

## Footnote: The Context of Human Rights

*The United Nations Declaration of Human rights, of 10 December 1948, was a laudable achievement. But united nations are united governments. Each serves the interests of those who dominate society within the country it governs. Its view of human rights is therefore always couched within the context of its established social order.*  
[\[PDF\]](#)

I was born and brought up in what has always been essentially a capitalist country. Everything I observed and learned from the society around me - from the acquisition of my family's needs of life, all the way to the foundation of our religious beliefs - was couched in the context of capitalist thought. I remember a hymn they used to have us sing when I first went to school. It began with the following refrain:

*All things bright and beautiful;  
All creatures great and small;  
All things wise and wonderful;  
The Lord God made them all.*

This was repeated after each of the verses that followed, the first of which was:

*Each little flower that opens;  
Each little bird that sings;  
He made their glowing colours;  
He made their tiny wings.*

It instilled the notion within our young minds that the whole life and being of the material universe in which we existed was made and sustained by an omnipotent creator, which was fine. It was a valid view. Following closely after it, however, was a verse which surreptitiously implied that this same being had, *in like manner*, established the social order under which we lived.

*The rich man in his castle;  
The poor man at his gate;  
God made them high and lowly;  
And ordered their estate.*

It imputed divine authority to the establishment to which we were all subject. It led us, by implication, firmly to believe that the laws by which our society operated were authored by a supernatural God, just as were the laws that ordered and governed the material universe. This politically indoctrinating verse was strategically sandwiched by three further verses that continued to extol the wonder and majesty of the natural world. The hymn terminated with:

*He gave us eyes to see them;  
And lips that we might tell;  
How great is God Almighty;  
Who has made all things well.*

This verse effectively placed a duty upon our impressionable young minds to spread the word about the great creation that the Lord God had made, including the elitist privilege and gross economic disparity that characterised our social order.

Many prominent writers of the last three centuries never seemed to recognise any demarcation between the natural laws that govern the universe and the artificial laws that govern society. To them, all law was part of a single consistent continuum. The result is that the social order within which we now live has become the assumed context or frame of reference which our minds use automatically to judge and understand all things. I have even heard people using commercial and political analogues to try to explain natural phenomena - no wonder they get it wrong.

The sad consequence of this subconsciously implanted context of capitalism is that when well-meaning people seek to devise a fair and equitable set of human rights, the rights they come up with all have a capitalist society as the assumed universe within which they should operate. That is how the United Nations [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) looks to me. I have no criticism of the rights themselves. My contention is that they do not go far enough. They are not fundamental. To make them so, one would have to remove the laudable precepts on which they are based from the contexts of capitalism, socialism, imperialism or whatever 'ism' members of the United Nations operate within.

To try to show how I think this assumed context of capitalism has crept into the wording of these rights, I list some of the Articles below and add my comments.

## Article 2

*Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, **property**, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.*

The inclusion of **property**, as a means of making distinction between individuals, gives passive acceptance to the disparity of wealth that prevails in the world today. This, in turn, lends credence to the capitalist principle that it is good and right that a favoured few should possess and control all the terrestrial resources by which human labour can be transformed into the needs of life. In effect, the right not to be subject to distinction by property protects those who have from those who have not.

## Article 4

*No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.*

A modern State or corporate employee of the 'free' world today is, in reality, a [slave](#). In fact, he has far less economic security than the slave of a good master.

## Article 6

*Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.*

What [law](#)? - Who formulated it, and for whose benefit?

## Article 7

*All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

Provided, of course, they can afford it!

## Article 8

*Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.*

What constitution? - To the best of my knowledge, the country in which I have lived all my life does not so far (January 2000) have one.

## Article 12

*No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.*

This means that my email is safe and that there definitely are no clusters of Cray-1s sifting the world communications infrastructure for keywords to capture the private information of others in order to gain political, military or commercial advantage. I think not!

It also means that the poor and lowly are not permitted to criticise and condemn the rich and powerful. After all, the rich can afford the protection of law: the poor cannot. As I have well experienced, it is perfectly acceptable for a rich or corporate perpetrator to commit a covert act that damages his poor victim. But it is not acceptable for the victim to damage the perpetrator's honour and reputation by saying anything about it.

## Article 13

- 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.*
- 2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.*

Provided he can afford the cost of travelling to where he wishes to go, and also afford to come back again. Economic deprivation is a more effective barrier to travel than a policed border crossing. It is said that money can always buy one's passage to or from anywhere. Notwithstanding, being unemployed in the United Kingdom, in violation of this Declaration, the law specifically denies me this so-called right to [freedom of movement](#).

## Article 17

- 1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.*

Under the rules of acquisition of property in a capitalist State, this does - by default - condone, encourage and facilitate the accelerating disparity of wealth - and hence poverty - in the world today. The words 'in association with others' implies acceptance of the rights of [limited liability](#) entities to exist and function the way they do - wreaking frequent and arbitrary economic ruination upon innocent individuals.

*2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.*

This effectively bars the forcible redistribution of the wealth-generating resources of this planet - including the vast proportion owned by limited liability entities. It thereby safeguards and protects the capitalist system in which all terrestrial resources are under the possession and control of a favoured few.

## Article 21

- 1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
- 2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*
- 3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*

In the assumed context of a capitalist State, this so-called representative democracy is [false democracy](#) and in no way serves the interests or well-being of the voters.

## Article 22

*Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.*

The [level of State welfare](#) I receive hardly qualifies as an [income of dignity](#).

## Article 23

- 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*

Not in the United Kingdom. I have been denied the [right to work](#) for over 10 years now (2001) and there is no sign that anyone is ever going to give me any. Furthermore, after 13 weeks of unemployment in the United Kingdom, one no longer has the 'right' to 'free choice' of employment. One is required to accept the first job of *any kind* offered or have nothing on which to live.

Nevertheless, it is nice to know that the United Nations has bestowed upon me the inalienable right to become a remunerated slave of one of the faceless few who collectively have dispossessed me of, and barred me from using, my fair and rightful share of this planet's natural resources for transforming my labour into the needs of life.

2. *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*

There is no such thing as equal pay for equal work. There is only equal pay for those whose personal chemistry gives them equal empathy with the boss, or who can manage to make themselves equally indispensable to their employer.

3. *Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*

Under free-market capitalism, one's remuneration is determined solely by the market forces of supply and demand. Pay levels have nothing to do with need, worthiness or dignity.

4. *Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.*

Not everybody is in a position to form or be a member of a trade union. In my experience, trade unions manage to hurt, and even ruin, their corporate employer's innocent small non-critical customers and suppliers long before their employer feels anything.

## Article 24

*Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.*

...unless he is unemployed, in which case he has to seek work continually. He simply cannot afford to go anywhere, nor is he allowed to leave his home without permission.

## Article 25

1. *Everyone has the right to a standard of living **adequate** for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

The standard of living bestowed by this right depends entirely on what is meant by the politically subjective term '**adequate**'. Naturally, the well-paid civil servants of the capitalist State who decree what is 'adequate' have a completely different conception of what it means than do the hapless labouring poor and unemployed to whom it is applied.

Addendum 2012: Regarding old age, since 2007, when I attained the age of 65, I have been in receipt of my "reduced State Pension" of £92.49 per week. This will continue for the rest of my life. It will never be increased and so will probably halve its effective value every decade. I am entitled to nothing more from the State. I have two private pensions. One is valued as a total lump sum of £12780.94 and another at £1307.92. I am now 70 years old and so far I have not managed to fight my way through the bureaucracy necessary to obtain these pensions. I don't really think I will ever see this money. I hardly think this situation constitutes "... security in the event of ... old age".

## Article 26

- 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*

My daughter was unable to take the Master's degree, which her university invited her to take, for only one reason - lack of money.

My elder son was unable to complete his education to secondary level. He is a special needs pupil who attended a special school up to the age of 16. He then moved to a mainstream school where he was taking GNVQ hopefully to advanced level. As a special needs pupil, he was supposed to receive free education at secondary level up to the age of 25 instead of the usual 19. However, at age 19 his child benefit and welfare support was stopped as for a normal child. He cannot receive State welfare in his own right unless he is actively seeking work. He cannot receive it while still in education. As can be seen from [our income](#), it is clearly impossible for 4 people to live on the State welfare for 3 (although we have been doing so for a month at the time of writing so he can finish his Intermediate level). He has had to forgo completing his course to advance level for one reason and one reason alone - lack of money.

A society or nation that treats dedicated conscientious young people like this deserves - and will undoubtedly be rewarded with - total economic failure. So much for [merit](#).

- 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

During my education, I was taught nothing about human rights or the society in which I lived. I was taught nothing of how its laws or economy operated. I was taught mathematics, physics and chemistry. Upon this was built knowledge of engineering. I was groomed simply as one of the particular kinds of human cogs which were needed at the time for the machines of capitalism.

## Article 27

- 1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*

Provided he can afford the money to do so. I most assuredly cannot afford to do so. I wish I could.

- 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.*

Provided he is a man of means or a corporation with the money to be able to finance the legal paraphernalia required to be able to do so. I couldn't afford to do this. [The result](#) was inevitable.

## Conclusion

The great revelation which my formative grounding in mathematics and physics gave me was that natural laws are absolute and perfect and beyond the control of mankind. Political and social systems (which are man-made) can never be perfect and are rarely even compatible with natural law.

The political system I have always lived under is based on greed, disparity, nepotism and the economic subjugation of the many by the few. If the God who created and sustains the natural universe also authored the political, social and economic systems of this world then he is clearly schizophrenic. My belief is that he didn't.

I believe the rules that govern human society are created to serve the interests of the favoured few to protect them and their wealth from the poor dispossessed many. The only way truly fair and equitable human rights could ever be formulated would be to look to the laws of nature - the laws of mathematics and physics - for the context in which to couch them.

## European Convention

In October 2000, so I am given to understand, the United Kingdom enshrined within its systems of law, the articles of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#). This includes only a few of the rights defined in the original United Nations Declaration, and even those have been watered down in order to meet international consensus.

Except for *Article 3 on torture* and *Article 12 on marriage*, the rights in the European Convention are granted "except such as is in accordance with the law" in each respective State. The government of any State is free unilaterally to change its law at any time. Being subject to the law of any individual State, these so-called 'rights' are not, by definition, inalienable rights. They can, for any individual at any time in any place, be overridden by local State law. I do not therefore see the point of their existence.

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