

Useful facts, from the workers and peasants' paradise of Great Britain

by Katharine Kanter

As the British elites swagger around the universe, bearing the White Man's Burden, imposing birth control here, and ethnic cleansing there, drooling and squealing about decency, western values, and human rights, why not glance at what goes on on the Isle of Pleasure itself? As we all know, if you belong to the 1% of the British population that lives well, being into weapons or narcotics, or something in that area, you are waited on hand and foot by a nation of slaves, because if there is one thing the English "lower classes" are good at, it is cooking and cleaning for others, driving taxis, waiting on tables, pressing clothes, and generally forelock tugging. The question is, how do these helots, the forelock tuggers, actually live, if you can call it living?

Well, first of all, you don't eat much, and you eat less every year. An English nutrition expert wrote a study for the London *Independent* newspaper recently, showing that workers today, given the high portion of junk food in their diets, all they can afford given the fact that their wives now have to work and therefore no longer cook, are actually eating far less real food than workers in the 1930s. According to the Family Budget Unit's latest report, the living standards of people on income support are far below the most basic level. A couple with two children cannot live for less than £142 a week, whereas income support allows only £105 a week. The £142 budget excludes all holidays, alcohol, tobacco, cosmetics, and jewelry; neither does it include prescription medicines, dental work, nor eyeglasses. Twelve million British adults are believed to live on or below this standard, i.e., 50% are below what the European Community defines as the poverty line. The gap between income support and the actual amount needed to live, is made up by mothers eating as little as possible.

Average weekly spending by households dropped by one full percentage point in 1991 relative to 1990, after discounting inflation. The well-off spend £74 a week on food, the poor only £21—bearing in mind that food in the U.K. is as expensive or more than in Germany or the United States. Then, shivering from lack of hot meals, if you are an old-age pensioner, you have a good chance of dying from hypothermia (20% of all homes have no central heating). And there's no point in trying to flee to your son's place. The decayed living standards are reflected by the collapse of the family: One-third of all households are now single persons,

while it was one out of six in 1962. Only 11% of all households are a so-called "nuclear family" (parents with children), let alone needy grandparents (source: Government Statistics, "Family Spending 1991" HMSO).

Second, if you are a National Health, as opposed to private patient, the government puts you on waiting lists for operations which are so long, that you are likely to die before your operation costs the state one penny. The government polices your doctor so he doesn't prescribe you expensive medicines. Annual cost per person of prescription medicines in the United Kingdom is 50% less than that in France and Italy, and 37% less than in the other European countries, according to the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry. And British doctors less frequently prescribe new, recently patented medicines than other Europeans. The government has hired gangs of "prescribing advisers" to police general practitioners' offices and make sure they are not "over-prescribing."

If you live in London, and cannot be sped by chauffeur or private ambulance to a private hospital, start praying. In the midst of the AIDS and TB epidemics, the Tomlinson Report proposes to eliminate next year 2,500 hospital beds in London by closing down the teaching hospitals: St. Bart's, St. Thomas', Middlesex, Charing Cross, and University College Hospital, at least. These include England's leading eye, skin, and cancer wards, and emergency units which the capital cannot spare. Fifty percent of all ambulances in London already take more than 14 minutes to reach an emergency, double the statutory time. Between 1982 and 1989, some 3,700 beds were cut, and in the decade 1982-92, some physicians estimate 10,000 beds have been cut. One doctor wrote the *Telegraph* in October, relating horror stories he had just lived through, including someone with a massive hemorrhage who nearly bled to death in his office while they searched five hours for a London hospital bed.

If you get in trouble with the law—for example, try being drunk and disorderly and speaking with an Irish accent—will the government still pay for you to get an attorney on legal aid? Or will they stick the latest "IRA" bombing by British intelligence on you? If the latest proposals by the Legal Aid Board become law, lawyers in England and Wales will no longer be allowed to take on legal aid work without a franchise from the Legal Aid Board. A kind of legal aid policeman will visit each firm which wants to be licensed to do

legal aid, and check closed client files to see whether the solicitor has done the work "reasonably," e.g., does he spend "unreasonable" time on a difficult client with an "unwinnable" (political? Irish?) case? The criteria defining "reasonable" will be set by the Legal Aid Board.

Firms seeking franchises will also have to show the Legal Aid Board that they have a "marketing strategy" and a formal system for appraising staff performance. Even franchised firms will have their legal aid bills paid by the government only to the extent that the Legal Aid Board considers that the work has been "reasonably" done. The criteria are expected to boil down to ruthless cost-cutting, and ties to the right class of people.

If you get really troublesome, you can always die. From now on, anyone thought to be failing to "actively" seek work will be cut off from all income support, according to a new social security directive issued on Nov. 13. That is the equivalent of a death sentence. Income support is now £33.60-42 a week; it is the safety net for those who have been unemployed for over a year. In the words of the minister, the socialite Peter Lilley, "the effect is to issue a short, sharp shock"—to those people the British government has no intention of finding work for. Some relief agencies have estimated that there may be 35,000 people sleeping on the streets of London.

If you do find a job, look out. Work accidents rose by 60% over 1987-92, as employers teetering on the edge of

bankruptcy cut back on training, maintenance, and investment. Wage councils, to protect the lowest-paid groups of workers, have just been abolished.

Most importantly, if you want to breed a nation of helots, you've got to start young. The EC Commission has just been informed that the British government will oppose any European directive regulating child labor. The minimum age to start work in the U.K. is 13, in other European countries it is 15-16. Since in Great Britain there is *no minimum wage* for children under 18, the current British practice is to hire 13 to 17 year olds at slave wages, and fire them when they turn 18. Twenty-five percent of the 2 million children working in the U.K. earn £1 an hour or less. In the Edinburgh area, children as young as 10 leave school at 3:30 p.m. for 4 p.m. factory shifts.

A letter leaked to the *Observer* in mid-November from Employment Minister Eric Forth to the head of the British U.N. Association, read: "To legislate in this area would constitute unwarranted interference and put unnecessary burdens on business. It was for precisely these reasons that the Employment Act of 1989 removed existing restrictions on young people's terms and conditions of work." Or, as one wag put it in a letter to the editor of the *Independent*, "This government never ceases to amaze me. It is re-introducing the Poor Law of 1834. I'm now waiting for them to come up with the stunning idea of the workhouse."

Books of the American System

- Henry C. Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*. With an examination of the causes of the differences in the condition of the laboring population throughout the world. (1835) \$25
- Henry C. Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*. (1851) \$35
- Henry C. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*. (1847) \$45
- Henry C. Carey, *Principles of Political Economy*. Part I: Of the laws of production and distribution of wealth. Part II: Of the causes which retard increase in the production of wealth, and improvement in the physical and moral condition of mankind. Parts III and IV: Of the causes which retard increase in the numbers of mankind and the causes which retard improvement in the political condition of man. 3 vols. (1837) \$95
- Henry C. Carey, *Principles of Social Science*, 3 vols. (1858-59) \$125
- Henry C. Carey, *The Slave Trade, Domestic and Foreign*. Why it exists and how it may be extinguished. (1853) \$45
- Henry C. Carey, *The Unity of Law*. As exhibited in the relation of physical, mental, and moral science. (1872) \$45
- Mathew Carey, *Essays on Banking*. With a selection of Mathew Carey's other writings on banking. (1816) \$45
- Mathew Carey, *Essays on Political Economy*. Or, the most certain means of promoting the wealth, power, resources, and happiness of nations, applied particularly to the United States. (1822) \$49.50
- Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy*. Translated from the original German by Sampson S. Lloyd. (1885) \$45

Shipping and handling: Add \$4.50 for one book, plus \$.50 for each additional book.

Visa and MasterCard accepted

Virginia residents add 4.5% sales tax.

Ben Franklin Booksellers

107 South King Street, Leesburg, VA 22075

Fax: (703) 777-8287 Ph: (703) 777-3661 (800)-220-1037