

## Editorial

Issue Three of *Common Voice* was put together during, and in the aftermath of, the bloody slaughter of ordinary men, women and children from a wide range of social backgrounds in London, Egypt, Turkey and Baghdad. While families and friends continue to mourn, news programmes, the press and the alternative media have devoted huge amounts of airtime, column inches and bandwidth in an attempt to come to terms with these tragic events. In this context it may seem rather insensitive of us to devote an issue of *Common Voice* to the nuances of how a future post-capitalist society might organise production, how Marx viewed capitalist progress, or the (ir)relevance of ‘ultra-leftism’ at a time when revolution is not on the agenda. Yet among the more progressive elements of the alternative media there is agreement that any solution to terrorism, state violence, religious hatred and racism must point to a different set of values to those propagated by the warmongers and fundamentalists. In this sense *Common Voice* will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who argue that another world is not only possible but eminently desirable.

This issue kicks off with a lengthy, in-depth analysis of the ‘Economic Calculation Argument,’ by Robin Cox. Cox uncovers the main assumptions of the argument which rests upon the idea that a post-capitalist economic arrangement cannot function effectively without the ‘guiding hand’ of the market. In exposing the fallacies of the ECA (based upon the idea that a post-capitalist economy would necessarily involve central planning) Cox demonstrates the viability of a de-centralised, non-market economy based upon a self-regulating system of stock control and ‘calculation in kind.’ Cox’s analysis deserves a wide audience and will be particularly welcomed by those in the anti-market, anti-state sector who call for more concrete examples of how socialism might work ‘in practice.’ Those who fear complex economic jargon – or are mindful of Bob Black’s warning in the *Abolition of Work* that a free society cannot have *Homo Economicus* at its centre – should perhaps be reminded that goods and services will still need to be produced, distributed and consumed in a global society beyond capitalism.

In ‘Ten Blokes that Failed to Shake the World,’ Stuart Watkins and Dave Flynn take issue with the various ‘ultra-leftist’ groupuscles whom they argue have failed to submit their own theories and practices to historical critique, preferring instead to remain as the “unsullied guardians of communist ideas.” Describing their move away from ultra-leftism, Watkins and Flynn take issue with its neglect of a practical programme of political action in the here and now, particularly in an era when mass working-class action is sporadic and revolutionary socialism remains a distant dream. Rather disappointingly Watkins and Flynn fail to outline what this might mean in practice beyond a brief mention of workplace organisation, anti-war coalitions and other “consciousness-raising” activities. Perhaps they will elaborate on this further in a future issue of *Common Voice*.

In Issue One of *Common Voice*, Jeff Shantz (a member of the North-Eastern federation of Anarcho-Communists) sketched out some common ground between radical ecological thought and theories which draw upon histories of working-class struggle. In this issue Shantz continues this theme by showing how the ideas of feminist, unionist and ‘*Earth First!er*’, the late Judi Bari, demonstrate a possible synthesis of radical ecological and socialist/anarchist theory. By drawing upon her experiences of workplace organising and belonging to a non-hierarchical environmental organisation, Bari is able to move beyond the reformism of much green thought by asserting that the problems which groups such as *Earth First!* address can only be challenged by a social movement with the aim of fundamentally transforming the social relations of industrial capitalism.

While Shantz only hints at the potential of feminism for informing anti-market, anti-state thinking in Bari's work, the article by Jim Davis tackles feminism head-on, showing how its various insights need to be incorporated into the struggle to transcend capitalism. Davis shows how elements of feminism (like those of the 'left' in general) have historically been recuperated by capital and urges its remaining liberatory elements to engage in a total critique of everyday life in order to avoid this recuperation. Davis suggests – and I hope that most of us would agree with him – that a movement to liberate humanity cannot leave the question of patriarchy until “after the revolution”; the struggle against sexism and the sexual division of labour must carry on in the here and now as an element of the broader fight for a world without markets, states and social classes.

In a reprint from a 1952 Freedom Press pamphlet (submitted by Richard Alexander) Tony Gibson attempts an answer to a question we hear only too often: in a post-capitalist society, “who will do the dirty work?” Gibson's often humorous answer lies in an analysis of work under capitalism which is both de-humanising and coercive. With the abolition of the wages system and the introduction of production for use, work has the potential to become intrinsically satisfying and with economic and political coercion removed, even ‘dirty’ work such as cleaning sewers may become relatively congenial tasks, carried out without compulsion for the good of the community.

One solution to the problem of cleaning sewers under capitalism not yet considered by politicians (but give them time) is to force those convicted of anti-social behaviour to do the dirty work. Blair's Labour government in Britain is currently on a crusade against all forms of ‘anti-social behaviour’ such as drunkenness and petty theft, which is apparently sweeping our towns and cities making us prisoners in our own homes. What we are witnessing in Britain is in fact an unprecedented crackdown, not only against working-class youth but also on campaigners and protestors, together with the widening of the powers of the police and the state. In this context it may be interesting to ask, as an article from *bristle* magazine does in this issue, who (or what) is *really* anti-social? Is it the group of youngsters wearing ‘hoodies’ hanging out on street corners at 9 o' clock at night, or illegal wars, shoot to kill policies and the privatisation of more and more areas of public space?

To my knowledge Marx never had to worry about Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or curfews, but he was concerned with the vexing question of how ‘progressive’ the capitalist mode of production was. Michael Handelman criticises the traditional interpretation of Marx's views on capitalism, imperialism and progress by showing that Marx himself changed his position from a broadly positive one in his earlier writings to a far more negative and critical view of capitalist progress in his later writings. Using the example of Ireland and, in particular, Russia, Handelman demonstrates how Marx came to reject the view of capitalism as ‘progressive’ and focused instead on the revolutionary potential of the Russian peasant communes. Even so, as Handelman argues, Marx was never to completely abandon his view of capitalism as a ‘necessary evil’ on the road to socialism.

Bringing things more up to date Chris Marsh addresses some of the same issues as Handelman as well as Watkins and Flynn in her article *What future for socialism/communism?* One answer is that socialism/communism still has a future as a viable alternative to capitalism, but that those of us who hold this to be the case must “unlearn our learning” and jettison some of the old certainties and dogmas characteristic of revolutionary Marxism. In particular Marsh urges us to learn from both attempts at alliance building on the left and from the permaculture movement which through its actions are attempting to help stave off land degradation and ensure that we still have a world left to win. While Marsh's polemic perhaps raises more questions than

it answers, her intervention is surely to be welcomed and we hope it will generate debate and discussion along with the other articles in this issue.

The issue is rounded off nicely with Torgun Bullen reviewing the work of Simon Baron-Cohen on autism, and a poem by Toija French. We welcome reviews of books, pamphlets, journals, films, websites etc. as well as poems, short commentaries and letters. Please see our submissions page for more details.

*Julian Prior*

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