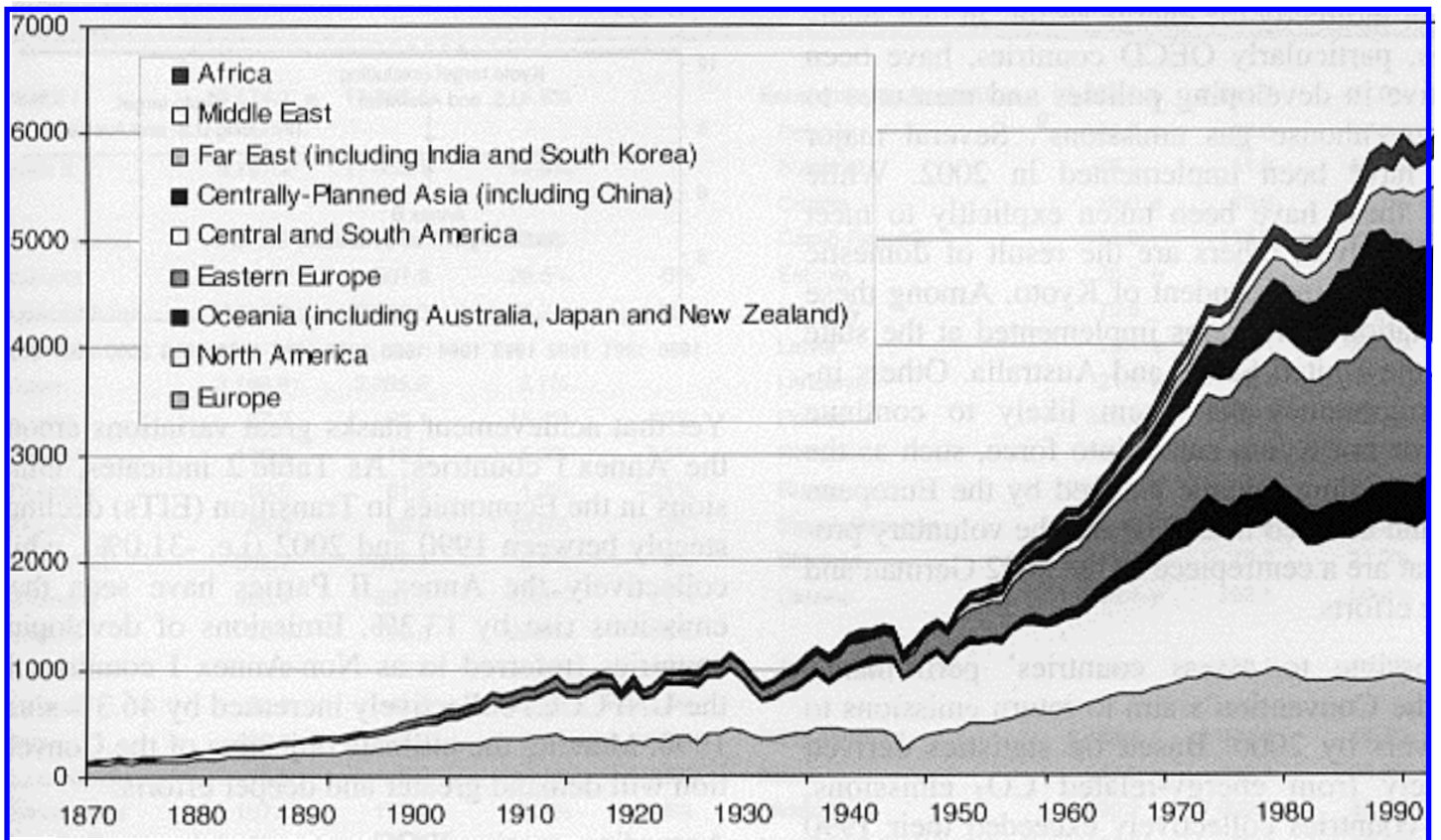


Green Socialist

Issue No. 38 Autumn 2006

ISSN 1741-5497



www.manicore.com

Climate Change: 1,000 years and 7 metres

Mike Marqusee on Thoreau

Tony Greenstein on Immigration Controls

Ken Ferguson on the Scottish Socialist Party

Tom Neilson on Politics from Music

Editorial

New Labour hits the buffers

The crisis over Blair premiership hides a deeper crisis in his party. Under Blair, New Labour has become just another Tory Party. Under Brown it will be just the same. The Labour Party can no longer be retrieved for social democracy, let alone for socialism.

Over 200,000 people have left the Labour Party over the last few years. This mass exodus has changed the nature of the organization. Many have left for political reasons: privatisation, cuts, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the cuddling up to Bush, the assault on civil liberties, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. At local ward level the Labour Party is moribund. Even Constituency Parties struggle to have quorate meetings.

It is worth asking why some people stay and who they are. A few are clearly deluded. They (still) believed the rhetoric of Blair and his many spin doctors that he is a sincere individual trying to modernize Britain and to influence the world to be a better place. However the few progressive policies New Labour have boasted about - from cleaner beaches to tackling age discrimination at work - have actually been forced on them by the European Union. And in many cases Blair and Brown have sought to water them down.

Another group still in the Labour Party are those who joined New Labour for a political career. These Blairites control the party from the top. Even the recent National Executive Committee elections, which showed a swing against Blair, only resulted in one new left winger.

Winning Labour back?

The other main group are those who (unbelievably) think they can still change the party from within. These have failed to see the progressive elimination of party democracy in favour of control from the top.

Some of this group put their faith in the Labour Representation Committee organized by some of the left trade union leaders and the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs. They are supporting John McDonnell in a purely nominal bid to be the next party leader. With the exposure of the corrupt Brown/Blair strategy of using millionaires to finance the party the trade unions ought to be in a very strong position to determine who the next leader - and the next policies - will be. However the supine leaders of the vast majority of unions will swing behind Brown. That a strong lead could make a difference was shown when Peter O'Grady, the President of the building workers union defeated his right wing to swing them behind Tony Benn

in the famous 1980 Deputy Leadership campaign. Peter took risks and fought with everything he had to win. None of the LRC trade union leaders have even hinted at such a fight.

Amongst MPs who think they can change New Labour are the Compass group of ultra-soft lefts led by Jon Trickett and others. They believe - without a shred of evidence to support this view - that it will be possible to push a future Brown premiership to the left. Everything that Brown has said, written or done indicates there are no political differences with Blair. In fact it is difficult to find even differences of emphasis, except for Brown being more right wing on economic issues. Many in the Compass Group hate the Blairites personally but have no real policy differences with them. Many hope for political preference under Brown.

Greening Capitalism?

Cameron's steps in moving the Tories towards the centre and espousing seemingly plausible green politics have undermined New Labour's appeal and cut ground from under the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party. Cameron's presentational swing reflects the growing recognition that green issues have to be taken seriously. An examination of the actual remedies put forward by the major parties - and the mainstream of the Green Party - shows only differences of emphasis between them all. None actually challenge the rights of big business to continue to destroy our environment. or the basic contradiction between capitalism and saving our planet.

Take transport. It is undoubtedly the case the increase use of aircraft is pumping more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, making a mockery of Kyoto. The rail alternatives have been made too expensive as the private rail companies push up their fares to the most expensive in the world. And even this is not enough for them. GNER owned by an offshore company to avoid paying taxes has begun to shed staff to survive. A full return from London to Leeds costs £168 !

A Green Socialist response should consider not only a tax on aviation fuel but direct measures to cut emissions from aircraft. Crucially we would bring the rail and bus network back into public ownership and provide integrated public transport systems which are affordable and environmentally efficient, providing a short-haul alternative to air. Only collective provision can take sufficient account of environmental impact.

**Garth Frankland Editor,
Green Socialist**

Green Socialist

is published by the

Alliance for Green Socialism

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The AGS is a political alliance seeking to build a future based on the twin principles of socialism and environmental sustainability - we see these two things as being inextricably linked, each being impossible without the other. If you share our concerns and our principles, if you care about the future of our planet and about social justice for all who live on it, then why not join us?

Membership details are on the back page.

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The Voice Within by Mike Marqusee

ON a recent visit to the United States, I made a pilgrimage to Walden Pond, a glistening body of water prized for its depth and clarity (only 20 miles from Boston) as well as for its association with the visionary writer, Henry David Thoreau. From July 1845 to September 1847, Thoreau made his home here, living simply in a small self-built cabin, tending his garden, studying the changing seasons, recording the details of the natural life surrounding him, trying to ascertain, by experiment, how much of modern life is given over to the superfluous, how much we could really do without.

The result was his book *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, a masterpiece of flinty English prose. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," he declared. The only escape was in heeding the voice within: "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." By the shore of Walden Pond, Thoreau embarked on a voyage which he insisted was of more profit than the celebrated overseas adventures of the day. "Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice."

Today Thoreau is recognised as a prophet of the environmental movement and an early, trenchant critic of consumerism. His impatience with the wasteful public babble of modern civilisation feels more pertinent than ever. We are inundated with words and images, yet seem increasingly incapable of responding to them meaningfully.

Walden Pond is now conscientiously preserved by the State of Massachusetts (an entity that Thoreau regarded as little more than a criminal conspiracy). The foundations of his refuge are marked, and next to them a pile of small stones has risen over the years, as generations of visitors pay an anonymous, appropriately geological homage to the man and the book.

Nearby, there's a shop run by the admirable Thoreau Society, stocked with memorabilia, books, CDs, postcards, and tee shirts emblazoned with Thoreau's words, my favourite being, "Beware all enterprises that require new clothes."

Thoreau is sometimes presented as an American sanyassin, but even in retreat, he was an active participant in his society. In July 1846, he was arrested and jailed for a night for refusing to pay his poll tax. In a lecture later published under the title *Civil Disobedience*, he explained why, in certain circumstances, the only place for a just individual in an unjust society was prison.

Thoreau was a militant opponent of slavery and of the Mexican-American war of 1846-48 — through which the U.S. seized from Mexico the area now occupied by the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado. "When a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionise," he wrote, and added, in words that ought to be broadcast today across the U.S. and Britain, "What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army."

Those who derided his act of "civil resistance" as a meaningless gesture "do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence." Gandhi encountered this essay in 1906, in the midst of his South Africa campaign, as he was formulating his doctrine of *Satyagraha*. "It left a deep impression on me," he later recalled, describing it as "scientific confirmation of what I was doing."

Gandhi's U.S. disciple, Martin Luther King, found comfort in Thoreau's arguments on the eve of the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56: "I remembered how, as a college student, I had been moved when I first read this work. I became convinced that what we were preparing to do in Montgomery was related to what Thoreau had expressed. We were simply saying to the white community, 'We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system'."

Unlike Gandhi and King, Thoreau was not a pacifist. When, in 1859, John Brown led an attack on an armoury in Harper's Ferry (now in West Virginia) in hopes of sparking a slave uprising, he was denounced by the moderate wing of the abolitionist movement, but defended by Thoreau, who saw Brown's audacious raid "as a touchstone designed to bring out, with glaring distinctness, the character of this government. We needed to be thus assisted to see it by the light of history." He praised Brown as a true hero, to be elevated above those who merely fought their country's foes, because "he had the courage to face his country herself, when she was in the wrong."

Thoreau was contemptuous of those who excoriated Brown's resort to violence while passively endorsing the more sustained violence sponsored by their own government, and not only against slaves. "We preserve the so-called peace of our community by deeds of petty violence every day. Look at the policeman's billy and handcuffs! Look at the jail! Look at the gallows!"

Referring to the weapons Brown and his band used at Harper's Ferry, Thoreau observed: "I know that the mass of my countrymen think that the only righteous use that can be made of Sharp's rifles and revolvers is to fight duels with them, when we are insulted by other nations, or to hunt Indians, or shoot fugitive slaves with them, or the like. I think that for once the Sharp's rifles and the revolvers were employed in a righteous cause."

Fourteen months after John Brown was hanged, the U.S. plunged into civil war. Another fourteen months after that, the 44-year-old Thoreau died of tuberculosis, his repute as a writer restricted to small literary circles in the Boston area. Like Brown, Thoreau was derided in his day as "crazy" and "impractical". Yet, still, today, the stones pile up by Walden Pond, and his words rise above the ubiquitous din, making us look again at the overlooked, in our world and in our selves.

This article originally appeared in *The Hindu Sunday Magazine*, 3 September 2006 and is reproduced by kind permission of the author. Mike Marqusee is a freelance journalist and the author of a number of important books on the 1960s including *Chimes of Freedom* and *Redemption Song*. Further information can be found on his website www.mikemarqusee.com.

Socialists Cannot Support Immigration Controls

by Tony Greenstein

The ASS national committee has agreed to promote, in the pages of *Green Socialist*, a debate on migration. This is intended as the first article in that debate. Letters or articles on this subject are invited.

It was Ernest Bevin, Attlee's cold war Foreign Secretary, and hardly a man of the Left, who explained that "my foreign policy is to be able to take a ticket at Victoria Station and go anywhere I damn well please". [The Spectator, 20 April 1951] It is a matter of shame and disgrace that a whole generation of 'socialists', most of whom were tarnished by Stalinism, bought into the racist agenda of British imperialism and agreed to the imposition of immigration controls.

For all the hypocritical nonsense talked by the likes of Blunkett and Blair, the fact is that tightening immigration controls, dealing 'firmly but fairly' with asylum seekers has not pulled the rug from under the BNP. Quite the contrary. Every time that the terminally obnoxious John Reid promises to get tough, to deal with past 'failures', then they reinforce everything that the racists and the BNP are saying. And however tough Reid and others can sound, the BNP can always be tougher. To compete with racists on their territory is to admit defeat in advance.

It is also a sign of the limited vision of many socialists today, again a legacy of the old CPGB and its 'British' road to socialism, that they can parrot the nonsense about non-racist immigration controls. By their very nature, immigration controls keep out the other – the Black, the Jew, the poor, the sick – in other words those who should be the natural constituency of the Left. The whole history of immigration controls is that they have only ever been introduced at the instigation of racists.

The first immigration controls were introduced by the Aliens Act 1905, when that good friend of the Zionists, Arthur James Balfour, sought to prevent the immigration of Jewish refugees from the pogroms in Russia.

This is what the Daily Mail of 3.2.1900 wrote: "*They fought, they jostled to the foremost places at the gangways. When the Relief Committee passed by they hid their gold and fawned and whined in broken English asked for money for their train fare.*"

And when those bogus asylum seekers fleeing Nazi Germany presented themselves at our borders the Mail was equally virulent:

"The way stateless Jews from Germany are pouring in from every port of this country is becoming an outrage: the number of aliens entering the country through back door - a problem-to which the Daily Mail has repeatedly pointed." 20.8.38.

When the first post-war immigration Act, the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 was passed, the clear intention was to prevent 'coloured' i.e. Black immigration. It was drawn up to ensure that the Old i.e. White Commonwealth would be largely excluded.

Likewise the patriality clauses of the 1971 Immigration Act were also designed to allow white and prevent black immigration. A cursory reading of the Cabinet minutes of the time reveal how the main concern was to ensure that the Acts were racially discriminatory.

As long as socialists and trade unionists cling to - the idea that we 'need' immigration controls, what they are really saying is that British workers have something to fear from immigrant labour. And once you do that it is inevitable that workers will look to their own ruling class for 'protection'. That is what happened in the 1900's when the British Brothers League, led by Tory MP William Evans-Gordon campaigned against Jewish immigration. To its shame the TUC supported their demands. And East End workers saw their saviours in the local Tory MPs they elected rather than working class unity with Jewish workers.

There is a simple answer to the problems of migrant labour. It is called unionisation. In an era of globalisation and the enlargement of the EC, it is a pipedream to pretend that the supply of labour is going to be cut off. Capital knows no borders and neither does labour. What ruling class

politicians, be it Reid or Sarkozy, do is to divert peoples' attentions away from the problems that really face them onto those who are worse off than them.

There is little doubt that migrant labour from Eastern Europe was intended to perform the jobs that British workers will not do. The answer is not to tighten up immigration controls, impossible anyway in an EC context, but to organise them into trade unions in order that existing labour is not undercut.

It is ironic that at the time that over half a million migrants from Eastern Europe have been entering and working in the country, tabloid attention has been almost exclusively focussed on the less than 30,000 asylum seekers who come to this country. The reason is obvious. Asylum seekers today, like Jews yesterday, are a convenient scapegoat for New Labour.

Socialists should remember the words of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto. Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains. Workers unity is not possible as long as the rich and the capitalists set off one section of the working class against another. The level of political consciousness among British workers is abysmally low as it is. For socialists to support immigration controls is to seek to reduce it even further.

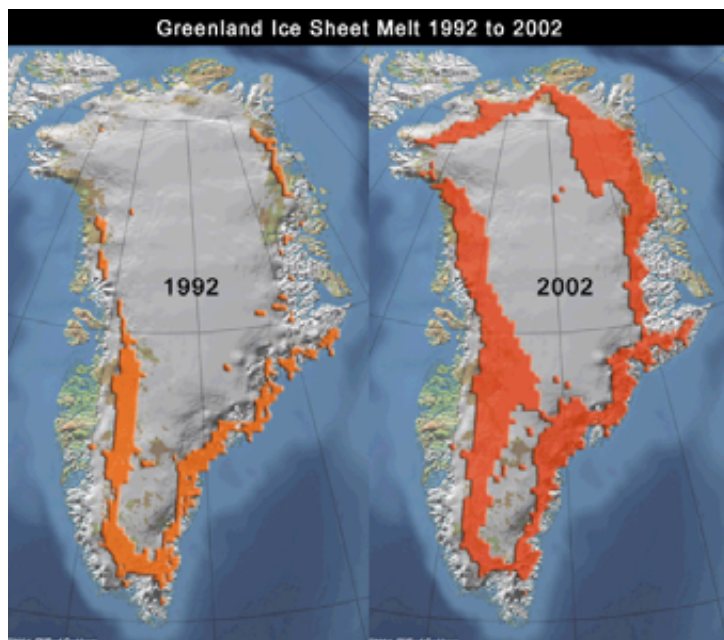
All the arguments against immigration controls such as numbers and jobs are the product of the siege mentality. We have always been an

'overcrowded' island, but overcrowding is relative. Travel to the Highlands or Cornwall or many other areas of Britain and we are anything but 'overcrowded' but in any case, cities are always overcrowded by definition. It is humanity's lot to live cheek by jowl. 'Numbers' was the excuse back in the 1970's when Powell first made his appearance but we still have managed to find room! Culture is another excuse. The smell of curry was something that used to seriously disturb racists. Today they are to be found with their vindaloes!

But if you have immigration controls then you have increasing internal controls. The main justification for identity cards has been 'illegal' immigration. You are asked for ID in hospitals now. Of course that is but another step towards privatisation.

Sometimes socialist, especially green socialists, need to stand back and look at the world as if they were on another planet. With all the major problems of climate control, diminishing resources, pollution etc. what an absurdity it is to concentrate on whether someone wishes to go from country A to B. The reality is, that when there were no immigration controls and anyone from the Commonwealth could come here, prior to 1962, it took considerable efforts to persuade people to come here. That is why Enoch Powell, as Health Minister, had to do a tour of the Caribbean to persuade people to come and staff our hospitals!

This article is the part of a debate initiated by the AGS National Committee. The Editor welcomes further contributions on this subject.



This picture shows the extent of the Greenland ice sheet in summer 1992 and summer 2002. In only ten years the ice has retreated dramatically. If the whole of the Greenland ice sheet melts, it will raise global sea levels by about seven metres (twenty three feet).

What future for the SSP?

Can the beacon lit by the Scottish Socialist Party survive the storm unleashed by the Sheridan case?

by Ken Ferguson, Convenor Tay Coast SSP

Since its formation as a unified socialist party the SSP has inspired thousands not just in Scotland but in the movement across the world. Growing from several roots the SSP was formed out of the Scottish Socialist Alliance and was a serious attempt to bring a range of different socialist traditions together in a left wing version of "big tent" politics.

It attempted to combine parliamentary and extra parliamentary politics together in what was neither and electoralist nor a vanguard party, but what was described as a "combat party". Thus the SSP was found opposing closures, supporting strikes, opposing motor-ways, backing communities against NHS and council cuts and fighting elections.

The process was given a major boost by the fact that throughout the Thatcher years Scotland resisted her agenda. Although this happened elsewhere, in Scotland there was the added dimension of the national question. The savage attacks from pit closures to the poll tax - trialled first in Scotland - had both a social aspect and increasingly a national dimension.

Put simply, the left asked the question: "If the UK wants Thatcher and we don't why not back an independent Scotland?"

Readers should understand that the call for a parliament dealing with Scottish Affairs goes back to the pioneers of Keir Hardie's time and the modern campaign was led by the STUC. In turn the STUC's pro-devolution stance was led by the Scottish NUM with the resolution on it moved by the legendary Mick McGahey. The ferment around devolution and independence is the key background against which social questions were and are played out.

The victory of Tommy Sheridan in the first Scottish Parliament, followed four years later

by that of six SSP members, is a direct consequence of the more democratic electoral system used in Edinburgh. This is similar to the list system used in Germany which gives parties seats if they gain a certain percentage of votes across a region.

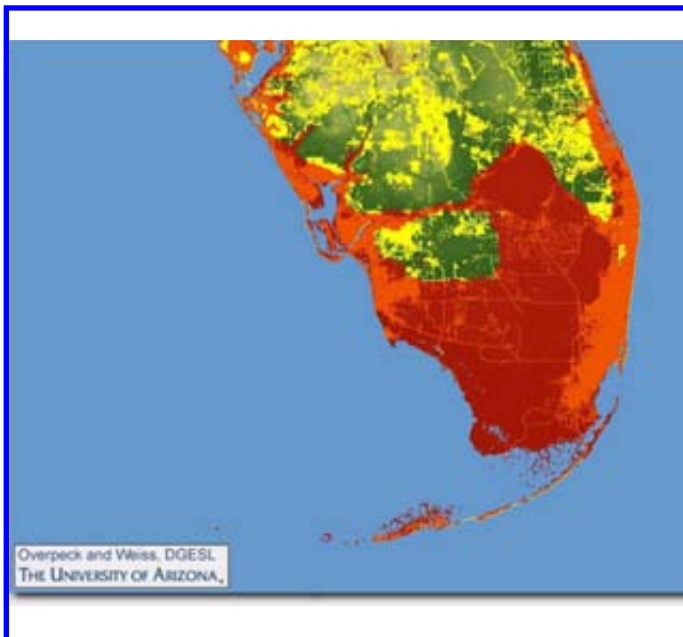
The events of the summer - with its lurid sex headlines culminating not just in Sheridan's court victory but in an organised attempt to wreck the SSP - has put much of this at risk. However the initial evidence suggests that, despite highly opportunist backing from both the SWP and the CWI (the Socialist Party) the misnamed Solidarity looks likely to fail. The vast majority of members stayed with the SSP, with organisation in the key central belt solid.

The party is turning outwards and about to table a key Scottish Parliament bill for the provision of free school meals which has won widespread support from medical, educational and campaigning groups.

The latest post-split opinion poll put the SSP on 6%, just one point below its winning level of 2003. The party also shows signs of broadening and opening up its educational and policy-making and there is growing support for Red/Green ideas. With the Scottish Green Party actively courting a place in any post 2007 election coalition with either the Scottish Nats or New Labour, left greens have much to ponder.

The politics of the period between now and 2007 (the 300th anniversary of the Union Treaty setting up the UK parliament) is highly fluid, unpredictable but open to new configurations of forces and Red/Green ideas.

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A rise of just seven metres in sea level would put half of Florida under water.

Bye-bye Cape Kennedy, bye-bye Miami and Tampa, and certainly bye-bye the Florida Keys.

And bye-bye most coastal or estuary cities, including London and New York.

www.geo.arizona.edu

Camp for Climate Action

by Dave Marlow

The last week of August saw around six hundred activists from all over the country converge on a field near Selby, close to the site of Drax power station. This coal-fired power station is one of the largest in Europe and is the single biggest generator of CO₂ in the UK. Every minute its furnaces burn 20 tonnes of coal to generate 7% of the electricity used in the country.

On the morning of August 31st, two large groups of protesters left the camp and headed towards Drax. One group consisting mainly of parents and children (and a giant comedy ostrich) left from the main gate and marched along roads to the main gate of the power station. The other group left from the rear of the camp and moved across country. As police had already surrounded the camp and a police helicopter flew overhead they were quickly able to keep track of protesters, but a main road leading to the power station was closed by a mass of protesters including a samba band. The police had a large number of officers guarding the fence to the station so an hour-long standoff occurred when the protesters arrived and were prevented from entering the site.

However, a smaller number of keener activists had left the camp before dawn and succeeded in entering the site undetected. Seven people locked themselves to lighting towers on the site and hung a banner reading “No Future for You”. Given that there were around 3000 police in and

around the power station it is not surprising that most of the campaigners were easily turned away and the protest outside the main gate was dispersed in about an hour. However, a huge amount of media coverage was generated, the majority of which was reasonably positive.

It wasn't just Drax that was coming in for some direct action. Two days earlier, a small group of activists managed to blockade the front and rear gates of Hartlepool nuclear power station for ten hours by locking themselves together and lying in the access roads. This action was in protest against the government's support for nuclear energy - following sustained lobbying by the nuclear industry and claims that it is a 'green' energy source.

The camp did more than give people an opportunity to strike back at the 'climate criminals'. Throughout the week a large number of workshops and discussions were held on a variety of subjects, including exploring the alternatives to fossil-fuels and positive changes that individuals can make to their lifestyles. The camp itself was intended to be a demonstration of a practical solution to climate change. The majority of energy used was generated from renewable means and, where possible, waste produced was recycled. In all, the camp was a positive experience and succeeded in drawing attention to the need for radical action to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Politics from Music

by Tom Neilson, US singer

The world-famous cellist Pablo Casals said: “An affront to human dignity is an affront to me, and to protest injustice is a matter of con-science. The artist has a particular responsibility because s/he has been granted special sensitivities and perceptions, and a voice that may be heard when others are not.”

I am grateful to have the opportunity to write about the relationship between my music and activism, primarily the struggle for peace and social justice, and protection of the environment.

“no-one is writing protest music today”

Neil Young recently stated that no one is writing protest music today. Where is Neil Young hanging out? There may not be many of us, but we are writing and singing music for social change, and much of this music is truly excellent and very well performed. A better question for Young to ask would be why today’s protest music is not played regularly on the radio, in coffeehouses, or other venues?

One answer is censorship. There is an obvious exclusion of social commentary by Clear Channel and mainstream commercial and public radio. While many may believe corporate control of the media is to blame, it bears only partial responsibility.

Every year I headline a Peace Festival in Florida, where the local NPR (National Public Radio) folk show won’t allow me on the air to advertise the event because they are afraid that listeners will complain about my lyrics. Another

*the strong connection between music
and social movements*

NPR folk show host in Massachusetts was reluctant to let me on the air to promote my Swords Into Plowshares CD (1996) because she was afraid I might suggest to individuals not to pay their taxes.

Historically, war-tax refusal has been a non-violent act of resistance spanning centuries. Yet, it is a subject and story that is rarely presented. At the end of the show, the phone rang and she commented that she was afraid that someone was calling to complain. They weren’t, but I was never invited back to promote another recording.

Over the last four decades fewer and fewer “progressives” seem to understand the strong connection that there has been between music and social movements. My songs and performances are interactive – the lyrics contain historic and timely information regarding political and social issues.

Can the World Survive Capitalism?

a conference organised by the
Alliance for Green Socialism
and **red pepper** magazine

Saturday 18th November

12.30pm - 5.00pm (food available
beforehand)

Leeds

**Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse
Square, Leeds, LS31AD**

main speakers

Professor Ted Benton

Hilary Wainwright

Dr Stuart Hodgkinson

The conference will explore the limitations of the market and the relationship between capitalism and the environment, plus the growing resistance to the domination of capital. It will include plenty of time for discussion, plus poster sessions in the break.

A year ago, I called the peace festival in Oneonta, NY to inquire about playing. I was told they had cancelled the event because they get the same people each year and they were tired of "preaching to the converted."

Preaching? Festivals are a time for celebration, visibility, affirmation, and to honor those working for the cause. She thought differently.

There are the people who regularly come up to me at every concert, who call in to the talk radio shows and tell me how important my message is and the urgency of getting it out. At a concert in Coral Gables last year, two Florida journalists came up to me after the show and complimented my songs, saying it was refreshing to hear someone reporting the truth because as journalists, they did not. Each said that they knew exactly what to write and how to spin it in order to keep their jobs.

journalists know what to write and how to spin it to keep their jobs

At Lee, Massachusetts two years ago, I wrote a song to support the community's movement to prevent Veolia from privatizing their water and sewer system. One city council member was so

Tom is an important US singer and songwriter who has taken his message against Bush's foreign policy throughout the world.

His playing at the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases "Independence from America" protests at Menwith Hill US base in Yorkshire was received enthusiastically.

You can find out more - and order his CDs - at his website www.tomneilsonmusic.com

offended by the lyrics, which asked questions about Council support for the contract, that he demanded a public apology from community activist Dee Dee Consolati, who had invited me. No apology was given!

Along with other protest singer/songwriters, I hope our music helps people be visible, raise our collective voices, and speak truth to power.

In Brighton, England, an audience member rose at the close of my concert and spoke, "You have a lot of courage to be playing this music." My response was that courage had nothing to do with it. His reply was, "Then you have worked through the fear."

Bangladesh

lies on the northern tip of the Bay of Bengal with a population of over 133 million in a small area.

Bangladesh has a 700 km long coastline that consists of a vast network of river systems.

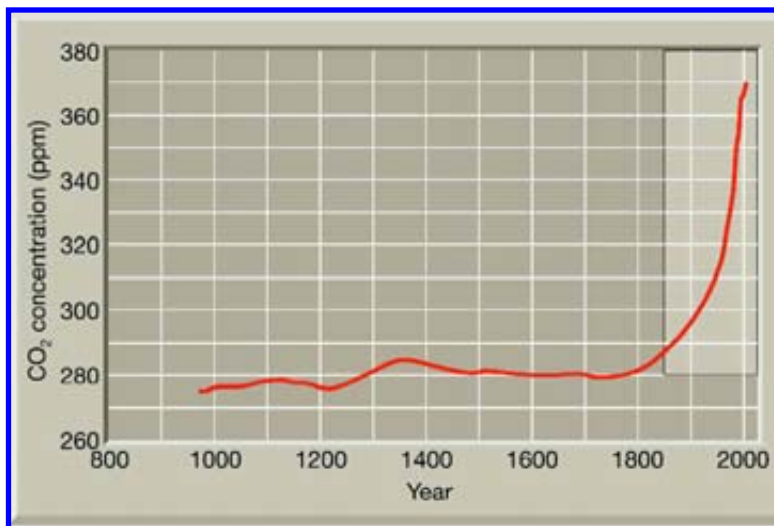
Mean elevations range from less than 1 metre on tidal floodplains, 1 to 3 metres on main floodplains. and up to 6 metres in the northeast. Only in the extreme northwest are elevations greater than 30 metres.

OECD 2003

If the sea level rises seven metres, Bangladesh - with its 133 million people - will simply cease to exist.

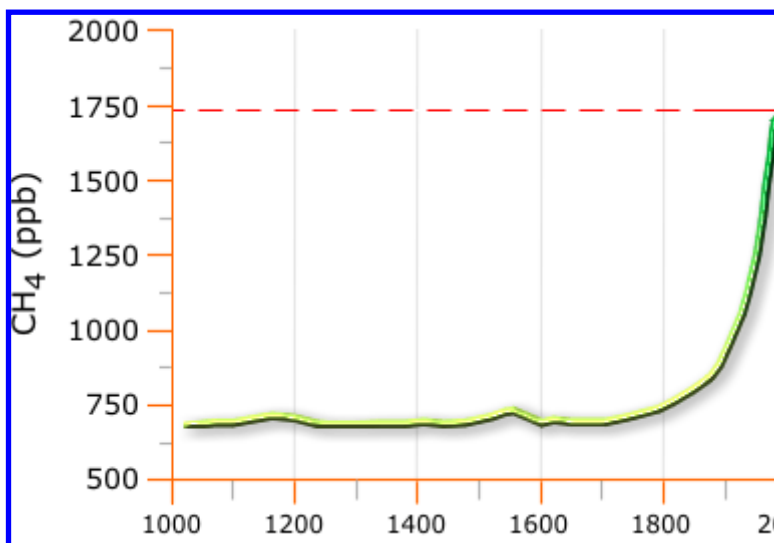
A THOUSAND YEARS: CAUSE & EFFECT

Carbon Dioxide



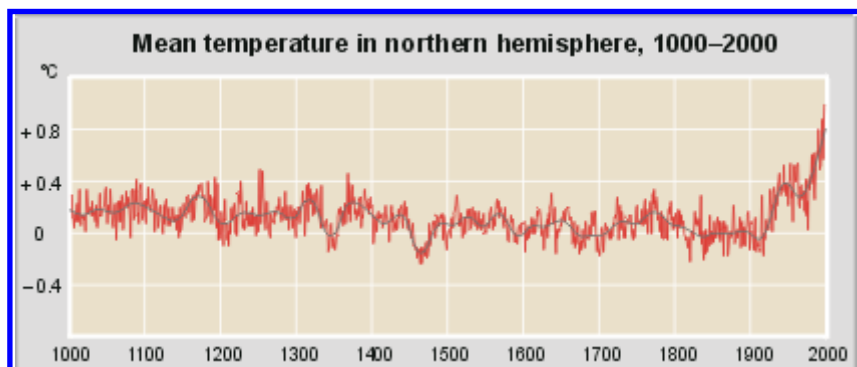
www.geography.hunter.cuny.edu

Methane



www.landcareresearch.co.nz

Temperature



www.internat.naturvardsverket.se

figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 report to the United Nations.

NOTES FROM LONDON

DEBT

June and Eddie Adams of the AGS attended the launch of James Falla's new book "IVA Bankruptcy and other Debt solutions". It took place in the Groucho Club in Dean St Soho! The club is only a stone throw away from the now Quo Vadis restaurant where a much more important Karl Marx lived.

The launch took the form of a video presentation in which Eddie Adams took part, with the Alliance for Green Socialism credited.

Domestic debt in Britain is a growing problem - although it is (as yet) no where near the level of the United States, where it has reached 44,000,000,000,000 dollars (yes, forty-four million million!) and is still soaring. One in ten Londoners have debts over £10,000 excluding mortgages, and 67,000 people became insolvent in Britain in 2005 - compared to 13,020 in 2004, five times as many!

Following the video presentation James Falla spoke and answered questions.

He outlined how the consequences of debt caused stress, it destroyed peace of mind and how it leads to all sorts of other problems. Common is work performance decline. Domestic relationships suffer often leading to abuse and family breakups some times criminal acts, and in extreme cases suicide.

He pointed out that around 3.8 million adults in the UK have unsecured debts totaling £20,000 and 1 million of these will very likely declare themselves insolvent.

ECHOES OF SPAIN PROJECT 1936-9

This project, inspired by events in the Spanish civil war, takes the form of a pictorial mosaic celebrating the 16 volunteers who went to Spain from Kensington to fight in the International Brigade in defence of the Spanish republic and democracy, and the Spanish refugees that came to Britain.

The group of fifteen to twenty people who made the mosaic have mainly a Spanish and British background. Amongst them several members and supporters of the A&S. The mosaic is

5 metres long and 2 deep. It is in the internationally famous market of Portobello Road in North Kensington, on the Portobello Road next to the motorway flyover.

The creation of the mosaic has taken many months. It is to be formally unveiled at 5.30pm on 18th October. Jack Jones, the retired general secretary of the TGWU, who was a member of the International Brigade, has agreed to do the honours

LONDON AGS

North London AGS now alternates its monthly meeting between Kensington and central London. See the Newsletter for details of these meetings and those of the South London A&S. All London members and supporters are welcome at both North and South meetings.

Eddie Adams

An Israeli is going through entry formalities at Heathrow.
Immigration Officer: "Occupation?"
Israeli: "No, tourism."

BOOK REVIEW

“7/7 - The London Bombings, Islam and the Iraq War”

Milan Rai Pluto Press, 2006 ISBN 0 7453 2563 7

Milan Rai's analysis is a “must read” for anyone interested in the real causes of terrorism.

Rai opens by demonstrating how Blair lied in pretending that the “7/7” bombings had nothing to do with Iraq. While this has long been obvious to AGS members – and, indeed, to a majority of Britons – Rai provides an admirably clear and well-documented analysis.

Rai graphically illustrates the biased nature of media reporting of political violence, including the London bombings. Our media never miss the opportunity to describe violent groups as “Islamist”, with the sub-text that Islam is naturally linked to violence. Yet reports of violence by Christians – even violence whose explicitly stated motivation is Christian – do not refer to Christian fundamentalism. Our media reinforces Bush's portrayal of Islam as “the enemy”.

Rai explores whether Muslim or Christian scripture can be used to justify violence against non-believers, scoring them about equal. It is quite possible to find passages in either the Quran or the Bible (particularly if taken out of context) which seem to support such violence. But both books also yield an abundance of passages in support of peace and tolerance. Similarly, in to-day's world, both religions include strands of teaching & practice that are intolerant and violent, and strands which are tolerant & peaceful.

the particular British Muslim background of the four London bombers, was actually a significant obstacle to such violence

The most illuminating part of the book is its extensive analysis of the different strands of Islam and the typical nature of Islam in Britain. Unless you are already very well informed, this will be an education. Rai describes the typical Sufi Sunni Islam of the majority of British

Muslims – theologically relaxed and focussed on the clan. He contrasts this with the fundamentalist Wahhabi Sunni approach emphasising the global nation of Islam and more readily supporting violence to defend that global nation. His thesis is that the particular British Muslim back-ground of the four bombers, far from being a natural breeding ground for political/religious violence, was actually an significant obstacle to such violence.

an inevitable consequence of Western foreign policy will be more terrorist attacks

In two respects I would criticise Rai's choice of language in this discussion. Rai uses “jihad” to mean only violent struggle. That is unhelpful in any discussion looking at the range of possible Islamic responses to oppression. To a Muslim, “jihad” equally means an internal spiritual struggle. Similarly, Rai uses “umma” to refer to the global Muslim nation only in the context of a defence of this nation. This ignores the more normal usage in Islam, which is more to do with community and mutual support. The “umma” is more about socialism than it is about war.

But Rai's basic message is a vital political one. Terrorism – such as the London bombings – does not arise from religious motives beyond our understanding, let alone from any “hatred of freedom and democracy”. It is an attempt to be heard, a protest against what is seen (accurately enough) as Western oppression of Muslims across the world, with Palestine and Iraq the most glaring current examples. While the West pursues a foreign policy that kills, imprisons, tortures and dispossesses Muslims in their thousands and millions, one inevitable consequence will be continuing terrorist attacks against those countries most responsible.

Mike Davies

OBITUARY

Murray Bookchin

1921 - 2006

Murray Bookchin was born in the Bronx to Russian Jewish parents whose families had been involved in the Narodnaya Volya. They had repudiated Judaism and become consciously secular. Bookchin's first language was Russian rather than Yiddish. The family home was decorated with pictures of Luxemburg and Liebknecht and he was brought up on tales of the Cossack revolutionaries Razin and Pugachev. Among his earliest memories was the judicial murder of the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. At nine Bookchin joined the Young Pioneers, the children's section of the Communist Party. At fourteen he joined the Young Communist League. He became a powerful outdoor speaker and a seller of the Daily Worker. The CP then could muster sixty thousand on demonstrations and fought fierce battles with the police.

In this period the Communist Party had politics of class against class, denouncing social democrats as social fascists. When the line changed to that of the Popular Front, Bookchin saw it as a betrayal of the revolution.

In 1937 Bookchin gravitated towards Trotskyism. An apprentice electrician and then a foundryman in New Jersey, he organised for the Congress of Industrial Organisations. Often on picket lines, he became a shop steward and a branch secretary. After a spell in the army he worked at General Motors and took part in the 1946 strike.

By the late 1940s, in Contemporary Issues, Bookchin was writing about ecological questions the dangers of chemical pollution, nuclear energy and atomic weapons. He wrote Our Synthetic Environment in which he advocated renewable forms of energy and a decentralised society in which we could live in harmony with the natural world. He abandoned Marxism for anarchism, forming a study group called The Lower East Side Anarchists, with a banner proclaiming "Ecology, community, revolution."

Becoming involved with the Students for a Democratic Society, Bookchin wrote a polemic against their conflicting Leninist factions called Listen Marxist, illustrated with pictures of Marx, Lenin, Mao and Bugs Bunny.

By the 1970s Bookchin was active in direct action movements against nuclear. An early Green Party member, he was critical of what he saw as Green anti-humanism and mysticism.

Against this Bookchin advocated dialectical reason, including study of Marx's Capital. While a critic of Marxism, Bookchin attacked groups like Socialisme Ou Barbarie for abandoning reason along with

Marxism. Bookchin was also highly critical of contemporary anarchism, seeing anarchism as the far left of socialism. Bookchin remained capable of criticising himself, stating he had over-romanticised tribal societies in his The Ecology of Freedom.

Bookchin was in many ways an autodidactic worker-intellectual and always attacked those who were fiery revolutionaries in their youth but took up safe middle class jobs in middle age. He was a prolific writer and amongst his works is a history of the Spanish revolution of 1936-37.

Derek Wall of the Green Left group in the Green Party accuses Bookchin of "sectarianism". (This from a leading light in a party which makes a fetish of sectarianism in its dealings with the AGS and others! Pots & kettles!) Bookchin was direct and forceful but not sectarian.

Bookchin wrote: "We may not get our revolution tomorrow, and maybe not even during our life-times. Yet by working for it, we will be doing only what great revolutionaries ... have done for at least two hundred years: fighting for a rational society and human freedom." Bookchin did not live to see the revolution, but the struggle in which he fought so hard - and wrote so much that can still inspire us - continues.

Terry Liddle



<http://anarchistnews.org>

LETTERS

GREEN PARTY

I read Mike Davies' article 'The Green Party and Socialism' in the last edition of Green Socialist with interest. As someone who sits somewhat uncomfortably between the two camps I wish to make some response to Mike's theme of criticising the Green Party for not being socialist. While generally I agree with the thrust of his argument, he seems to be expecting a butterfly to be a bird — or vice versa.

As most readers are probably aware, Green Politics was developed eighty years on from Marxism/Socialism to partly address what it saw as the latter's theoretical limitations and to provide a new framework of reference for political theory. Feminist, anarchist and ecological critiques criticised the concepts observed in socialist practices of central management and bureaucratic classes, the nature of and value of work, woman's in particular, faulty class analysis that ignored cultural differences and the scientific/modernist ideas of overcoming nature, leading to a false view of development ideals and humankind's place in the eco-system. Green thinking intended to build on previous emancipatory advances and extend them further to include other animate and inanimate beings.

Because Mike Davies in his article doesn't see the Green Party advocating socialist solutions to the environmental crisis it leads to him saying the 'Green Party has no position at all beyond the environment'. In fact, unless it has changed since I last looked, the Green Party actually has no policy on the environment as it sees it as intrinsically woven into all other policies as an integrated approach, not an add on.

Mike further says the Green Party has 'no explanation at all for why we have life threatening environmental problems'. Again I think that is to misrepresent the overall context of the Greens in questioning what development is. When Mike says the Green Party 'has an absence of any policy on imperialism' I think that needs to be balanced by a recognition that Green policy fundamentally attempts to outline humanity's wider place in the world and our overall species imperialism.

The excellent work of the seven Green councillors on my local council in Morecambe and Lancaster, who are a breath of fresh air to the business as normal approach of the other Parties, makes me think that simply presenting a different 'story of life' is crucial. In the present legal, economic and political system speaking out to change the terms of reference for debate has certainly helped to achieve renewed political interest.

I don't question Mike that in the battle between the deep green fundamentalists and political pragmatists there is no doubt that Green Party policy has been watered down so as to try to please all sides with some horribly compromised outcomes that really please no-one and leave the fundamentals of social justice compromised. I further agree that the Green Party's failure to argue consistently and specifically against the impact of the present capitalist model on social justice, diversity and ecological sustainability is unacceptable. It was enough for me not to renew my membership after nearly twenty years.

However I hope channels of debate are left open between Green Party and the AGS and that the Green Left in the national party exerts influence where possible.

Chris Hart

The editor welcomes short letters on political issues, particularly those covered in *Green Socialist*. Letters may be shortened or edited.

**Letters should be posted to
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Garth Frankland, Editor *Green Socialist*

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