

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

July/August 2015

#275

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Whip hand

Cat Smith MP

Bucking the trend

John Palmer

UK/EU Federalism

Rachel Robinson

Human Rights Act

Euclid Tsakalotos

D-Day for EU/Greece

Peter Hain

Anti-austerity



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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

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Email: editor@chartist.org.uk
Twitter: @Chartist48
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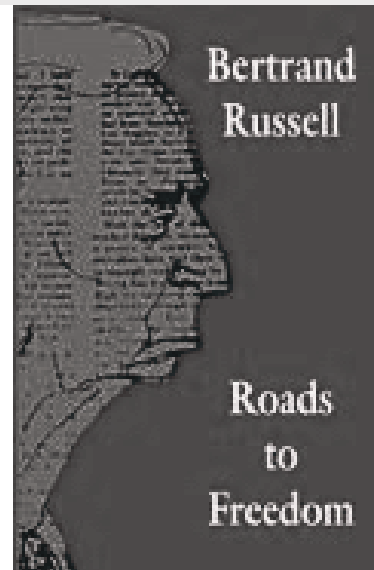
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Patty McCabe explores political activism after the General Election

OUR HISTORY - 61

Bertrand Russell - Roads to Freedom (1918)

The philosopher, Bertrand Russell, was politically active throughout his long life- from the No Conscription Fellowship during the First World War to CND and the Committee of 100 in the 1960's. His first political work in 1896 was a study of German Social Democracy. In 1916 he published the Principles of Social Reconstruction, in 1917 his Political Ideals, and in 1920 he published a critique of the Theory and Practice of Bolshevism. This extract is taken from his 1918 work Roads to Freedom which reviewed the principles of socialism and anarchism, advocating a form of guild socialism. Russell was pluralist in his politics but can best be described as a libertarian socialist and pacifist, a conviction he retained throughout his life. The attempt to conceive imaginatively a better order of human society than the destructive and cruel chaos in which mankind has hitherto existed is by no means modern: it is at least as old as Plato, whose Republic set the model for the Utopias of subsequent philosophers. Whoever contemplates the world in the light of an ideal – whether what he seeks be intellect, or art, or love, or simple happiness, or all together – must feel a great sorrow in the evils that men needlessly allow to continue, and –



if he be a man of force and vital energy – an urgent desire to lead men to the realisation of the good which inspires his creative vision. It is this desire which has been the primary force moving the pioneers of Socialism and Anarchism, as it moved the inventors of ideal commonwealths in the past. In this there is nothing new. What is new in Socialism and Anarchism is that close relation of the ideal to the present sufferings of men, which has enabled powerful political movements to grow out of the hopes of solitary thinkers. It is this that makes Socialism and Anarchism important, and it is this that makes them dangerous to those who batten, consciously or unconsciously, upon the evils of our present order of society. 'The world that we must seek is a world in which the creative spirit is alive, in which life is an adventure full of joy and hope, based rather upon the impulse to construct than upon the desire to retain what we possess or to seize what is possessed by others. It must be a world in which affection has free play. In which love is purged of the instinct for domination, in which cruelty and envy has been dispelled by happiness and the unfettered development of all the instincts that build up life and fill it with mental delights. Such a world is possible; it waits only for men to wish to create it.'

LETTERS

Ireland says yes to an equal society

On May 23rd, 2015 Ireland finally threw off the shackles of a conservative catholic past and voted in favour for social equality. The Irish electorate were asked to vote in a referendum to include gay marriage in our constitution and we agreed in great numbers to this proposal. Many young people who had to leave Ireland in recent years due to austerity, managed to make the journey back home to vote yes. They sailed home and flew home under the hash tag 'home to vote' which lit up Twitter. While the youth turnout at polling stations generated a buzz, there were many older voters who also voted yes. These people are of a

generation who grew up in a catholic conservative state, a generation suffocated by stringent church laws that prohibited an equal society. This was their chance to reject something that had blighted most of their lives. The margin of victory for the yes side in the gay marriage referendum showed modern Irish people's rejection of church morals. 62.1% of the electorate compared to 37.9% voted in favour of marriage equality. All political parties in the country supported the introduction of gay marriage which left the no side backed up by conservative Christian groups and the catholic church who ran a campaign based on fear. The

referendum had nothing to do with children, it was a marriage referendum, yet the no side ran their campaign on the fear of what may happen to children. Where were these people when so many children were abused by the likes of the Christian brothers in schools and churches across the country? Those times thankfully and hopefully are gone. Ireland has voted in favour of equality. Ireland has rejected hate.

LILY MURPHY, DUBLIN

Battle lines drawn

Not unexpectedly the new Tory majority government is wasting no time in pushing through the more controversial measures in their party manifesto. The European referendum bill is foremost amongst them paving the way for an in-out referendum in late 2016 (not May). Cameron will return from Europe with a fig leaf and seek support for continuing membership. As **John Palmer** writes, the result won't be a foregone conclusion (polls can get it wrong). Eurosceptic, narrow nationalist sentiment fuelled by UKIP and the Tory right, plus a few Labour and far left EU opponents, underlines the need for democratic socialists to make the case for a more democratic, social European Union all the greater. We also have the ludicrous proposals to legislate for any government to run a 'budget surplus' in 'normal' times (whatever they are, only in two years of Thatcher's 11 years did Tories secure a surplus) and for no tax or NI increases for the term. This means that the government will dig even deeper at the foundations of the welfare state, public services and the NHS. Half a million public sector jobs are under threat while local councils, already shrunk by a third, face cuts on a similar scale, making proposals for 'Northern powerhouses' as empty as the 'Big Society' eye-wash of the first Cameron term. Privatisation will be the name of the game from health to housing, criminal justice to street cleaning. The £12 billion welfare axe will hit working families in receipt of tax credits, those on housing benefit, the disabled, sick and unemployed. The post-war welfare state settlement, already undermined, will look unrecognisable. The Tories are seeking to lock in austerity and privatisation indefinitely, creating a new settlement where the wealthy and big business control ever wider realms of the public and enjoy light touch tax. It is a topsy-turvy world of a warped socialism for the rich with the state guaranteeing the profits of banks and corporations with bailouts and sell-offs like Royal Mail, Lloyds, Royal Mint, Met Office and RBS where tax payers will lose a minimum of £13 billion and rising, while the rest endure a naked capitalism. Meanwhile the Labour Party wrestles with its future after enduring a second damaging defeat. The faint-hearts call for a return to the halcyon days of New Labour. Liz Kendall is unashamed, while Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper are more guarded. All peddle some version of Labour not being business friendly, not appealing to aspirational voters, overspending in last Labour government or being too left wing. Thankfully MPs have enabled a left candidate in the form of Jeremy Corbyn to enter the contest. So an alternative view to the dominant austerity mantra will be voiced. Corbyn will also speak truth to power with an internationalist, redistributive narrative. Perhaps it will encourage more to talk of the founding values of Labour to secure social justice, equality, cooperation and an economy that puts people before profit and nurtures a society that enables all to lead

a fulfilling, creative life, free from fear and want.

We would have preferred a serious discussion of policy, programme and strategy engaging members and supporters before a leadership election, as **Jon Lansman** reports. But at least having a choice of candidates representing wider strands of Labour opinion is progress. We urge all socialists, trade unionists and Labour sympathisers to pay their £3 associate membership and get involved in the leadership and London mayor contests. Hard-won trade union rights are also in the Tory cross-hairs. **Manuel Cortes** outlines their attack plan to virtually outlaw strikes and disempower unions. Resistance is crucial and the June 20th People's Assembly demonstration against austerity is just the first step. A major challenge will be for unions to reach out to the modern 'precariat', the four million plus self employed and the many millions of unorganised workers in service sectors, or on zero hours contracts with imaginative actions and campaigns to build support. But it was the confusing message on austerity and deficit reduction that failed to convince key sections of the electorate. Austerity-lite with humane cuts meant many voters opted for the authentic austerity party. **Peter Hain** provides a radical plan for Labour to move out of the neo-liberal straightjacket by launching instead a programme of green investment, sustainable growth and job creation kick-started with progressive taxation and modest borrowing. Leadership candidates should read his book Back to the Future of Socialism to get the arguments. **Cat Smith MP** who successfully overturned a Tory majority echoes the call for an alternative economic policy. Of course Scotland was the other tsunami that beached Labour where all but one of its 41 seats were lost to the SNP. **Gerry Hassan** assesses the strange death of Labour Scotland with its failure to read the signs of growing nationalist support, complacency, ossifying membership and tired politics. **Pete Rowlands** finds a similar story in Wales though Labour lost more to the Tories than Plaid. **Don Flynn** discusses the fundamental crisis afflicting the Westminster state, with Scotland and the regions pressing for greater autonomy from a sinking London based parliament perceived as remote and over-centralised with an antiquated governance system of Lords, monarch and City in desperate need of overhaul. **Frank Lee** sees a new bust down the line for Osborne's fragile property bubble fuelled recovery. Amid the hoo-haa over Magna Carta **Rachel Robinson** outlines Cameron's cynical threat to scrap the Human Rights Act. Greece remains the front-line of the anti-austerity battle. Solidarity is vital. As **Euclid Tsakalotos** argues, fundamental values of pluralism and democracy are at stake. There are divisions in our ruling elites: pro- or anti-Europe; civil liberties versus state control; centralised or decentralised Britain. The question is will a revitalised Labour Party be able to exploit these divisions and forge a new unifying political narrative.

An alternative view to the dominant austerity mantra will be voiced

UK/EU - two federalisms brewing?

In the face of Cameron's in-out referendum **John Palmer** asks if the left has the imagination for a federal Europe

No sooner did David Cameron recover from his shock general election victory than he has launched the biggest double gamble of his political career: the 're-negotiation' of the terms of Britain's membership of the European Union and a further devolution of powers to the UK nations and regions. The two processes are bound to interact with each other and both set important new challenges for the British left. In a repeat of Harold Wilson's ploy in 1975, Cameron hopes to emerge from back room haggling with his fellow EU leaders with a document whose contents are sufficiently arcane and esoteric as to allow him to convince enough of his fellow Tories and the British electorate to vote to remain within the European Union.

In 1975 Wilson pulled off precisely this trick – but in admittedly very different circumstances than today. Although the Labour Party was as divided internally on Europe then as the Tories are today, Wilson had the benefit of a popular press by and large favourable to the UK staying in "the Common Market." A strong public campaign for a Yes vote triumphed before anyone had really twigged that Wilson's much vaunted re-negotiation of the terms obtained by the previous Tory government led by Ted Heath, involved no real changes. It will not be so easy this time round for Cameron to pull the same trick on his ideologically hard line Euro-sceptic right wingers. They are better informed about the minutiae of how the EU works than was true of the 'anti-Common Market' 40 years ago and more determined to make a final break with the European Union. There are more than a few Tory MPs willing to split the party wide open if they are presented with a re-negotiated settlement which does not – in effect – pull Britain out of the core political functions of the EU. And this is without the role of UKIP – which is exercising attraction for both the Tory right and for a significant chunk of Labour's former

working class electorate.

Today the media in Britain is overwhelmingly hostile to Britain's EU membership; the popular culture has undoubtedly also become more Euro-sceptic. Meanwhile the establishment pro-European lobby looks politically jaded and large parts of the Labour Party and the further left have effectively given up in making the case for a more integrated, democratic and progressive European Union.

To date Cameron has been reticent about the precise list of demands he intends to put to the rest of the European Union. He has resorted to generalisations about most of the issues which are likely to form part of his agenda to leave himself the maximum

Taken together this federalising 'Double Helix' could open new horizons for a socially, economically and politically different European Union

wiggle room. This has irritated even those EU leaders most closely ideologically in sympathy with the neo-liberal economic strategy of the British Tories. They have also been infuriated by the refusal of UK government ministers to even try to balance their criticisms of Brussels with a clear defence of the principle of UK membership. What are we told Cameron will want to concentrate on a few key areas of policy in seeking new terms for Britain? They include: a kind of emergency "cap" on the permitted level of migration to the UK from the rest of the EU; some tightening of the rules governing the benefit entitlement rights of EU workers in Britain; action to accelerate the completion of the EU "Single Market" in areas like services and energy; and agreed language somehow exempting Britain from the commitment in the founding Treaty of Rome in 1957 to work for "an ever closer Union of the peoples and states" of the EU. Along the way there may be other issues which the UK will want clarified. These include – as yet unspecified – guarantees that as

the Euro-area countries within the EU intensify their own integration, that Britain's interests in banking and financial services will be protected against threats from the voting power of the vast majority of EU states, which form the Euro-area.

Finally, London wants to see even higher priority for new world trade liberalisation agreement such as the controversial trans-Atlantic TTIP deal. Cameron would like to see his demands met through formal changes to the EU Treaties. This, however, will be strongly resisted if only because re-opening the existing legal commitments in the treaties is to open a vast Pandora's Box the consequences of which could quickly spiral out of control as other states seek changes they want. One way round this might be some political promise to examine possible treaty amendments the next time they come up for review. This is unlikely before 2020 when there is talk about far reaching constitutional changes designed to create a Euro-area economic union (not just a monetary union). But France and Germany seem to have reached agreement on further steps in this direction already without having to change the treaties for now. Cameron will almost certainly press for an acceleration of his original 2017 deadline for a UK "In/Out" EU referendum – to next year. This is because elections are due in both France and Germany in 2017 which would make it even harder for Berlin and Paris to agree to London's demands. But central European states will also not allow laws governing the free movement of workers to be made a nonsense of by a UK immigration cap. Some other right wing governments are willing to consider changes which the UK could make on its own account to modify existing "in-work" and some other benefits paid to workers from other EU states.

But a large block of governments and the European Parliament are opposed to any overt discrimination against their workers employed in the UK.

However insubstantial the eventual agreement with which Cameron emerges after the haggling in Brussels, what will be the impact on the forthcoming referendum? Currently opinion polls suggest a clear win in an EU referendum for "Stay In." But after the general election we all know a little more about the limitations of opinion polls. The debate in Britain about continued membership is in part coloured by the growth of right wing Euro-scepticism expressed vehemently by UKIP and the Tory hard right. But it is also affected by the revulsion and dismay felt on large parts of the left at the ruthless drive of governments in the EU for ever greater economic austerity. This has led to ill-disguised attempts to de-stabilise the elected Syriza government in Greece and a refusal to negotiate what every half way numerate economist has long advocated – a negotiated reduction in the debt owed by Greece to other EU central banks and the IMF. The Berlin government's dogmatic insistence on still further austerity (with the disgraceful acquiescence of the German Social Democrats) could yet bring trigger a full scale crisis in the Euro-area and even the wider EU.

Serious analysis

Labour's defeat in the British general election reflects a general decline in support for European social democracy. Any serious analysis of the way forward for progressive politics at the European level must begin with a hard look at political trends. Both centre right and the centre-left parties in the EU level are weaker and are threatened with marginalisation by new political trends. The rise of the nationalist, Euro-sceptic right (including UKIP and the French National Front) is well documented. Further to the right are smaller but growing forces of the openly neo-fascist and neo-Nazi right (most obviously including Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary). The longer austerity based strategies persist the greater the risk that these forces will grow. But it would take an economic collapse similar to 1931 to put the fascists centre stage. On the left, there are also signs of profound change under way. Syriza's election victory has brought the radical left to power in Europe for the first time since the Second World War. The

recent local elections in Spain have also dramatically underlined the growth of radical new social protest movements, led by Podemos, which are splintering the mainstream parties. Elsewhere some left parties – such as Die Linke in Germany and the Green Left Party in the Netherlands – are also gaining strength. Under pressure from similar left parties in Portugal, the official Socialist opposition has shifted to opposition to further austerity policies. Having been burned by earlier experience in coalitions, the European Green parties are growing again – not least here in Britain. On the far left, however, the austerity crisis has brought little gain.

The weakness of the organised labour movement and a parallel decline in class consciousness (what Marx defined as "a class for itself, not just a class in itself") has disoriented much of the far left. This has been reflected in derisory electoral support as well as episodes of bitter internal conflict. There are some very difficult questions to be confronted in all of this. What are the implications of the decline in a class which provided the political firepower for the socialist left since the middle of the 19th century? What truth is there in the analysis of thinkers such as Guy Standing, author of an important new book (*A Charter for the Precariat?*) who argues that the Precariat is the emerging new subaltern class in late capitalism? If so what political expression will the Precariat give birth to and what relationship can it forge with the remaining strongholds of organised trade unionism? Common ground exists between the new left parties, the Greens and some forces on the left of social democracy about the urgent priority of a radical change of economic and political direction in the European Union. The commitment of parties like Syriza and Podemos to systemic economic and social change at European level is striking. But the doctrinaire left's alternative amounts in practice to little more than a nationalist advocacy of currency devaluation – a recipe for more impoverishment and inequality.

In Britain another development seems bound to impact on the EU re-negotiation. The virtual wipe out of the mainstream parties in Scotland has left the SNP is filling the space for a leftist social democratic party. Indeed a wider revival of the radical left in

Scotland – outside and within the SNP – may well be a feature of the Scottish Parliament elections next year. The Tories know that the UK "Union" will disintegrate unless further devolution of powers are given not only to Scotland, but also Wales, Northern Ireland and the big English city regions.

The Tory version of devolution would paralyse Scotland's ability to counter austerity by requiring it to finance most of its own public spending. Edinburgh is unlikely to accept this and have to help pay for Trident too. In spite of all this, a referendum rejection of EU cannot be excluded. The economic risks for capital if the UK leaves the EU are enormous. It is not just a question of the terms of future access to the European single market but the loss of the collective negotiating power which the EU as a whole deploys when negotiating economic and trade deals with the US, China, Russia and other important trade powers.

Unfinished European reform

For the left there is vast unfinished European reform agenda including the urgent need for new growth and employment strategies, action to raise minimum wages throughout the EU, laws to protect the rights of migrants and the most vulnerable in society, and much more ambitious "green" sustainable energy and development measures. A progressive European left alternative should also aim for a federal, democratic UK constitution. This should include solidarity provisions similar to those in the German constitution guaranteeing a limit on tax revenue inequality between the economies and regions in the EU. There are obvious attractions for the mostly Labour run big northern and midlands city regions – as well as the smaller UK nations – in this approach.

A federalising – if not yet fully federal – UK system would stimulate a more constructive British role within a still integrating European Union. Taken together this federalising 'Double Helix' could open new horizons for a socially, economically and politically different European Union. Does the British left have the imagination and the energy to join with those from Greece to Germany, from Ireland to Spain who want to seize the opportunity?

John Palmer is a former European Editor of the Guardian

Labour: trapped in the Westminster bubble

Don Flynn explains how Labour's ineptitude in dealing with the crisis of the Westminster state has contributed to its predicament

The unexpected gift of a parliamentary majority to David Cameron's Conservatives might encourage some to believe that at least one of the constitutional crises that has loomed large in recent years has been resolved.

Once again the Westminster state has recovered its knack of granting stability and the prospect of a decent period of office to political parties that win only a minority of the popular vote. On this occasion a 36.7 per cent share of the poll has proven sufficient to give the Tories a 12 seat majority and prospect of a run at government that will last them through to 2020. What had seemed to be on the cards only a short time beforehand – sweeping electoral reform and the likelihood of the reconstitution of the party system as a consequence – has now receded to distant grumbling on the part of the third and fourth level parties that feel aggrieved by the current arrangements.

Labour seems least likely to carp against the injustices of first-past-the-post. Its leadership contest is dominated by the themes of getting back in touch with 'aspirational families' and building a partnership with the supposedly more progressive elements of the business community. The task of winning more votes five years down the line, or even closing the gap between the Tories, will require so much focus on a conventional narrative about the economy and what needs to be done to overcome its ailments as to preclude anything that looks like a more fundamental critique of power and the way it operates.

Yet it is easy to make the argument that it is precisely the neglect of this issue which has brought the mainstream left to its current low point. The most obvious sign of this failing is the way in which the once secure bastion which Scotland provided for Labourism has been shattered by



Palace of Westminster: gloomy outlook, crumbling edifice, taking hostages

the inability of the party in that country to appreciate the nature of the national grievance north of the border.

Growing dis-union

The United Kingdom, forged by the Act of Union in 1707, had laid the foundations for a country that adopted the name of 'Great Britain' primarily by offering the Scottish bourgeoisie a share in the spoils of an empire which until then had been a largely English endeavour. Its benefits had extended to the working classes of the developing industrial regions of the country through the imperial demand for ships and engineering products and the energy resources of its coalmines.

Distinct elements of Scottish national culture had favoured a modest appropriation of the benefits that came by way of this partnership and rather less of the vulgar conspicuous consumption that went on in England. For decades this strengthened the ethos of patriarchal 'Lairds' ruling in a benevolent Tory mode, which was only displaced when the United Kingdom swung to the brash, free market right under Margaret Thatcher. From that point onwards the puritan one national tradition dominant in Scottish

politics was revamped as social democratic welfare statism.

This was a plausible adjustment as long as the welfare state itself could hold its place within the Great Britain that emerged from the turmoil and class confrontation of the 1980s. But the fact was that its position as a useful compromise between the needs of the working class for a degree of social insurance against the risks of life in a market society, and the need of British-based companies for a decently well-educated and socially disciplined workforce to take its place in factories, coalmines and offices came under strain from the international competition fostered by globalisation.

Much stress

The historical line of evolution that has placed the structures of the Westminster-centred state under so much stress is summed up by firstly, the dwindling of the guarantees which came from the exploitation of a global empire which had underpinned the Great Britain project since its earliest days. Secondly, although Britain's position amongst the leading world powers survived for a longer period by virtue of both its international alliances and its

still-influential commercial enterprises, which allowed it to be profitable enough to support a welfare state, this also began to be eroded as once national industries transformed themselves into transnationals and became less tolerant of the idea of supporting the social investment in human capital and infrastructure represented by the welfare state system.

Marked decline

As a consequence of these developments the Westminster state's appeal to the broad swathe of the population in Scotland and, increasingly, the Welsh and English parts of the United Kingdom periphery, has been in marked decline over much of the past generation. No longer able to secure imperial preference and increasingly less able to support a decent level of welfare or the future of iconic services like the NHS, government from Westminster has found itself under increasing scrutiny and prone to spasmodic revolts against its ossified logic.

The one thing that has sustained its appeal to at least the segments of the population for which such things are of primary importance is its role as a last line defence of a law and order regime across the whole territory of the country which has the sanctity of property and all the activities associated with chasing after rents that come from monopoly control of assets, at the core of its mission. Dysfunctional and irrational as the Westminster state appears to many, it still presides over an area of land that has value and wealth locked up in many of its cities and rural hinterlands. While these might be flat-lining in terms of productivity and the production of new surplus value, at least they can be milked

for an income that will maintain privilege for another generation or two.

But it is the social justice issues which arise from the Westminster state's continued efforts to maintain its grip on power in the land which have been entirely unaddressed by all the generations of Labour leaders since the end of the second world war. The party long ago made its peace with the structures of power which prevail in the UK, preferring to operate with the delusion that they function in a rational and objective manner and could be put to use as a means to effect redistribution and greater social justice just as they served Conservative governments in securing a massive social subservience to the demands of the

What radical change will be required to alter the way democratic society governs itself?

free market.

In providing the means for a Conservative party to govern as a majority in circumstances where it has the support of scarcely one-third of the popular vote the Westminster state seems to have staggered sufficiently back to something approaching rude health. But other elements of the crisis of political power over which it presides remain active and will dominate the agenda in the years immediately to come.

The Scotland crisis will expand during this time to become the Northern England crisis as the task of regenerating industrial capacity in that region flounders as a result of numerous factors, but with the stark fact of the asymmetrical support that Westminster gives to the global service sector in London and the

South East being prominent. The prosperity of the capital region is secured in large part because the array of Westminster state structures, from the policies of the Treasury and the Bank of England through to the role in world affairs which the prime minister's office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office aim for, and a great deal of this works directly against the interests of people who are trying to get value creation off the ground again in places like Yorkshire and the North West.

All this will be happening at a time when leading figures in the Labour party squabble over the best tactics to adopt to ensure that they are able to fulfil the mission set by their long-ago compromise with the power of the Westminster state, which is to populate the benches of the House of Commons with parliamentarians who would be backing, at best, a governing party, but more likely just another squad for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

But such is the speed at which the crisis of the Great British state is developing, we need not pin too many of our hopes on the prospect that Labour will eventually 'get it' and start kicking out more purposefully against the powers and structures which have confined it to the minor role of peripheral reform and minor adjustment of the direction which capitalism is taking in the modern world. The kicking out is likely to be coming from other quarters who are currently further down the food chain when it comes to the attention of the Westminster powers-that-be. The left should be concentrating its thinking on what its role will be when these confrontations start to reach their fruition and what radical change will be required to alter the way democratic society governs itself.

Don Flynn is Director of Migrant Rights Network and a member of Chartist EB

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Tory assault on democracy

Manuel Cortes says confronting the toughest anti-union laws in the EU is imperative

Defeat tastes incredibly bitter. What was on offer at the general election were two different visions of how we run our society. The tried, tested and failed Tory trickle-down neoliberal model, and a new economic settlement which would have started to challenge vested interests and ever-growing inequality. Unfortunately, we now have a vicious right-wing Tory government whose manifesto made clear that trade unions will be one of their first targets. They ain't stupid - and rightly understand that a strong labour movement is an insurmountable barrier towards achieving the neoliberal nirvana that they so badly crave. Trade unions act as conveyor belts in mobilising people and resources towards progressive aims, indeed that is what TSSA are doing when we help Labour fight elections. The UK already has some of the toughest anti-union laws of any democratic country. In fact no other EU country comes anywhere near when it comes to restricting the ability of workers to defend their interests. Our country wilfully and repeatedly violates the International Labour Standards to which it is a signatory. It is also somewhat ironic that for a party who pride themselves as fighters of red tape, when it come to trade unions, there is never quite enough! The thresholds being proposed for industrial action ballots in public services, if applied to the election of MPs, would have seen 270 less of them sitting on the Tory benches. They also defy the long established democratic tradition that any plebiscite is decided by those who exercise their right to vote, with the outcome settled by the majority view amongst them. Seeking to introduce a threshold which will make an industrial action ballot invalid unless 50% of those entitled to vote exercise their right, is simply undemocratic. Of course this will be compounded when it comes to public services when an even greater hurdle will need to be overcome.

Workers will only be able to take part in lawful industrial action if the outcome of the ballot shows at least 40% of those entitled to vote support it. Results that would otherwise be considered overwhelming - a 70% vote in favour on a 57% turnout - won't be enough! Of course, if the Tories had the remotest interest in enhancing participation in ballots they would be making the process simpler. Unions have long argued that both electronic and workplace ballots will enhance our members' democratic involvement. At present, the anti-union laws only allow us to hold postal ballots, not just for industrial action, but also for leadership elections and the political fund. In an age when electronic means of communications are the norm, the anti-union laws are keeping us stuck in an antediluvian age. Sadly, I don't see the Tories doing anything whatsoever to enhance union democracy as their only aim is to destroy us! Some commentators suggest these proposals will largely consign strikes, particularly in public services, to the dustbin of history. Let's face it - that's exactly what the Tories are desperately trying to do. However, I am far more optimistic. When the anti-union laws were introduced, with their complex balloting and notice procedures, I suspect many thought that workers' ability to participate in lawful industrial action was largely coming to an end. However, unions reacted by enhancing our organisational capabilities and time and time again, we have outwitted the anti-union laws. In fact, these proposed restrictions are, in a bizarre way, a glowing tribute to our success! Sadly, the anti-union laws have turned industrial relations into legal disputes. The first people we consult when our members decide to be balloted is our legal team. These unjust laws have clearly given bosses the upper-hand, with the threat of a costly injunction always looming large. As everyone knows, ever since the Tolpuddle Martyrs were deported to Australia, the British

judiciary has hardly been a friend of organised labour. That is why the proposed restrictions will see even more bosses running to the courts, even though ultimately, industrial disputes can only be resolved through negotiations. Our recent union conference reacted to these proposals by agreeing that we would work with other unions and use all means at our disposal, to defeat them. This means that when our members are prepared to take on their bosses, we will support them, even if this brings us into conflict with unjust laws. We will not be browbeaten! We take inspiration from our proud history - our movement is built on the shoulders of giants. Just in the same way as the fight for justice for the Tolpuddle Martyrs resulted in them being brought back home, we will defeat these laws - don't mourn, organise!

Manuel Cortes in
General
Secretary of
transport union
TSSA



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Corbyn: torchbearer for an alternative to Blairism

Jon Lansman on a flawed leadership process

In the New Labour years, the Left was systematically marginalised and excluded from senior positions in the party and ministerial responsibility. In spite of the culture of youth over experience fostered by Ed Miliband in his front bench promotions, that explains why there was no queue of left candidates for the leadership when Ed resigned - just one of candidates keen to apologise for alleged overspending by the last Labour government.

So it was that, after failing to challenge publicly the neoliberal narrative on austerity which is the primary reason why Labour was judged wanting in its handling of the economy, that widespread dismay at the uninspiring nature of the leadership election forced a rethink.

Andy Burnham who had for years fostered a left self-image and won support accordingly began to tack right, competing with Yvette Cooper for the Blairite votes, even arguing in favour of primaries for parliamentary selections which almost no one but Progress wanted.

Groundswell

But still, when Jeremy Corbyn emerged from the conclave of left MPs who sought a challenger it was surprising that such a groundswell of grassroots enthusiasm was unleashed.

In this election - unlike the last - the only important role that MPs could play was to make a nomination. Last time it had been possible to nominate one person and give your first preference vote to another, but the most important thing an MP did when their vote was worth the same as 930 trade unionists was which Miliband got their highest preference even if that was their fourth. Now that an MP is just another voter, their nomination appeared to be more significance than their subsequent vote will have.



Labour Party leadership election contenders 2015: watch the odds shorten on the rank outsider

That turned MPs into gatekeepers able to allow the Labour movement a real choice or to deny it. The hurdle of 15% of the party's MPs is simply too high. It should not require MPs to nominate candidates other than their preferred one in order for them to even be considered by party members. And yet, in moving to a 'Collins report-based system' of OMOV, Scotland has now not only introduced a 15% hurdle for parliamentarians but added another for councillors.

Rules

Let us hope that there will now be a willingness to change these rules. David Lammy, no left-winger, when he announced he was nominating Corbyn, tweeted: 'The next Labour leader should be chosen by members and supporters, not MPs.'

The fact that Jeremy Corbyn did qualify is a tribute to the massive social media campaign which took place, to pressure from

grassroots members on parliamentarians and also to the spirit of openness and tolerance fostered by Ed Miliband. Many observers, not least amongst those on the left and to the left of Labour, failed to notice the left resurgence that did take place during Ed's leadership, distracted by his concessions to the right in the name of party unity and by his failure to re-introduce effective democratic reform.

Better chance

Ironically, the new system gives Corbyn a better chance than any previous left-wing contender. All votes count the same, including those of 'registered supporters' who can sign up for £3; plenty of people from the non-Labour activist left will do this now they can vote for Corbyn. How long will it be before the Right cry foul at this opportunity? But don't blame us - we actively opposed its introduction.

Jon Lansman
edits **Left Futures**
website

Anti-austerity only route to Labour victory

Peter Hain on why Labour needs to break with the politics of neo-liberalism

John Edmonds, former general secretary of the GMB trade union, often shocked colleagues by reading the *Daily Telegraph* – for the sport not the politics: no mean cricketer himself. If John had glanced at the paper's comment section in early June he might have hit his own wicket in surprise. Because there was columnist Mary Riddell acknowledging that Britain 'is crying out for social democracy' due to the dismantling of the welfare state, ballooning child poverty, and injustice stalking the land, but meeting a less than radical response from the Labour Party. Whose example did she cite as the source of the kind of inspiration that she feels today's Labour Party lacks? The Chartists no less, plus a few other friends from days gone by.

Pallid imitation

She blames Labour's 2015 defeat on it having lost the passion that originally motivated members and supporters alike. Her over-harsh but no less salutary verdict on the 2015 campaign is that Labour's original vitality had given way to a 'pallid imitation' of Tory policy across the board. Although unfair, she does have a point. Labour hardly offered voters a vigorous alternative to Tory neoliberalism. That, rather than any supposed personality defects unfairly attributed to Ed Miliband, was our undoing.

Several years in office have more than once taken their toll on the spirit that drives Labour. Tony Crosland's classic text, *The Future of Socialism*, published in 1956, arose from his concern that the party had lost its bearings in the post-War world it had helped to build, and had become unsure about how to express its core values and fundamental purposes in a society that already enjoyed full employment and a welfare state.

In my new book, *Back to the Future of Socialism*, published

last January, I addressed that same sense of a party having lost its way after 13 years in office and of an electorate uncertain what Labour stands for, unsure whose side it is on, and unconvinced about where it is heading.

Mary Riddell's piece appeared the same week that the OECD joined the IMF in calling for Britain's public spending cuts to be slowed down. The IMF advised letting higher economic growth bring down the UK debt to GDP ratio gradually and urged a boost to growth through higher infrastructure spending. The OECD's concern was that cutting spending too quickly could endanger recovery – exactly what George Osborne had done five years before with his 2010 savage cuts package which choked off the post-banking crisis recovery under Labour.

Our Government had given the economy a big fiscal stimulus (worth nearly 5 per cent of GDP) in 2009-10. We did so mainly by allowing the 'automatic stabilisers' to operate in full (for example accepting a bigger budget deficit as tax revenues went down while welfare bills rose as the credit crunch sunk the economy into recession). The automatic stabilisers had contributed about 80 per cent of the total fiscal stimulus. The rest came from a VAT cut and – very important – a doubling of public investment by bringing forward projects worth over £30 billion. Shock, horror – expanding public spending and investment during austerity!

But as Keynes had shown would happen, in his demolition of austerity economics, the economy was growing again by late 2009, and the budget deficit was starting to come down from the stratospheric levels caused by the bank bailouts and the recession.

Yet so wedded is he to neoliberal dogmatism that Osborne's prompt response to the OECD and IMF 'heresy' of June 2015 was to announce £3 billion more cuts on top of the £13 billion

already declared for 2015-16.

These new cuts hit local government, further and higher education, transport, justice, business innovation and skills, and defence. This was even before Osborne's July 2015 budget when the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) expects £30 billion further cuts to 'unprotected' department spending (i.e. excluding health, schools and overseas aid) between 2015-16 and 2018-19 on top of the £12 billion cut in welfare benefits repeatedly pledged by Osborne and Cameron. Carl Emmerson of the IFS confirmed that the Tory cuts are being speeded up since the 2010-15 Parliament: austerity with a vengeance.

There's no doubt about the Tories' true ideological intentions, the kind of society they plan to create, whose interests they intend to sacrifice in building their brave new world, or their firm commitment to shrink the role of the state. If only the same could have been said of Labour's intentions in the 2015 election campaign.

Reject austerity

I argued for the Labour manifesto to reject austerity in favour of a substantial public investment stimulus of £30 billion per year over two years, with priority going to housebuilding, infrastructure, education and skills, and low carbon industry. This would have reversed the slowdown in the rate of economic recovery that we have seen since 2013 and boosted economic growth. Higher public investment today would have meant lower government borrowing tomorrow by keeping the economy growing instead of slowing, since a growing economy means rising tax revenues and falling welfare bills.

Instead, under Tory policy, growth this year is expected to be slower than last year and slower still next year. Once Osborne's 2016-18 spending squeeze grips the economy we can expect a re-

run of what happened in the last Parliament, with faltering economic growth, stagnant real living standards for all except a few at the top, and Osborne's deficit and debt targets – the altar upon which public services had to be sacrificed – missed again as they were in the last Parliament.

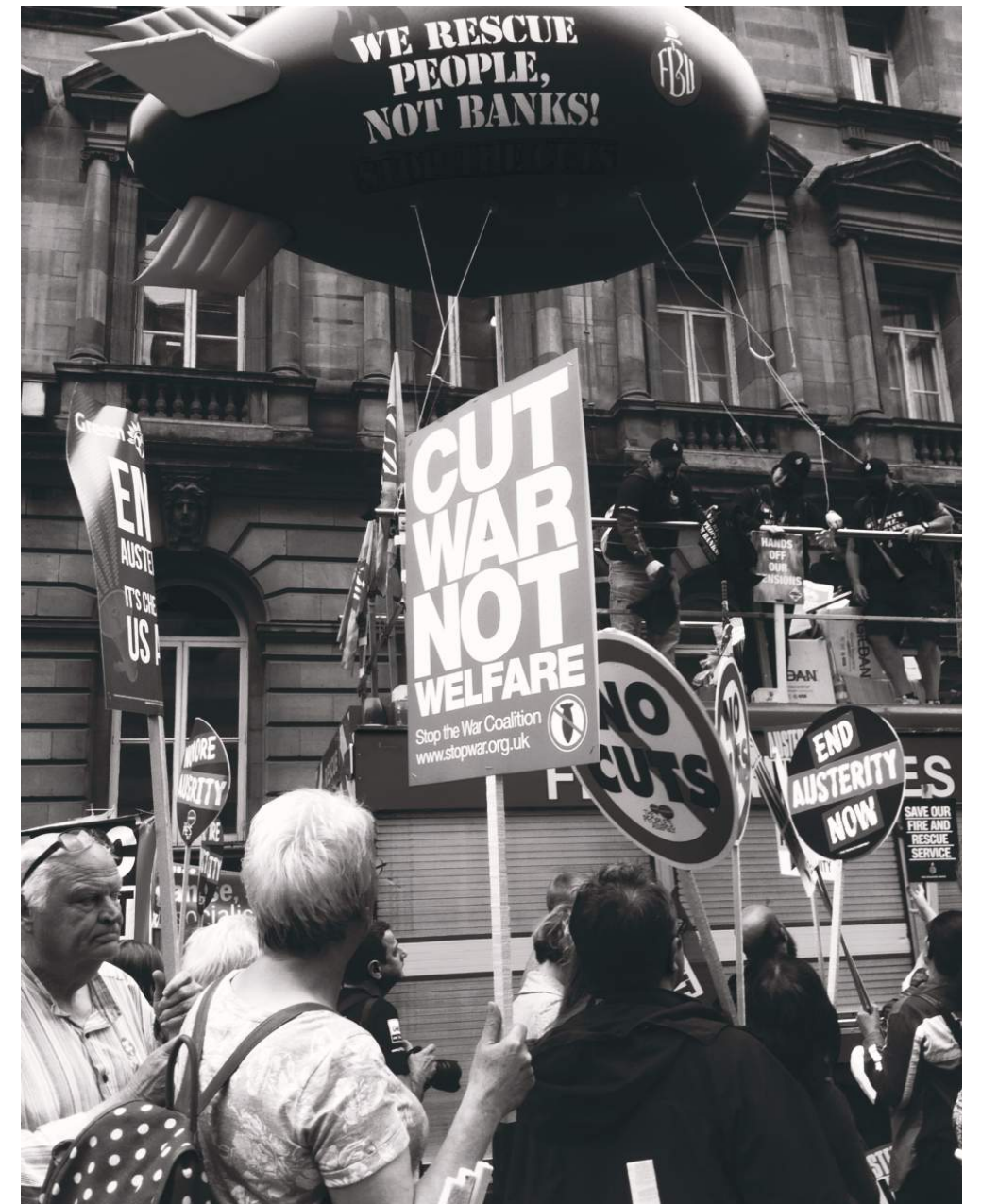
Labour could have hammered home the message that slow economic growth only delays deficit reduction. We could have insisted that reviving Britain's flagging economy required dumping austerity. We could have explained how faster economic growth would bear more of the burden of reducing the budget deficit, reducing or possibly ending the pressure for further public spending cuts. The consultancy Oxford Economics noted in 2014 that 'none of the spending cuts planned beyond 2014-15 would be needed to return the deficit to pre-crisis levels'.

Instead Labour promised 'sensible cuts' and to balance the current budget (i.e. excluding public investment) as soon as possible. Labour's leadership team were afraid of appearing 'soft' on debt and 'weak' on the deficit. The case for scrapping austerity went unmade and unheard, except from the SNP, leaving potential Labour voters confused and demoralised.

Adopting a more vigorous alternative to austerity would have required Labour to confront the current neoliberal orthodoxy that was the cause of the banking crisis, the consequential recession, and the obsession with debt and the budget deficit which dominated the 2015 election contest.

Yet sadly Labour leadership contenders have started to concede that our last Government's pre-banking crisis budget deficits may have been too high, a few implying that the last Labour government had 'over-spent', implying that we might have averted the worst impact of the 2008 crisis by lower deficits immediately before. Yet none put the deficits into context by citing the scale of the effort required to deal with the biggest threat to the financial system since the 1930s or the recession it engendered.

Britain's 2007 budget deficit was £39 billion or 2.7 per cent of GDP. This was dwarfed by the colossal cost of state support to Britain's failing banks which by 2009 was equivalent to some 90 per cent of GDP. The banking crisis and the recession it provoked caused the UK debt to GDP ratio



People's Assembly Anti-Austerity demonstration - 20 June 2015

to more than double over seven years from 37 per cent in 2007-08 to 80 per cent in 2014-15. Something a bit lower on the budget deficit scale in 2007 would have been irrelevant to the stratospheric impact of the crisis or how government was able to manage it.

Until Labour leaders start defending the last Labour Government's economic record in the face of the Tory/Lib Dem Big Deceit that we 'overspent'. Until Labour leaders start confidently reminding everyone that national debt, borrowing and the deficit were actually low, indeed lower than inherited from the Tories in 1997. Until we remind people that Cameron and Osborne would hardly have signed up in September 2007 to the Labour

Government's spending programme to 2010 if they had thought it would 'bankrupt the nation' (their subsequent deceit). Until we start explaining with confidence and passion that growth not cuts is the route to lowering the deficit. Until all that happens, we are condemned to offer only a neoliberal-lite economic alternative. And that surely is a prescription for another defeat.

The fundamental choice remains between the right's insistence on shrinking the state and the left's case for an innovative, socially supportive state; between the right's backing for a free market free-for-all and the left's belief in harnessing markets for the common good. That basic choice will never go away.

Former Labour Cabinet Minister Peter Hain was MP for Neath from 1991 to 2015.

His book *Back to the Future of Socialism* is published by Policy Press

Positive vision

Cat Smith says beware lazy conclusions

We can be under no illusion. The 2015 General Election was a disaster for the Labour Party. We were all but wiped out in Scotland and failed to make anything like the gains necessary in England and Wales to prevent the Tories from forming a majority government, let alone obtain a majority of our own. Worryingly in many areas we went backwards, meaning we now need an even greater swing at the next election than we required this year if we are to secure a Labour Government. Under the circumstances it is vital that we learn the lessons from this defeat but we must be wary of drawing lazy or simplistic conclusions. Following the 2010 election we allowed the Tory myth that Labour spent too much to go unchallenged for too long until it became the narrative widely accepted across the mainstream media. Sadly too many in our party appear to have repeated the mistake this year swallowing the line of Tory columnists that

Labour lost the election because it was too left wing. The reality of course is much more complex. It would be ludicrous to suggest, for example, that we lost 40 seats in Scotland to the SNP because we were too far to the left. In my own marginal seat of Lancaster and Fleetwood a refrain I heard much more frequently was that politicians, particularly those from the mainstream parties, were all the same. While we had many policies of which we could rightly be proud, our core economic message of fewer cuts, less fast did little to dispel this impression. Instead, after accepting the Tory narrative for so long our attack on the scale of their cuts appeared confused and did not inspire confidence. We cannot follow the same path for the next five years. We need to offer a positive vision for voters based on investment, jobs and growth building on the work of Nobel Prize winning economists Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz and others. We should talk about reducing the deficit by challenging vested interests, for example ending the

Cat Smith was a member of Chartist EB for five years. She was successfully elected as Member of Parliament for Lancaster and Fleetwood, defeating the incumbent Tory in May 2015

huge subsidies paid to private landlords, rather than attacking the most vulnerable and cutting the support which they depend upon. The planned Tory austerity for the next five years will exacerbate the damage done over the previous five. Greater welfare cuts will place an even larger strain on the most vulnerable people in our society. Wages will be squeezed further and employment will become less secure as a result of legislation aimed at making our trade unions weaker. Even greater sections of our public sector will be scaled back or sold off to the private sectors as shown by the announcement of the sell-off of our remaining stake in Royal Mail. As these cuts start to bite now is not the time for Labour to be seen as Tory-lite. As we have moved into the Labour Party leadership election with Jeremy Corbyn on the ballot paper it has provided the platform we need to make the case for another way, one of investment in jobs and growth and a rejection of austerity.



Tories playing dirty with human rights

Rachel Robinson argues that the universalism of the Human Rights Act is at risk

For most of the past decade, the Prime Minister, Home Secretary and former Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, have taken every opportunity to condemn the Human Rights Act and spread misinformation about it. It is a dark irony that in the same year that these senior government ministers line up to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta they are hell-bent on repealing the Human Rights Act – our modern day Bill of Rights that protects the vulnerable from arbitrary abuses of power. Government proposes to replace the HRA with a ‘British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities’.

According to a Tory policy paper from October 2014 its basic function would be to strip away the rights of British residents. Like the constitutional documents favoured by despots the world over, the Government wants to make rights dependant on good behaviour and have the final say on which (or whose) rights are worthy of protection. Not very British and like no Bill of Rights we know in the rest of the democratic world.

Cross party support

While Labour should take enormous credit for its passage in 1998, far from being ‘Labour’s’ Bill of Rights, as Government has tried to coin it, the HRA was passed by Parliament in 1998 with considerable cross party support. It incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which was adopted in 1950 by the Council of Europe (a completely separate body from the EU). The Convention was Winston Churchill’s post-war legacy, drafted by some of our greatest legal minds, and was adopted voluntarily by the UK in 1951. But more fundamentally, human rights don’t belong to the Conservatives, or Labour, or any political party. They were never meant to make

the mighty comfortable. They are for everybody – universal and indivisible. They’re ours – and there are so many reasons we must fight to keep the Bill of Rights we already have.

The ECHR was our response to the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, designed to ensure no group could ever again be robbed of its most fundamental rights on the whim of those in power. Since its introduction in 1998, it has helped countless people – soldiers, survivors of rape, domestic violence and slavery, bereaved families, journalists – but only a minority make the headlines.

The Government is playing a sly confidence trick with incredibly dangerous ramifications

Take the case of Darren Fuller. He has no convictions, but, like many black Londoners, he has been continually stopped and searched – without explanation – by police. On one occasion, he was pushed into a fence, kicked and bundled off to a police station, where his fingerprints and DNA were taken. Thanks to Article 5 of the HRA, the right to liberty, Darren received compensation for being unlawfully stopped.

Or the case of FGP who was rushed to hospital with severe abdominal pains while being held in immigration detention. The private security firm responsible for him insisted on restraining him at all times, 24 hours a day – for example, by handcuffing him to a guard using a 2.5-metre chain. The High Court ruled that FGP’s right not to be subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, under Article 3, was breached.

Then there are all the cases where the HRA has held the state to account for a basic failure in its obligation to protect the public. After Joanna Michael was brutally murdered by her ex-partner –

despite calling police twice on the night she was killed – the Supreme Court ruled that her family could bring a case against local police thanks to Article 2 of the HRA.

Spin in overdrive

Painting the Act as a ‘criminals’ charter’ is a cunning way for politicians and profiteering newspaper editors to dupe people into believing that their best defence against state abuse and neglect should be scrapped. The HRA lets us defend ourselves – and that’s not always convenient for those in power. This isn’t the only example of the machinery of Government spin in overdrive.

The Conservative leadership would have us believe that the HRA trumps parliamentary sovereignty; in reality it is more light touch than most Bills of Rights. It doesn’t give courts any power to strike down an Act of Parliament. If a court finds primary legislation is incompatible with human rights, it can say so – and leave it to Parliament to decide how to respond.

Contrary to the spin, under the HRA UK courts are only required to ‘take account’ of European Court of Human Rights judgments. The Supreme Court is already the ultimate arbiter of human rights cases here – and British courts regularly depart from ECHR jurisprudence. Before the HRA, British courts had no say in human rights decision making and British claimants had to take their cases to Strasbourg instead.

The Government is playing a sly confidence trick with incredibly dangerous ramifications. But the public and many Parliamentarians know what they stand to lose – and we won’t let them get away with it. The UK is a beacon of human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and that global reputation will crumble if we let the Government repeal the Act.



Rachel Robinson is Liberty’s policy officer

From Labour bastion to basket case

Gerry Hassan asks whatever happened to the Scottish Labour Party

British Labour has suffered one of its worst and most unexpected election defeats in post-war times. The post-election debate and leadership contest is so far struggling to come to terms with the scale of Labour's rejection and the uphill task it faces in votes and seats to make an impact in 2020.

All of this pales compared to the state of Scottish Labour. Once a bastion and ballast for the national party, 2015 was a watershed moment for the previously impregnable party. In one Westminster contest it went from 42.0% to 24.3% of the vote – its worst showing since 1918 – and it fell from 41 seats to one – its lowest ever. The SNP won 49.97% and 56 out of 59 seats, and now look set to dominate Scottish politics for quite some time.

Post-election, things are continuing to go in the wrong direction for Labour – with a TNS June poll for next year's Scottish Parliament election putting the SNP on 60% and Labour on 19% in the constituency vote – an all-time high and all-time low respectively.

Scottish Labour setbacks: 2007, 2011, 2015

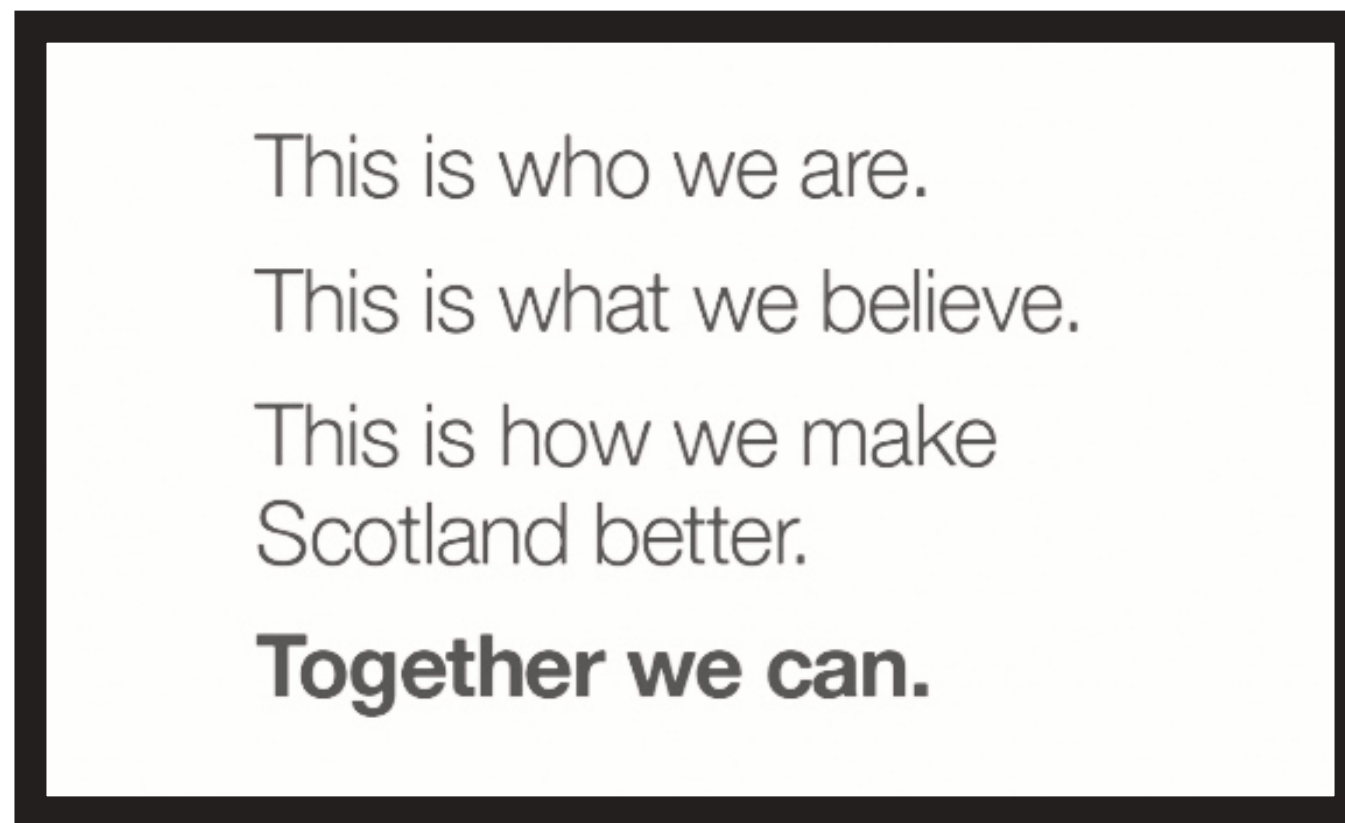
How did things change so quickly and go wrong so spectacularly for Labour? And is there any hope in the short to medium term? There are immediate and deeper answers to the first question. Scottish Labour has suffered three significant and increasingly emphatic reverses at the hands of the SNP, and until now, chosen to do little to leave its comfort zones.

The Scottish party first lost to the SNP in the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, when Alex Salmond narrowly defeated Labour by a whisker in votes and one parliamentary seat. He was then able to show his competence and political touch running a popular minority government for four years. While the SNP remade the political landscape, Labour under Wendy Alexander and then, Iain Gray, waited for normal service to resume, and the Nats to implode due to internal contradictions.

Labour weren't aided in the long run by doing relatively well in the 2010 Westminster elections, over-interpreting this result as 'Labour's coming home' and acting as if the 2011 Scottish Parliament election was in the bag. They were anything but, and produced a SNP landslide and majority government in a proportional representation Parliament.

This is when Labour alarm bells should have started ringing, but they didn't. Instead, the party continued in its complacency, fighting an inept, indistinctive campaign in the Independence Referendum where the party came out on the winning side in terms of the result, but lost the argument and post-referendum political debate.

Labour wasn't a happy party in the Independence Referendum. Two months after the vote, the party's Scottish leader Johann Lamont resigned, citing that the London Labour leadership treated the party as



The Scottish Labour Party's message - General Election 2015 : Wrong

nothing more than a 'branch office' and that fundamental change had to happen in how it did politics and autonomy.

Cometh the hour cometh the man or more accurately the seventh leader in sixteen years: Jim Murphy. In his six short months before his resignation he tried to press everything to reignite the party's fortunes. The former Blairite called himself a 'socialist', campaigned like crazy, rewrote the party's constitution, and in a brazen attempt to win back pro-independence working class former Labour voters in the West of Scotland, talked incessantly about 'football'. All of this had no effect whatsoever.

Labour fell to its third reverse in the last few years, but one which made the previous two seem like glorious victories. The party that once dominated Scottish politics and elected 50 MPs in 1987 and 56 MPs in 1997 (out of then 72 seats) saw its representation reduced to one single seat (Edinburgh South). A host of Labour grandees: Jim Murphy, Douglas Alexander and Margaret Curran all lost their seats to huge swings to the Nationalists.

Murphy has now gone, leaving the party to elect leader number eight in a contest between Kezia Dugdale and Ken Macintosh. Both have qualities and are personable, but there is little for them to draw on in the party in terms of ideas, resources and energy.

The Three Crises of Scottish Labour

The predicament Scottish Labour finds itself in has to be understood as part of three interlocking crises. First, there is the Scottish aspect. The party became the political establishment, failed to develop a positive devolution agenda, and then struggled to adapt to the rise of the SNP as their main challenger.

Second, there is a British dimension to this. This began to become a problem with the collapse of the post-war consensus and its progressive pillars of full employment, public spending and redistribution, and then what came after this. Lastly, none of this can be seen, as it usually is, in isolation. Nowhere in the Western world is social democracy in good health. Look across Western Europe and none of the mainstream social democratic parties are making the political weather.

This situation isn't just about lack of presentational skills or a plethora of Ed Milibands across the continent. It is instead about some pretty fundamental and long-term factors. It is about the collapse of the managed capitalism of 1945-75 which gave workers, trade unions and most of the working class and middle class a powerful stake in growing

prosperity.

Beyond Labour 'Back to the Future' Politics

What is on offer at the moment in Scottish and British Labour revolves around two versions of 'Back to the Future'. One is a new centrism returning to Blairite assumptions and talking endlessly about 'aspiration' and 'the middle ground'. The other is a left nostalgia and romanticism, which yearns for the certainties of a past, which isn't coming back.

A successful politics would have a few key ingredients. For a start, it would not be based on a profound pessimism about what people think. For all New Labour's glossy upbeat rhetoric it actually believed Britain was 'a conservative country'. And traditional left-wingers have been fighting change and people's decisions for decades.

Second, it would not settle for a defensive politics which sees the highest progressive aspiration as the status quo in public services. That gives the agenda of change to the right. So whether it is the BBC, the NHS or state education, left-wingers have to come up with a different agenda of change.

Third, Scottish Labour has to lose its sense of disappointment and bitterness at the people. In response to May 7th, one former Scottish Labour MP, Brian Donohoe said he could now tell his ex-constituents to 'fxxx off'. Another former MP, Tom Harris commented that 'I don't trust my electorate. They lied to me for the best possible reasons'. A senior Scottish Labour politician commented pre-vote that 'I hate Scotland and can't wait to leave'. That's the mindset of a party which has forgotten that its mission is meant to be to serve, not for the people to serve the party.

Scottish Labour has to use its defeat as a release. To recognise that they can free themselves from their old assumptions and dare to step outside the confines of being Scotland's political establishment.

Trapped in its own past

That moniker no longer fits; but the party has become one which doesn't shape the future and is trapped in its own past. More profoundly, Scottish Labour has in the last two decades squandered a deep well of goodwill which voters felt towards the values and idea of Labour, distinct from the day-to-day reality of the actual party.

Scottish Labour by its lack of imagination, digging itself into its own bunker, and showing its disappointment with voters, has transformed into a lost cause. It has become a party which most Scottish voters see themselves as moving on from and in their distant past, and which has little to say or offer about modern Scotland. Does it have a viable future? That remains to be seen, but the next decade or so will only bring hard times for the once seemingly omnipotent Scottish Labour Party.

Gerry Hassan is co-author of 'The Strange Death of Labour Scotland' and author of 'Caledonian Dreaming: The Quest for a Different Scotland'

Green dilemmas

The Greens trickle rather than surge – but is the future to the left, or centre? asks **David Toke**

The Greens trickle rather than surge. With party membership topping 75,000, making it the third largest party in England and Wales, prospects look moderately good for the Green Party – despite the fact that no extra Green MPs will be joining Caroline Lucas in the Commons. But can the Green Party break out of its role as a refuge for disaffected left-leaning Liberal Democrats? Moreover, can the Green Party itself avoid the pitfalls of the coalition disaster that has befallen the Liberal Democrats themselves, or more prosaically, the problems of what to do when faced with power? Analysis of who wanted to vote Green suggests that Green Party voters largely consist of left-leaning Liberal Democrats. Greens seemed to do best in relatively left-leaning places like Bristol West, Sheffield Central and Liverpool Riverside where Liberal Democrat votes collapsed. As the LSE's James Dennison put it: 'Green Party voters look like Lib Dems, think like Labour voters and are as dissatisfied as 'Kippers'.

Took votes off the Lib Dems

Often Labour activists have waxed at length that Greens take votes off Labour. However, the evidence is that they did not do so in any significant degree (probably a lot less than UKIP!). Rather, they took votes off the Lib Dems. A problem for the Greens now is that the room for continuing this trend is limited given the crash in Lib Dem votes. Another problem is an international problem for the Greens – what to do when they get into power? Indeed Caroline Lucas faced this problem in Brighton as the Green controlled Brighton and Hove Council struggled with the realities (faced by every other council) of limited resources and the drive for cut-backs. Lucas dealt with this problem by distancing herself from the Council. Effectively, she went into opposition against her own party's control. This strategy worked. Whilst the Green Party

lost several council seats and Council control (to Labour) Lucas achieved a swing of 6 per cent against Labour and, as you may have guessed, the biggest part of this change seems to have been the near annihilation of the Liberal Democrat vote. People have wondered why Caroline Lucas gave up the party leadership, despite her obviously greater experience compared to Natalie Bennett. The fact is that Lucas needed, above all, to hold her seat, and so the Party's interest was not well served by her having to divert much of her efforts to campaigning around the country as Leader when her opposing candidates could devote all of their efforts trying to overturn her (then) thin majority. But a collateral (if not

The Green Party has been widely ridiculed for its allegedly loopy left sounding policies

initially intended) benefit was the fact that Lucas was much more able to distance herself from her own party-controlled Council than if she had been Party leader!

The Green Party has been widely ridiculed for its allegedly loopy left sounding policies. But there's a danger if this is seen as the major problem. Well, it is true that ideas such as a citizen's income, however good in theory, would in practice (if set at a sufficiently high level) be unworkable. Obviously (to me) things like that need to be scrapped from manifesto commitments. It should avoid dalliances with far left groups. Rather, the problem is different, - that the Party might ape the Lib Dems and veer to the centre, maybe even doing disastrous coalitions with right wing parties. A far prospect you might say in the UK, although not so much at a local council level where parties may be seduced



Bennett to Lucas: You look left and I'll look middling

into odd looking alliances in pursuit of policy objectives that do not materialise in practice. In fact, as in London with Livingstone-Labour, Greens have done best when they have allied with parties with an overlapping agenda on issues such as energy and transport. The coalition with the SPD in Germany from 1998 to 2005 can be regarded as a success in many respects – indeed despite small losses in 2005, the experience left the Greens stronger than before 1998.

Poisoned chalice of coalition

Since then the Greens have left the SPD to be emasculated in grand coalitions with the CDU and have avoided the poisoned chalice of coalition with the right. However, at Lander level this has not always been the case. Usually they ally with the SPD, but twice they have formed coalitions with the CDU. Nearer home the Irish Greens formed a disastrous coalition with the conservative Fianna Fail which saw them wiped out in the aftermath of the financial crash. One plausible strategy for the Greens to adopt is to be a green, but also mainstream left, party that taps into the discontent with the establishment. If (and here's wishing) UKIP implodes, the Green Party's ability to capitalise on this strand might grow.

David Toke is Reader in Politics at the University of Aberdeen

Paul Salveson on re-shaping local politics

In praise of flat-cap democracy

Iwonder if looking back in 30 years time the May 2015 election will be seen as a tipping point in British politics? Against most people's expectations, Labour lost heavily after going to the electorate with a programme which offered little in the way of a 'narrative'. You've heard it all before but it's worth re-emphasising how very different politics in different parts of the UK have become. Scotland, London, the North, 'Middle England' and – to a degree Wales and Cornwall – have changed markedly. Of course, Northern Ireland has always been completely different. Building a single, UK-wide centre-left party that would have broad appeal is, arguably, asking the impossible, particularly if it sticks to a traditional course which most of Labour's hopefuls seem to be offering, whether left or right. Here in Colne Valley (West Yorkshire) there are signs of a change, though it's currently below the radar.

I stood for regionalist party Yorkshire First and got just under 600 votes. There was a high turnout (about 70%) and five hustings events, which were all well attended. The biggest took place in the old Mechanics Hall in Marsden, with 200 crammed into the main hall and 50 people turned away because there was no room left. So there was no lack of political interest. A lot of people liked our message but many said they'd vote Labour 'this time' to keep the Tory out. In the end, the Tory got back in with an increased majority. Several friends who were involved in the Labour campaign were disappointed with the lack of a strong message coming from the party. 'Too much supermarket politics' was one comment - no vision, just a freeze on energy prices, train fares etc. At the same time, many of them genuinely thought they were going to win. I had no such expectations, though 572 was less than I'd hoped for. Across the country, small parties got squeezed. Yet where we stood in parish and district elections we did extremely well - people just weren't willing to take the risk of what they saw as a 'wasted' vote in the parliamentary. I got just over 1% of the vote; but in the rural Fulstone ward of Holme Valley Parish Council, in Colne Valley constituency, we got 433 - about 45% of the vote. The same happened in Leeds NorthWest, Penistone and Hornsea.

There seems to be a growing appetite for regionalist 'quasi-independent' politics which can be both progressive and related to local or regional identity. Yorkshire First isn't a party in the conventional sense as we don't have a centralised hierarchy with a party whip. Candidates are expected to sign up to the 'Bell Principles' which are a code of conduct for political independents set out by former independent MP Martin Bell. There is a growth of radical 'independents' in widely different parts of the country. John Harris' piece in *The Guardian* (May 22nd) on the 'People's Republic of Frome' highlighted one particularly interesting example, where a group of

local campaigners now have all the seats on the town council. Their approach is about grassroots, bottom-up campaigning with a strong 'green' tinge. One of the Frome Independents, Peter McFadyen has dubbed it 'Flatpack Democracy'. Frome is an affluent rural market town in Wiltshire. Similar developments are happening 'Up North' which one comic described as 'flat cap democracy' to counterpose to the 'southern' variety! In a semi-rural area south of Huddersfield, a group of independents run Meltham Town Council and the ward (part of Kirklees Metropolitan Council) returns three 'Valley Independents'. They form a 'Green/Independent group' of seven councillors on Kirklees Council. All three independents could be described as 'progressive' and two are very much of the left. However, they don't have any fixed policies other than a very bottom-up approach to addressing local issues by asking and engaging. In what could be a very exciting development, the political reach of the Valley Independents is likely to extend to neighbouring wards and communities. Furthermore, they want to affiliate to Yorkshire First and effectively become the local association of the progressive regionalist party. Which takes us back to the 'Bell Principles'. How can a local political body function in a very different way to the conventional party branch, which is always subservient to the leadership? It's quite easy if you start thinking in a different way. The Valley Independents are already constituted as a political party. They

would affiliate to Yorkshire First, whose main policy is democratic devolution for Yorkshire with a subset of policies which could be determined by a future Yorkshire Parliament, e.g. energy, transport, health, culture, economic development and education. At the local level, affiliated groups or Yorkshire First branches are free to develop their own local policies based on community engagement and 'village meetings'. At the same time, local candidates are encouraged to have their own views on national and international issues. Acceptance of The Bell Principles automatically rule out potential racist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes. Frome and Colne Valley are not the only places where progressive independent politics is starting to develop. It has the potential to re-shape how we do politics in the UK and particularly in an increasingly diverse England. Flat-pack or flat cap? Let a hundred hats be worn.....



Whatever fits

The Bell Principles - a code of conduct for political independents can be found at

www.independentnetwork.org.uk/about-us/bell-principles

D-Day for Europe and Greece

Euclid Tsakalotos says it is decision time for an inclusive democratic Europe

Three facts on the recent rumourology concerning the Greek delegation's supposed walk-out on the recent Brussels meetings on 14th June 2015:

♦We did not walk out from the recent Brussels meetings on 14 June 2015.

♦We faced a team with no mandate to negotiate.

♦We remain ready to negotiate with a team that does have such a mandate.

The discussions focused on fiscal issues. There is no disagreement with the institutions on the fiscal gap for 2015. Discussions focused on the 2016 fiscal gap. The institutions estimate a fiscal gap 2.5% of GDP for 2016 which should be covered only with new parametric measures i.e. measures that are more easy to estimate (such as increasing tax rates).

The Greek government estimates a fiscal gap of 1.65 % but as a compromise we proposed measures, of a parametric kind of around 2% of GDP. What about the gap between our 2% and the

2.5% proposed by the institutions? We argued that a reasonable compromise could constitute with either the gap being filled with administrative measures of which we have already presented a comprehensive list of such measures amounting to 2.3 billion euro (for instance measures against tax evasion – after all we were elected on a programme of fighting tax evasion) or by the institutions giving a bit of ground on their estimate of the fiscal gap. Of course we could have had a compromise based on a combination of the above two factors. The institutions refuse to allow any administrative measures to help close the fiscal gap on the grounds that they are uncertain. This is quite extraordinary since 500 million euros worth has already been collected from our new installments scheme for tax arrears. Moreover they insist that the parametric measures should incorporate a large sum from pension cuts – 1% of GDP. An extraordinary demand for a country in which pensions have been slashed over the last 5 years and

2/3 of pensioners have pensions below or close to the European poverty line. It should also be noted that in Greece one pension often needs to serve a whole family given our 27% unemployment rate and over 60% youth unemployment rate.

Conclusion: The Greek government has been struggling and will continue to struggle for a fair compromise. It is up to our European partners to decide whether, after six years of recession, the priority should be a strong reform programme to counter tax evasion, the power of the elites and the failings of the Greek public administration or yet more recessionary measures, yet more cuts in pensions and real wages. It is also time for a decision whether Europe can encompass a government and people that have set social and economic priorities somewhat different from the mainstream.

It is thus time to see whether pluralism, fairness and democracy are still European values worth preserving.

Euclid Tsakalotos, is chief coordinator of the Greek negotiation team

Follow Greece Solidarity Campaign at www.greecesolidarity.org or on Facebook

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Battling austerity



First published by Chartist on the cover of issue #273

Opportunity to buy by Auction an original Martin Rowson cartoon (unframed)

A full colour version can be seen on the Chartist website. The original measures: 42cm x 30cm

Proceeds to be shared 50/50 between Chartist and the Greece Solidarity Campaign

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Dire for Labour in Wales too

Peter Rowlands looks at the election results in another Labour heartland

The election results in Wales were dire! The swing to the Tories was greater in Wales (1.1%) than that to Labour (0.6%), unlike in England where it was 1.4% to 3.6%, but seven out of nine English regions swung to Labour, leaving Wales alongside only two English regions that swung to the Tories, East Midlands and South West. The swing to UKIP in Wales (11.2%) was greater than that in England (10.7%), and there were huge votes for UKIP in most of the old mining valleys seats which must have mainly derived from Labour as there was only a limited Tory vote in most of these seats.

The two Welsh Labour seats lost to the Tories, Gower and Vale of Clwyd, were the worst losses in the UK, excepting Scotland, in terms of swing required, and compare to seven such losses in England, where Labour gained ten seats from the Tories but none in Wales, including the highly marginal Cardiff North which should have fallen but actually swung back to the Tories, as did the other two Labour targets, Carmarthen South and Vale of Glamorgan.

Plaid only marginally increased their vote, from 11% to 12%, and failed to take Ceredigion or Ynys Mon, but achieved a large swing in Rhondda and more modest swings in other valleys seats, but failed in Llanelli where there was a swing to Labour. This was one of the few positive signs for Labour, its only gain in Wales. Apart from the predictable swings against the Lib-Dems in Swansea West and hugely in Cardiff Central, there were only five seats which registered a swing from Tory to Labour, only two of these, both in Cardiff, with swings of over about 2%. But elsewhere, shockingly, there were swings from Labour to Tory in 16 seats, six of them above 2%, and from Labour to UKIP in six traditional, mainly valleys seats in South Wales.

The Greens did relatively poorly, gaining only 2.6% of the vote against 4.2% in England, although this is still a huge increase on their previous vote.

The far left got their usual



Labour: no longer so welcome in the valleys

miniscule vote, with TUSC getting an average of 0.4% in 12 seats, worse than the UK average of 0.6%. However the SLP (the Arthur Scargill Fan Club) scored relatively well, gaining an average of 1.3% in seven seats, the only seats, curiously, that they contested in the whole of the UK.

It is difficult to pinpoint why Labour did so badly in Wales. Poor organisation at some levels could undoubtedly have been a factor, but there is no clear proof that Wales was significantly worse than England in this respect, or the Tories better. In two seats that I have some detailed knowledge of and where we did badly, local organisation was good, although so was that of the Tories.

There are two factors that do not apply in England, the Welsh Government and a nationalist party, but the vote for the latter was only marginally up, although Tory attacks on the Welsh Government's record on health and education may have had some effect. Perhaps a general complacency, a feeling that Wales was essentially a Labour country, was to blame. If so, then it is misplaced. While the South Wales valleys remain predominantly Labour, despite the rise of Plaid and UKIP there, significant support for the Tories and Lib-Dems elsewhere has endured. While

that is no longer so for the latter, at least for the moment, the Tory threat in Wales must be taken very seriously.

It is an immediate threat, because of next year's Welsh Assembly elections, when on the basis of the recent results Labour would lose four seats to the Tories and probably be seeking a coalition again with Plaid, although the precedent was not an altogether happy one as some would point out. However, it could be dependent on Plaid continuing on its left wing path.

If the election proves unfruitful for them next year there could be a reversion to a more centrist, cultural nationalist orientation where a 'rainbow coalition' with other parties is no longer seen as a less acceptable option than one with Labour. That would in part depend on how many seats UKIP gain, which will probably be at least four, all regional seats, at the expense of the Lib-Dems who on present showing stand to be completely obliterated. Plaid would probably balk at any coalition which included UKIP, and it is unlikely that a majority could otherwise be realised. However, to forestall such a possibility Labour must concentrate on shoring up its defences against a Tory party in Wales that is hungry for more blood.

Pete Rowlands is a member of the Welsh Labour Party

BOOM/BUST Mark 2

Frank Lee looks at the prospects for the UK economy and finds little cause for optimism

'A bubble is a market which has lost touch with reality.'

One of the key components of the (unfortunately successful) Tory electoral strategy was the reflation of the property market. Osborne's giveaways included taxpayer funded subsidies to first-time buyers, pushing up house prices, as intended. Of course facilitating the buying and selling of second hand houses with a monetary stimulus is not growth, it is asset price inflation. (As an aside, the way that the CPI is constructed excludes these types of house price rises as well as rises in council tax. This of course understates the true inflation figures – but that's politics.) Also included in Osborne's freebies were 20 new 'Housing Zones' where state intervention will be capitalised into higher land prices, and a corporation tax cut that will boost the value of rent-yielding assets.

House prices

At the present time house prices, after falling for a period prior to the election, have begun to rise. According to Rightmove's commercial director, Miles Shippside "This was an election-driven price stall which gives some buyers only short-term relief from the backdrop of a long-term housing shortage, and many estate agents are now reporting a resurgence in interest following the surprise election result ... Election uncertainty... put a brake on the market, and their removal gives a reason for a rebound in activity and prices."

London has been the epicentre of the house price bubble, but much of the purchase has come from overseas buyers at prices in excess of £1 million. Many were bought as investments and as a means to get UK citizenship. Some are used as a means to get money offshore, or to evade tax and engage in money laundering (London being the money laundering capital of the world).

Thus the great Ponzi show

must go on – until it blows up of course. Look at it this way. If bubbles inflated forever, all the liquidity (money) in the economy would be sucked into the housing market and the economy would collapse as a result of starvation of funds. When does it blow up? When rises in asset prices outstrip any further increases in income and borrowing levels. That's the inflexion point when the smart money gets out and greed turns into fear leading to a mad stampede to sell and cut losses. Put another way you cannot outstrip asset price inflation by buying more of that asset. It is a logical contradiction.

It should be understood that annual growth figures GDP are distorted in a number of ways. Firstly, sex industry earnings and

There should be no doubt that global bonds are in a bubble, the question is not if, but when the bust comes

the illegal drug trade are now counted as components in GDP growth. Secondly, the raw GDP figures are subject to correction by use of the GDP deflator. That is to say that inflation must be factored in (or rather out of) the real GDP figures. Therefore the higher the inflation rate the lower the GDP. But we have already established that the inflation rate CPI does not include certain items and that CPI is lower than real inflation. It therefore follows that UK GDP is overstated since the 'official' inflation figures are understated.

Running out of steam

Official GDP figures are 2.4% - year on year. The first quarter, January to March 2015, the economy expanded 0.3%, the weakest pace since 2012. This is unmistakable evidence that the economy is running out of steam, and there is no evidence to suppose any reversal in the near future.

Piling on more agony we have

the Balance of Payments figures. Britain's structural deficit on current account has been impervious to exchange rate manipulation since it was never a problem of an overvalued currency. It was and is a problem of deindustrialisation. We just don't have the manufacturing/industrial base to compete on world markets. The responsibility for this sorry state of affairs lies with successive governments – Blatcherism – since 1979. At the present time the UK's deficit on current account stands at almost 6% of GDP. Of 20 OECD countries, Britain comes 19th, just one place in front of Turkey which gets the wooden spoon.

We pay for this deficit with the UK selling bonds (debt) to investors. This involves servicing these debts which at the present amounts to approx £1 billion per week. Then of course there is the car-boot sale of British assets from Manchester Utd to Boots the chemist, which counts as 'inward investment' and which helps keep the wolf from the door a little longer. What happens when we have no more assets to sell, or our bond servicing commitments become unsupportable?

The Bond Market bubble

Quantitative Easing - the purchase of bonds from investors with newly minted monies – has led to a seemingly unstoppable price in government bonds – the highest in the Bank of England's history and this is not simply a British problem, it is global. Bond prices are inversely related to bond yields (interest rates). So if bond prices rise then yields will fall. The present bond market bubble will crucify (is crucifying) those unfortunate souls who took out private Defined Benefit pensions. Pension funds provide a very large proportion of bond buyers – buyers who now see the yield on their assets diminish around zero when inflation is factored in. There should be no doubt that global bonds are in a bubble, the question is not if, but when the bust comes.

Frank Lee is a member of the Chartist editorial board and writes on political economy and international politics

Turkey: stalemate as Kurdish party gains

Sheila Osmanovic reports Erdogan's power-grab blocked by Turkish election result

The outcome of the Turkish parliamentary elections on the 7th June reflects the divided situation in the country – modernists versus hardliners. This is a long-running battle that had engulfed Turkey and, indeed, all the other Muslim countries following the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey's leading Justice and Development Party (AKP) did not secure the majority of seats in the parliament needed to change the constitution from a parliamentary to a presidential system without needing a referendum. AKP has been pushing for greater powers for the president and the executive branch. It also seeks to strengthen the role of the parliament in senior judicial and appeal court appointments. The opposition parties – The Republican People's Party (CHP) and

Nationalist People's Party (MHP) – differ on this believing that presidential power has to be either restricted or abolished altogether. A significant outcome of these elections is the unprecedented 80 seats won by the leftist pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). HDP is led by a former human rights lawyer whose freedom campaign focused not only on Kurdish rights but also on women, workers and even gay and lesbian minorities.

After 13 years of single-party rule AKP now needs to seek partners for a coalition government. The president, Erdogan, said that he will ask the Prime Minister Davutoglu of the leading AKP to form the government. If efforts fail, then he will ask the main opposition CHP leader, to do so. In the event that no coalition is formed in 45 days it is likely new snap elections will be called.

However, Erdogan carefully chose his words in his latest speech to the media and emphasised a need for 'rerun' elections. Reports from Erdogan's inner circle suggest that the President will aim for renewed elections to reinvigorate AKP's political position. He will gamble that the uncertainty of current public opinion might yet be turned to support more hegemonic rule.

As neither CHP nor MHP show a willingness to form a coalition with the AKP, the option of a government with the pro-Kurdish HDP to secure domestic and international stability alongside Turkey's 1800 km long border with Syria, might just happen. However, since the term 'coalition' does not resonate well with the Turkish electorate, the argument for renewed elections might be a persuasive plan.

Israeli PM: A man of wind

Jon Taylor on the circus in Jerusalem

The Israeli election (see previous *Chartist* 274) resulted in Likud (Benjamin Netanyahu's party) winning 30 seats; Zionist Union (Labour Party coalition, led by Isaac Herzog) 24. The three right-wing parties all lost seats – 19 between them. Likud and the new party Kulanu all benefited, as did Zionist Union. Because of the deep divisions in Israel, Netanyahu was always going to struggle to form a viable coalition. He tried to persuade Herzog to join him, to create a moderate image behind which he could continue to advance right-wing policies. He was unsuccessful. As a result, Netanyahu has created the most right-wing government in Israel's history – and with 61 seats, a 1-seat majority. The Palestinians see it as exposing "...the true face of Israel". The big mystery of the election? The decision of Avigdor Liberman, ex-minister and right-wing hawk, to rule

himself out. Liberman seeks power, so why avoid power in the new coalition? Only because he seeks greater power – as Prime Minister – from another direction: by bringing about a putsch against Netanyahu, whenever he feels the time is right. It is the ministerial appointments that

Any sense of democratic debate or reasonable progress has finally been abandoned and the dire state of the economy forgotten

give the new government its political character and represent a slap in the face for Obama and the EU. I offer you a selection. Silvan Shalom, Foreign Minister, responsible for negotiations with the Palestinians: "We are all against a Palestinian state, there is no question about it" (May 2012). Eli Dahan, Deputy Defence Minister: "To me, Palestinians are like animals, they aren't human." Miri Regev,

Minister of Culture: "The Sudanese [refugees] are a cancer in our body, they should be sent back where they came from..." Immediately after this speech, her supporters roamed the streets beating up any black-skinned person they encountered. Ayelet Shaked, Minister of Justice, will act "to prevent the Court from interfering in the work of the Knesset (Parliament)" and in making new appointments to the Court, would give preference to "conservative judges who avoid undue intervention with the actions of the Executive and Legislative Branches." Any sense of democratic debate or reasonable progress has finally been abandoned and the dire state of the economy forgotten. Netanyahu's survival is all that counts. Amongst such a bunch of malcontents, it will take only one change of mind to bring it all crashing down. I give it 12 months – at the outside.

Registration, Registration, Registration!

Mary Southcott on why we need to get voter registration numbers up

This summer Labour members are choosing leaders, mayoral and council candidates. The electorate can go to sleep until May 2016 or 2020 or vote for our national bird, Britain Has Talent or Strictly Come Dancing!

We have too many contributions about what went wrong since 2010: few about how serious Conservatives are about power while Labour disagrees about being in opposition to a Tory majority rather than leading a coalition government.

One illustration of Conservative determination to deprive Labour of office is the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration. Parties wanted IER to avoid fraud. How do we trade a few instances of people voting for others against disenfranchisement for missing millions?

Back in 2011, a Number 10 seminar heard a Conservative minister say they only needed "the low hanging fruits" to register. Translated into plain English they wanted Tories to vote and potential Labour voters not to vote.

Areas of greatest need have always been the least likely to register. Labour has concentrated on the disenfranchisement of students even where some would be better voting at home.

Students are a subset of the population living in the private rented sector, particularly where people share a letter box, post gets lost and never redirected. Anyone moving a lot gets lost by the system, the NHS and others, and people who get on the register often move before they get a chance to vote.

A real change with IER is attainers, 16 and 17 year olds who have to register individually not put on the register by their parents in household registration. Schools have a role but citizenship education is patchy and not everyone concentrates during

assemblies.

Given the remaining propensity of some ethnic minority communities to vote Labour we need to pay attention to the difficulty people had, despite on-line registration, in getting onto the 2015 register, often because databases held by the local Council and the Department of Work and Pensions did not match. Spelling of names when transliterated from other languages has always been a bit random, Mohamed or Mahamed, Georgiou or

being in power again, the 2016 register will be the basis of the equalisation of parliamentary boundaries whether or not the number of MPs is dropped to 600. Areas where churn is highest, diversity strongest will be in urban areas where the registered vote will underestimate the real population. Labour loses the advantage of having fewer people in their constituencies where we know there are more people than registered, more who need MPs, more casework generating more

YOUR VOTE MATTERS

MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN



Georghiou, even in the same family.

People who do not have English as their first language may have failed to match across. Certainly many people in this category lost their vote in the European elections. Those who condemn people for not learning English should consider the lack of opportunities particularly for women at home with children for practising but also how many Brits abroad learn the language of their new residences.

So besides being the building block of our democracy why is registration important? It is important to the individual because they are obliged by law to register as opposed to voting. They may find getting a loan or other contract difficult if they cannot show they are on the register.

Then the local authority is granted money per capita so the money they receive for health and education may depend on the registered vote rather than the population as a whole.

Most importantly for the current debate about Labour ever

Mary Southcott stood and lost in St Paul's in Bristol in the local elections.

During the last three years she has spent time registering people and on election day persuading people to go to the polling station despite not receiving their polling cards or having late postal votes.

work, at the expense of a greater number of smaller real population seats in suburban or rural England.

Already those who remained on the General Election register from 2014 but were not matched across will be removed. What can you do? If you are canvassing visit each door whether on the register or not. If you have records, go back to people who were turned away from polling stations, or you discovered elsewhere particularly 18 year olds who couldn't vote or people in multi occupation in big houses on main roads.

When people talk about registration, they realise it is an urgent problem. Lowest registration areas are more likely to be Labour, just as the party has the votes of people who say "If I voted I would vote...". Compulsory voting is tempting but not the answer. We need to see registration as part of active citizenship. Only then are arguments about voting giving people a voice valid. And we won't have thrown away even more seats in the coming boundary reviews.

Patrick Mulcahy
ON
detached
Salt of the
Earth

Picture this

Wim Wenders and Juliano Ribeiro Salgado's documentary, *The Salt of the Earth*, is a problematic film to watch. It follows, without criticism, the career of Brazilian-born photographer Sebastião Salgado, who traded a potentially lucrative career as an economist for a life as a photographer, taking pictures of harrowing extremes. We first see his photographs dating back to the mid 1980s of miners working without machinery and climbing, at great personal risk, a perilous incline. Salgado's intent is compassionate. He is interested

endeavour: we can help the world regenerate but we can't change people. He doesn't tackle head on narrowly defined self-interest even when its effects are a few feet from his camera lens. You watch *Salt of the Earth* angry with the tone. I could not care less about Salgado, because he was defined by his impassive lens. I wanted to know what effect his pictures had. Did they serve a purpose or are they a form of pornography, depictions of the undefended self? Salgado is portrayed as an explorer, an ethnographer, an almost romantic figure. You want him to have a moral compass. Why not photograph the doctors distraught by the lack of supplies or put a soldier's face to face with images of his victims. Wenders is respectful of Salgado. His interest is in the man behind such monumental photographs. But he isn't interested in psychology. Wenders is a little like his angels in *Wings of Desire*, hovering over his subject, pretending he doesn't have a role to play, expressing compassion not action. I wasn't a terrific fan of his work before watching *Salt of the Earth*; now I am convinced that he is atonal. For all his eccentricities, I feel Wenders' compatriot Werner Herzog has a moral compass. Wenders lost his in asceticism. Taken on their own merit, Salgado's pictures are individually worthy of attention. The body of work is disturbing. I wanted a different documentary: one where the photographer chose single images that best represented

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

"SUPERB. NO MATTER HOW MUCH OR HOW LITTLE YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CELEBRATED PHOTOGRAPHER SEBASTIÃO SALGADO, THIS FILM WILL BE A REVELATION."
—*Rolling Stone*, LOS ANGELES TIMES



THE SALT OF THE EARTH



WINNER BEST DOCUMENTARY
WINNER BEST DOCUMENTARY
WINNER BEST DOCUMENTARY
A FILM DIRECTED BY WIM WENDERS AND JULIANO RIBEIRO SALGADO
Le Ducte d'...
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

The Salt of the Earth is released in cinemas in July.

his intentions and debated the impact they had. I know that it is wrong to demand too much of Salgado (father and son) and Wenders when so many filmmakers and artists are simply interested in aesthetic pleasure. What is wrong here is that the people in some of the photographs are so desperate; their plight (on the face of it) beyond hope. What *Salt of the Earth* left me with, aside from a bitter aftertaste (naturally) is that big problems are best dealt with when they are reduced to individual human actions; when we look at what we do day by day.

Lessons for 2020

James Sweetman
on Ed Miliband post-mortem

FIVE YEAR MISSION

Tim Bale (Oxford University Press, £12.99)

The curse of any political account is that it is often rendered detached from the seismic events that follow it. It is to Tim Bale's credit that, despite Labour's most damaging post-war election result, Five Year Mission does not fall into this category. By providing a scrupulously fair account, Bale offers what could have been either a tale of Miliband's accession to No. 10 or a bracingly honest post-mortem. In the context of an unexpected (by both left and right) Conservative majority government, Five Year Mission acts as the latter, and does so in considerable depth.

This is a comprehensive study of Ed Miliband's leadership, encompassing his triumph over his brother in 2010 up until late Autumn 2014, and Bale pulls no punches. His account is well-informed and provocative, combining political analysis with revealing insights from figures at the heart of Labour's political and policymaking operation.

In posing the question 'Five Year Mission or Mission Impossible?', the writer is being entirely facetious. Bale never pretends to believe that Miliband was damned to inevitable loss from the time of his selection. Indeed, this book provides a precise and definitive analysis of the major strategic flaws that helped inflict electoral catastrophe on Miliband's Labour party.

Labour's Scottish meltdown was a long time coming, the corollary of Miliband's 'betrayal' of Scotland in the independence referendum and the enduring antagonism, present across much of the UK, but particularly so in Scotland, with the Westminster elite. The hostile conditions for Scottish Labour are explored in forensic detail by Bale. That 'the referendum campaign itself had driven up support for the Nationalists and had apparently seen them treble their membership...' never seems to strike

Miliband in the way it should have done. The effective loss of any chance of an overall Labour majority is even more remarkable for the strange absence of any strong response from the Miliband camp. The fact that this failure does not energise those running the party into action hints towards the fundamental cautiousness of Ed Miliband.

Or, as Bale argues, perhaps it is unfair to describe Miliband as fundamentally cautious. While it is certainly true that he lacks Tony Blair's penchant for headline-grabbing, substance-free policy initiatives, the sense that there is a more radical, impudent side



to the ex-Labour leader is repeatedly underlined in this account.

Bale is at his best when examining the personal failings and contradictions of Ed Miliband: a by-product of his extraordinary access to party insiders and the opportunity to explore the character of a man whose entire political leadership has been characterised by tabloid smears and banal attacks. The true character behind the mutually contradictory Tory attack lines of the past five years (the world's first weak and contemptible, but backstabbing and ruthless party leader?)

is genuinely intriguing.

Bale describes two sides to Ed Miliband: 'There is the Ed who genuinely thinks Blue Labour was onto something, who really does want radical reforms to the governance and the economy of the UK... Then there is the Ed who was Gordon Brown's apprentice, who, for all his denials, is as anxious as Brown was about what the papers are saying...' This internal contradiction has been almost ubiquitous throughout his leadership. A Blairite would never consider steps towards nationalisation of rail, while those on the left of Labour generally support it. Despite the overwhelming public support for nationalisation, Miliband's weak compromise, the possibility of buying back some rail franchises when current private contracts expire, pleased no-one. Business still cried foul, it failed the test of any simple populist policy (to be pithy and persuasive) and failed to provide any encouragement for left-of-Labour voters to vote out of pragmatism rather than principle.

In this, the fundamental flaw of Ed Miliband's leadership is comprehensively exposed. The conflict between the two Eds (Balls and Miliband) on policy and approach has been extensively discussed in the press, and in one sense they were right. There has been a major conflict between the two Eds, but few realised they were both Ed Miliband.

'Ed Number One wants to let a thousand flowers bloom and have IPPR write a grand, sweeping Condition of Britain report that recasts social democracy for the post-crash era. Ed Number Two, however wants to make sure it says nothing he cannot defend in the Sun or on Marr.' This, the clash between radicalism and pragmatism, vision and realism, is the major reason for the failure of Miliband's Five Year Mission. Bale's account contains important lessons for Labour's future; this book is required reading for policymakers and politicians alike.

Frank Lee
on Ukraine myths

UKRAINE CRISIS: WHAT IT MEANS TO THE WEST

Andrew Wilson (Yale University Press, £12.99)

It was the great German social theorist Max Weber (1864-1920) who once commented that "All knowledge of cultural reality is knowledge from a particular point of view." (emphasis in original). He may well have added that all knowledge of political reality is also a fortiori reality from a particular point of view. This particular book represents a superb example of moral and political beliefs presented as objective and disinterested facts when they are nothing of the sort. The book says more about the mindset of the writer and others of a similar ilk, than it does about the object of investigation.

It follows that if you are looking here for serious and disinterested political analysis you're looking in the wrong place. For example Wilson states: "This was a crisis of Russia's making and was about Russia's future." No mention of the role in destabilisation through CIA fronts, fake NGOs like the US State funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which had been funding opposition groups in Ukraine since the orange revolution in 2004. Note also that Victoria Nuland, US Assistant Secretary of State for European affairs (whilst standing under the Chevron logo) openly stated at the International Business Conference at Ukraine in Washington, National Press Club, December 13, 2013 that \$5 billion had been invested in the regime change programme. And further Mr Wilson omits any mention of Ms Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, who moved among the demonstrators at the Maidan offering cookies and moral support. Obviously none of this could have taken place without clearance from the White House, and that it represented gross meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. All of which should not come as any great surprise as the CIA have used this approach in various parts of the world for many years past.

The same Miliband-Pyatt duo can then be heard in a hacked

telephone conversation picking the future government of Ukraine, with brain-damaged Boxer Klitschko clearly persona non grata, but Nuland's choice – Yatsenuik, second in command to Tymoshenko in the old Orange days – for future Prime Minister. And so it came to be.

The second issue avoided is why Yanukovich was forcibly removed from power at the cost of death and destruction when new Presidential elections were due in 2015. In fact Yanukovich had under pressure brought these elections forward to May 2014. If Yanukovich was as bad as Wilson says he was why was the democratic process abandoned for what became mob rule?

Then comes the usual litany of alleged Russian perfidy, the shooting of the demonstrators and the MH17 disaster, all asserted as if they were objective facts when there is sufficient evidence – yet another hacked phone conversation this time between Baroness Ashton and the Estonian foreign minister who stated that the same bullets were recovered from the bodies of both the slain policemen and the demonstrators. Enough to cast doubt on who was responsible, or at least have an investigation, one would have thought. But no! Assertion is apparently enough.

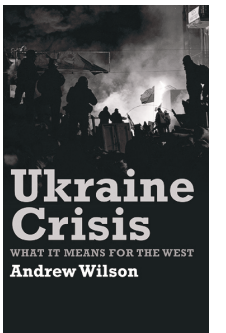
As the former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen addressing the Danish Parliament said: "Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. This is not something that we just believe. We know."

This approach pretty well characterises not only this particular book, but in fact the whole western narrative on the Ukraine crisis. It is not just saturated with double-think, double-talk, and taken-for-granted assumptions, it is based upon them.

This indifference to reality is striking and was noted by Orwell as far back as 1945.

'Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage – torture, use of hostages, forced labour, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassinations, bombing and shelling of civilians – which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by 'our' side.'

Enough said I think.



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The history of an idea

Duncan Bowie on international government

GOVERNING THE WORLD
Mark Mazower (Penguin, £12.99)



Histories of international institutions tend to be somewhat dreary. This is an exception. Mazower is a New York based historian who has written a number of books on European history – on the Balkans, on Hitler’s occupation of Greece and Eastern Europe, a history of Salonica and on Europe’s Twentieth Century – Dark Continent. The framework for the new book is to study the history of international government’s through contrasting principles – and he starts by contrasting the internationalism of Bentham with that of Mazzini and then with that of Marx. Mazower takes us from the 1815 concert of Europe of European diplomats through the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and the founding of the League of Nations to the failure of the League and the re-establishment of international government by the victors of the Second World War in the United Nations of 1946. This familiar story is however interspersed by studies of other international initiatives – the international arbitration movement of Randal Cremer in the late 19th century, the movements for international governance through science of the Saint Simonians, Comte and the central office of international

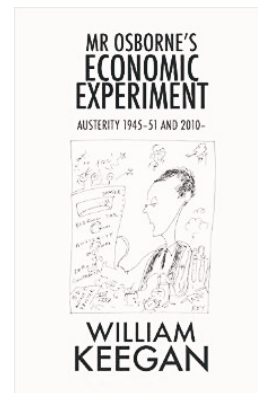
institutions established by the Belgian statistician Paul Otlet in the early 1900’s. The second half of the book is dominated by the trajectory of the USA’s relationship with international institutions – the American Congress’s rejection of Woodrow Wilson’s League of Nations and its drift to isolationism; its original dominance of the United Nations (for example, the use of the UN as a cover for American led intervention in Korea) and then its hostility to it as control shifts to a General Assembly dominated by ‘third world’ countries, as the UN becomes a supporter of liberation movements. Mazower then traces the marginalisation of the UN as power moves to those US controlled organs of domination over the world economy – the

International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The UN shifts its attention to international development, but its attention is then diverted by the growth of a world peace keeping role. Mazower traces the tension between the UN and the US (and the UK) over the justification for humanitarian intervention in sovereign states – Somalia, Bosnia, Serbia (with NATO intervention without UN approval) to Afghanistan and Iraq, demonstrating the US’s willingness, as the one remaining superpower, to operate independently of the UN if it so chose. The final chapter examines the role of international governance post recession and Eurozone crisis, focusing on the changing role of the European Union, and the extent to which the EU now overrides the national sovereignty of its member states. This is a book that deserves to be more widely read. The study is well researched and covers both a wide time-span and has a global reach but Mazower manages to examine both the theory and practice of governance in a way that is both informative and insightful. It proves that a book on the history of international relations can reach beyond the specialist academic discipline. International relations is far too important to be left to the diplomats and academics.

An ongoing and cynical experiment

Peter Kenyon plugs an essential read

MR OSBORNE’S ECONOMIC EXPERIMENT: AUSTERITY 1945-51 AND 2010 -
William Keegan (Searching Finance, £9.99)



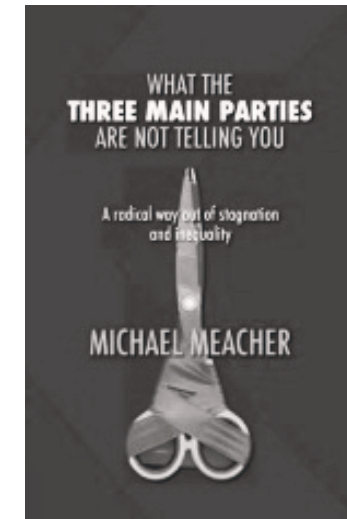
William Keegan’s publisher is to be congratulated for releasing this book ahead of the UK 2015 General Election. It could have been more history, than salutary reminder for the cognicenti and essential reading for anyone with a care about other people. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne’s class-riddled cynical politics to enrich his pals and impoverish the poor will go on. The author has been the *Observer* newspa-

per’s senior economic commentator for as long as I can remember. This 156 page book is divided into three-parts: Post War Austerity

1945-51 serves as a reminder of when national bankruptcy was a real risk, but the scope of the state to improve people’s lives in the most strained circumstances. The second part deals with the manufactured austerity of the last government. The third sets out the consequences and ducking and diving by Osborne that persuaded too many voters in May this year to vote Conservative. Anyone wanting to show conclusively that there was no mess left by the outgoing Labour government in 2010 should read this and get active. The impact on the poor of Mr Osborne’s experiment is already all too evident.

Trevor Fisher on an alternative economic strategy

WHAT THE THREE MAIN PARTIES ARE NOT TELLING YOU
Michael Meacher (Ed.) (Searching Finance, £9.99)



An intellectual challenge to the pro-Austerity consensus dominating the Westminster bubble and the EU is long overdue. The People’s Assembly, public sector unions, and a wide range of local campaigns are fighting strongly but the dogma that There is No Alternative to cuts is politically unchallengeable. Challenging it intellectually is a task which is only now starting to happen, and this booklet edited by Michael Meacher is a very welcome first step on the road.

The main theme is to question the orthodoxy at Westminster that cuts and balancing the budget is inevitable, now the dominant theme in the EU as well. It is limited to the world of the existing major parties – there is nothing on UKIP as an austerity party, nothing on the SNP as a claimed anti-austerity party, but an essay from Caroline Lucas of the Green party closes the collection, showing that there is a new opposition out there. However the main focus is the Labour Party, and a perceptive essay by Austin Mitchell on The Political Impasse points out that Labour’s failure to challenge austerity has led to serious political developments, including the failure to involve potential voters in the General Election.

This is however an isolated essay as most of the collection focusses on either policy options which a progressive government could embrace, or theoretical essays which would be appropriate in an academic collection with no political focus. In the former camp, essays by David Blanchflower (growth strategy), Michael Burke (on government investment), Cutting the Deficit (John Mills), the Dominance of Austerity (Michael Meacher), restoring Public Ownership (Kelvin Hopkins), Tax Avoidance (Richard Murphy), Labour and the Energy Revolution (Alan Simpson), and Housing (Austin Mitchell) make useful and in many cases telling points.

The more theoretical essays, including Innovation led growth


(Mariana Mazzucato), the failed Monetary Union in Europe (Costas Lapavistas), Privatisation dogma (Ha-Joon Chang), a Democratic Economy (Andrew Cumbers), Reform of the Banks and the Finance Sector (Prem Sikka), and Equality (Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett), focus on key issues which do not apply only to the UK, particularly where the EU is concerned. Len McCluskey contributes a useful article on the unions as an important modern institution, but tellingly has little to say about austerity. The unions much back the anti-Austerity movement, beyond their role in the People’s Assembly movement.

Indeed, none of the essays address the grassroots issues, and it is a weakness that the focus is on Westminster or a theoretical debate which either is too sketchy to be satisfactory or too specialised to be of wide appeal. The most interesting essay on this sub

theme is the one by Wilkinson and Pickett, (authors of *The Spirit Level*). In 2010 this book was embraced by David Cameron and seemed to be widely approved as the springboard to a new assault on inequality from the Westminster bubble. The Tories used their book in winning centre votes for the 2010 election and appearing to be moving into the centre ground with the Lib Dems. The book was forgotten as soon as the election was over, Cameron presided over a massive and unprecedented growth in inequality – and it has not been a political issue at all that he and his Lib Dem colleagues have reversed the politics which *The Spirit Level* advocated.

This points to the limits of an approach that either operates at the theoretical level or focusses on Labour. Theoretically, the triumph of neo-liberalism (with a possible exception of Obama’s USA, though it is very much a contested issue how successful Obama has been), is not considered as an abstract issue. Westminster is far from alone, though as some contributors point out, it is unusually dogmatic and turbo charged in its attack on anything that is not market oriented. One small book can do no more than open the debate, but this is an important contribution.

As for Labour, its timidity has weakened its electoral appeal. The policy essays are admirable, but there is a missing final chapter to the collection – what happens next? This is the unavoidable issue if austerity is not to permanently damage Britain and Europe.



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Welfare myths

Tony Manzi on winners and losers

Good Times, Bad Times: The Welfare Myth of Them and Us
John Hills (Policy Press, £12.99)

The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor has a long history in social policy, both within the UK and elsewhere and has been placed in sharper focus by the 2010 coalition government. Following the lead of previous Labour administrations the government have chosen to present a clear moral choice between those who attempt to improve themselves through enterprise and hard work ('strivers') and those ('shirkers') who prefer to spend their time enjoying the supposed extensive benefits of the UK welfare state. To date much of the debate has been driven by polemics from those who criticise the system on moral and ideological grounds. The resulting dia-

logue has been conducive neither to informed debate or rational argument. The main victims are disadvantaged groups who actually receive benefits whose voice has been marginalized and excluded from the discussion.

There is therefore a clear need for an objective analysis of the way that the welfare system operates and the winners and losers in these debates. John Hills is ideally positioned to provide an informed study of the actual (rather than presumed) impact of the contemporary welfare system, given that he has devoted several decades of rigorous study to the operation of welfare in the UK. This book represents a summary of much of his work and Hills clearly demonstrates that (contrary to popular myth) the main beneficiaries of the welfare state have been middle class households.

The book benefits from its attention to detail and the ability to draw convincing conclusions about how far from reality are many of contemporary welfare myths. Its great strength is its ability to highlight the complexities of modern welfare and to warn against the simplistic labeling so indulged by modern politicians. At times the language of the book appears excessively constrained and the book would be stronger if enlightened by some real life stories rather than being reliant as it is on two fictional characters. Nevertheless it represents a much needed intervention into a debate which has raised more heat than light. This analysis of what Hills terms 'Britain's misunderstood welfare state' should be welcomed by all with an interest in the impact of modern welfare reform and the difficulties ensuring a socially just state.

From margins to mainstream

Duncan Bowie on the new anti-establishment politics

REVOLT ON THE RIGHT
Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin (Routledge, £14.99)

PROTEST VOTE
Tim Newark (Gibson Square, £14.99)

These two contrasting books focus on the rise of UKIP. Anyone who thinks that the fact that they have only one MP and are engaging in yet another internal faction fight should not ignore that nearly four million people voted for them.

The anti-establishment party is now a major force in British politics – a proper proportional representation system would have given then at least 60 seats in parliament. The Ford and Goodwin study is an academic study, part of Routledge's series of Studies in Extremism and Democracy. Goodwin has previously written a book in the same series on the BNP.

The book provides an excellent history of the origins on the BNP in Patrick Robertson's Thatcherite Bruges group and Alan Sked's Anti-Federalist League. It traces the rise of the party from obscurity, its fluctuating leadership and its competition

with both the BNP and Jimmy Goldsmith's shortlived Referendum Party. The main value of the book is its detailed statistical analysis of UKIP's vote at general and European elections and its survey of UKIP supporters. The book emphasises the shift of the party from its



Southern right wing conservative middle class base to its growth of its support amongst the working class electorate of northern cities, a development that was demonstrated only too clearly in the 2015 General Election results. UKIP is no longer a single issue party but the party of the disempowered white working class. Newark's book is more journalistic and more readable, with an absence of statistical analysis. It is not just a study of UKIP but

covers other protest parties and groups, including interesting material on the Green Party (whose history is perhaps more obscure than UKIP's) the Referendum Party, the BNP, the Countryside Alliance and the TaxPayers Alliance, for whom Newark writes a blog. Interestingly Newark leaves the protest parties of the Far Left well alone. The book is based on a series of interviews with UKIPers, Greens, Eurosceptic Tories, the Labour baroness Ann Mallalieu of the Countryside Alliance, and perhaps oddly with trade unionists John Monks and John Edmunds and includes interesting material on the internal politics of each of these protest groups. A book of this kind covering such a disparate range of groups cannot have a conclusion or even a clear message, but is worth reading, purely in terms of the principle of 'know your enemy'. Farage is still with us. It does give you an idea of some of the potential outcomes of an effective PR system – many of these eccentrics would be in the UK parliament, not just in the European parliament and the London Assembly.

Save the NHS

Patricia d'Ardenne on health privatisation

NHS FOR SALE MYTHS, LIES AND DECEPTION
Jacky Davis, John Lister, and David Wrigley (Merlin Press, £10.95)

This is an essential and up to date account of the privatisation of the NHS, resulting from the reforms of the Coalition, spearheaded by Andrew Lansley's Health and Social Care Bill in 2010. The authors comprise a GP, a Radiologist and the Director of London Health Emergency, as well as a founder of the campaigning group, Keep Our NHS Public, (which receives all royalties from this book). They set out to debunk the many claims made by the Coalition used to justify the reforms/cuts, and set out what needs to be done to protect the NHS from Corporate greed

and organisational meltdown. To this effect, the authors do not mince their words. After an introductory chapter that sets the scene, there follow ten chapters, structured as myths about the NHS, promulgated by the Coalition that the authors seek to challenge. These include: the NHS as an inefficient and unaffordable structure in need of more choice for patients; that GPs should be put in the driving seat; that they will reduce bureaucracy; give more power and voice to local people, make the NHS more transparent and accountable, that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector; that the NHS is not being privatised; and that the deficit will be cut. There is a chapter on what the Tories don't want you to



Victims of terrorism

Patricia d'Ardenne on victims' experiences

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORIST VICTIMISATION: AN INTRODUCTORY APPROACH
Javier Argomaniz and Orla Lynch (Eds.) (Palgrave MacMillan, £67.00)

The purpose of this book is to bring experts from different disciplines- psychology, political science, psychiatry, law, criminology and sociology- backgrounds and histories, to explore victims' experiences in a range of terrorist contexts. It is part of a Palgrave series on Re-thinking Political Violence- spearheading research and promoting debate in clichéd and emotive topics of security, violence and 'terrorism'. Victims' experiences is an under-researched topic, isolated from broader studies on perpetrator violence.

In late 2012, a multidisciplinary conference was convened at St Andrews University to discuss dimensions of victimhood and the best papers have been selected as chapters for this book. The authors consider local vs international issues; academic vs practitioner approaches; multidisciplinary vs broad brush approaches; psychological vs social constructions of victimisation; public vs legal debates about victims; and last but by no means least, terrorism vs counter-terrorism, and the neglect of the victims

of counter-terrorism. The book is divided in to Victims' experiences; Support for Victims, and Counter-terrorism. There is of course, plenty of cross-referencing as the categories are recognisable but not fully discreet. A fundamental part of the philosophy of the editors is that terrorism victims are not just a random representatives of a community. To understand victims, they need to be seen as part of divided societies, at the public face of the point of ideological divergence. where everyone can be seen, to a greater or lesser extent, as a victim. Northern Ireland is offered as one good example. Violence also needs to be understood not only as criminality, but also as a political tool-used intergenerationally, and reciprocally in acts of vengeance or war- depending on your point of view.

Some of the authors argue that there are hierarchies of victimhood within conflict. The perpetrator may also be a victim consider child soldiers, for example.

Public interest in victims waxes and wanes- often according to political processes, or how the media succeeds in keeping stories in the news e.g. through human interest. The public is fickle – and will sympathise- or perhaps blame victims. Even victims blame themselves, e.g. for belong-

ing to the wrong tribe or religion; being in the wrong place; being punished for the sins of their ancestors. The book addresses these issues and particularly asks if support organisations address the expressed needs of victims ion this regard.

There is one chapter on clinicians' findings and implications for public health- which provides surprising insights into the perceptions of victims and their attributions fo blame. For example, most of the survivors of the London Bombings held politicians and their foreign policies in the Middle East to account for their suffering more readily than the four young men who blew themselves up on the London Transport system.

Take home messages are that political violence creates a different kind of victim to criminality alone, and demands political solutions. Counter terrorism creates a whole new wave of victims- in minority ethnic groups especially, but also for the wider community, and lastly, the voices of victims have been largely distorted by political needs, and need to be heard directly, distinctly, and compassionately.

This is an ideal text for Human Rights, for Public Health, and Disaster Planning organisations. Expensive, but recommended.



Patty McCabe
on
keeping
the will to
change

Stay angry, stay active

If I thought things were looking pretty grim before the election, then it is fair to say that the sun is only edging further behind the storm clouds now. Yet there is always a silver lining to every cloud and although this time it is perhaps much thinner and narrower than ever before, young voters on the left still have something to gain from the 2015 General Election. Student voters, and amongst them, first time voters in particular, learnt what it meant to lose and perhaps it is time to stand back and assess what it means to be a politically engaged young person in the current political climate.

I have always been pretty sceptical about the way students engage with politics and the reactions from my student friends did little to quell this scepticism. Firstly, I think its only fair to say that if the UK was as left wing as my newsfeed, it would be a much better place. Yet this sudden burst of enthusiasm for the traditional left wing agenda only materialised about two weeks before the election and disappeared very quickly afterwards, only to be replaced by the usual single-issue politics and pictures of cats doing silly things. They got a little bit upset about the repeal of the Human Rights Act, a nice big moral issue for them to get their teeth into, but apart from that, all the angry self-righteousness about how people should vote for left wing parties and do everything to frustrate the efforts of both UKIP and the Tories has vanished.

I'm fine with the self-righteousness vanishing, I have very little time for that anyway, but along with it has disappeared all the anger and the will to change that seemed so refreshing in the run-up to the General Election. I can't help feeling that just when their support has probably become more crucial than ever, many students have turned round and said 'we didn't get what we wanted so now we've had our little strop we are going to withdraw into our usual insular politics because we'll probably get our own way here.'

Defeat gives the Labour Party and its voters a chance to really work out what went wrong, to work out why people did not believe that it was the best party to govern the country and take it through the next five years. It also provides its younger voters in particular with the chance to challenge a government and convince people that next time, you can trust the Labour

Party, and more importantly, we are not going to say I told you so. The terms in which we defend what matters most over the course of the next five years will be of the highest importance. They are also crucial to us. It goes beyond issues such as housing but within the next five years, the way Britain looks is going to radically change. Selling off the Post Office will only be a taster of the dismantling of the state that is to follow. The recent announcement that subsidies for wind farms will stop next year show a complete disregard for the environment which will affect us in the near future, and coincidentally is the sort of issue that needs to be tackled at least on a European level. A Tory government will continue to drive a wedge between England and Scotland as well as between Britain and the continent. These are not problems that we can wait to the next election to campaign against. We need to attack them now.

I'm asking my fellow students to really engage with the average person and think about what might be the most important issues to them, if we want to protect those that are most important to us. Sometimes they will overlap and sometimes they will not. It might be the darker areas such as immigration, where the language of some people in working class communities might offend our fine, well-educated, sentiments, but this should never mean that we do not take them seriously as concerns that other voters have. Many young people and the left have to admit that

we lost the election, not because the SNP are evil, not because Rupert Murdoch's media empire managed to brainwash the population, but because the Conservatives managed to convince the most people that they were the best of a pretty poor bunch. Young people more than ever should be engaged in challenging and questioning the politics of their own side if we hope to convince the general public otherwise. Most importantly, this has to start now, not just two weeks before the next general election.

I'm asking my fellow students to really engage with the average person and think about what might be the most important issues to them



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