

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

July/August 2014

#269

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## Tory gift

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*Birmingham Schools*

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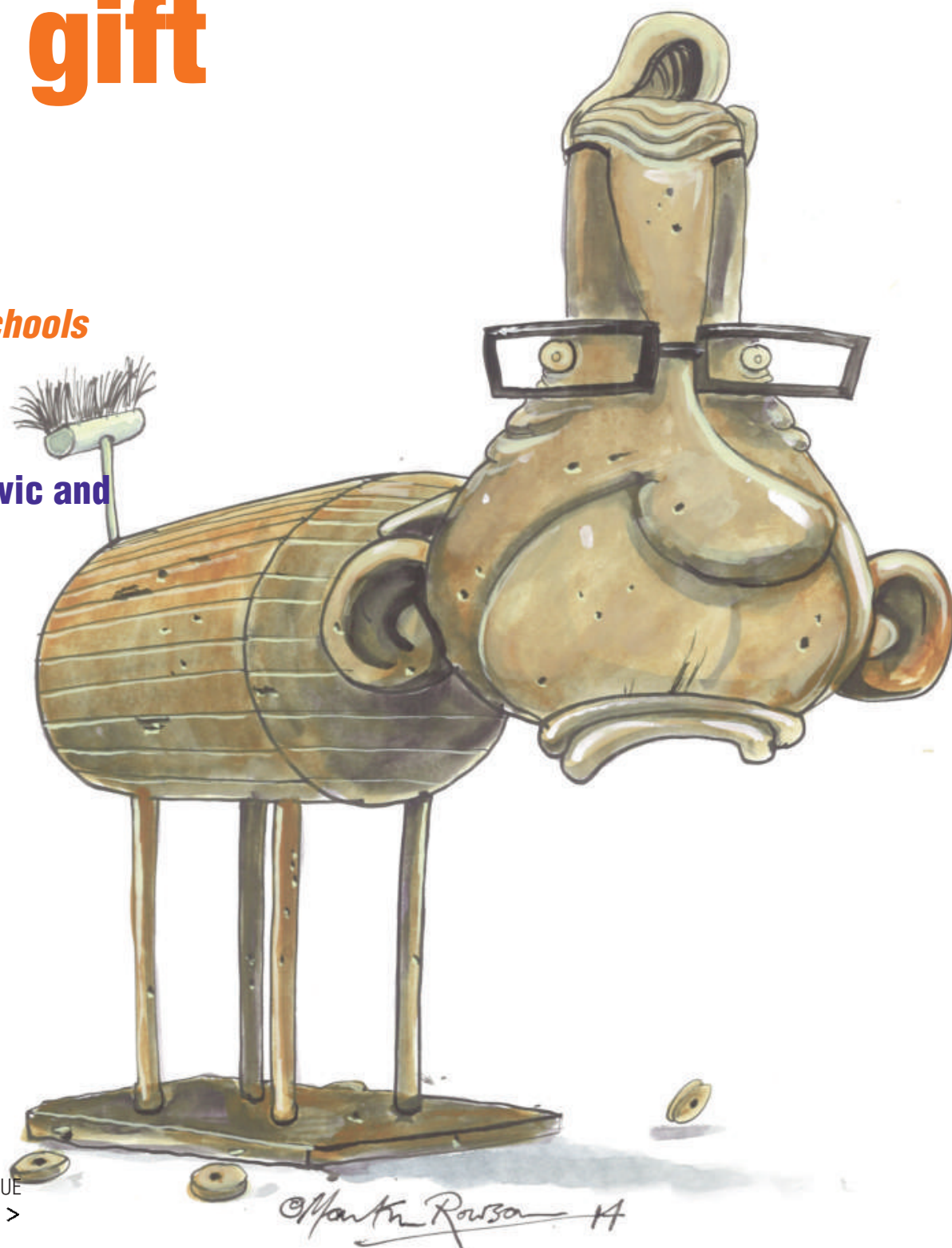
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## Editorial Policy

The editorial policy of CHARTIST is to promote debate amongst people active in radical politics about the contemporary relevance of democratic socialism across the spectrum of politics, economics, science, philosophy, art, interpersonal relations – in short, the whole realm of social life.

Our concern is with both democracy and socialism. The history of the last century has made it abundantly clear that the mass of the population of the advanced capitalist countries will have no interest in any form of socialism which is not thoroughly democratic in its principles, its practices, its morality and its ideals. Yet the consequences of this deep attachment to democracy – one of the greatest advances of our epoch – are seldom reflected in the discussion and debates amongst active socialists.

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

## Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Peter Chalk, Mike Davis (Editor), David Floyd, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, Peter Kenyon (Treasurer), Frank Lee, Dave Lister, Andy Morton (Production Editor), Mary Southcott, Cat Smith, James Grayson, Patricia d'Ardenne and Sheila Osmanovic.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

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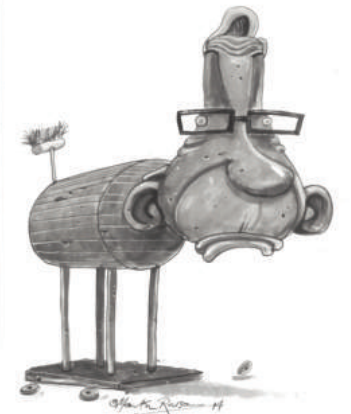
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Cover cartoon by Martin Rowson

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# Vladimir Derer

Jon Lansman pays tribute to a champion of Labour democracy

A full version of this obituary is available on Left Futures website

<http://goo.gl/RWpPc1>

Vladimir Derer who was the leading figure in the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) for forty years after its foundation in 1973 has died at the age of 94. Although almost unknown other than amongst Labour activists, he was the Labour Left's leading strategist at the height of its influence in the 1970s and 1980s. The organisation he created and his strategic vision made CLPD, the most effective organisation on the Labour Left not only in that period but through the New Labour years to the present.

Tony Benn, who died only three months ago, was rightly regarded as the Labour Left's outstanding leader and communicator of the period but he was often wrongly credited with being the architect of the movement for democratic reform within the party. That role was performed by Vladimir Derer. As Frances Morrell put it in *The Struggle for Labour's Soul*: 'He was a strategist and tactician of outstanding ability.... if any single individual was responsible for the changes to the party's constitution that were agreed in the period after the party left office, then it was undoubtedly Vladimir Derer'.

Without Vladimir, there would have been no mandatory reselection of MPs, no electoral college in which Tony Benn could come within a whisker of winning the deputy leadership of the party and in which Ed Miliband was to



win the leadership. Those two reforms together with the unrealised objective of Labour's manifesto being determined by its elected executive were CLPD's core objectives through the 1970s.

Nor is it only the victories of the early 1980s for which Vladimir should be remembered. Immediately after the victories on mandatory reselection and the wider franchise for the election of the leader the 1980s, CLPD was, at Vladimir and his wife Vera's instigation, the first organisation on the Labour Left to take up the issue of the representation of women and BME communities

within the party, and amongst its candidates for public office. This was vigorously opposed initially, but without this initiative, it is hard to see how Labour could by 2010 have had 81 women and 16 black MPs, compared with ten and zero respectively in 1983.

Vladimir believed the Left should take parliamentary democracy seriously but needed to focus on winning the support of the Labour Party membership to a socialist programme by building a rank & file organization.

Vladimir Derer, like Tony Benn, was the son of a cabinet minister. His father, Ivan D er, had been a Social Democratic minister in various Czech governments from 1920 until the Munich agreement.

Vladimir, himself, a nineteen year-old with Trotskyist sympathies at the time, escaped in 1939 via Poland to Britain. His Jewish girlfriend and other friends with whom he travelled were denied visas, and Vladimir was able to obtain one only because of his father's reputation.

Following military service, working as a translator and as a courier, he didn't settle into a life of political activity, supported by his second wife, Vera, until well into his middle years. He was politically inactive for many years until he joined the Labour Party in the early 1960s. Thereafter, it became his life's work.

Vladimir Derer 1919 - 2014

# British values smokescreen

In the wake of the Birmingham 'Trojan Horse' controversy which has seen Education Secretary Gove at loggerheads with Home Secretary Teresa May, Cameron has come up with the wheeze of 'British values' to resolve the spat. Conveniently it also seeks to distract from the mess his government has created.

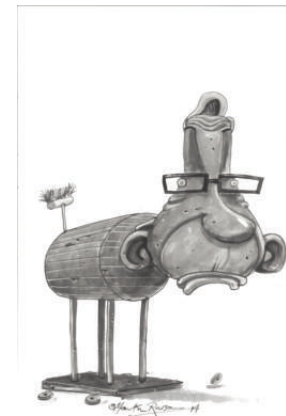
We have been here before with John Major's failed 'family values' campaign in the early 1990s. Nobody knows exactly what British values are. Cameron talks of democracy, tolerance, freedom. But these are universal values, pioneered by the 18 century French and American revolutionaries with Britain coming in very late on the act. When Cameron gives more detail, talking about 'respect for British institutions' he lets the cat out of the bag. Is he is talking about the relics of feudal inheritance known as the monarchy and all the trappings of the Crown in terms of land ownership, huge family wealth and privilege? Or maybe the Church of England with its declining congregations but thousands of taxpayer funded church schools and peers. Or maybe he means another bastion of democracy, the House of Lords? Or is it our surveillance state? Or even the City of London with its reckless bankers, its bonus binging bosses, its vulture capitalists forever bleating about high taxes and squirrelling profits into tax havens and avoidance schemes.

Most likely it is all of these that children should be taught to respect without question. British values is the mantra Cameron hopes will divert attention from the real government extremists mounting a state assault on children and staff in Birmingham schools and local government. **Dave Lister** untangles the web of deceit and damage.

This is one narrative spin the Tories are running. The other is that we are on the way to Eldorado as long as we keep our belts tight and accept another six years of austerity policies. The people don't seem to buy into this story. They have seen their living standards squeezed with real pay levels lower than six years ago. They have seen social benefits eroded and the invidious Bedroom Tax. They are aware that two and half million people are still jobless. They also know that many are on insecure zero hours contracts, or working long hours to make ends meet. That is before we talk of the two million using food banks, the rising numbers of homeless and those living in overcrowded accommodation. They also see rising poverty and socio-economic equality. Even IMF boss Christine Lagarde, at an oxymoron of a conference on 'Inclusive Capitalism', quoted the Oxfam research that a double-decker bus load of the richest 85 people own wealth equivalent to the poorest 3.5 billion. This is the message of Thomas Piketty (*Capital in the 21st Century*): rising inequality is creating a political time-bomb of injustice, hardship and anger.

In the face of this smoke and mirrors narrative

Labour has trimmed and tacked. For the last 35 year Labour has adapted to a conservative neo-liberal free market narrative that means it is always moving its baseline backwards. The real Tory values of power, hierarchy, inequality, prejudice towards outsiders and less concern for global justice are eclipsing values of tolerance, cooperation, empathy and social justice. Instead of promoting inclusive values Labour has adjusted. Labour's Policy Review looks set to sustain the Coalition's programme of cuts accepting 'deficit reduction' as the main task. We will only have a Robin Hood Tax if USA agrees (forget the EU which is pushing for it). We won't have a land values tax or more progressive income



tax, a windfall tax on extreme wealth or eradication of tax avoidance loopholes. Labour's Chris Leslie says cuts will be sustained 'decades ahead' to finish the task of beating the deficit. This will not do.

Labour needs to put its traditional values centre-stage and develop a coherent alternative narrative and set of objectives for a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power. There are a number of open goals. **Duncan Bowie** looks at the London housing bubble as a symptom of a failure to build sufficient social and affordable homes. Rather than an arms race on immigration Labour

can't win **Don Flynn** argues for a robust case for managed immigration, the benefits for all in terms of free movement within the EU and an humane refugee and asylum policy. More broadly **Paul Reynolds** urges Miliband junior to take a few leaves from Miliband senior's theoretical writings on the limits of parliament and state institutions, implying the need to support trade union and civil society action.

Across Europe Ukraine has seen fascists parties seize a foothold in the state and set a trail of conflict running across the region. Frank Lee investigates the malign role of the US state department in the process. **Sheila Osmanovic** retraces the history of Crimea as the site of power struggles between imperial powers over several centuries. Whilst fascists (Golden Dawn, Greece & Jobbik, Hungary) and extreme right

**Time is running out for Labour. With a strong democratic redistributionist narrative Miliband could trump Cameron and consolidate a poll lead**

nationalists did well in the European elections (particularly in France with the Front National and UKIP in Britain) so too did the radical left in Greece and Spain. **Steve Freeman** and **Phil Vellender** seek to remind us that not all nationalist campaigns are reactionary. They argue for a 'yes' vote in the Scottish independence referendum as a way to advance the republican democratic movement against a reactionary, pro-austerity, City dominated UK state.

Time is running out for Labour. With a strong democratic redistributionist narrative Miliband could trump Cameron and consolidate a poll lead. Or will it be austerity-lite and level-pegging polls?

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# Right track North

**Paul Salvesson** urges united action on threatened cuts & closures

**T**ransport ought to figure strongly in Labour's programme for 2015, it could be a major issue in some marginal seats, not least in the North of England. There's growing concern 'up North' about the Government's intentions for the new franchises for Northern Rail and TransPennine Express, both due to start in February 2016. The Department for Transport has launched a 'prospectus' and consultation document for the two franchises which cover local and longer distance regional services across the North and it has set alarm bells ringing not just amongst the unions but also among rail campaigners and local authorities.

These are not minor 'local' issues. The two franchises cover a population of over 15 million – more if you include the central belt of Scotland, which TransPennine Express serves. For years, poor Northerners have put up with clapped-out rolling stock, unstaffed and unwelcoming stations and poor service frequencies. The last Northern franchise was let ten years ago on the basis of 'no growth'. Yet the reality has been that, despite all the inadequacies, growth has been nearly 40%. That has led to overcrowding and train companies struggling to keep an aging fleet on track.

So the hope for the new Northern franchise, in particular, was that we would see a major change in thinking with much greater ambition demonstrated by the Department for Transport and its apparent partners in 'Rail North' – a consortia of 30 local authorities. Indeed at one point it looked like the Government was willing to hand over most of the responsibility for the Northern franchise to Rail North. That position changed some months ago with DfT clawing back power, whilst telling the outside world that it was working 'in partnership' with Rail North.

What is on offer in the Government proposals, once you strip away the hype, is a programme of minor improvements partly funded by cuts in some parts of the network. The theme of 'trade-offs' runs throughout the two documents, with suggestions that 'lightly used services and stations' could have services reduced to help pay for more services on busier lines. RMT is particularly incensed by proposals to take the conductor off the trains and close down some booking offices.

The mostly Labour-controlled Northern authorities which make up Rail North are now in the awkward position of being seen to be part of the Government's franchise offer whilst having precious little control over what goes into it. Yet the outcome of the 'partnership' is not good news for rail users, or rail workers, in the North of England. The North

needs an expanding network of services and routes, including line re-openings and new stations. Some of the less busy routes suffer precisely because services are infrequent. Any railway manager will tell you that the way to grow business on less busy lines is by improved frequencies, on a 'regular interval' (e.g. hourly or half-hourly) basis.

The Government papers are positive about community engagement and point to the success of 'community rail' on the Northern rail network. Yet a programme of cuts and booking office closures will have the effect of turning communities against the railway, if they think they are being manipulated into filling gaps left by staff cuts.

The Government's proposals are, at present, just that. They are out for 'consultation' and people – individuals and organisations – have until August 18th to respond. A united response from the rail unions, local authorities, politicians of all parties, business community, rail user groups and community rail partnerships could achieve a shift in the Government position. But it will need united action, not the unions nor anyone else doing their own thing. The Campaign for Better Transport ([www.bettertransport.org.uk](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk)) has launched a 'Right Track North' campaign which aims to do just that. Please support it.

Don't think that because the franchises don't start until February 2016 an incoming Labour Government could make it all better. The franchise winner will be decided early next year, just weeks before the General Election. An incoming Labour Government may be able to minimise some of the worst effects of the 'trade-offs' but it will not be easy. A Labour secretary of state will be faced with having to do business with a franchisee who won the competition on the basis of the previous Government's ground-rules.

The North has an opportunity to speak with a single voice, demanding that the new franchises give us something better, including new rolling stock, better stations, enhanced services across the network, further electrification and a properly staffed railway

things differently, looking at bringing staff back to some de-staffed stations by involving social enterprises. More could be done on bus-rail integration, including use of community transport feeder services. People want to support their local railway and we've waited a long time for the opportunity to get something better. The chance shouldn't be missed and Labour should be there championing their cause.



Paul's website is [www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)

# Tipping point for local councils

What needs to change if councils are to play a constructive role in the face of huge cuts? **Keith Savage** investigates

**T**he story that dominated media coverage of the May elections was the alleged UKIP 'breakthrough'. In the local council elections that took place UKIP successes were fairly patchy – the party has no councillors at all in great northern towns and cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sunderland, Leeds, Barnsley and Carlisle. Indeed UKIP has just a couple of dozen councillors in Labour's northern strongholds – only in Rotherham did Farage's party make significant headway. In London, too, the small-minded, scare-mongers performed weakly.

So whilst the European election story may have been about shifts to the right in Britain, France and Denmark – for example – the first-past-the-post nature of council elections saw Labour and Conservative groups relatively undisturbed. What is the story in our town halls then?

Some things remain unchanged. As Sheffield MP, Clive Betts, has pointed out between 2010-2015 government funding for local councils will be cut by 45%; deep cuts will continue for at least three more years and the cuts quite deliberately will result in a transfer of resources from the north to the south, from urban to rural areas and from the poorest communities to the wealthiest ones.

Other public services – the police, fire and health care – also face cutbacks year-on-year. Apart from the continual reduction in services – discretionary provision such as leisure and recreation being hit first – the loss of jobs and the sucking of money out of local economies will cause long-term damage to the lives and dreams of many.

As Labour (and Tory) councils look to make cuts over the next few years even statutory services will be affected. Councils have hundreds of billions of pounds of loans extending well into the future, and the interest repayments take a sizeable chunk out of revenue before any social worker can be paid. To date front-line services have been reasonably well protected in most areas and 'customer satisfaction' levels remain high – but many councillors and council officers fear that in the next period we shall reach a 'tipping point' which sees an irreversible change in the level, breadth and quality in service provision.

Some remain more optimistic but recognise that ways must be found to direct more money to councils and that councils themselves need to re-think their purpose and how they connect with their communities. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has suggested that a key starting point for any incoming Labour-led government will be to redirect much of the public money that currently goes into subsidising private landlords' rents towards build-

ing affordable homes. [Presently just 5% of government spending on housing goes to build new homes. The rest pays for rents]. Potentially around £5bn over five years in the north of England alone could be put to constructive use – building homes, creating jobs, revitalising communities.

Many of those contributing to the Labour Party policy review have urged that there must be a significant transfer of resources from central to local government so that decisions on spending can be taken by those closest to needs. Arguably local councils are far more efficient when it comes to controlling and monitoring spending than Whitehall is so such a settlement makes political and economic sense.

More money is only part of the answer though. The essentially paternalist nature of councils and their relationship with communities is hopelessly outdated and all too often the council is seen as the enemy, part of the problem and seldom the solution. Those working for councils will be used to taking the

**More money is only part of the answer though. The essentially paternalist nature of councils and their relationship with communities is hopelessly outdated and all too often the council is seen as the enemy, part of the problem and seldom the solution**

blame for all that is wrong with life in communities – be it the cost of car parking, the demise of the high street or dirty needles in parks.

Reconstructing relationships between councils and communities is a point for debate perhaps, but something needs to be done. At a grander, strategic level the Local

Government Information Unit (LGIU) in a publication Municipal Futures argues that councils need to re-think how they:

- Learn from their own practices and develop genuine partnerships
- Share power with local communities building on the strengths that exist
- Connect with other groups and organisations working to improve the social fabric
- Look beyond the local and contribute to global issues.

An example of where such a strategic examination might begin has been provided by Leeds council which is launching 'community committees' to meet with people in places that are friendlier and accessible. Whether steps of this sort can get beyond the cynicism that may have developed over years of 'us and them' interactions only time will tell. Certainly councillors and councils have a difficult job on their hands; managing budgets and redundancies is a time-consuming exercise that cannot change the social landscape in a positive way. Finding the time, patience and energy to work with others – to gain trust, confidence and build the capacity to accept failure as well as success – takes skill and courage. It is part of the difference between managing and leading.



# Ofsted off beam in Birmingham

David Lister finds hypocrisy and political interference at the heart of Gove's policy

There is a group of fairly extreme people which is threatening British values of fairness, justice and evidence-based judgements in our schools. They are also known as the Conservative ministers in the Coalition Government.

An element of hysteria has been generated around allegations of extremist infiltration by Muslim fundamentalists of some Birmingham schools. This has at times reached ludicrous proportions as in the *Daily Mail* featuring an alleged extremist governor who was accused of wanting to hold school management to account, which is what is expected of every effective school governor.

The background to this story is that a number of allegations were made by a few former teachers, followed by the publication of the so-called 'Trojan horse' letter outlining a supposed Muslim extremist plot to take over Birmingham schools, which is now generally accepted to have been a fake.

## Allegations

At the time of writing we await further reports from outside Ofsted but the evidence of religious extremism unearthed by the Ofsted inspections of 21 schools appears to be very limited. There is some cause for concern in a few schools, some areas to be addressed in a few schools, but nothing of substance to justify the launching of what Salma Yaqoob, former leader of Respect and former Birmingham councillor, has called a "witch-hunt". It is also worth pointing out that

(i) Two of the schools that have been particularly highlighted – Park View and Oldknow – had both been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in their previous inspection and the Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw visited Park View and praised it for its high level of achievement despite large numbers of its stu-

dents being entitled to free school meals.

(ii) Both schools are academies. As John Harris pointed out in *The Guardian*, this makes the suggestion from Gove that all Birmingham's schools could be forced to become academies as a solution to the perceived problems particularly absurd.

The outcome of the inspections is that 5 schools have been judged to be inadequate, 11 require improvement and the rest are good. As has been suggested, there does seem to be a certain amount of evidence of questionable practices such as at Oldknow Primary School, a school that organised visits to Saudi Arabia from which non-Muslim pupils were excluded and whose former headteacher, who resigned, made allegations of harassment on BBC news. On the other hand the main accusations against most of the schools appear to be of not adequately preparing children for life in a multicultural society and not preparing them adequately to deal with extremism. As a letter to *The Guardian* from a reader in Devon pointed out, on the basis of this all her local all-white schools should have been downgraded. In other words the approach form Ofsted had been "we were sent to hunt out extremism, we generally didn't find it, but we were always going to get these schools anyway". The point to note here is the difference between making a reasonable judgement and using it as the basis for moving a school into a lower category.

A number of issues arise from this:

1. The massive cut-backs in the funding of Local Authorities (LAs) has meant that many education/children's services departments are much less able to provide support for their schools and have an oversight of them.



Govenomics: no thank you

2. There is little oversight of academies and free schools as Sir Michael Wilshaw has pointed out. They do not have to teach the national curriculum and other regulations such as on providing healthy food do not apply to them. Free schools can employ unqualified teachers.

3. This whole imbroglio has stirred up divisions in the Tory ranks with Teresa May and Michael Gove at each other's throats. There is speculation that this is connected to the succession to Cameron. Gove's position has become less secure as Cameron is apparently concerned at his frequent spats with other people such as Wilshaw and Clegg.

4. Labour has appeared ineffective on this issue. Stephen Twigg has been replaced by a Twiglet, Tristram Hunt, whose qualities as a historian have not so far translated into the ability to provide coherent alternative policies. Blustering against the Tories for failing to combat extremism sufficiently was not the response. Local Birmingham MP Liam Byrne has been more impressive in expressing concern over how Muslim parents have been treated and Gove's failure to distinguish between parents who want their children's education to accommodate their religious views and extremists.

5. There has been a reaction

around school governance. The latest Ofsted inspection framework already focuses much more on governance but there have been calls from some politicians for even greater scrutiny of it. This needs careful thought. Most governors are currently elected or appointed by different bodies to which they are responsible; ironically the latest changes by the Government reduces this accountability by creating more co-opted governors who are accountable only to their fellow governors. Governors in academies and academy chains may not be accountable to their local community in any way.

6. As a practising agnostic, I am in despair over the continued hold of organised religion over much of the world's population. Nonetheless in a free society we need to uphold people's right to practise their religion. Lee Donaghy, assistant headteacher at Park View has made some useful points about how you operate in a school in which 98% of the pupils are Muslim. As he says, it is not unreasonable to allow girls

to cover their hair, to make rooms available for prayer and to adjust the school day during the Ramadan fast.

There are also some interesting points to be made about gender segregation. Clearly this should not be happening in a school but this practice is not exclusive to more orthodox Muslims. For example orthodox Jews separate women from men in religious ser-

**We need to celebrate outstanding schools, not denigrate them. Everybody needs to be clear on the difference between extremism and orthodoxy. Finally, judgements need to be made on the basis of a careful evaluation of the evidence not political expediency**

VICES. Many Victorian schools had separate entrances for boys and girls, so the Victorians were unBritish! It has also been pointed out that there are not many girls at Eton.

We need to see Labour develop a clear alternative vision for our schools. For instance, they should

be advocate a halt to the academy and free school programmes and LAs should be allowed to build new community schools again. National programmes should apply to all schools and LAs should have overall responsibility for all state schools in their area. Some thought could also be given to school admissions. Whilst it makes sense for children to attend their local primary school, secondary schools could aim for a balanced intake through banding in addition to an element of parental choice. The concentration of children from a particular community in a secondary school is not ideal and raises issues of segregation by class, religion or race.

We need to celebrate outstanding schools, not denigrate them. Everybody needs to be clear on the difference between extremism and orthodoxy. Finally, judgements need to be made on the basis of a careful evaluation of the evidence not political expediency. There will not be many tears shed on the left if Gove goes.

## Down and out in Brent

I decided to stand for Brent Council in the May elections this year. This could be interpreted as an act of masochism in the face of ongoing cuts to Council funding. I felt that I could contribute towards ensuring that services were protected as far as possible in the circumstances. I knew many Brent councillors and believed that they were generally doing their best for local people, although there have been some controversial decisions in the past four years such as library closures.

I was selected to fight Brondesbury Park ward, which elected three Lib Dem councillors in 2010. One of them, Carol Shaw, returned to her Tory home subsequent to her re-election and I was convinced that she would take her support back with her, as she did, especially since this had previously been a Conservative-held ward. It is a mixed area with many large properties but also pockets of council housing, multi-occupied properties and a large number of blocks of private flats. In the event, after campaigning hard, we did pretty well – all three Labour candidates polling 900+ votes as against two Tories on 1100+ and Carol Shaw, who had by far the highest local profile, on 1634, to her delight. The Lib Dems were wiped out with 388 their lowest vote and 630 their highest. Labour overall did extremely well in Brent winning all but seven seats, including Neil Nerva elected in Queens Park.

Brent Labour campaigned on its success in freezing the Council tax, although the new Council may not continue with this. You might be happier with their successes in introducing the living wage for everybody directly employed by the Council and combating fly-tipping. Labour pledged to build 3000 new homes in the next four years, introduce a £100 million building and expansion programme to create more school places and give parents of primary age children the guarantee of 8-6 childcare though their local school and expand childcare for 3 and 4 year olds from 15 to 25 hours a week for working parents.

The bigger picture is clearly that Labour did better in London than in the country as a whole. Labour won 31% of the vote nationally, up 2% on 2013 but not enough to form a majority government after a general election. On the BBC's figures Labour would win 322 seats as against 255 for the Tories, 45 for the Lib Dems, and 28 for Ukip on the basis of this result. Of course voting patterns will be different in a general election and there is another year to go but Labour will need to do better than this.

So what should Labour say now? Much has been made of the rise of Ukip, but they performed significantly less well in the local elections than they did in the European elections and their share of the vote actually dropped as compared with last year's results (down from 23% to 17%). It is unlikely that they will fail to make an impact in 2015.

The big mistake for Labour would be to continue to be obsessed with focus groups and not upsetting 'middle England'. If people are worked up over immigration and Europe they are unlikely to vote Labour whatever we say. What is needed is a radical alternatives and more decisive leadership to win back more of our core supporters and beyond. Saying that we will more or less continue with the Coalition's austerity programme will certainly not be a vote winner. The pledge to freeze energy prices is a start. A genuine assault on growing income inequality would be heartening. We should be targeting tax avoiders and evaders not people on benefits.

David Lister.



# Ukraine: Fascism's toe-hold in Europe

Denunciations of Russian threats in the East have obscured the fascist presence in the Kiev government writes **Frank Lee**

Politics in the Ukraine can only be understood by reference to its history and ethnic and cultural make up – a make up criss-crossed by lasting and entrenched differences. The country has long been split into the western Ukraine, where Ukrainian is the official and everyday *lingua franca*, and the more industrialised regions of the east where a mixture of Russian speaking Ukrainians and ethnic Russians reside. Additionally, there has long been a Polish and Romanian presence in the west of the country, whose unofficial capital, Lviv, was once the Polish city of Lwow. The Russian Orthodox Church is the predominant form of Christianity in the East, whilst in the west the Christian tradition tends towards Roman Catholicism.

Politically the Eastern Oblasts (Regions) have tended to tilt towards Russia whilst the western regions have had a more western orientation. This has traditionally been reflected in the political and electoral division of the country. There is no party that can be considered 'national' in this respect, except ironically the old Communist party, which of course is now banned in the Western half of the country. The major regional parties have been the Fatherland party of Yulia Tymoshenko and Arseniy Yatsenuk (ex-acting president) in the west and the deposed Yanukovich Party of the Regions in the East, along with the junior partner the Communist Party.

## Ultra-nationalist emergence

What is new since the 'coup' (and I use this word advisedly) which took place earlier in the year has been the emergence from the shadows of ultra-nationalist (fascist) parties and movements: in the main 'Svoboda' or Freedom Party, and the paramilitaries of 'Right Sector' who spearheaded the coup in Kiev. These

parties did not emerge from nowhere.

This far-right tradition has been historically strong in the western Ukraine. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was first established in 1929 and brought together, war veterans, student fraternities, far-right groups and various other disoriented social and political flotsam under its banner. The OUN took its ideological position from the writings of one Dymtro Dontsov, who, like Mussolini had been a socialist and who was instrumental in creating an indigenous Ukrainian fascism based upon the usual

**One would have thought that this mutating revolution in the Ukraine would have drawn attention of the centre-left to the fact that fascism had gained a vital beachhead in Europe, and that the danger signals should be flashing. But not a bit of it**

mish-mash of writings and theories including: Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, and Charles Maurras. Dontsov also translated the works of Hitler and Mussolini into Ukrainian.

The OUN was committed to ethnic purity and relied of violence, assassination and terrorism, not least against other Ukrainians, to achieve its goal of a totalitarian and homogeneous nation-state. Other enemies and impediments to this goal were Communists, Russians, Poles, and of course – Jews. Strongly oriented toward the Axis powers OUN founder Evhen Konovalets (1891-1938) stated that his movement was "waging war against mixed marriages", with Poles, Russians and Jews. The last he described as "foes of our national rebirth". Rabid anti-Semitism has been a leitmotif in the history of Ukrainian fascism.

Konovelts himself was assassi-

nated by a KGB hit-man in 1938 after which the movement split into two wings: (OUN-m) under Andrii Melnyk and, more importantly for our purposes (OUN-b) under Stepan Bandera. Both wings committed to a new fascist Europe. Upon the German invasion in June 1941, the OUN-b attempted to establish a Ukrainian satellite state loyal to Nazi Germany. Stepan Lenkavs'kyi (1941-1977) the then chief propagandist of the OUN-b 'government' advocated the physical destruction of Ukrainian Jewry. OUN-b's 'Prime Minister' Yaroslav Stets'ko, and deputy to Bandera supported, "the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like."

## Bloody history

During the early days of the rapid German advance into the Soviet Union there were some 140 pogroms in the western Ukraine claiming the lives of 13,000-35,000 people (*untermenschen*, in fascist terminology). In 1943-1944 OUN-b and its armed wing the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) carried out large scale ethnic cleansing resulting in the deaths of 90,000 Poles and thousands of Jews. The campaign of the UPA continued into the 1950s until it was virtually wiped out by the Soviet forces.

It should be said that Bandera himself was incarcerated by the German authorities until his release in 1944, since unlike Bandera they were not enamoured of an independent Ukrainian state but wanted total control. Nazi Heinrich Himmler established a militarist Ukrainian formation to fight the Soviet forces. Many of the UPA were involved in this unit. It is also interesting to note, that to this day, every year in Lviv a commemoration ceremony including veterans of this unit takes place

with a march through the city and an evening torchlight parade – genuine Nazi pastiche. Not forgetting the splendid statue of Bandera himself in the city. Other novel attractions in Lviv include 'Jewish themed restaurants' in one of which customers are required to haggle over highly inflated prices "in the Jewish fashion" Yes, it's all good clean fun in Lviv. Anti-Semitism also sells. Out of 10 book vendors on the streets of central Lviv, 16 were openly selling anti-Semitic literature. About 70% of the anti-Semitic publications in Ukraine are being published by an educational institution called MUAP (The Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management). MAUP is a large, well-connected and increasingly powerful organization funded from outside anti-Semite sources, and also connected to White Supremacist groups in the USA and to the David Duke, former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.

## Ideological cesspit

Directly descending from this ideological cesspit has been the contemporary neo-nazi grouping Svoboda (Freedom) party and Right Sector. Heading Svoboda is Oleh Tiahnybok. Although these are separate organizations Tyahnybok's deputy Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn is the main link between Svoboda's official wing and neo-Nazi militias like Right Sector. The Social-Nationalist party as it was formerly known chose as its logo an amended version of the Wolfsangel, a symbol used by many SS divisions on the Eastern front during the war who in 2004 at a celebration of the OUN-UPA, stated, that "they fought against the Muscovite, Germans, Jews and other scum

who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state." Tiahnybok came under pressure from the then President, Yushchenko, to retract his inflammatory statements, which he did. He then retracted the retraction!

Given the fact that Svoboda was, apart from its stamping grounds in the west, making little national electoral headway, it was essential to clean up its image and deny its Nazi past. This was always going to be difficult since the members of such groups cannot help the unscripted outbursts which reveals their true colours, like praise for convicted death camp guard John Demjanjuk.

## A mutating revolution


We can infer that this organization is inveterately fascist. More disturbing Svoboda has links with the so-called Alliance of National European Movements, which includes: The British National Party, Nationaldemokraterna of Sweden, Front Nationale of France, Fiamma Tricolore in Italy, the Hungarian Jobbik and the Belgian National Front. More importantly Svoboda holds several ministerial portfolios in the Kiev administration, and Right Sector swaggers around Kiev streets with impunity, and/or are being drafted into a National Guard in order to deal with the separatist movements in the east, or to beat down anyone who doesn't conform to their Ayran racial and political ideals.

One would have thought that this mutating revolution in the Ukraine would have drawn the attention of the centre-left to the fact that fascism had gained a beachhead in Europe, and that the danger signals should be flashing. Not a bit of it, a perusal



Stepan Bandera statue in Lviv

of *The Guardian* newspaper quickly reveals that their concern has been on a non-existent 'Russian threat'. One of their reporters – Luke Harding - described Right Sector as an 'eccentric group of people with unpleasant right-wing views'. This must rank as the understatement of the century. *The Guardian* was simply reiterating the US-imposed neo-conservative foreign policy.



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# Crimea – eye of storm of great power rivalry

**Sheila Osmanovic** explains that Crimean disputes should not be dismissed as peripheral parochial skirmishes, nor should they be disconnected from the wider international arena

Sheila Osmanovic explains that disputes around Crimea should not be dismissed as peripheral parochial skirmishes nor should they be disconnected from the wider international arena. Historical lessons suggest that Crimea has been a major bone of contention amongst leading political rivals at least since the rise of European Imperial Powers from the 18th century onwards. The current Crimean crisis must be understood within the broader historical context of international diplomatic *Real Politik*. Only an historical analysis can lead to a better appreciation of the international diplomatic and military involvement in the crisis and its potential resolution.

The international diplomatic conflicts around the region of Crimea are not of contemporary origin. Crimea has been contested and coerced to change political ownership many times before in its long history. The most significant exchange of state governance occurred with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca on 21st July 1774. Whilst this treaty ended seven year long war between Ottomans and Russians, it also signalled the beginning of the Ottoman decline and rise of European Empires predominantly the British Empire. The defeated Ottomans were coerced to hand Crimea to the Russians, a completely Muslim province until then which suffered its first known ethnic cleansing. In addition, the Ottomans were ordered to pay six million rubles of military compensation, a pattern that became a norm for all future settlements. This accelerated the 'Sick Man', as the Ottomans became known, to his deathbed. More significantly, the transfer of power of Crimea stamped a new era of international diplomatic relations referred to as the Eastern Question. This Great Game lasted until WWI in 1914.

During the course of 19th century conflicts between Russia and

the Ottomans the oddest of alliances were forged. This was shown in the Crimean war of 1855 and the siege of Sevastopol in which the old foes – France and Britain – were united in fighting alongside Ottomans. Facing the stronger opponent, Russia was badly defeated and Crimea given back to the Ottoman Empire. In return for having accepted a helping hand in the war with the Russians, the Ottomans were compelled to issue another Improvement Ferment – a series of reforms during the 'modernising' period that run from 1826 to 1878. These reforms caused further detrimental effect upon the *Sublime Porte*. In Paris in 1856, under the shady argument of the need for more reli-

**The international diplomatic conflicts around the region of Crimea are not of contemporary origin. Crimea has been contested and coerced to change political ownership many times before in its long history**

gious justice, British-led negotiators cajoled the Ottoman Empire to introduce two very important reforms: abolition of poll and farming tax and the right for foreigners to obtain private property. This reform, coupled with the first overseas loan resulting from the cost of the Crimean War from 1855, paved the way for the Ottoman Empire's future bankruptcy.

Britain was weary of Russian expansionism. When the new Russo-Ottoman war unfolded in 1876, Britain unleashed her fully equipped ships to the Dardanelles in May 1877 in support of the Ottoman fleet. Lord Derby, the British Premier, explained the Government action:

"We have in that part of the world great interests which we must protect. It is said that we sent the fleet to the Dardanelles to maintain the Turkish Empire. I entirely deny it. We sent the

fleet to maintain the interests of the British Empire."

Lord Derby was telling the truth. Certainly, it was not affection for the predicament of the 'Sick Man' that urged Britain to offer him a helping hand. The safety of the Sublime Porte was a common concern for all, around whose bedside 'all the other Powers were watching, each determined that none of the others should gain the greater share in his estates when he died.' Repeatedly, Britain had fought against Russia alongside its traditional foe, France, in order to ensure that the greatest prize of the Ottoman heritage, Constantinople, did not end up as a Russian possession 'simply because all alike dreaded the appearance of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean.'

Keeping Russia at bay from Crimea and manipulating the Ottoman Empire, albeit reconstituted and financially starved to a position of brittle glass-legs, was of paramount importance in preserving imperialistic possessions of the 19th century. Imperial greed gained predominance and the Great War occurred when the Great Powers had accumulated enough capital to finance it. The measures of debt economy and locally inflamed wars around the Crimean region resonate today, too. History teaches that unlike the 19th century imperial approach, today's Crimean solution should lay in the joint effort of the peoples of Crimea, Europe and Russia, not solely in the hands of their political elites which are pushing for conflict in the search for profit and usury. Is it realistic? It is certainly possible to avoid further escalation of the war through the activism of grass-roots organisations and the encouragement of a proper reading of historical facts. Masquerading and celebrating the start of the WWI in schools is certainly not the way to teach about the horrors of war.

# Reaching out or repressing?

**Frank Lee** sees the covert hand of the US behind the actions of the new president

On 25th May 2014 Petro Poroshenko, billionaire businessman/oligarch, and former government official in both the regimes of Yuschenko-Timoshenko 2004-2010, and Victor Yanukovich, 2010-2014, was elected to the office of President of Ukraine. Poroshenko made his money principally in the chocolate and confectionary industry but has also been involved in Ukrainian politics for some time past. It is difficult to pin down what the new President believes in since he has moved around the political spectrum with apparent ease, gliding effortlessly from one political party to another and one administration to another. He is a keen advocate of Ukraine membership of the US/EU/NATO imperialist bloc.

Turning to the election itself, according to official Ukraine governmental sources, there are 33.594 million registered voters on 'mainland Ukraine' (i.e. excluding Crimea which is now under the jurisdiction of The Russian Federation). Some 474,000 Ukrainian voters abroad could also cast their vote at 114 polling stations in 75 countries.

Turnout in the two federalist oblasts of Eastern Ukraine (Donetsk and Lugansk) was less than 10 percent while according to the Kiev Post, there had been an overall turnout of 55.33 percent. This figure is misleading because it is based on an incomplete number of electoral precincts, it also excludes the Eastern Ukraine oblasts.

**A resounding affirmation?**

Let us assume a turnout of 50%, which rather overstates the reality but is a good round figure. Poroshenko received 55% of the vote with his nearest rival, Yulia Tymoshenko receiving 13%, which meant that Poroshenko was the outright winner. This also means that he was elected by around 27% of Ukrainian voters eligible to vote, hardly a massive endorsement. Nonetheless this was seized upon by both the local and western media as a resounding

affirmation of Ukraine's bid for freedom and democracy and the rest of the usual western media hyperbole.

One of his first pronouncements was that he was going to 'reach out' to the alienated Eastern oblasts adopting a policy of reconciliation. This was not going to be easy after the massacres of anti-regime activists in Odessa, (12th May 2014) where they were driven into a building Right Sector thugs who then set the building alight and blocked the entrances with the people inside either being burned alive or jumping out of the window to their deaths, the survivors clubbed to death by this mob. The western media? Not a word, apart from an announcement that there had been a fire and some 30-48 persons had perished. (Anyone interested can watch the RT.COM youtube video-not for the squeamish). Some time earlier (9th May 2014) armoured vehicles had rolled into the southern port of Mariupol, masked gunmen got out and started shooting indiscriminately killing some 20 unarmed civilians. Again there was no comment from the western media, only official announcements blaming everything on 'pro-Russian elements'. These events undoubtedly contributed to the massive vote on 11th May for secession from Ukraine organized by the leaders of the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts.

**Reconciliation**

Granted, President-elect Poroshenko was not responsible for these events, if we take his pronouncements at face value his objective had been to reach out to the East and reconciliation. This position quickly changed. Now there was to be no negotiations with the 'terrorists' (i.e. armed Don Bass separatists) and 'force was the only thing they understood'. There thus began a generalized military offensive against the Eastern regions carried out by the Ukrainian army/airforce with the National Guard and Right Sector Units, the latter complete with armband SS insignias (Wolfsangel), used by



Number one, but who's in charge?

German Waffen SS units during WWII. There have been casualties on both sides, including civilian casualties which began to mount when indiscriminate shelling of Slavyansk and aerial attacks on Lugansk took place. It became necessary for the children of Slavyansk to be evacuated to the Crimea for their own safety.

**A familiar story**

The success of a military campaign seems doubtful. The Donetsk/Lugansk regions are about two and a half times the size of Wales at 52,000 square kilometres. An army of occupation will be needed to hold it down, given an extremely hostile environment. Poroshenko has neither the manpower, money nor the weapons to do this.

It seems probable that Poroshenko is not making the decisions. This is almost certainly a CIA counter-insurgency operation of the type carried out in Latin America and the Middle East. In his visit to Europe Obama has promised military aid and expertise to the Kiev regime, presumably counter-insurgency 'advisers' will be next, if they are not there already. It's an all too familiar story; the stuff of American foreign policy.- This time it is happening in Europe.



# London – growing up or growing out?

**Duncan Bowie** on growth without tears

London's population is growing with 1.2 million extra people expected over the next 25 years. For the last ten years, planning policy for London, under both Livingstone and Johnson, has assumed that London's growth can be met within the existing London boundary – 'the compact city' approach, beloved by urbanists such as Richard Rogers who advocated this in his Urban Renaissance report for Prescott when he was deputy prime minister.

There is a crisis in housing supply, not just in London but in the Greater South East, the South West of England and parts of the Midlands. This is not just an absolute shortage of homes, but a crisis of affordability as: the supply of social rented housing continues to fall, rents increase in an unregulated private rented sector and house prices increase. While in some parts of the UK, house prices are still below the pre recession peak and still affordable by middle income households, in London house prices continue to increase by 10% a year, with average house prices close to £500,000 and over £1m in central London. So the issue is not just building more new homes but who can afford them.

## International investors

Danny Dorling's new book *All That Is Solid* (melts into air) focuses quite rightly on the fact that part of the current problem is the unequal distribution of housing assets. In a market driven system, those with assets can buy large homes even if they don't need them – or even if they don't intend to live in them at all. In fact London property has increasingly become a very secure and highly profitable investment for international investors – as money has flowed into London from less stable economies and countries with less stable governance regimes. This is the product of London's success as a world city - helped by the fact that UK

has a much lower rate of property tax – especially for corporate and international investors, than most other countries. Dorling has a point – the increase in overcrowding has actually been paralleled by an increase in under-occupation and vacancy – so the use of the existing housing stock is less efficient than it used to be. The unequal distribution of housing and the differentials between house price inflation between the London and most of the North of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have not just fuelled the increase in inequalities of wealth, but also increased the North/South division, to the extent that London is now in a bubble – in terms of property wealth as well as of politics.

Dorling's conclusion that we don't need to build any more homes is wrong. Many of the surplus homes are in locations where there are not jobs, relocating employment opportunities is not easy. Dispersing people who are economically inactive or lower income households more generally across the country as advocated by this government, is something we should not support. Government's powers to ensure a more effective use of the existing stock are limited – and even a property tax on underused homes and an increase in council tax on higher value homes, which I have advocated - politically problematic and not supported by the Labour Party - would not solve the whole problem. So we need more homes now and we need them mainly for lower income households which would still not be able to afford the market, even if house prices fell a little – and which politician would support the level of house price crash that would make a significant difference?

What the compact city approach to London's development has done is made the situation worse than it needed to be. Not only have we not managed to build enough homes – basically under 25,000 a year compared with the 60,000 – 100,000 homes



Bricks and mortar matter

needed, but we have been building the wrong kind of homes – not enough family homes and not enough affordable homes. About a third of the development programme is high rise homes at very high densities – small flats aimed at high earners, some are penthouses on top floors – sometimes 60 stories up – for the mega-rich.

My concern is less with the changing skyline but whether these new iconic developments (and they can't all be that iconic) are providing the homes London needs. For those who think building high makes homes more affordable the answer is no they don't – high densities just inflate land costs and building high is very expensive. Fewer and fewer affordable homes are cross-subsidised by these new developments – and this 'planning gain' generally does not fund social rented family homes which we need most.

The Town and Country Planning Association and now the Government, see a new programme of garden cities as a solution. It is not. Three new towns of 15,000 houses with large gardens beyond the green belt, does

not go very far to meet the housing deficit. There is no government grant for the new homes or the schools or health facilities or public transport, which are essential components of any new community. These are to be market led privately financed initiatives, so the homes will not going to be cheap to rent or buy. The new towns are not likely to provide a large range of employment opportunities – but no doubt will be attractive to London professionals with cars and first class season tickets.

If more hyper-dense central London developments and garden cities are not the solution what is? The answer is in three parts. First, incremental intensification of the London suburbs – many developed in the past at 20-30 dwellings per hectare could provide a range of homes; low rise flats and terraced houses at 70-120 dwellings per hectare. These could include a significant number of family sized homes at low rents – council or housing association owned. Yes, it would mean

using some large suburban private gardens and a few private golf courses – but why not? We don't need to touch the public parks and other metropolitan open spaces.

## Suburban extensions

The second part of the solution is suburban extensions on the edge of London, where land is cheap and residents can have access to public transport, employment opportunities and to existing town centres. Some of these developments might need to use sites currently in the Green Belt but land-take could be limited to those sites which are not green make no contribution to Green Belt functions and which are not publicly accessible. We need a green finger approach as in Stockholm or Helsinki – not a Green Girdle, which strangles London and Londoners.

Thirdly, we need urban extensions to the economically successful Home Counties towns, which provide opportunities or local

employment as well as access to central London and to the London suburbs. Many of these towns are blocking new homes and fail to recognise that they need to contribute to the needs of the metropolitan region as a whole. They need to be made to do so, and bring back a strategic planning system for the London metropolitan region is the way to do this.

For those readers who think this article is London-centric, I also support a national economic strategy and special plan which supports employment growth beyond the South-East. There does not need to be polarisation between London and the rest of the UK. By strengthening local economies across the country, we not only take the pressure off London but also enable other areas to grow and attract new population. This will help to reduce London's dominance of not just the English economy but of English politics.

## OUR HISTORY 55

### Fred Jowett - What is the use of parliament? (1909)

Fred Jowett was the leader of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford. He had been a member of the Socialist League and then the Labour Electoral Association and was also president of the Bradford Labour Church. In 1889 he was elected as the first socialist councillor on Bradford City Council and secretary of the Trades Council from 1893. A member of the national administrative council of the ILP from 1900, he failed to be elected to parliament in the 1900 election, but was returned in 1906. He was a columnist in Blatchford's Clarion. He was highly critical of parliamentary procedures and of the role of the Labour party leadership within and in 1909 also contributed to the pamphlet Let us Reform the Labour Party. He argued for the primacy of principle over party tactics and was promoter of the successful resolution at the 1914 Bradford ILP conference that Labour should 'vote on all issues in accordance with the principles for which the Party stands' a resolution Beatrice Webb called impractical.

Jowett had a wide range of interests – in 1907 he published a volume in the ILP's Labour Ideals series on Socialism in the City and he also led for Labour on the debates on the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Bill. He was also interested in foreign policy, supporting Roger Casement's campaign against slave labour in Peru in 1912, was a member of the executive committee of the Union of Democratic Control (on foreign policy) in the war years, was one of the organisers of the pro soviet Leeds convention of June 1917 and in 1920 joined a delegation to Hungary to examine the white terror of Admiral Horthy and suppression Bela Kun's communists.

In MacDonald's first Labour Government in 1924, Jowett joined the cabinet as First Commissioner of Works, but lost his seat in the 1924 election. He remained active within the ILP and supported their radical 'Socialism in Our Time' programme. He was returned to parliament in 1929, but this time remained on the backbenches, Lansbury taking his former post. In the 1935 election a split in the Labour ranks, with Jowett as ILP candidate fighting a Labour Party candidate, let in the Conservative. Jowett died in 1944 at the age of 80. Ten years later his friend Fenner Brockway published a biography of him - Socialism over Sixty Years.

"No school of politicians can justify the present system of conducting the executive basis of State on its merits... The present system fosters and maintains a governing class, that is why the ruling classes support it. They think that the aristocracy and the chief persons of the State should govern, in the interests of the people, of course... If State departments were placed under committee control, not only would the system of single Ministerial control go, but the two-Party system would go with it. As for those who are now Ministers, they might be chairmen of committees, but the powers they would now wield should be vested in the committees over which they preside. In recommending as I do most emphatically, the present system of single Ministerial control, supported as it is by joint Cabinet responsibility, and the substitution in its place of a system of committee government similar to the system which prevails in county and local government, I am making no unsupported recommendation, though if I were the only one to protest against the present system, I would persist in doing so."



# Westminster another story for UKIP

Labour should keep its cool on immigration says **Don Flynn**



Celebrating 'Britishness'

ing in May 2015) but the judgement that UKIP will secure somewhere between 5% and 10% of the poll isn't likely to be too wide of the mark. The sensible money still says that the right wing populists will struggle to win even one seat in Westminster next year.

Aside from the psephology, is anything becoming clearer about the reasons why UKIP voters feel the need to register their protests against the traditional governing parties? Polling carried out by the Tory grandee, Lord Ashcroft, sampled the thoughts of 4,000 people who expressed the intention of voting for UKIP. Eight out of ten said that Europe was their main reason but with six out of ten also saying that they were doing so to send a message to the party they usually supported that they expected change on this issue.

UKIP supporters also said that they expected the 2015 general election to be mainly about the state of the economy, with the issues of immigration and the NHS coming an equal second place. The good news for the Tories is that most of those whose primary concern is about the economy will return to their party, with Labour doing better

amongst those anxious about the state of the NHS. It is only amongst those who report immigration as their gravest concern that UKIP gains the largest proportion who plan to stay.

What does all this suggest about the way the parties will fight their election battles over the next twelve months? A good strategy for both the Tories and Labour would be to play it cool on the immigration issue and avoid the temptation to enter into competition with one another to win the votes of sections of the population who have shown themselves to be responsive to negative messages about newcomers. There will be enough to do to persuade voters that they have the best policies on dealing with the still problematic recovery from the economic catastrophe triggered by the financial crises of 2008 onwards.

#### In need of settlement

Labour will not need any persuasion about the role the economy and the NHS will play in its campaigning but the question of what they should be doing about immigration, at least for a section of the parliamentary party, still seems in need of settlement.

The sound and the fury of the European and local election campaigns has now subsided and it is time to consider the evidence of what it all means for anyone hoping to see signs of a revival of the progressive left.

Some might be surprised to find that there is at least some good news to report. Despite its undoubted achievement in topping the poll in the elections for the European Parliament the right wing outfit shows little sign of becoming anything other than the protest party chosen by a section of the electorate to punish politicians operating out of the centrist mainstream.

This much can be asserted despite the fact that a 27.5% share of the poll is by far the biggest that any party other than the Conservatives or Labour have won since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1928. UKIP's success in gaining an MEP in every British electoral region under a vote conducted on the basis of proportional representation looks impressive but is an unreliable indication of what will happen when the system reverts to first-past-the-post in May 2015.

The Westminster electoral system requires that we look at the concentration of the votes of parties, rather than their success in gaining a threshold percentage of support. The picture looks patchier for the Europhobe party on this score, with it showing its largest portion of the gain in a handful of councils in Essex, East Anglia and Rotherham. The latter result gave some credence to the concern that the party is now showing a capacity to eat into the Labour vote in a few areas, with the suggestion that Great Grimsby might become vulnerable when the veteran current incumbent, Austin Mitchell, follows through with his intention not to stand again in 2015.

Otherwise the top twenty seats where UKIP can plausibly claim to be the strongest challenger are all held by the Tories. With respect to Labour, the most realistic target the party leader Nigel Farage can set for his 'insurgency' is that UKIP supplants the Liberal Democrats in the constituencies in its northern stronghold.

#### UKIP

Past European elections have provided some guidelines as to what might happen to the vote of challenger parties in succeeding general elections, but none of it will give encouragement to the Ukipers. According to the think-tank British Future, the party lost 66% of the vote it received for the European Parliament in subsequent general elections in 2005 and 2010. Some scaling of the figures is required to take into account the differences between European and Westminster elections (around 15 million more people will be vot-

**Labour will not need any persuasion about the role the economy and the NHS will play in its campaigning, but the question of what they should be doing about immigration, at least for a section of the parliamentary party, still seems in need of settlement**

The faction closest to leader Ed Miliband seems unenthusiastic about sharpening up on an anti-immigration message. There are three very sensible reasons why this would be the case. The first is that anyone deeply troubled by immigration already has a party to vote for and Labour banging on about this issue will only remind them of that fact. Secondly, why would anyone believe them? The party shares this credibility problem with the Tories, who will be going into the campaign saddled with a failure to make good on its promise to bring net migration down into the 'tens of thousands'. There is a slowly dawning recognition amongst the party's policy wonks that promises of any sort on migration ought to be avoided in the knowledge that the movement of people across frontiers is largely uninfluenced by anything as crude as immigration controls.

The third reason is that public attention on immigration now seems to be focused on renegotiating the terms of Britain's membership of the European Union. There are few options here which will seem attractive in this area to the Labour leadership. A small backbench campaign calling for restrictions on free movement has been waged by the longstanding opponent of immigration, Frank Field MP. The supporters of Field's letter to Miliband calling for a change in policy have called for the benefits of free movement to be withheld from new accession countries whose indices of economic performance fall by a stated proportion below the EU average. The difficulty with this is that it is unlikely to receive the level of support required by other member states to allow the change to be made. This might not worry Field and his colleagues too much, who stand on the nationalist right wing of Labour and would probably welcome the opportunity that a failure to win this change would further inflame voters against the Union.

#### This most vexed of issues

**Joining in the chorus of anti-European, anti-immigration political catcalls is definitely the wrong thing to do for a party on the left of centre, but it is important that it comes up with something to say on this most vexed of issues**

But if these are all good reasons for Labour not adopting a harsh line on immigration, it only opens the door a little way to knowing what needs to be said that might have a chance of proving popular with the electorate. Joining in the chorus of anti-European, anti-immigration political catcalls is definitely the wrong thing to do

for a party on the left of centre but it is important that it comes up with something to say on this most vexed of issues: with an explanation as to why it's not going away, and how it is wrong to blame immigrants for the bad stuff going on in Britain, being the absolute core of the script.



# South Africa at a crossroads

South Africans re-elected the ANC in May's elections. But as **Dot Lewis** reports all is not well with the party that seeks to carry the mantle of Mandela.

**R**eturned to government with 62.15% of the national vote the ANC has received plenty of suggestions of what to do next. It's the 'semi-colonial' economy relying on mining rather than manufacturing and other services which causes today's poverty, unemployment and inequality, Blade Nzimande, general secretary of the SA Communist Party told a public sector union congress a month after the general elections. The economy is to blame for deindustrialisation, job losses and 'throttling' of small and medium enterprises. The solutions? South Africa must move from the first phase of the 'National Democratic Revolution' to the second phase – the building of socialism: "Transformation of the ownership and control function of key commanding heights" must be on the agenda – but Nzimande didn't include it on the agenda of an Indaba (debate) on mining which he wants the government to convene. Given that the ANC and SACP leaders are bedfellows it's pretty certain that his views will be echoed by the new government.

## Longest strike in SA history

One item immediately on their plate was the strike in the North West platinum belt where 70,000 miners have been out for five months, the same Marikana where 34 miners were massacred and 70 injured by police in August 2012. (see *Chartist* 267 March-April). This is the longest strike in SA history, blamed by some commentators for SA's economic problems. The companies (multinationals Amplat, Implat, Lonmin), says the SACP, should be forced to honour their licences on safety, provision of housing and BEE - black economic empowerment.

Owning 80% of the world's platinum supply, this century they have taken profits higher

than any other in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange's top 40. They paid wages averaging 38% of value added, compared to 51% nationally. They said they could not afford the wage increase demanded by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). Redundancies have been threatened to follow hard on the heels of a settlement expected as we go to press.

A victory for the platinum miners is likely to be seen as a victory for the union (at least in the short run) and to some, a defeat for the ANC. In the May elections the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) replaced the Democratic Alliance as 'first opposition party' in the North-West province, home of the platinum belt and AMCU is undoubtedly closely linked to the EFF. Perhaps this does weaken the ANC as it has lost the loyal support of the National Union of Miners there, but the union remains dominant in gold and coal mining. The EFF's relative success seems to have been overhyped in SA media - they gained only 6.35% of the vote nationally, despite being able to use the ANC structures to mobilise (they broke away from the ANC). As self-appointed 'Commander-in-Chief' of the EFF (they have not had any elections yet) Julius Malema provoked a rumpus in the ranks by 'restructuring' some positions at their conference in June. Added to that, Malema and others have visibly reneged on their pre-election promises not to claim any extra expenses on top of their salary as a member of the national or provincial assembly. It is difficult to take seriously Malema's 'socialist' rhetoric.

## The Democratic Alliance

What of the Democratic Alliance? Remaining 'first opposition party' nationally, its share of the vote increased to 22.3%, it retained Western Cape province and replaced the Inkatha Freedom



Blade Nzimande - general secretary of the SA Communist Party

Party as first opposition in KwaZulu Natal. Its leader Helen Zille, on taking her place as premier of the Western Cape, declared its continued opposition to SACP/ANC economic policies and support for deregulation including the labour market. The DA would abolish the minimum wage and BEE. (This was set up to provide a fast track – positive discrimination, but is widely blamed for the creation of a small, privileged 'black elite'). The province has the second highest rate of youth unemployment in the country. DA are pro-free market and against any state intervention.

At first glance the clear lead retained by the ANC may indicate political stability, BUT in all eight 'metros' the ANC vote declined, to below 50% in two cities (to join Cape Town in the Western Cape). The increase in seats for opposition parties resulting from proportional representation means challenges to ANC dominance will strengthen. And above all: were the 26.5% who did not vote at all expressing satisfaction with the status quo? This seems unlikely, given the rising rates of poverty, unemployment and the high incidence of unrest.

# Power to the owners!

**Patrick Gray** surveys the crisis at the Co-op insisting the principles of the Rochdale pioneers must triumph over managerialism

**T**he future of the Co-operative Group, accounting for over two-thirds of the consumer co-operative movement in Britain, hangs in the balance. Proposals for a new governance system are being hammered out. In September a delegate conference will decide what shape this system will take.

At a time when the very idea of democracy in the economic sphere is under attack from neo-liberal conservatives, much more depends on the outcome than the fate of one large company. Will the debate which followed the publication of Lord Myners' recent report shift power back to the Group's owner-members? Or will what is going on behind closed doors in Manchester amount to a managerialist coup, with all important decisions being taken in future not by, but on behalf of, members by rubber-stamped nominees who (however benevolent), are imbued with private sector aims and values?

## An economic mono-culture?

A co-operative is not just a business that does good things. It is a specific type of structure, defined by the International Co-operative Alliance as an organisation both owned and controlled by its members. And it is this issue of control which, since its origins in Rochdale over 160 years ago, has meant that co-operation stands for something far more radical than just good quality goods at fair prices.

Do we stumble on towards an economic mono-culture, where all important decisions are taken by a highly-paid elite? Or do we aspire to live in a plural society where people grow strong taking decisions about their own lives and their own communities? If so, co-operatives are right in the front line, ensuring members have a meaningful say in running an organisation which they own, should determine the future shape of governance in the Group.

Fortunately, the image pro-

pounded in the Financial Times of the Group being led to ruin by vodka swigging 'commissars', is simply fantasy. Far from too much member control, the real problem was an undemocratic board too weak to rein in a headstrong chief executive pursuing a get-big-quick agenda far removed from the prudent defence of members' interests. Given a real say, grass roots members would have agreed to food shops being neglected to pay for a lavish new head office or the co-operative name being sold off to Thomas Cook to fund adventures in the world of high finance.

Is it realistic to believe that a large retail organisation can combine democratic control with business success? The answer is an

**Do we stumble on towards an economic mono-culture, where all important decisions are taken by a highly-paid elite? Or do we aspire to live in a plural society where people grow strong taking decisions about their own lives and their own communities?**

emphatic yes. In Finland, Italy and Switzerland, for example, co-operatives dominate the retail sector. In the UK, it is the most democratic independent co-operatives (including Midcounties with 450,000 members, turnover of £1.2 billion and a strong record of growth, profitability and community engagement) which are the most successful, not the reverse.

So what must we do to bring about a renaissance of co-operation in Britain where this far-reaching and revolutionary project began? First, The Co-operative Group must pay down its debt and establish a governance system which combines meaningful member control with informed and efficient decision taking. Second, co-operators must build a new consensus around the proper parameters for co-operative enterprise, giving managers clear ethical and business guidelines

within which to operate. Third, we must face up to the fact that we are no longer living in the 1920s. We must re-think our relationship to the world of politics and show that it is possible to campaign and be committed to radical change without being politically exclusive. Fourth, we must explore new ways of involving members and customers, giving them a bigger role in their co-operatives and communities.

There are, to be sure, areas where equity based business has advantages (arguably, in raising capital for example), but the co-operative model also has unique inherent strengths. Co-operatives are sustainable because they are not vulnerable to the vagaries of share price and the threat of hostile takeover. Their organic links with the communities they serve means they can be more responsive. Unlike the equity sector, where profit maximisation must rule, in co-operatives ethics and commercial success naturally pull together.

## Genuine democracy?

Despite the horrors of the last 18 months, after decades of retreat, recent years have seen many positive developments. More societies have adopted genuine democracy; new areas of co-operative enterprise - energy supply and childcare in the case of my society - have emerged; and even the crisis in the Group has sparked a long overdue debate on governance. The Group is not the whole of the Co-operative Movement but it is a big part of it. If, against the odds, a settlement combining genuine democracy with business efficiency emerges out of Manchester in September it will be a big step towards the Rochdale Pioneers' radical vision of a community where everyone, rich and poor, shares directly in economic decisions which affect their lives.

**Patrick Gray is President, Midcounties Co-operative**



# A tale of two Milibands

Miliband senior had some vital ideas about parliament & change that son Ed seems not to have absorbed argues **Paul Reynolds**

Last September, the *Daily Mail's* Geoffrey Levy wrote a typically distasteful attack on Ed Miliband, claiming his politics were aligned to his late father Ralph Miliband's Marxist politics. He labelled Miliband Senior 'the man who hated Britain'. The execrable quality of the piece was widely judged to be its slur on someone who had joined the Royal Navy and been involved with the Normandy and Toulon landings. Cameron and Clegg endorsed Miliband Junior's riposte, and Miliband's anger was generally received as a righteous response to an excessive and illegitimate press attack.

This episode might be assigned to the history of right-wing repugnant politics, but it inadvertently illustrates a myopia in Labour politics and explains the weakness of Miliband's leadership. Levy is, of course, wrong. Ed Miliband is not following the ideas of his father. On the contrary, he ought to read his father's work more carefully and take note of its analysis, because it goes some way to explaining why Labour present such a weak alternative to a morally and politically bankrupt Con-Dem coalition.

## Labour lack 'vision'

For many looking for leadership from the left, Miliband's Labour has thus far been a disappointment. Against a ConDem Coalition trying and failing to put a human face on the privatisation of social life, dismantling what remains of public welfare and masking the bankruptcy of any morality in the relationship between business, state and society, there is much to criticise. Labour seems to lack 'vision'. Their flailing attempts to turn responses to Coalition crises into a coherent political position are lamentable. Promises of 10p tax rates, freezing energy prices and campaigning on 'the cost of living' may or may not excite popular interest, but are tinkers with symptoms and fails to address causes with coherent strategy.

One major weakness of

Miliband, like Brown and Blair before him, is that he has swallowed the rhetoric that Labour can only win on conservative ground. Hence the importance of being tough in austerity economics, being qualified in the vilification of the sharp practice of the finance and banking sector, tax avoiding multi-nationals and opportunist energy cartels. Seeking the 'centre-right ground' requires Labour to acknowledge contributory culpability for the financial crisis and adopt a 'responsible' pose in opposition that negates any real attack on exploitative labour practices such as zero-hours contracts and corporations using unemployed people as cheap labour, or defending public services, wages and pensions. The logic - more an electoral math - is that the failure of Labour is so embedded in public consciousness that to be credible Labour has to occupy space close enough to the Coalition to pick up disaffected votes, and not risk a clash of ideas and ideologies. Thus far it has led Labour to limited polling success based mainly on the unpopularity of the Coalition. In his defence of his father, Miliband laid his beliefs bare 'I want to make capitalism work for working people, not destroy it'.

Miliband could take lessons from Miliband senior, a significant Marxist theorist figure in the New Left from the 1960's to the 1990's. His key works on British politics and society focused on two themes important to understanding labour's failures today: the power of class interests; and the systemic causes behind the failure of Labour politics.

In *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*, written in 1961 (with a postscript in the 1972 edition), Miliband gives an incisive evaluation of the limits of Labour's politics that is still relevant today. His first lines evoke the problem, 'Of political parties claiming socialism to be their aim, the Labour Party has always been one of the most system dogmatic - not about socialism, but about the parliamentary system'. Miliband identifies the



The Miliband clan

Party leadership and its industrial leadership in the unions as wedded to a Parliamentary and political system that diminishes the radicalism of social reform. The commitment for working through Parliamentary processes and structures, even when they directly diminished Labour policies for change, was a powerful constraint to any form of radical change, and prescient of the failures of the Wilson Government's of 1964-70. Two examples will suffice. First, the failure of the Department of Economic Affairs, introduced to run national planning for the British economy as a counterpoint to the Treasury. Deliberately humbled by the power of the Treasury and financial interests. Second, the failure to develop nationalised industries into strategic economic actors with more collective ownership and control, instead attempting to run them through parliamentary oversight of corporate governance with no clear overarching national objectives.

## Works

In *The State in Capitalist Society*, written in 1969, he provides a closely argued and well-evidenced analysis of the interrelations and connections between key elements of state bureaucracy, business, media and political elites, providing a class analysis that argued to the instrumentality of class politics in Britain. This argument was developed against the prevailing influence of Louis Althusser's more theoretical Structuralist Marxism and put the elites who populated class society in the dock with the struc-

tural systems and processes of capitalism they populated. For Miliband, it was necessary to recognise the empirical and political connections that made British politics. It was not as simple as Marx's Manifesto characterisation of the state as an 'executive committee for managing the whole affairs of the bourgeoisie'. After governance by a succession of public school elites from all parties, and the obvious interlinkages of 'Bullingdon Boys' and global media and financial leaders evidenced in Levinson's inquiry into press misconduct and the failure to regulate the banking sector after the financial catastrophe, Miliband's analysis seems decidedly trenchant.

## Superficial democracy

The superficiality of democratic processes in Britain and the persistence of class interests, particularly the interconnections and shared interests of business, media and government were continued in subsequent works: *Capitalist Democracy* in Britain (1982); and *Class Power and State Power* (1983); and *Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism* (1989). In his final work, *Socialism in a Sceptical Age* (1994) published posthumously, Miliband maintained his incisive analysis of a capitalist system that always promises the possibility it might be remedied of its failing but leaves a history of broken aspirations and unremitting misery for working people and those consigned to poverty and privation. Miliband's commitment to socialism as a progressive possibility is a moral and political commitment to change he sees perhaps stretching forward over generations. Miliband was not for compromises that won Parliamentary plaudits but did not empower and deliver ownership and control to the working classes.

Even the modest reforms Ed Miliband proposes, whilst hugging the middle ground to garner popularity, are deemed 'radical' and 'dangerous' to those who continue to offer barely plausible apologies for mass inequality, anxiety and adversity. Within the Parliamentary game, respecting the elite interests who hold financial power and political influence, it is doubtful they can be formulated as policies and will simply add to the litany of broken promises and failed proposals of another Labour Government.

Labour has always been obsessed with winning and retaining a parliamentary majority, so much so that this has become an end in itself. Its corollaries are a disposition towards compromised policies, towards achieving 'respectability' and approving media headlines, towards appearing 'responsible', 'credible' and 'reasonable'. Above all, it has brought with it an impatience and intolerance towards extra-parliamentary actions. Demonstrations in the

**Ed Miliband is not following the ideas of his father. On the contrary, he ought to read his father's work more carefully and take note of its analysis, because it goes some way to explaining why Labour present such a weak alternative to a morally and politically bankrupt ConDem coalition**

street, withholding rents, occupations and especially 'disruptive' strikes, have been anathema to Labour in and out of office. Parliamentary means 'trust us', consolidate the majority in the Commons, vote for us and then leave things to the elected representatives who would pass legislation when times were propitious (they never are).

In this way Labour has found itself not transforming capitalism, but shoring it up by frantic efforts to avert crises of sterling

or to resolve some industrial dispute or other, while vainly attempting to appease vocal, especially business, opinion. Thereby, far from offering an alternative to capitalism, Labour has consistently found itself adapting to its exigencies, even proudly claiming to run capitalism better than Conservatives.

The odd thing is that, while all this was going on, business interests never hesitate to act in extra-parliamentary ways, from making runs on the pound, withholding investment, avoiding taxation and of course, mobilising opinion and measures against anything coming from Labour of which they disapproved. The more they subvert Labour's plans by these actions, the more Labour in office or opposition masochistically mollify them.

## Modest expectations

Some may reasonably anticipate a Miliband electoral victory at the next election. Few think it will make a great deal of difference, and Labour reinforce that position with embrace of austerity politics. Miliband senior's seminal studies warn us not to expect anything more, and probably a good deal less, from Labour leaderships trapped in the Parliamentary game of class deference. That is execrable and repugnant. Ed Miliband clearly loved his father. It is rather a pity he did not adequately read him.

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# Neo-liberal immigration – the policy of corporate gangmasters

Gavin Lewis takes issue with Don Flynn on the benefits of European migration

It's hard to fault the motivations of Don Flynn (*Chartist* 266) in defending the rights of immigrants, in what is a traditional anti-racist position. Adopting a uniform policy on immigration suggests that it is a homogenous standardized phenomenon. It is not. Historically immigrants to this country have been made up of refugees – to whom we have rightly demonstrated a tradition of hospitality. We have also happily accepted forced migration. Similar to refugees, these are migrants – usually an educated administrative class - who have been exiled by self-destructive nation states for reasons of ethnic or religious bigotry. The Huguenots, European Jews, the Nigerian Igbo tribe, and Ugandan Asians, are examples that spring to mind. These unusual high performing middle-classes are frequently used to make a pro-market capitalist argument for immigration. The bulk of our Post-war immigration has been something completely different. Black Commonwealth immigration was partly an apology for the many evils of imperialism. It was also a thank you, for the massive war effort of our colonies - more than 2.5 million Indians, half a million Africans, and 7000 Caribbean Islanders fought for Britain in WW2. These new workers joined Irish immigrants in providing a direct service to Britain's communities by labouring in 'nationalised not-for-profit' public services. Most significantly, these workers were NOT brought to the UK to provide a cheap workforce for largely foreign corporate employers, or to undermine existing labour rates.

This is very different from recent Neo-Liberal immigration. New Labour's bank of England chief Mervyn King boasted of the crushing effect of its Neo Liberal immigration policy on workers wages. "Immigration has reduced wage inflation." Bob Rowthorn, Professor of Economics in Cambridge noted 'The most affected [by immigration] are likely to be previous immigrant...For those who can afford to employ

nannies or cleaners or builders, the impact of immigration will be largely beneficial, because it increases the pool of available workers and keeps their wages from increasing.'

Low wage immigration actually underpins global Neo-liberal imperialist policies as a whole and mirrors the cheap exploitation of labour in the developing world. For more than a decade now, western elites have been prosecuting what Senator Barak Obama – on the Presidential trail - described as 'wars for oil.' This oil is used to subsidize cheap exploited labour in China, India, Indonesia and elsewhere. This reinforces massive global systemic problems. Workers in the 'cheap economies' have frequently been oppressed in conditions not dissimilar to indentured servitude or the 19thC factory system. As well as polluting the planet, abandoning localised national production has resulted in the development of under-classes, which have been thrown on the economic dust heap by corporate elites in the US & UK. This dynamic, is neither good for working labour, (nor the environment). Some things though, have to be done locally and to service a corporate capitalism that is unwilling to pay appropriate living wage rates at home, more carbon fuel is being burnt, unnecessarily moving cheap migrant labour across the planet for easy exploitation in western economies.

## Developing world

Other problems with this model include its impact on societies in the developing world. One of the great scandals of the last New Labour government was its reluctance to fund enough British trained nurses. It instead hijacked nursing personnel much needed in their developing home countries of South Africa, the Philippines and elsewhere. These countries could ill afford to lose the money they spent training these nurses. Nor do we really know what the long term effect of taking a generation of young workers from East Europe will be

on the further re-construction and development of those countries?

At the moment, parts of the left appear to be seduced into applying an anti-racist reflex - developed in reaction to post-war 'black commonwealth migration' - to Neo-Liberal immigration. This is indicative of a current poverty of ambition. Historically the left has always favoured re-distribution and self-determinist policies. By contrast supporting Neo-Liberal immigration is a 'crumbs from the corporate table' agenda. It's also advocated by dodgy Neo-Liberal former Cabinet Ministers who made the 'we're an aging population' argument while simultaneously cutting lone parent benefit. They now want to be seen as anti-racists, despite while in power, having imprisoned the children of asylum seekers and supported imperialist 'wars for oil.' This is no decent company for genuine anti-racists.

So what should our policy be for real immigrants on the ground? We need to end corporate dependency on cheap immigrant labour and instead be more concerned with taking our fair share of refugees. Fundamentally, we can't continue to champion Neo-Liberal immigration policies that are designed specifically to attack our own working-class. This just pushes more misinformed understandably aggrieved lost souls towards the BNP, the EDL and UKIP. We need to remove the economic logic supporting employers preference for cheap foreign labour. Dramatically raising minimum & living wage rates for all would help. Anti-cheap labour policies need to be balanced with measures to combat the scape-goating of immigrant groups - including continuing public education, anti-racist strategies and no place for policies of second class citizenship. If people are in this country then they should be entitled to the same benefits as anyone else. Anything else plays into a benefits cutting agenda and prices the poor into drug and trafficking criminality.

**Gavin Lewis is a freelance academic & writer who has published in Britain & Australia on Film, Politics, Race & Imperialism. He is a member of BECTU**

# In response to Lewis

Don Flynn says the task is integration not repeating tabloid myths

Gavin Lewis has few scruples when it comes to laying out his list of charges against migrant workers. Not only do they 'underpin[...] global Neo-liberal imperialist policies' but according to his account it also seems they carry a fair share of the blame for global warming. He is gracious enough not to mention it in this piece, but in following this logic there is no reason why we shouldn't add queues for GP appointments, the unaffordable price of housing and congestion on public transport systems to the crimes these newcomers have inflicted on our once congenial and harmonious British society.

## Facts

There are many reasons to object to this account. It is factually wrong, for example, to attribute the containment of wage levels to migration, either in the UK or in any of the other developed economies. The current long phase of flat-lining wages for skilled and semi-skilled workers began in 1978 and is more strongly associated with the decline in manufacturing than competition from migrants. It is salutary to remember that throughout the long decade of the 1980s, when the groundwork was done for the modern structure of wages, immigration was negative in net terms, with more people leaving the country than coming in.

It is fundamentally wrong to ascribe an 'underpinning' role to migration in relation to contemporary global capitalism, as though neo-liberalism would never have happened without it. Indeed, the proportion of the world's population living and working outside their country of origin is around the 3% mark – scarcely an alarming increase over the 2% recorded in the 1960s and 70s. The genesis of globalism has much more to do with the Thatcher and Reagan success in floating exchange rates, scrapping controls on capital movements, and the 'big bang' innovations in the trading of stocks of shares, and the emergence of the WTO as the governing force overseeing the terms of the post-Cold War



We have enough evidence - past and present - to demonstrate the value of migration to Britain

'Washington Consensus'.

The patterns of migration which Lewis appears to believe are fundamental to our current epoch did not assume their form until the turn of the millennium, when neo-liberalism was already the order of the day. The issue it addresses is not so much 'how do we hold down wages?' – this having already been achieved before the migrants turned up, but 'what sort of a labour force do we need to be competitive in the conditions of today?' The answer sometimes is one that is ultra-flexible and cheap, drawing on the reserves of migrants might in some instances meet this need, but in other cases the need will be for skilled workers operating with knowledge and networks that make them exceptionally productive.

Lewis seems to think that a lot of very basic problems for ordinary people are going to be solved if immigration is stopped, or at least significantly reduced. As argued here, the reduction in the proportion of GDP going to wages as opposed to capital isn't one of them, since that was secured by other means before the migrants turned up. The point about global warming is so inept as to not warrant a serious reply; so what else is left?

Perhaps he needs help from the tabloid press as a prompt.

Without migrants the NHS will improve? Young people will be able to afford their first mortgages? We won't be spending so much time having to stand on buses and trains? Take your pick – the list is long enough.

## Missing the point

Lewis misses the point when he implies that all that is needed from immigration policy is a commitment to welcome refugees and then have no qualms about getting tough with labour migrants. International capitalism has not enormously increased the proportion of migrants in the world, but at a whole number of key strategic points it has become more dependent on their skills and the attributes of their labour. It would be helpful if people who think they are playing a role in getting the forward march of the proletariat underway once again could apply themselves to the task of working out how this potential new power can be integrated into the militant, class conscious mainstream of socialist labour politics, instead of joining the right wing tabloids in reviling their very presence in the country.



# For Scotland's republic vote 'yes'

Deft avoidance of constitutional questions characterises Paul Teasdale's defence of the union. **Steve Freeman** and **Phil Vellender** see twelve key issues

1. On September 18th Scotland will vote for or against the 1707 Act of Union. We are strongly in favour of people voting 'Yes' because it is in the interests of the Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish working class. It will undermine the Tory Coalition, taking this step towards a republic is in the democratic interests of the working class.

2. If Scotland votes Yes it will become 'Independent under the Crown', remaining a constitutional monarchy but with a written constitution. The Unionists have been forced to promise more devolution in 2015. The Independence Bill states the interim written constitution is not a final settlement; there will be a 'Constitutional Convention' to devise a more definitive constitution. The latter is clearly the most democratic and offers the Scottish people the chance to decide on their future. This will precipitate wider debate that will not stop at the Scottish border.

3. In Scotland there are three constitutional trends with various levels of public support - Unionists (46%), Nationalists (37%) and Republicans (22%). In reality there is a three cornered constitutional struggle although the Scottish people are only given two options. These constitutional options have their reflections in the socialist movement in the ideological struggles between Unionist-socialists, Nationalist-socialists and Republican-socialists. A 'Yes vote' will shift the centre of gravity of the debate towards republicanism.

4. Unionism is fundamental to the British ruling class. The forces gathered under the Union Jack include the monarchy, the Tories, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour and Trade union bureaucracy, UKIP, BNP, the City of London, Bank of England, the CBI and the major Corporations. Leaders of major world powers support a 'strong and united' Kingdom including the European Commission, the President of the United States and Prime Minister of China.

5. Opposing the Unionists

are the SNP government, the Scottish Greens, Scottish CND and the Scottish left organised in the Radical Independence Campaign including the SWP and the Socialist Party supporters in Scotland. The progressive sections of the English left are lining up in support of a 'Yes' vote. In the Labour Party there are comrades such as Owen Jones supporting a pro-Yes position, and some members of the Scottish Labour Party.

## Constitutional questions

6. Writing in *Chartist* (May/June 268), Paul Teasdale puts forward the Unionist case, deftly avoiding any key constitutional questions, except to suggest the Scottish parliament already has "more powers than almost any other regional government in Europe". This is a conservative attitude to constitutional reform and consequently it implies that the struggle for democracy is irrelevant. First, he proffers a fear of Scottish nationalism, second, he cites an overriding concern that Labour will lose out because 'Yes' would "almost guarantee continued Conservative rule in the remaining UK", thirdly, he embraces the Big State as the sole means of protecting workers from rampant capitalist competition.

7. On the contrary, the real enemy of the working class throughout the UK is the British state with its nationalist and unionist ideology founded on a long and bloody history as a major imperialist power. Scotland is a small country whose nationalism is focused on achieving democratic self-determination.

8. Clearly, if 'Yes' spells eternal Tory rule in the rest of the UK, the Tories would be leading the 'yes' campaign against Labour. The Tories understand their class interest and they know you cannot extrapolate from past election results. Seismic or systemic constitutional crises frequently consign political parties to the dustbin of history rather than giving them permanent majorities.



The choice

9. Paul argues that Scotland is already one of the most 'prosperous' regions of Europe, which he says was nothing to do with the Scottish Parliament because "this ranking was reached in the years of the Major government". He explains Scottish 'prosperity' as resulting from existing links between Scotland and the City of London. He neglects to mention that under the British Union the financial sector crashed the country's economy and is still looting its resources to this day.

10. Paul's Keynesian case concerning tax and spending over the next decade amount to little more than speculation about levels of capital accumulation. What is not discussed is the struggle between capital and labour in post-independence Scotland. His narrative centres on the wellbeing of capital not the welfare of the people.

11. The idea that that 'big' capitalist states grow more than small ones does not stack up as Denmark, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway or even Iceland amply illustrate. In any case it is the struggle for democracy and workers' rights that determine the share of national wealth.

12. The only protection working people have is the common solidarity born from shared struggle, regardless of changing borders or bigger or smaller states. Workers of England and Scotland should make common cause for democracy and not defend existing borders as defined by an outdated 1707 Act of Union.

Patrick Mulcahy is gripped by Joe

# Looking for pop

Joe is a return to the naturalistic, gritty stories of individuals living on the margins that brought director David Gordon Green (George Washington, Undertow) to the attention of critics and, much later, Hollywood. Based on the 1991 novel by the late Larry Brown, it tells the story of a boy, Gary (Tye Sheridan), fifteen – or says he is – going on twenty-one who has a good natured, goading but ultimately fruitless relationship with his violent old man, Wade (Gary Poulter), defined in a mesmerising opening scene. Somewhere in the middle of a forest, Gary, with his back to the camera, tells his wizened, booze-licked, bearded old dad, that he deserves what's he's going to get, that he has messed up again, and people are coming for him. Wade listens for the longest time, until he quarter turns and gives him a wallop. In a single take, he makes his way up a grass verge when he is apprehended by two men who do indeed give him a whipping.

Gary squats with his father, mother and teenage, silent (read: abused) sister in an abandoned house, the latest in a line of temporary refuges. He is eager to work and sees a guy, Joe (Nicolas Cage) hiring men to poison trees, giving developers an excuse to clear the forest. Joe appraises the kid and gives him a shot. He judges men by their day's work, pays cash and appreciates being looked in the eye. He has a violent temper, been troubled by the law. These catch up with him early on. He is, as others are wont to say, 'a good man'.

After winning the Best Actor Oscar for *Leaving Las Vegas* in 1996, wild man Cage was seduced and suffocated by Hollywood in films such as *The Rock* and *National Treasure*. Watching him in a series of progressively banal thrillers (*Trespass*, *Stolen*) you

could not help notice the cooling of jets, a lessening of the crazy eye, goofy smile, explosions into frenzy, as if the inner life had been vacuum-sucked out of him. I'd like to report that *Joe* is a return to form, a cleansing of his acting palate, but Cage has given too much of himself to bad movies. You watch him as Joe pick up a cotton mouth snake and there is a flicker of devil-may-care ('this is my friend, you leave him be') and you recall with a start that he wore such an animal as a coat in *Wild at Heart*. But it's just a flash.

Cage the actor on a redemption trail bleeds into his performance as *Joe*. He doesn't overwhelm the movie, but as Joe he meditates on his age (48). Joe's physique and near dependability attract young women to him. He's the object of gentle goading. ('Why don't you get a new truck?') He inspires respect from his mostly African-American employees, who are an exemplary work force with a sense of responsibility.

The film charts the relationship between Gary, who needs a real dad, and Joe who identifies with him as raw material for a good life. In spite of the age difference, Joe defines himself as Gary's friend, gives him a second chance ('you'd work in the rain') after Gary's dad becomes a liability and sells him his truck. Inevitably, the film gears up for a tragic ending; Joe isn't a superhero.

There isn't anything in *Joe* that you haven't seen before, but if Cage's palate isn't cleansed, Gordon Green (who directed the crude and unfunny *Your Highness*) is. His direction is tight. He focuses on atmosphere without losing our attention in slackening the pace. *Joe* is gripping and leaves you with a sense of hope that Gary might become like his mentor with none of the anger issues. It inspires.





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# Patriotism and protest

**Mike Davis** on a panoramic study

**ZEPPELIN NIGHTS - LONDON IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR**  
**Jerry White (Bodley Head, £25)**

**J**erry White has done it again. Following the success of London in the Twentieth Century and similar studies of London in the 18th and 19th Century, here we discover London as 'one of the greatest killing machines in history'. The war turned London upside down in many more ways than this suggests.

The economy was transformed into a war machine making munitions and every kind of war related product. The rag trades and leather boomed making uniforms, boots, bandoliers and belts to ration bags and rugs, while timber, ship building and the docks, and surprisingly film flourished, architects and builders struggled and hostels and workhouses emptied.

Pro-war demonstrations eclipsed the anti-war pacifists and socialists and a patriotic fervour gripped the city with thousands of men flocking to recruiting stations.

White divides his panoramic chronicle into thirteen thematic sections: 'A war for Purity', 'Work, Work, Work', 'Harlot-Haunted London' for example. Using contemporary accounts, records, biographies and numerous secondary sources he details the daily life, changes and events appropriate to the themes.

A stand out chapter is 'The All-invading Alien'. Here he examines the extraordinary reaction to the many thousands of Germans and Austrians and many Jews living in the city. Stirred up by jingoists in the media and Tory politicians like Horatio Bottomly mobs attacked butchers, bakers and shops of every kind with German names. Many of those who did not leave in the first few days of war found themselves interned in makeshift camps at Alexandra Palace and Olympia, many for the duration of the war. The Aliens Restriction Act, rushed through parliament on 5th August combined with DORA (Defence of the Realm Act) imposed hideous restrictions. It required all 'enemy aliens' born in hostile countries, male or female, to register with the police. White

estimates 40,000 did so in London. A reign of terror pervaded both the poorer East End and the German Quarter in the West End, which was virtually eliminated. The royals and writers changed their names. Streets like Bismark Road in Hampsstead became Waterloo Street. Chinese and black communities also faced racism. The TUC was not immune. In fact, White describes the Seaman's Union leader Captain Edward Tupper as 'a racist, ultra patriot' hugely inflating numbers of Chinese seamen and provoking a clampdown on 'cheap foreign labour' (sound familiar?). Relations with East End Jewry were more complex. Those with German sounding names faced attack. Following conscription in 1916 those refusing to sign up were used as evidence of the lack of patriotic spirit of all Jews. The Times was a prominent stoker of anti-semitism - 'the Russian jews in the East End of London have prospered during the war and do not want to fight' and called for their forced enlistment.

By 1917 patriotic fervour was waning. With a rising death toll, perhaps 20,000 per week, hospitals bursting with wounded soldiers and above all the dreaded Zeppelin night bombing, the mood of Londoners began to change.

What of the opponents of war? References are made within several chapters to conscientious objectors and militant anti-war activists. Socialist journalist RM Fox and Labour leaders like Fenner Brockway and Herbert Morrison objected and experienced lengthy prison spells for their refusal to sign up. Local tribunals rarely sanctioned non-service appeals.

Before the war internationalism had been strong in the rising ILP, the non-Hyndman section of the BSP (see Ian Bullock *Chartist* 268) and amongst sections of the Labour Party itself (many believe the collapse into nationalism hastened Keir Hardie's death in 1915). Sylvia Pankhurst's wing of the Suffragettes was also anti-war and continued to campaign. Many pacifist and anti-war meetings were subjected to sustained and violent attacks, often by Canadian and Australian troops.

By 1917 numbers seeking

exemption from conscription were mushrooming. Rent strikes spread amongst the poor and in 1917 a wave of strikes shook the capital and government. The food question was the largest single cause of unrest with prices twice the July 1914 level. London bus workers struck, so too did munitions workers and then engineers at Crayford, Erith and chiefly Woolwich downed tools over pay. Eight strike leaders were arrested under DORA and gaoled in Brixton prison. There were equal pay strikes on buses, trams and railways in 1918 and the Metropolitan Police struck for two days in August. Lloyd George declared the capital was 'face to face with revolution'. The impact of the Russian revolution was significant giving heart not just to British democrats but to all those who opposed the war. A 12,000 strong rally, with 5,000 outside, was staged in support at the Royal Albert Hall.

Perhaps another study will reveal more of this side of London workers in wartime. It wasn't all jingoism, death and destruction. A new spirit for change began to develop. The war left London a different city. White's rich study illustrates the process with panache.

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# Spies, writers and architecture

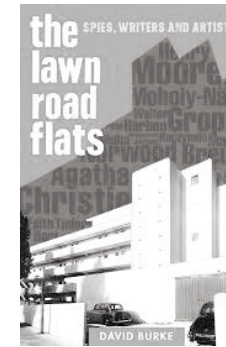
**Duncan Bowie** on secret lives in Belsize Park

**THE LAWN ROAD FLATS**  
**David Burke**  
**(Boydell and Brewer, £25)**

**T**he Lawn Road flats are a block in Belsize Park, North London. They were built in 1934 by the modernist architect, Wells Coates, funded by a plywood manufacturer, Jack Pritchard. The block is venerated by architectural historians as the first domestic building in Britain to be made from reinforced concrete and is more commonly known as the Isokon building. The block became home for the German architect and leader of the Bauhaus movement, Walter Gropius, on his exile from Germany before he moved to America.

It may seem curious to write a history book in a series on the 'history of British intelligence' based on the residents of a block of flats but the block was to become home for a group of leftist intellectuals, many of whom were exiles from Germany and Austria and continued to be involved in various forms of anti-fascist activity, including in several cases acting as agents for a range of Soviet espionage organisations.

Burke is an expert on Russian émigrés in the UK. He wrote a PhD, unfortunately not yet published, on Theodore Rothstein and other Bolsheviks, in pre WWI London. This led to a chapter in John Slatter's 1984 volume of essays on Russian political émigrés - From the Other Shore. In



2009, Burke published a volume with the attractive title - The Spy who Came in from the Co-op - a study of Melita Norwood, the 'Greenwich granny' who had, together with Klaus Fuchs, been a member of the group of 'Atom spies' in the cold war period. Melita Norwood was the daughter of Alexander and Gertrude Sernis, Latvian Bolsheviks, who had been friends of Rothstein and active in the Socialist Labour Party - Alexander Sernis had translated Lenin and Tolstoy.

This is a fascinating book as it exposes the links between a wide range of British and continental progressives and communists. The book has sections on Bauhaus and modernist architecture; austro-marxism and its influence on Kim Philby - the Austrian Andrew Deutsch, was controller of the Cambridge spy ring; the German communist party in exile - its leader Jurgen Kuczynski and his family ran a soviet espionage ring from Lawn Road - his sister was the legendary spy 'Sonya'; the

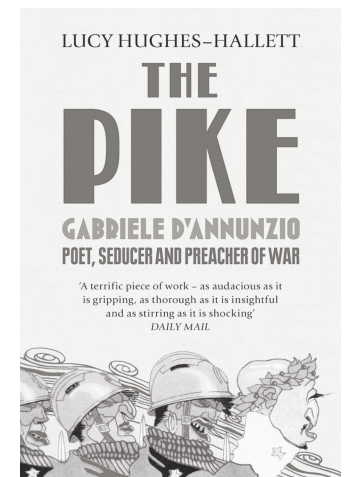
Australian communist prehistorian, Gordon Vere Childe; Agatha Christie and her archaeologist husband Max Mallowan - all of whom lived in the block. The block also had a bar, the Isobar, and member's restaurant - the Half Hundred Club, which attracted a wide range of progressives for fundraising events for Spanish republicans, the Chinese famine and a range of Soviet friendship events. A recurring character is Andrew Rothstein, son of Theodore, who was a leading member of the British Communist party and acted as its link to the Moscow soviets. Burke claims that some 32 residents or regular visitors of the flats or the neighbouring streets had connections to Soviet intelligence - including the philosopher Cyril Joad, the bookshop owner, Eva Collett Reckitt, Francis Meynell of the Daily Herald, the communist lawyer, D N Pritt, the photographer Edith Tudor Hart and the architect Maxwell Fry. A few residents of the block were apparently not spies - for example, the sculptor, Henry Moore, author Nicolas Monsarrat and Lionel Elvin, the former principal of Ruskin college and Director of the Institute of Education - they must have been party to some interesting discussions in the Isobar and at the Half Hundred supper club. The flats, after periods of ownership by the *New Statesman* and Camden Council, have recently been restored by Notting Hill Housing Trust.

# Poet, seducer and preacher of war

**THE PIKE**  
**Lucy Hughes-Hallett**  
**(Fourth Estate, £10.99)**

**T**his is a brilliant biography of an appalling individual. D'Annunzio was an Italian poet and playwright, who was obsessed that Italy should join in the First World War and who, once the war had ended, in 1919 marched into the city of Fiume (Rijeka) in the Balkans and declared himself the dictator. Much of the 650 page book focuses on D'Annunzio's poetry and on his personal life and sexual proclivities. D'Annunzio is often

regarded as a modernist - he was obsessed with fast cars and planes. He, like Sorel, saw political violence as the way to overcome what he considered as an effete liberal parliamentary democracy. Lenin was an admirer and D'Annunzio managed to attract support from syndicalists and some anti-parliamentary socialists. He was however a proto-fascist and a source of many of Mussolini's ideas. His life story should be treated as a warning and not as an inspiration. It is important to remind ourselves how appalling individuals can





**Duncan Bowie** on a London underclass



THE KNIGHTS ERRANT OF ANARCHY  
LONDON AND THE ITALIAN UNDERCLASS 1870-1917  
PIETRO DI PAOLA

## More anarchists in Soho

**THE KNIGHTS ERRANT OF ANARCHY**  
**Pietro di Paola**  
(Liverpool University Press, £70)

This study is a fitting companion to Constance Bantman's study of French anarchists in Soho, which was reviewed in *Chartist* 265 and published in the same Liverpool University Press series. The book is based on a PhD undertaken at Goldsmith's under the supervision of Carl Levi, an authority on the Italian anarchist Malatesta and editor of a recent volume of the writings of Colin Ward, to which Di Paola contributed.

Di Paola makes full use of anarchist memoirs and the records of the Italian embassy who kept a close watch on the anarchists, including funding spies who infiltrated the anarchist networks. Despite the official British government position of unrestricted asylum for political refugees, Di Paola demonstrates that the Metropolitan Police provided some assistance. This is perhaps not surprising given this was the period of anarchist assassins with an anarchist, Gaetano Bresci, assassinat-

ing the Italian King Umberto in July 1900.

It is in fact difficult to see what political objectives the Italian anarchists had. Their principles, so far as they had any, were very different from the Mazzinian exiles of the 1850s as Italian unity had been achieved. Their main enemy was the Italian liberal democracy which they saw as elitist. Their perspectives were also different from the philosophical anarchist communism of Kropotkin and his circle, or for that matter from the French republicans and anarchists studied by Bantman whose main focus was syndicalism and trade union organisation. The London Italian anarchists had little to do with London radicals or trade unionists, though they did seek to organise Soho's Italian waiters. There were exceptions - Antonio Agresti contributed to the anarchist newspaper, the Torch, and married one of its editors - Olivia Rossetti, though later returned to Italy and became a Fascist sympathiser; Sylvia Corio, secretary of the International Club in Charlotte Street, later became Sylvia Pankhurst's lover and co-

agitator against Italian imperialism, especially after the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

Di Paola follows the lives of less well known Italian anarchists - most Italian anarchists seem to have ended up in London at some time in their lives - though many went to America the most famous of them all, Malatesta, was active in Argentina. This book is an impressive piece of research and presents a detailed, even exhaustive study, of the experience of these exiles daily lives. Most of the Italian anarchists were poor, some participated in semi-criminal activities. They lived outside 'respectable society' and unlike Kropotkin or Stepniak were not habitués of the salons of London's Liberal intelligentsia. The rescuing of these obscure and largely politically insignificant, certainly marginal, figures, makes the study more fascinating, and Di Paola's achievement in providing such a comprehensive study, including its biographical appendix, a more impressive achievement.

## Vegetarianism and pacifism in Essex

**TOLSTOY AND HIS DISCIPLES**  
**Charlotte Alston**  
(I B Tauris, £62)

The book is subtitled 'The History of a Radical International Movement'. Tolstoy had small groups of followers in a number of countries - Russia, America, England, Holland, the UK and Hungary. There were some connections between the groups, but the terms 'international movement' perhaps overstates Tolstoy's influence. Tolstoy was a pacifist and vegetarian who did not recognise the role of the state and who was anti-capitalist in that he considered that exchange should operate on the basis of reciprocity rather than money. Tolstoy tends to appear in the anarchist pantheon.

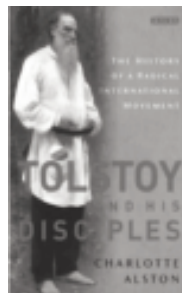
Written by a British academic, who specialises in Russian cultur-

al thought and diplomacy, the most detailed coverage in the book is on the Tolstoyan colonies in Britain - at Purleigh in Essex. Clousden Hill outside Newcastle (subject of an earlier study by Nigel Todd) and Whiteway in Stroud (subject of a study by Joy Thacker). The study provides useful material on British Tolstoyans such as John Coleman Kenworthy and John Bruce Wallace of the Croydon brotherhood church.

Alston examines how the different Tolstoyan groups tried to put Tolstoy's principles into practice, including his belief in complete sexual abstinence and non-monetary forms of exchange, with one group trying to travel round the country without making any payment, till they realised that in effect they were just depending on the generosity of others, which was not very principled, and no different from itinerant beggars.

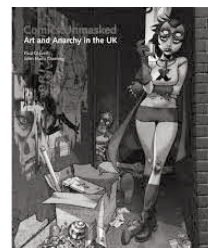
The book concludes with an examination of Tolstoy's influence, focusing on the role of Tolstoyans in the international peace movement before the First World War. It covers his impact on Gandhi, who was involved with the Phenix farm and Tolstoyan settlement in South Africa and Tolstoyan vegetarians in North London before developing his own concepts of non violent resistance (contrasting with Tolstoy's concept on non-resistance). One other rather surprising Tolstoyan was Alexander Sirnis, manager of the Tolstoyan Free Age Press at Purleigh, who was a Bolshevik and member of James Connolly's Socialist Labour Party as well as the father of Melita Norwood - later famous as 'the Spy who came from the Co-op.'

**Duncan Bowie** on British Tolstoyans



TOLSTOY AND HIS DISCIPLES  
CHARLOTTE ALSTON

**Mike Davis** on comics coming of age



ART AND ANARCHY IN THE UK  
PAUL GRAVETT & JOHN HARRIS DUNNING

## Subversive power - Comics Unmasked

**ART AND ANARCHY IN THE UK**  
**Paul Gravett & John Harris Dunning**  
(British Library, £25)

Secretly read under the covers or censored comics have been with us for hundreds of years. Much more than the stuff of childhood and nostalgia they have entertained and energised their readers or outraged opponents, usually the establishment, for generations. In the 1950s the National Union of Teachers, ran a travelling road show to have American comics banned alleging they represented a form of cultural imperialism. Similarly the British Communist Party sought to censor comics like Tales from the Crypt alleging corruption of young people's morals. The exhibition at the British Library and accompanying book demonstrates how comics have retained a popularity and power to reach adult

and child alike. From Hogarth to Victorian Penny Dreadfuls, Mr Punch and Ali Sloper, through the Beano, Dandy and Eagle to Alan Moore's The Watchmen and V for Vendetta—the Guy Fawkes mask of which has been adopted by Occupy activists internationally, comics and their creators have shown an immense capacity to ridicule, reinvent and reinterpret the world.

Comics have not always been radical and subversive: the first British popular comic strip artist William Haseldene, pilloried the Suffragettes, while Enid Blyton's children's strips were often racist and the US imported superheroes were often conservative characters preserving the status quo and 'American Way'. This exhibition with its six sections from Mischief and Mayhem, through Politics, Power and the People to Sex and Breakdowns unashamed-

ly is subversive. With sections on Rights and Wrongs covering anti-fascist strips and Profit and Loss, Artistic Director Dave McKean (a comic artist himself) has portrayed the power of comics to capture the imagination and disrupt conventional views.

British comic writers and artists, mainly in the graphic novel form, are in the front line of breaking new boundaries. Women artists are better represented. No topic is taboo. A single strip of images in this unique form of story telling in sequential pictures can replace a thousand words. Lavishly illustrated the book and exhibition should be a must for anyone seeking new ways to see and subvert the world.

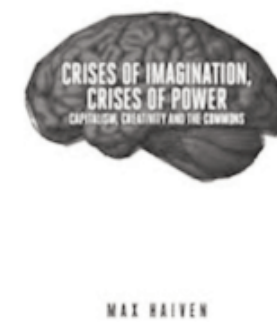
The exhibition at the British Library runs until 19th August

## Thinking differently

**CRISES OF IMAGINATION, CRISES OF POWER. CAPITALISM, CREATIVITY AND THE COMMONS**  
**Max Haiven (Zed Books, £14.99)**

I came to this wondering about how many crises it is appropriate to include in a title? Haiven's concern about contextualising capitalism, imagination and power presents readers with a challenge that I wholeheartedly recommend. As the generation of soixante-huiters gives way to the Arab Spring generation how might our futures improve?

We all operate within a context so dominated by capitalism that imagining alternatives may be circumscribed by our lived experience. Capitalism is one of a number of methods of economic organisation, we hope for alternatives and, en route we need to imagine them before implementation. Capitalism is not a necessary future model of organisation. We need to be confident in our powers



to, 'Think differently'.

A notion of common or collective good is helpful; the recent experiences of some of the British Co-operative movement recently notwithstanding. One chapter covers memories and reflects on

how different those often are of common experiences. There is also a consideration of the issues between public access as a concession and public ownership which was certainly heightened during the 'Occupation', in London.

The chapter on further education perhaps takes an overly financialized perspective. It does not consider the potential of the deskilling of many academics likely to come about as a consequence of Massive Open Online Courses.

There is no single prescription for the future. More will be available later this year when *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life* will be published. He is a performance artist as well as an academic, perhaps he just likes long titles?

Readers will find interesting items at: [MaxHaiven.com](http://MaxHaiven.com).



## Green pioneer

**Duncan Bowie** on an anarchist communitard



**ANARCHY, GEOGRAPHY, MODERNITY**  
SELECTED WRITINGS OF ELISEE RECLUS  
Edited by John Clark and Camille  
(Martin PM Press £13.62)

Elisee Reclus has been due for greater recognition. He was a leading French anarchist and one of the founders of human geography. Unlike his friend and fellow anarchist geographer, Petr Kropotkin, most of his works have never been translated into English (though I do have an 1871 translation of his first major study- The Earth and a Bellamy library edition of his 1891 pamphlet Evolution and Revolution) and this new collection provides for the first time substantial extracts from his major political and geographical works. The editors, academics in

New Orleans and Mississippi, also provide a 100 page introduction to Reclus' thought, which complements Marie Fleming's 1979 biography – The Anarchist Way to Socialism, which to my knowledge is the only previous substantive work on Reclus in English.

Reclus was a communitard. He spent part of his life in exile in Switzerland though he also visited London and attended at least one meeting of the First International, at which he supported the case for land nationalisation against Marx.

Reclus's writings covered a wide range of topics. This collection includes pamphlets and extracts on nature, the extended family, evolution and revolution, vegetarianism, the state, culture and property and progress.

Reclus can be considered with Alfred Russell Wallace as one of the founders of environmentalism – much of his work focuses on the relationship between human beings and nature. I found the extract on 'The Growth of Cities' from volume 5 of L'Homme et La Terre, an excellent analysis of urban growth and the negative effects of densification, a text which should be read by all planners and 'urbanists'. The final extract is a letter Reclus sent to comrades in Barcelona in 1901 - as advice from an 'old man' - "Do not quarrel or deal in personalities. Listen to opposing arguments after you have presented your own. Learn how to remain silent and reflect. Do not try to get the better in an argument at the expense of your own sincerity." Good advice.

## A study in concrete

**James Grayson** on concrete

**CONCRETOPIA**  
John Grindrod  
(Old Street Publishing, £16.75)  
(in paperback from July)

John Grindrod was born in New Addington (and the book starts in Croydon – and finishes in Croydon). Its subtitle is *A Journey around the Rebuilding of Post-war Britain*. It

is a study of concrete buildings – the successes and failures of post-war reconstruction. The book is highly readable but also intelligent. It covers post-war prefabs and the early garden cities, the Festival of Britain, the rebuilding of Plymouth and Coventry, the Smithson's post-war concrete schools, the Red road blocks in Glasgow, Park Hill in Sheffield,

shopping centres and motorways, Poulson, T Dan Smith and corruption in Newcastle, Centre Point and the first generation of London office towers, Ronan Point and Milton Keynes and much more. An entertaining and educational read – and a lesson to planners and architects everywhere.

## Dirty Wars

**Duncan Bowie** on the End of Empire

**IMPERIAL ENDGAME**  
Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon  
(Palgrave Macmillan, £16.99)

Grob-Fitzgibbon is an American historian. This book is a detailed study of the political and military governance of Britain's decolonisation under Attlee, Churchill and Eden's governments, between 1945 and 1956. The book's focus is on Palestine, Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus. The book covers some of the same ground as Calder Walton's book on the role of the security services in decolonisation, reviewed in *Chartist* 265. While this new book does refer to the role of the security services, the focus is on the

relationship between successive colonial ministers – George Hall, James Griffiths, Arthur Creech Jones, Oliver Lyttleton and Alex Lennox Boyd, and the colonial governors and military commanders, who often moved from one troublespot to another. The study is based in a thorough examination of official records, memoirs and uses previous academic studies, though this has not included the memoirs of the leaders of the nationalist uprisings – for example those of the Malayan communist leader, Chin Peng, which were published in 2005.

Despite this limitation, the book is well worth reading. It reveals the difficult balance between containing the insurrec-

tions and enabling a relatively peaceful transition to independence – an approach which failed in Palestine and Cyprus, but can be seen as succeeding to a large extent in Malaya and Kenya. The book provides new material on the harsh measures applied in all four countries to contain what was seen as terrorism, especially in relation to the Mau Mau in Kenya. It demonstrates that the final states of decolonisation were not as chaotic as often perceived in academic studies but managed and to a considerable extent controlled by the political and military agencies of the retreating empire.

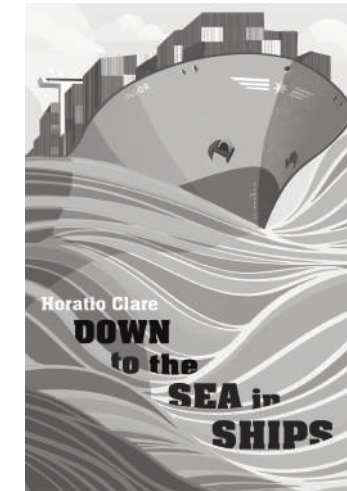
**Patricia d'Ardenne** on container crews

**DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS**  
Horatio Clare  
(Chatto & Windus, £20)

This is a magnificent account of two journeys on the high seas. Clare joins the crews of two containers, the first from East to West, Felixstowe to Los Angeles; the second northerly passage from Antwerp to Montreal. The author focuses on the experience of being at sea with crews who are separated from home and family life for increasingly longer periods of time, in conditions of isolation, tedium, hazard and bad weather.

The work is written as a tribute to those who live and work at sea to bring us our everyday comforts on vast ships from every corner of the globe. Mariners are largely invisible. They work long shifts on huge vessels manned by very small crews, isolated from others, travelling for weeks or months at a time, in cramped, Spartan accommodation, with few pleasures, low pay, and unregulated even dangerous deck and docking conditions.

The book reveals inequalities in modern crews. Captains who



begin round the world will know little of most of their men. The officers and engineers are usually European or Indians these are the employees of the shipping company. They are paid on annual contracts, which incorporate a range of benefits, holidays and training.

In contrast, the ship is run, cleaned and maintained by seafarers who are Filipinos or Chinese - making up half of the manpower, who are voyage contracted by a manning agency.

They are flown out to join a ship where they may know nobody, and may have little means of communication with officers. They may have only one call home once a month. Internet access is variable. Seamen sign on – two or three months for the officers, but upwards of 9 to 13 months for the youngest, least well paid and least protected. The agency bills the shipping firm, the firm is absolved of any direct responsibility for the terms and conditions of these men, who are only paid while at sea. The agencies offer unregulated jobs for those who would risk a great deal for 1000 dollars a month. The International Transport Workers' Federation is the largest seafarers' Union, but many of these carriers do not recognise a unionised workforce.

Seafarers have a well earned reputation for hard work, courage, and an eternally cheerful disposition. Clare beautifully describes their lives, and the high price they pay for our cheap goods imported from over the seas.

## Anti-war pioneer

**Duncan Bowie** champion of colonial freedom

**THE POLITICS OF DISSENT: A BIOGRAPHY OF E D Morel**  
Donald Mitchell  
(Silverwood Books, £11)

My first reaction was why another biography of Morel. The author of this new biography states that this is the first biography of Morel since Seymour Cock's work of 1921. This is just plain wrong, as the author within the bibliography acknowledges the biography published by the American academic in 1980. Morel's work has also been covered in Helena Swanwick's 1924 history of the Union of Democratic Control Builders of Peace and in Adam Hochschild's 2006 classic *King Leopold's Ghost*. Mitchell is not a professional historian, but a farmer from Northern Ireland who after working for the World Wildlife Fund, retired to Dartmouth Park in North London. While I'm not convinced that the new biography adds much to previous works. Mitchell

has nevertheless researched the voluminous Morel archives and written a comprehensive and readable volume.

Morel is not quite the forgotten figure Mitchell claims, but the new work is well worth reading. Mitchell occasionally introduces comparisons with contemporary politics and foreign policy issues, which points to the relevance of Morel's work. The biography takes us through Morel's work in the Congo Reform Association before the First World War and his role in the UDC during the war and in the immediate post-war period. Morel was imprisoned during the war for smuggling one of his anti-war works to the French pacifist, Romain Rolland in neutral Switzerland, but was returned to parliament for Dundee in the 1922 election, defeating Winston Churchill.

Morel hoped to become Foreign Secretary in McDonald's 1924 Government, but he was never part of the core Labour Party leadership. He campaigned

against the Versailles Peace Treaty and against Germany being required to pay reparations for war damage. Morel argued that Germany was not solely responsible for the outbreak of war and argued that the 'war guilt' clause in the treaty was unjustified. He was generally regarded, unjustifiably, as pro German, and in war time as a traitor. Mitchell also briefly covers Morel's support for Irish republicanism – though Morel distanced himself from his closest Congo Reform colleague, Roger Casement, who sought German support for the Irish independence struggle, which not surprisingly during wartime led to his execution. Morel also hoped to win the Nobel peace prize, but died in November 2014 before his nomination could be considered. This biography is worth trading, but also read Morel's books on the Congo, such as *Red Rubber* and his attack on wartime censorship *On Truth and War*.



# World Cup bets on



**Dermot Neligan** on the curse of gambling in an on-line age

Perhaps it's the (usually suppressed) moralising Christian within me; maybe a self-confessed thrifty instinct. Whatever it is, the result is the same – unequivocal scorn for the gambling industry, in all its guises. Not least its callous class targeting of those least equipped to pay for the consequences of taking their 'fun' too far.

As a newly 'adult' young male I should form part of the demographic fodder of the industry. Indiscriminately preying upon the whimsical fantasy of young eternal optimists, the bevy of 'flutter' pushing bookmakers has, amidst World Cup festivities, reached epic proportions.

In a new tech-savvy App-driven culture, the 'online gaming experience' is more readily available than ever; as of 19th June 2014 seven of the top 100 free Apps were high street bookmakers on digital platforms. Potent new facilitators of instant betting, it reflects a broader shift online, with all its enticements of real time betting, constantly adjusting odds and of course instant transfer of money out of the users account. A new smartphone equipped 18-30 age demographic lie prey to a virtual reality that sees at the innocuous tap of a button or swipe of a finger, the ready dispatching of a day's wage.

Central to the 'normalising' of such behaviours is the media's aggressive campaign of marketing. During the recent World Cup, the ITV ad breaks were punctuated by relaying the latest odds at frenzied speed. We're long acquainted to the Cockney 'charm' of Ray Winstone informing us the latest 'in play odds' across an array of markets; the adverts of said bookmakers competitors similarly dubious, not least in implicit appeal to a certain social grouping.

The infiltration of the betting industry into conventionally 'working class' football is stark, typified in the emblazoning of a recent tabloid World Cup score chart with



**The greatest show on earth? Brazil's world cup is as much a lesson in entrenched social problems as 'tiki-taka' and the overhead tick**

promotional enticements for yet another gambling brand. Perhaps most infuriatingly, said wall chart is likely to adorn the walls of many a young eager football fan's bedroom wall. Gambling companies advertises frequent interruptions before, during and after the football matches threaten to fatefully synonymise football with gambling. Perhaps the poster's small writing: 'We take your fun seriously. 18+ Bet responsibly' tacitly alludes to the age indiscriminate ploy that threatens to taint the Beautiful Game for all spectators.

The gambling industry, in seeking to build upon successive annual revenue growth of 7% against an otherwise subdued backdrop of other sectors stagnation, has unashamedly targeted the relatively deprived areas of the UK. In the face of recession era business closures, local authorities across the North, as well as the more disadvantaged London inner boroughs, have all too readily licensed the big bookmakers to fill the void.

Mass openings have set a recent record of 9128 betting shops across the UK, yet crucially these are spatially concentrated in the most deprived corners of the country – Tower Hamlets alone has 81 licensed betting shops for a population of little over 250 000, working out at one shop per 3000 or so residents. The comparative figure for leafy, affluent Richmond upon Thames? One betting shop per 7200 residents. However crude a barometer, particularly in the new technological age, it shows the broader focus of betting companies upon poorer socio-economic

groupings.

Gambling sector boom is a loss for us all. The fact that it brings in £700 million a year to the Treasury surely reasons the cross Party impotence on clamping down on excessive gambling promotion. The consequences of threatened addiction; even in cold monetary terms, are much greater than the perils of taking action. The case for central governmental paternalism has never been so strong and the necessity for local government to dissuade the invasion of the thinly veiled money drains never so urgent as it is now.

The concept of gambling is of course nothing new – the appeal of earning 'something for nothing' has intoxicated countless cultures and civilisations, whilst the regulated gambling market globally is currently worth some \$355 billion a year. Yet surely it's the profound growth of the UK domestic betting market, as of yet uninhibited by Westminster that causes alarm.

The combined growth of store quantity, online traffic and total revenues of the big gambling firms is damning indictment of all the major parties. Technologies eroding the barriers of rationality, through facilitating impulsive gambling via new App mediums has resulted in an unmitigated social disaster for Britain. Concerted industry advertising still only meekly regulated must end, or the 43% of Briton's who currently regularly gamble may well swell the already estimated half a million UK addicts. Let's not allow the 'flutter' to snowball.