

Thinking about Anarchism

A Woman's Work is Never Done: Capitalism and the Exploitation of Women



When the Irish constitution was unveiled in 1937 it set out a special place for women within the home. In Ireland as elsewhere 'women's life within the home' has to a large extent been characterized by long hours of thankless drudgery. While the struggles of Irish women for greater liberties during the last century have improved our lives in many ways, the drudgery of housework remains thankless and the workplace has not brought the liberation that certain feminists promised. As anarchists see it this is because as long as we live in a capitalist society women (or men) can never be meaningfully liberated.



For the vast bulk of people on the planet, capitalism means a life of exploitation with little or no say in how things are organised, while a small elite reap the profits and make the decisions. Those of us who create the wealth do not control it. The main tool of capitalist exploitation is the wage. Put simply, in your job you create a certain amount of wealth every day when you go to work be it in the office, the call centre or the building site. You are paid back a fraction of this wealth as a wage by your boss who keeps the rest as profit or surplus value.

So whether you work as a waiter in Cork or in a garment factory in the Philippines the wage relationship means that you are not paid for all the work you do; you are

being exploited by your boss who amasses the surplus value you create. For working class women around the globe capitalist exploitation is twofold. Women are exploited as wage workers in paid jobs but also on the basis of the vast amount of unpaid domestic work, overwhelmingly done by women, that contributes directly to the bosses' profits.

According to U.N. figures, women do two thirds of the world's work for 5% of the world's income. Most of this work is unpaid, unvalued, unrecognized work without guaranteed benefits, health and safety regulations or organised hours. It is the work of rearing children, breast feeding, caring for the elderly, cooking, cleaning and growing food: housework.

The work that women do in the daily grind of housework is not only central to the existence of humanity; it is the work that underpins economics and the work upon which capital bases its profits. The work that women do in housework is the production of the human race and that means overwhelmingly the human workforce, the basic ingredient of all industry, all agriculture, all services, all

profits and all wars. Women's unpaid domestic work is the production of the commodity that is sold for wages, labour power.

It is in the production and reproduction of labour power that women as housewives are exploited in capitalism. By giving birth to and caring for workers to enable them to face into the daily slog of wage work women directly contribute to the profits of capital. But while the wage worker gets a fraction of the wealth they create, the housewife gets none. Her work is done for free.

Women who solely work in the home having no wage of their own are faced with the choice of being economically dependent on a man or getting by on social welfare. For many women solely working within the home is not an option and increasing numbers of women also engage in waged work. For most women, work outside of the home does not bring the liberation promised by certain feminists. Millions of working class women can tell you that there is nothing particularly liberating about low paid menial work, especially when you have to make dinner and clean the house after you 'come home from work.' The double day of

wage work and unpaid domestic work is done by millions of women. The lack of social and economic recognition for women's domestic work devalues all the work women do, resulting in low wages for caring and domestic jobs (nursing or cleaning for example) and helping to keep women's wages lower than men's across the board.

As anarchists we aim to break apart the exploitative relationships that govern all the work we do and to replace them with relationships based on mutuality, solidarity and respect. This means the destruction of the wage relationship upon which capitalism is built and in which women's unpaid caring labour plays a central part. We think that work should be governed by the needs of our communities not the need to maximize profits at our expense. For women this means an end to their double exploitation inside and outside the home. It means a fundamental shift in what gets prioritized, placing the caring work that is fundamental to the survival of the human race, our well being and our happiness at the centre where it belongs.

Eve Campbell

TV Review The Wire

Raked over in newspapers since the fifth and final series made its way on to TnaG, it's hard to write anything new about the Wire. It's a portrait of America through Baltimore and the cop show vehicle; of failing school systems and crumbling communities, where drugs gangs and cops act in similar flurries of selfish brutality.

It leaps from the personal to the institutional, in blinding flashes of how power - legal and illegal - affects us. Empathy for characters is pummelled into you, before they're cruelly disposed of on society's scrapheap. And that's not me reading too much into it.

The chief writer, David Simon articulates the trickle down effect of capitalism on the small screen. Of how post-industrial society leaves communities ransacked of employment, forcing kids on to the drugs corner, with the ethics of the system seeping down to street level, in a dog eat dog game of survival. Young drug foot soldiers, map their lives on a chess board, knowing sorely, that pawns never become kings.

An underlying bleakness makes it a surprising choice for radicals to fawn on. The space for collective solutions is dramatically closed and only Thomas

Carcetti, a young white Mayor, holds a candle to political optimism. And that's rooted in a cynicism that shimmies between idealism and the crude opportunism you'd expect of the political ladder.

In an entertainment industry, where tough realities are wedged into easy redemptions, even that hope is popped. With Simon claiming to bring audiences to recognition "that our political and economic and social constructs are no longer viable, that our leadership has failed us relentlessly, and that no, we are not going to be all right."

An admission along those lines from TV is a rare thing. So too are the similarities sketched between organised crime in the projects, and the wrangling of downtown property developers and politicians. As a scumbag lawyer is told in one scene: "you just rob people with your suit case."

Shards of light do break through, as characters mount epic battles against drug addiction and neglect. With the decline of traditional class organisation passionately

evoked with the dockers union in series two, it's clear that a systematic challenge to American capitalism requires an awesome task of movement re-building, with churches seen as the only social response to poverty.

So, don't jump straight in and ruin The Wire if it's new to you. Pirate or buy the previous four series and curl into the best thing on the box right now. And when you're finished, don't stare into the cracked mirror of a broken society with the perversion of pessimism The Wire feeds on. Start asking how we can go about fixing it - together.

Season Five of the Wire is on TG4, Mondays at 1030pm with repeats on Saturdays at 11.25pm.

James Redmond



Slaving away your life just so you can make ends meet; having no say in the major decisions that affect your life; criminal politicians and businessmen plundering the country. Try to do something about it and they'll lock you up. Yes...

That's Capitalism!

According to World Bank's 2008 World Development Report, 2.1 billion people live on less than US\$2 a day. 880 million of these live on less than US\$1 a day

Oil giant Exxon Mobil made a profit of \$11.68 billion between April and June, breaking its own record for the highest quarterly profit by a US company.

Foreign Affairs magazine reported that in 2005 six hedge funds managers pocketed €2.15 billion dollars between them.

A car enthusiast in the Arabian state of Qatar wanted the very best when his Lamborghini needed a service so he had it flown all the way to London. Specialist mechanics checked the oil on the Murciélago LP640, at a cost of £23,500, including £3,552 for the service. A spokesman for Lamborghini UK said: "This sort of thing is not unheard of."

According to the Central Statistics Office southern Irish bosses had "invested" €2,003 billion abroad by the end of last year - yes that over two trillion euro. Talk about capital flight....

War, eternal war The US versus Russia



Civilians in Gori, Georgia bear the brunt of Russian bombing

Some things in life are pretty obvious. One is that you don't attack a heavily armed gang that outnumbers you 30 to 1. So what was Georgian leadership thinking when it ordered an attack on South Ossetia? There can be no question that they thought they would be able to defeat Russia. There are, after all, limits to human idiocy.

As usual, when a major conflict breaks out, the public is fed the standard diet of lies that invariably features the cartoon stories of underdog and oppressor, of good guys and nasty tyrants. That the ruling elites resort to large scale deception is most obvious in the case of Iraq. They drummed up support for war on the basis of weapons of mass destruction.

This was pretty stupid as it was an issue that was decidable on the evidence. And the evidence famously showed that the allies brazenly lied their way to murdering thousands of people. Naturally they didn't do introduce all that killing for the fun of it. There's plenty of oil to be had in the Middle East and it's also a strategic location for permanent military bases.

Bases that could be used to attack Iran or, to

bring us back to Georgia, ones that effectively encircle Russia. The conflict in the Caucasus was started by an American puppet. It's vanishingly unlikely that Saakashvili, the Georgian President, didn't get the nod of approval from Washington to blunder into the Russian military. It's still rather hard to understand, however, what the Americans were thinking. They probably calculated that Russia wouldn't respond and advised the Georgian leadership of this. This would make sense if you're of the mind that the Kremlin could be pushed around at will. After all, NATO, has expanded from West Germany to Russia's borders in the years since the disintegration of the Soviet Union as well as having established bases in Afghanistan. Quite a reversal of fortunes for Russia, compared to, say, 1970.

Hamas, the left and 'liberation' in Palestine

Hamas' recent "clampdown" on Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade in Gaza, rather than its ongoing brutal repression against leftist dissent including that of feminist voices dominated Western coverage of life in the occupied territories.

The hostilities between Hamas and Fatah is a US and Israeli dream come true. It has also been manufactured to a large extent, as it is more cost effective to divide and rule a society than to conduct unpopular massacres such as we witnessed during the Second Intifada. Fatah on the other hand, lacking the rank and file structure of Hamas had already lost the chance to unite with the secular dissent in Palestine and are too busy squandering what was left of the Western aid before Hamas came into power.

The shifting of the of authority from corrupt US-Israel backed PLO to fundamentalist rulers of the working class and peasants does not change the fact that Hamas is authoritarian,

nationalist and racist. It is trying to impose a de-facto Sharia regime in Palestinian.

It has, to a vast extent, exploited the desperation and powerlessness of a majority working class and peasants who had no hope but to turn to the first hand which handed the urgent basic needs for their survival; food, health care, social services and a short lived law and order in Gaza.

Receiving aid from same US friendly Saudi financiers who backed US in invasion of Afghanistan, Hamas is not trying to make its Sharia policies a secret either. The only respect for women Hamas has is for mothers, daughters and wives of suicide bombers.

Very little is heard from the radical left and feminists since they came to power last year; they are able to deploy enough violence to

Russian Revival Clearly the Russian regime thought the time had come to stop their rot and, more importantly, Russia's economy has recovered from its Stalinist paralysis and the subsequent neo-liberal chaos of the 1990s. It is also one of the world's major producers of natural gas, which is an increasingly crucial commodity, and which significantly magnify their international power. The recently constructed pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey lies outside their control. Not only is that a threat to Russia's domination of the natural resources in the Caucasus region, it was also, for them, a dangerous precedent of the smaller Caucasian states gravitating toward an American orbit.

The Americans intended expanding their influence in the Caucasus by suitably demonstrating Russia's relative weakness and diluting its monopoly on the region's gas. Instead their man in Tbilisi got a bloody nose while they are stopped in their tracks and are looking more and more like an overstretched Empire. More importantly, thousands of ordinary people get caught up - that's dead and injured - in a quarrel between elites.

In real terms, this means lives lost, infrastructure destroyed, and ethnic tensions kept nicely boiling over in case the major powers require pretexts for future conflicts. It's worth remembering, as the media never seems to, that people are people and that ethnic differences are, at most, extremely minor and trivial. Conflict between nationalities is not inevitable and in fact, as the relationship between France and Germany illustrates, fairly easily solved once the respective ruling classes agree to end their power games.

War and Capitalism Both the recent conflict in the Caucasus and the mounting drumbeats for war against Iran highlight an unpleasant fact about the world: War is a permanent feature of capitalism. They are not going to stop. Ever. This is simply a consequence of the world being organised by capitalism because the fundamental logic of

Hamas' financial supporters, from regions of the Muslim world where fundamentalism is rising, are still giving them millions. It will continue to oppose any form of demand for participatory democracy as it has since its early days of establishment. Collective memory of the attacks in the late eighties against the dominantly left-wing Palestinian Red Crescent workers has been erased.

Hamas' support stems from its resistance to the brutal and completely illegitimate Israeli occupation as well as widespread disgust at the corruption and compliance of Fatah. But no amount of anti-imperialist rhetoric can disguise its fundamentalist religious nature and the consequences that flow from it. Ultimately, while being anti-imperialist is necessary, it is not enough. Replacing the Israeli jackboot with their own would be an empty kind of liberation for Palestinian women and workers.

An unwillingness to criticize nationalist resistance movements has resulted in the left forgetting that it must not only support the liberation of peoples of Palestine from occupation but also from

the economic and social system is competition.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has dominated the globe and used this period of hegemony to decisively advance the interests of its ruling class. Hence the crude drive to dominate the Middle East. They do it because they can. It's not that American ruling class are intrinsically evil - to adopt their own cartoonish methods of describing the world - the logic of capitalism dictates that if they did not seize their current window of opportunity before China matures or Russia resurges or Europe unites, then one of the other slumbering giants would. That would inevitably consign the United States and its ruling elites to a secondary position from which it would be difficult to re-emerge.

This points to a problem with the system and not just with the individual players. It's not as if Sweden or Germany or any of the other more moderate sounding powers were angels when they were making their bid for Empire. Capitalism is about survival - it's not as if competition between states takes the form of sporting match with no significant consequences for the participants. The insanely competitive nature of capitalism dictates that every power that must develop any advantage it has or allow their competitors to use it against them.

Clearly if the problem stems from capitalist competition per se, then simply changing the competitors will not resolve the fundamental problem. War between Iran and the United States is no better or worse - and, ultimately, no different - than that between France and Germany. Thus, steps to restrict the arms trade, reduce the number of nuclear weapons, abolish aggressive military alliances such as NATO etc, while good things in themselves - and ones that merit support - are ultimately doomed to failure as the conditions that give rise to them will remain. As such, they would inevitably resurface fairly quickly.

Putting an end to war on the planet requires that the causes of war be dealt with. This necessitates that capitalism is replaced with an economic system based social solidarity. The ruling elites will never do this because it isn't in their interests to; after all, a just and equitable society would be happily bereft of them. Such change will emerge from ordinary people getting organised and consciously constructing a viable alternative.

James O'Brien



liberation for who?

religious repression, racism and sexism. Our policies of solidarity as anarchists for the people of Palestine should provide for coherent principles of equality and justice for all who live in that land, Muslim and Christian, men and women, and straight and gay.

Sevinc Karaca