lessons gained from these multi-faceted struggle.

### **The economic contradiction in capitalist production sets out the course of struggle.**

It is in the nature of the capitalist contradiction that the more working-class resistance there is, the more the system breaks down. It is important to illuminate why this is so by examining the central contradiction at the heart of the dilemma of capital, namely the tendency, organically, for the rate of profit to fall. This fall has nothing to do with workers, but to reverse its fall has everything to do with workers. The economic crisis of capitalism is unique to capitalism. It did not exist before capitalism, and it will end with its demise. Simply put raising the productivity of workers results in the tendency for capital to grow faster than profits. There is either too much capital or there is too little profit.

The solution is self-evident. Capital has to be destroyed which gives rise to recessions, and profits have to be increased which means fewer workers, lower pay, longer hours and harder work. In sum, it requires an attack on the working class. Clearly if workers defend their jobs, their conditions, and their pay this becomes an obstacle to the capitalists drive to increase profitability. Instead of improving, profitability will fall further, and the ongoing investment strike by the capitalist class will deepen.

Should workers prevail against the attack on them, capitalism will begin to fracture. Production and circulation will become disrupted. What we are seeing today with supply chain disruption is a history of insufficient investment, this being so, imagine how much more severe an actual investment strike would be. At this point workers will be forced to take matters into their own hands. They will need to form committees at work to assert control against the interests of their employers. They will have to organise committees in supermarkets and warehouses to ensure the community is fed. Direct links between producers and distributors will have to be forged. Workers will have to organise town and city councils to take over from local government not only to prevent cutbacks but to expand what is done for the community, and to base these town and city councils on street and block organisations to ensure the full involvement and participation of the entire community.

They will have to make the country ungovernable. That is stop the repressive arm of the state. This includes the benefit system by voiding all sanctions and ensuring everyone who needs support to receive it automatically and unconditionally. This means disrupting the judicial system when it acts against the movement. Above all this will mean challenging the police for control of the streets by displacing the police through locally organised community self-defence groups to patrol our communities and ensure the safety of all.

If we do this, then the process towards insurrection, conquering state power and disarming the capitalist, class will be underway. Lenin was partially correct to say that a pre-revolutionary period was one in which

the masses could no longer live in the old way, while a revolutionary period was one in which, additionally, the capitalist class could no longer rule in the old way. In a parliamentary democracy a revolutionary period is ultimately defined as one in which rule by consent has collapsed, where it has been discredited and discarded, where parliament has been reduced to a museum piece.

Even if capitalism prevails initially by means of its violence, once rule by consent is over, capitalism's days are numbered.

### **Recipes need changing when the ingredients themselves change.**

It's a common theme in Marxism that we do not create recipes for a future kitchen yet to be built and for which no blueprint exists. I have never subscribed to this binary projection of the future. The future is not dissociated from the present. Present day developments shape future probabilities. We only act consciously when we absorb these developments. The setting for debate today is far removed from the one that raged over 100 years ago. Today the proletariat numbers billions making it the dominant global class objectively. In the mature capitalist countries, the proletariat makes up to 85% of the total population. Moreover, during this century the urban population has overtaken the rural population.

1917 Russia was completely different. Workers were in the minority, and so too was the urban population. The UK's total labour force on commercial agricultural holdings in 2019 was 476,000 of which 138,000 were farmers. If we add in family members then at best the agricultural community would not add up to 2 million or around 3% of the population. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2019> In contrast at the time of the revolution the working class in Russia was only 4% of the population.

Thus those who mechanically transpose the debates and arguments from that time, who lose context, are doing a disservice to the working class today. Today there can be no debate about whether or not capitalism is ripe for overthrow. It was already ripe for overthrow at 5.28 a.m. on the morning of July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the moment before the first nuclear bomb was detonated, a detonation which was to change the circumstances of the working class forever.

Five generations have passed since the closing days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with each new generation the conditions of the working class have changed. We need to be rooted in today's conditions, in today's developments, in today's possibilities. Our historical app requires continuous updates. This does not mean there are no lessons to be drawn from that time. The science is to be able to distinguish what is enduring from what is time limited.

One of those enduring lessons is the recognition that the power of capital continues to be centralised. Like a hammer its power lies in the head of the hammer which can be used to smash things, not only once but repeatedly, and not only in one area but everywhere resistance is found. In this way a few thousand highly organised mercenaries in uniform can smash tens of thousands of poorly led demonstrators first here, then there, until the movement itself is crushed. That is why a revolutionary party is needed so that the centralised might of the state is met with the co-ordinated might of the mass of the population. A rock on which to break the hammer. Ordered might ultimately overwhelmed by dedicated might.

Given the size of the working class and the special interests within it, could there be more than one revolutionary party? It is conceivable. Provided these parties agree a common programme, invite

observers to each other's internal meetings, and co-ordinate their efforts through joint action committees, this would not weaken the working class.

What these parties cannot do is substitute themselves for the organs of power of the working class which will be lodged in the committees which will spontaneously arise under extreme economic stress. We will have more to say on this later when investigating Ed Rooksby's commentary on the Russian Revolution. Nor are conditions for a vanguard party as acute as they were a hundred years ago. Today's working class is generally more educated, more literate and with access to modes of communication undreamed of a hundred years ago. The working class is thus culturally more receptive to the propaganda struggle.

Nonetheless, political consciousness is not uniform in the working class. Divisions abound. Desperate workers voting for Trump and Johnson is but one example. Thus a party to represent the collective interest of the working class is still needed. It is unlikely to be formed by those who consider themselves Marx's gift to the working class. I am referring to all those groups steeped in Trotskyism or Marxist-Leninism. You know the ones that cannot tell the difference between planning and the social fund in a communist society. Not only are they elitist but they are primitive, not only are they primitive but obsolete as well. They do not have the theory nor the insight to lead workers to their emancipation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **The post-revolutionary period.**

The organisational forms thrown up in the period pre the seizure of power, must become the foundation of working-class rule after it. The workers' state forming in the run up to revolution and anointed by the revolution itself is not radically transformed in the post-revolutionary period. It remains the organised power of the working class, now consolidated and elevated, needed until it is no longer needed.

And here lies the clean break with the past. Previously the workers' state was seen to have a dual character. It would empower workers as well as becoming their economic manager. I have argued repeatedly that the latter would end up disempowering the former. Class rule is not only about suppressing another antagonistic class, but also about creating the conditions for the economic emancipation of the class itself. It is not only about the past but also about the future. This cannot happen when the state becomes the economic manager.

I have always argued, and it has been the primary political purpose of this website, that in the post-revolutionary period, once it has been stabilised, the state cannot decide what is produced, how quickly, at what price, how workers are rewarded, and it is banned from raising taxes. Under these conditions the state is prevented from managing the economy. Instead managing the economy remains in the hands of workers organised and unified through a system of equal rights and a pricing system loyal to their labour times. In short; remuneration is based on the individual's contribution to production, collective effort is rewarded by falling prices based on the reduction in labour times, consumer led planning ensures that workers are rewarded for their effort by the products of their choice, the right to collectively regulate intensity of effort ensures workers' control of production, and the right to decide on the deductions from and disposition of the social product ensures that it is workers who regulate the commanding heights of the economy. The state no longer has an economic function. It is reduced to the three Ps. Protecting, Promulgating and Policing.

This is the fatal flaw in Lenin's "State and Revolution", which sees the workers' state becoming the new manager of what is effectively a syndicate. Let's be blunt, confiscating the productive property of the

capitalist class and converting it into active state property, does not abolish the power of productive property over labour, it merely changes its spots. Once the state becomes the employer, deciding on what will be produced, under what conditions, and when as a result the product of labour becomes state property, labour becomes enslaved rather than emancipated. Thus this part of Lenin's hastily written and venerated pamphlet is a menace to the working class.

This is not to condemn the Bolsheviks outright. They were right to make the Russian Revolution and how inspiring it was. Had they not done so, the Russian Bourgeoisie and their international allies would have reorganised and rearmed and the Russian worker would have been crushed within months. They were right to abolish the Constituent Assembly out of necessity given the small social weight of the working class. They were right to call for all power to be vested in the "Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets" potentially a more organic political working-class body rooted in workplaces and communities.

And here Ed Rooksby's observations regarding the neutering of the Soviets comes into its own. The power of the Soviets was incompatible with the state becoming the manager of the economy. In a capitalist economy the state manages the affairs of the capitalist class allowing the capitalists to manage the affairs of their companies. Socialism is not about ending this division between politics and economics. It is not about unifying the economic and the political by abolishing private board rooms and replacing it with a single state syndicated board room. Once you establish this syndicated board room, the functions of the soviets are trivialised. *"Of course, Lenin is clear that (the higher phase of) communism lies in the far distant future. But similar problems seem to lurk in his account of the immediate post-revolutionary period too. What's very striking about his discussion of the institutions of proletarian power is that their function (other than repression of the old ruling class) seems to be reduced entirely to processes of technical administration. Delegates, officials and other participants within them engage in 'simple operations of registration, filing and checking', 'accountancy and control', 'watching, recording and issuing receipts' and so on – but there's absolutely nothing about mass participation in the formation and revision of policy... But mass participation is not quite the same thing as democracy in the sense that most of us would understand that concept."*

Ed Rooksby details the transfer of decision-making power from the soviets to the Sovet Narodnykh Komisarov (Council of People's Commissars) – known as Sovnarkom. This is discussed at length in the fourth link. The Council of People's Commissars became the de facto government and although set up to report to the Congress of Soviets it soon abandoned this role in order to assert its independence on economic matters. After all how do the commissars report to the Soviets and seek permission from them to encourage state capitalism or to enter into negotiations with the capitalists. *"Indeed Lenin's vision for Russia appears to have been to introduce state capitalism along similar lines to the existing German model – he thought that the major economic task of the revolution would be to speed up the process of industrialisation and economic centralisation in Russia on a still fundamentally capitalist basis. Soviet organs would perform supervision and 'control' functions in relation to an economy in which basic relations of production remained essentially unchanged and in which private ownership was still the norm. Indeed, as Sirianni points out, soon after the seizure power, meetings were organised between Bolshevik representatives and various groups of capitalists to discuss proposals for setting up state-capitalist trusts in order to guarantee the continued flow of private investment into Russian industry."*

Of course there is the question of expediency. There can be no doubt that the twin purposes of our revolution is not only to emancipate workers but to also to preserve the means of production. Winning

the revolution but losing the means of production through a scorched and radioactive civil war would annihilate the future. The purpose of our programme must therefore be to not only win over the working class but to isolate the capitalist class by separating it from its agents. Senior managers are irrelevant. As the saying goes, senior managers only look good when their juniors make them look good by providing them with the details of any strategy. It is likely that in today's society the bulk of the junior managers and civil servants will join the revolution and there will be no need to "negotiate afterwards" with the remnants of the capitalist class. Rather workers and the ex-agents of the capitalist class would more or less immediately set out to construct the new organs and structures of working-class empowerment – primarily the planning bodies, the creation of the data bases needed for labour vouchers and the formation of the social fund - using the debris of the previous state but only as temporary scaffolding for the new constructions. These organs and structures in turn would bring to life the rights previously described.

And here Ed Rooksby reveals his own shortcomings. Though he recognises Lenin's confusion regarding differences within the working class and their resolution, he does not provide an alternative system of rights and their purpose and function. *"Indeed this seems to assume that much of the conflict Lenin thinks will remain is not really about disagreement as such stemming from legitimate differences of opinion or interests, but about managing individual misbehaviour and dealing with transgressions against a widely shared set of 'thick' social norms. Further, Lenin gives us absolutely no indication of how the majorities and minorities he speaks of will be determined/discovered (if this is a reference to public decision-making it seems to require some sort of institutional mechanism of deliberation and balloting – yet this goes against Lenin's emphasis on the withering of permanent institutional structures) and indeed no clear sense of the matters of contention in relation to which these majorities/minorities will coalesce. Is this a reference to debate over public decision-making – or are the minorities here merely the agents of 'individual excess'?"*

This purpose and function is to be found in the Draft 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme.

### **Conclusion.**

This is not an idealist posting. The capitalists may be boasting about how their economies are recovering. That present difficulties are just the pins and needles following dormancy. Certainly the stock markets seem to believe this is the case. But below the surface whole sections of society are being immiserated. Disillusion is swelling as the needs of society and the planet cannot be addressed. We are in the white water of history when events follow each other with increased rapidity. The objective conditions which fertilise struggle are intensifying which means there is just as much to gain as there is to lose politically. Bystanders are not welcome.

<https://edrooksby.wordpress.com/2019/03/30/on-lenins-the-state-and-revolution-1/>

<https://edrooksby.wordpress.com/2019/04/09/on-lenins-the-state-and-revolution-2-2/>

<https://edrooksby.wordpress.com/2019/04/09/on-lenins-the-state-and-revolution-3/>

<https://edrooksby.wordpress.com/2019/04/10/the-bolsheviks-did-not-smash-the-old-state/>

<https://theplanningmotivedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/21st-century-programme-2019-final.pdf>

Brian Green, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021.