

What is capitalism? Will it last?

Questions for discussion

These questions are to help kick-start discussions for groups of people who wish to study any of these readings.

Most but not all of the readings are covered here. The questions are neither comprehensive nor geared to a particular level of knowledge. However they may be useful as a starting points for discussions. In some cases there is suggested further and background reading.

Fighting the Tories: what next?

What, in your view, are the lessons of the recent pensions dispute?

There are many problems with the current union leaderships, but how did things get so bad?

What do we mean by “bureaucratisation” in the unions and what can we do to guard against it?

What are the barriers to younger readers getting involved in the unions? What arguments can we use to encourage anti-capitalist activists, students or unorganised young workers to get involved in unions

What kind of things should socialists advocate to put pressure on unions to fight on working-class political demands in general and inside Labour?

More: Trotsky on politics and economic slumps:

Links here: <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/09/01/why-did-working-class-militancy-collapse-face-thatcherism-1983>

Socialists and Europe

Four programmes for the Euro-crisis

Based on what we can see today, what do you think could be the challenges to the neo-liberal response to crisis in the next few years?

Open letter to the left: do you really want the EU to break up?

How do you think socialists should assess, and what do you think they should say, about the current warm words from both the Tories and Labour, on a referendum on UK membership of the EU.

The United States of Europe

Trotsky seems to be in favour of the capitalist unification of Europe. Why might that be?

Did Trotsky’s perspective – “the national state has outlived itself” – make sense in 1914. Does it still make sense?

What perspective does Trotsky have for the workers’ movement in Europe?

How do our basic arguments and slogans on Europe differ from Trotsky.

More: Against the Europhobes, against the Euro-capitalists:

www.workersliberty.org/node/3795

Greece the fight for workers’ control

Read this piece together with Syriza’s programme here: www.workersliberty.org/node/18974 and critically evaluate that programme.

Keynes: the educated bourgeois

Are there parallels between the ideas of early 20th century orthodox economics and the policies of bourgeois politicians today?

What do you make of Keynes' challenge to that orthodoxy? What are its strengths and its weaknesses or limitations.

What would be our answer to today's economic orthodoxies?

Do we owe anything to Keynes?

Rebuilding the socialist movement

Fight for a workers' government! (2 pieces) and What is the workers' government? (Trotsky)

What do we mean by a "working-class demand"? Surely we don't just demand things that only concern workers as workers or working-class people? We want demands based on socialist principles?

Is the "working-class demand" the same thing as a transitional demand?

What is the united front?

Should the workers' government be synonymous with proletarian power under the leadership of revolutionary socialist politics or can it mean something less than that?

Is a workers' government an inevitable outcome of any rising semi-revolutionary or revolutionary class struggle?

Why bother raising the idea/slogan of a workers' government in the UK today?

What were the main arguments for raising the slogan in the early 1920s?

Shouldn't the idea have been confined to a revolutionary period such as the early years of the Communist International?

Is the call for a workers' government in Greece premature?

More: Selection of articles on workers' government

<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-government>

Anti-capitalist, pro-what?

Is there an objective need for a broad left anti-capitalist initiative? If so, what should it look like, what would it do and who would be involved?

Where (if anywhere) is consensus decision-making appropriate?

Why are coherent views important for working-class militants?

Why are they important for socialists?

Is it really necessary for socialist organisations to be always "politically sharp and quick on its feet."? In non-revolutionary times can we not allow for a slower, more ecumenical, free-wheeling approach?

What are the arguments for keeping class central to the socialist project? What, if any, are the limitations of that point of view?

What is the point of the socialist intervention into single issue, anti-capitalist etc struggle or campaign?

What should the principles for united left campaigning be? How do we develop that in current politics?

More: Workers Power: a tale of kitsch Trotskyism: <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/6633>

An appeal to the French Anti-capitalist Party not to split:

www.workersliberty.org/story/2012/04/18/appeal-nga-dont-split

What is the Bolshevik-Trotskyist tradition?

What did the experiences and actions of the Bolsheviks add to socialist thinking, culture and knowledge?

How meaningful is it for the AWL to call itself “Trotskyist”? Is it just a synonym for the untainted tradition of revolutionary socialism? What significance and weight should we give to the AWL’s analysis and rejection of Trotsky’s conceptual framework on the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR?

Do you agree with the notion that many contemporary Marxists are infected with “Stalinist seepage”. What does that phrase mean? List a few contemporary examples (organisations, political ideas, arguments).

List six important stages, developments, events which were instrumental in creating the Stalinist infection of the Trotskyist movement.

List (as many as you can) the political characteristics of post-Trotsky orthodox Trotskyism – good as well as bad.

What do you make of the description of the SWP’s dissemination of “theory” (point 34)? Is there something inevitable about that kind of hierarchy in a democratic centralist organisation?

More: Workers’ Liberty 3/8: The other history of American Trotskyism:

www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-38-other-history-american-trotskyism

What was the Minority Movement?

In general terms, what is a rank-and-file trade union organisation?

Was the Minority Movement more of a “front” for the CPGB than a genuine mass rank-and-file organisation?

What lessons can we learn from the NMM’s campaigns and activities prior to the General Strike?

Are there any parallels between the CPGB’s indecision and inconsistency in the General Strike with the left in the recent pension dispute (on a smaller scale)?

More: Marxism and trade unions study course

<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2012/04/23/marxism-and-trade-unions>

Issues for the left

The truth about BDS

Why does the BDS campaign focus on influencing the UN?

Do you agree that support for “right of return” is incompatible with a two state solution?

The boycott campaign says it targets institutions not individuals, and therefore the charge that it is hostile to Israelis in general is false. Agree? Disagree?

Surely a limited or targeted boycott is better than doing nothing? Especially if the Palestinian workers are not organised enough and the Israeli workers too committed to the status quo to fight for change. The tactic does, at least, raise public awareness.

What is the Muslim Brotherhood?

“Neither plague nor cholera!”: an open letter to the Socialist Workers’ Party

What makes the MB today different from other conservative political movements in the world? Is it any different today from e.g. Christian Democracy?

Why is “Israel and the Palestinians” the focus of the Islamists propaganda and political activity?

If the MB is split on generational lines and under pressure from the movement which ousted Mubarak shouldn’t the left at least try to intervene in MB ranks? How should socialists do that?

The AWL advocates a vote for the Labour Party, an organisation which has done terrible things, arguing that socialists can maintain criticisms when we advocate particular votes. What is the

difference between this and the SWP advocating a vote for the MB?

Reassessing imperialism: the case of the 1982 Falklands war

If it is the duty of socialists to consistently and relentlessly fight our “own” bourgeoisie, how can you square that with partially accepting their policy; in the Falklands, by saying the British troops were fighting - indirectly - to defend the self-determination of the islanders?

If France invaded the Channel Islands what would we say?

“Every country is more or less dominated by the world economy. No country has control over it — now not even the US colossus which was supreme after World War Two?” Isn’t this a kind of moral relativism? If the UK acts like it is still an imperialist power, it is a good thing if it is defeated. The US still has tremendous power to force and sustain war and national oppression in the world? If it gets defeated, that too, surely, is a good thing?

More: Lenin and the myth of revolutionary defeatism by Hal Draper

<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/4507>

Building a workers’ “third” front in Iran

Why does Maziar Razi say Iran is a “sub-imperialist” power? What difference does that make to the socialist attitude to any war on Iran?

What should be the basis for an international solidarity movement with Iranian workers and oppressed people?