

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#290 January/February 2018

£2

## Tories on thin ice

**John Palmer**

**Peter Kenyon**

**Brexit follies**

**Mica Nava**

**Sexual abuse**

**Mary Southcott**

**Cat Smith MP**

**Transforming  
democracy**

**Prem Sikka**

**Industrial strategy**

**Dave Lister**

**Academy failures**

**plus**

**Book & Film reviews**



ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE

90 >



770968 786001

[www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

## Editorial Policy

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

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

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

## Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Andrew Coates, Peter Chalk, Patricia d'Ardenne, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, James Grayson, Hassan Hoque, Peter Kenyon, Dave Lister, Puru Miah, Patrick Mulcahy, Sheila Osmanovic, Marina Prentoulis, Robbie Scott (Website Editor), Mary Southcott, John Sunderland, Margie Newens  
Production: Ferdousur Rehman

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

## Contacts

Published by Chartist Publications  
PO Box 52751 London EC2P 2XF  
tel: 0845 456 4977

Printed by People For Print Ltd, Unit 10, Riverside Park, Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield S2 4BB – Tel 0114 272 0915.  
Email: [info@peopleforprint.co.uk](mailto:info@peopleforprint.co.uk)

Website: [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)  
Email: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)  
Twitter: @Chartist48

Newsletter online: to join, email  
[webeditor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:webeditor@chartist.org.uk)

## Contributions and letters deadline for

### CHARTIST #291

**08 February 2018**

Chartist welcomes articles of 800 or 1500 words, and letters in electronic format only to: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)

Receive Chartist's online newsletter: send your email address to [news@chartistmagazine.org.uk](mailto:news@chartistmagazine.org.uk)

### Chartist Advert Rates:

Inside Full page £200; 1/2 page £125; 1/4 page £75; 1/8 page £40; 1/16 page £25; small box 5x2cm £15 single sheet insert £50

We are also interested in advert swaps with other publications. To place an advert, please email: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)

**How we make policy**

1. What role should Constituency Labour Parties have in making policy?
2. What role should Party Conference have in making policy?
3. What role should motions and contemporary motions have at Conference?
4. How do we develop local and regional economic plans and local policy?
5. How can motions from Constituency Labour Parties be dealt with more effectively?
6. What are your views on the National Policy Forum and how it works?

**Building a mass movement**

1. How do we get our increased membership more involved in the Party?
2. How do we recruit more people into the Party?

**Your local Labour Party**

1. What changes (if any) are needed to the way we work at Constituency level?

**Deadlines**

- The deadline for submissions on the organisational aspects of Young Labour, BAME Labour and Women's Conference is **12 January 2018**.
- The deadline for submission on all other aspects of Diversity and Participation, Your local Labour Party and Building a Mass Movement is **23 March 2018**.
- The deadline for submissions on Electing our Leadership, How we Make Policy and The Way We Work is **28 June 2018**.

You can submit responses to the review to the website: [labour.org.uk/about/democracy-review-2017](http://labour.org.uk/about/democracy-review-2017) or by emailing [democracy@labour.org.uk](mailto:democracy@labour.org.uk).

**Labour** FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW

© 2018, 177 Promoted by Ben H. Newell, General Secretary, the Labour Party, on behalf of the Labour Party, 100 Abchurch Lane, London, EC4N 3DF. Printed by People for Print, 100 Abchurch Lane, London, EC4N 3DF.

**The Labour Party Democracy Review**

**Labour** FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW

# CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM



Join the growing body of supporter subscribers for which you will receive occasional discussion bulletins and an invitation to readers' meetings and the AGM. Alternatively, just take out an ordinary subscription.

£15 ordinary subscription  
\$30 supporter subscription  
(6 issues)

Visit [www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe](http://www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe) for details





David Davis heads Brexit woes – Page 8



Jessica Chastain leading celebrity in challenging sexual abuse Page 16



100 years ago- Sylvia Pankhurst  
Now emocratic revolution overdue – Page 19

## FEATURES

8

### TORIES ON THIN ICE

John Palmer identifies opportunities for Labour in Brexit follies

10

### BREXITOLOGY

Peter Kenyon says time for Labour to come off fence

11

### HAMMOND FUDGES INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Stakeholder representation key to progress says Prem Sikka

12

### COUNCILS' FINANCIAL STRAITJACKET

It's crunch time for local Labour says Tom Miller

13

### WORKER'S VOICE

Bryn Jones puts the case for worker directors

14

### UNIVERSITIES CHALLENGE

Paul Reynolds on the student squeeze

15

### TORY ACADEMY FIASCO

Dave Lister explains how chains are failing students

16

### GENDER & POWER

Mica Nava explores the #metoo fightback against misogyny

18

### VOTES FOR WOMEN 100 YEARS ON

Mary Southcott celebrates women's suffrage with a call for a democratic revolution

19

### MAKE VOTES MATTER

For the many not the few says Alena Ivanova

20

### SPREADING DEMOCRACY

Shadow minister Cat Smith on Labour's reform programme

21

### SAUDI ARABIA NEW BROOM?

Muddasser Ahmed asks how far will changes go with new leader

22

### SOFT LEFT OPTIONS

Trevor Fisher on yesterday's LCC and Momentum today

23

### STATE OF THE NATION

Frank Lee argues nations still matter



Cover by Lorna Miller

## CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Number 290

January/February 2018

## REGULARS

4

### OUR HISTORY 76

Evan Durban -The politics of Democratic Socialism

5

### EDITORIAL

Breaking Brexit -preparing for power

6

### POINTS & CROSSINGS

Paul Salveson on going north

7

### GREENWATCH

Dave Toke on Tory legacy  
Jewish Socialist Group on Jerusalem

25

### FILM REVIEW

Patrick Mulcahy on Hollywood shame factory

26

### BOOK REVIEWS

Andrew Coates on Tariq Ali's Lenin,  
Rory O'Kelly on benefits, Don Flynn on Holloway, Nigel Doggett on Monbiot, Mike Davis on Widgery v Miserabilism, A Stewart on Catalonia, Bryn Jones on neoliberalism, Andy Gregg on Stuart Hall

32

### WESTMINSTER VIEW

Rupa Huq MP on tribulations of a new parliamentarian

## DEMOCRACY REVIEW

# Help Jeremy Corbyn build a country for the many not the few

writes **Katy Clark**

**D**emocratic socialism puts people in charge. The democracy review Jeremy Corbyn has launched gives our party the opportunity to see our principles in action by transforming into a truly democratic and participatory movement, led by its grassroots and capable of winning elections to form a government fit for the 21st century.

Since the 2015 general election, our party has almost tripled in size, swelling its ranks to well over 550,000 members. Our mass membership is an incredible asset.

Members are not just an army of canvassers. Our membership is a remarkable resource of ideas, talents and skills. As a party, we must ensure that we do not waste this precious capacity, but enthuse our members to be as involved as possible in all aspects of our politics and our party. We want our members to be at the heart of our party – to have

more power – over policy, how we campaign, organise and run our party, just as we want the people of Britain to be at the heart of deciding how our communities, economy and society are organised.

The review will be wide ranging. We will consider how we develop regional and local plans, how best to work with the whole Labour movement, improve the digital skills of our local parties, how regional parties work, the relationship between councillors and local parties, how our conferences work, the scope of Young Labour, how we empower our BAME and LGBT+ members, the role of women's conference, socialist societies and friends groups – and many other issues. **C**

**Katy Clark is leading the democracy review and was appointed political secretary to the leader of the Labour party in November 2015**



## OUR HISTORY - 76

### Evan Durbin The Politics of Democratic Socialism (1940)

Evan Durbin studied economics at University College, Oxford under Hugh Gaitskell. He was a lecturer in economics at the LSE from 1930 to 1945. In 1939 he joined the economic section of the cabinet office, working with Lionel Robbins and Harold Wilson. He then became personal assistant to Attlee when deputy prime minister between 1942 and 1945. He was elected MP for Edmonton in 1945 (with Douglas Jay taking on his previous job). He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Dalton

(Chancellor of the Exchequer) and then parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Works. He died in 1948 in a drowning accident. He published a number of books and pamphlets on economic policy, including *How to Pay for the War* (1939) *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* (1940) and *Problems of Economic Planning* (published posthumously in 1949). There is no biography of Durbin. His daughter, Elizabeth Durbin published in 1985 *New Jerusalem: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism*, which presents a study of her father's work as well as that of his circle including Cole, Dalton, Gaitskell and Jay. The historian Stephen Brooke published substantive articles on Durbin in 1991 and 1996. There is also material on Durbin in Jeremy Nuttall's 2006 book *Psychological socialism*. Durbin had a significant influence on the thinking of Anthony Crosland.

"From the evidence of modern psychology...the social life of adult human groups can be largely understood as a conflict within their minds between repressed impulse to violence and cruelty on the one hand, and their love for each other, for constructive achievement and for the common good, on the other....The Marxist and Communist defence of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'...was based upon faulty logic and inadequate

empirical evidence...it represented in our day the series of false religions by which the impulse to cruelty and destruction have been rationalized into a reforming zeal and a love of justice and freedom. The only hope for the future appears therefore, to me, to lie in the preservation, if necessary by force, of the system of political democracy from all assaults upon it."

"Many things can contribute to the happiness of us all. Wealth can contribute to it. A rising standard of living will increase leisure, reduce the physical fatigue of labour, bring comfort and health to a growing proportion of our fellow human beings. Wealth, properly distributed, can tear down the slums, drive back the diseases of malnutrition, open the countryside to our people and bring fresh air, sunlight and safety, to those who lack these elementary necessities.... Social equality would certainly increase our joy in living... For this end the socialist politician honourably strives."

"The grip of a class system that frustrates the search for comradeship between us wastes a monstrously high proportion of our natural talent... Every generation is in part united, and in part inspired, by some conception of a better and more just society...We need not be content with anything less... than a society in which property as a source of social inequality is made to wither slowly away, in which the establishment of a rational central control has restored expansion and created economic stability, in which political democracy is preserved and protected as a method of government, and in which children may grow, free from secret fear, into a sociable and happy maturity. This is what I mean by a more just society. An important, indeed an essential, part of it is the constituent principle of socialism. Within it the common happiness of mankind can be, for a long season, safely established."

# Sinking Brexit & preparing for power

**T**heresa May's government ended 2017 with three Cabinet resignations (Priti Patel, Michael Fallon and Damian Green) and a parliamentary defeat. It is a government mired in Brexit negotiations where the DUP tail wags the government dog as May and her minister for exiting the EU, David Davis, desperately fought to save an agreement with the EU that was first done then undone by Arlene Foster's band of loyalist brothers. Finally wording on 'full alignment' of the Six Counties with Ireland was agreed at the eleventh hour.

This is a shambolic government that continues to pursue a broken austerity economics, as evidenced by Hammond's November budget, while workers endure ten years of pay caps, higher inflation, massive personal debt and disappearing public and local services. Presiding over growing social inequality and hardship is a leader propped up only by a fear of further Labour advances if an election were called.

The EU Referendum was one of the most dishonest campaigns staged in Britain. It is clear from their behaviour that the last thing Brexiteers want is power to the people either expressed through parliamentary representatives or in wider society. 'Taking back control' is being revealed as a cynical hoodwinking of voters. Against eleven Tory rebels who voted with a united Labour and other opposition parties to defeat the government on its failure to sanction in law a parliamentary vote on any final EU deal, the government has sought to override parliament. Moreover, David Davis spectacularly failed to produce any evidence of impact assessments being undertaken on the consequences of Brexit on 48 sectors of the British economy.

**John Palmer** analyses the deal to move to the second stage of EU withdrawal negotiations, seeing the Tories on very thin ice. A hard Brexit has been temporarily averted. Opportunities arise for Labour to champion a European renewal programme.

May agreed a liabilities payment of up to £39 billion, an unsatisfactory arrangement for EU nationals in the UK and no hard Irish border. These contradictory arrangements will come to haunt the Tories over the next year.

Labour did not have a vote on Brexit at its Brighton conference. But its 2016 conference voted heavily to support either a general election or a referendum on staying in the EU if the deal failed to meet fundamental criteria for economic and social security. **Peter Kenyon** says it is now time for Labour to end constructive ambiguity and call unequivocally for continued participation in the EU, as a minimum the single market and Customs Union.

The Tories are forfeiting any say in future arrangements, accepting EU regulations, rule-making and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice during a transition period from March 2019. Ceding control and influence in decision making rather than securing more control: this is the Tory reality. At least the Tories won't be able to (unsuccessfully) block extending EU moves to crack down on tax havens—including sham UK

overseas territories. Labour needs to call out the Tories duplicity on all this.

A hollow wish list is how **Prem Sikka** sees the Tories industrial strategy. Continuing the 'not' taking back control theme he sees the dropping of proposals to have workers on company boards as symbolic of the Tories failure to re-boot the economy. He outlines alternative ideas for worker stakeholders, drawing on German and Scandinavian models. **Bryn Jones** expands this idea further, arguing that drawing on the ideas and expertise of producers and providers must be a central element in any strategy for socialist economic development.

In the wake of the #metoo movement of women against sexual abuse, highlighted particularly by the Harvey Weinstein exposures, **Mica Nava** examines the politics of gender and power and asks why now? The generation of seventies feminists did tackle issues of sexual exploitation but did not attract the media coverage of the later wave of feminists who are calling out misogynists in cultural and political life. Perhaps Trump, social media and a more confident celebrity sisterhood is contributing to challenging the ugly hands of male power.

**Patrick Mulcahy** surveys the transformation of the Hollywood dream factory into a factory of shame. Mary Southcott celebrates 100 years of votes for women and the pioneering work for a new democracy of our suffragette and suffragist antecedents. She further poses the democratic questions yet unresolved in our antiquated democracy. **Alena Ivanova** highlights the poverty of our electoral system while **Cat Smith MP** champions a thoroughgoing constitutional review of democratic participation covering voting age, registration, electoral system change and much more.

2018 will be a year of local elections when Labour candidates face the horrendous choices of what municipal services to maintain in the face of further stringent government cutbacks. **Tom Miller** re-emphasises the crisis (as Duncan Bowie outlined in our last issue) and suggests a concerted national campaign is needed for the life and soul of local government. 2018 could also be the year of a general election. There is no room for complacency. Labour's Democracy Review, as **Katy Clarke** writes, is about getting the party onto an effective permanent campaign footing by strengthening the sinews of internal democracy and participation while opening up the party to local communities, unions and civil society organisations.

Tory Brexiteers are likely to beat the nationalist drum as they seek to portray the EU as anti-British. They will find few friends in Trump's 'America First' regime. But that won't stop efforts to play the populist blame game. Labour needs to keep the pro-Europe internationalist flag flying in protecting workers rights and the environment whilst developing an economic development and tariff free trade programme framed in a European rather than national context. We have more in common with our European partners than that which divides us.



# Will the North rise again?

Paul Salveson on going local

**T**he anthem of the (non-existent) Northern liberation front would be The Fall's splendid *The North Will Rise Again*, penned back in the 80s by Mark E Smith, in a moment of relative sobriety. Its more memorable lyrics include:

I'm Joe Totale  
The yet unborn son  
The North will rise again  
The North will rise again  
Not in 10,000 years  
Too many people cower to criminals  
And government crap  
The estates stick up like stacks  
The North will rise again (x4)  
Look where you are  
Look where you are  
The future death of my father

But that was then. Are things better? No, they sodding well aren't. Try walking round towns like Farnworth, Accrington, Batley, Dewsbury. Yes, dear Chartist readers, have a day out from North London, or even Didsbury and Headingley, to visit these failing Northern towns. The state they're in makes me furious. Why aren't people rioting in the streets? Recently I went back to Farnworth, now part of Bolton Metropolitan Borough, where I was brought up as a kid. Back then it was a lively town with its own council, based in a fine town hall. The mills were still flourishing. The market was brilliant and I can remember the children's swings next to it, close to the public baths. It's all gone. What remains provide space for car repairs or cheap-jack furniture sales. Farnworth Council was swept away by local government 'reform', based on the Redcliffe-Maud Report, in 1974. This was possibly the worst act of political vandalism visited on this country in the 20th century. The fine council estates that Farnworth Council built after the First World War are now deprived and unhappy. The new 'shopping complex' built in the 70s is mostly empty, with the private owners sitting on their 'asset' doing nothing.

A few days after my visit to Farnworth I spent a bit of time in



Dewsbury's once iconic arcade lays empty

Dewsbury, on t'other side of The Pennines. This was another once fine town with a strong textile base and some substantial buildings which remain, but in a sad state. The splendid arcade which would be regarded as a gem in any thriving town, is closed. The grand co-operative building is slowly being re-built by Kirklees Council, which replaced Dewsbury's own local authority

## Our vision for local government should align with our larger vision for a socialist society

the same time as Farnworth's democratic governance was destroyed. The centralisers say that these changes were necessary to make better use of resources. It simply isn't true. Look at the 'secondary' towns in places like Kirklees, Wakefield, Bolton, Tameside and Blackburn – e.g. Dewsbury and Batley, Castleford and Normanton, Farnworth, Hyde, Darwen. Are they thriving examples of local prosperity, ushered in by benign super-councils? Anything but.

The causes are not simple and you can't just blame uncaring councillors. The key issue has been industrial decline, particularly the collapse of cotton, wool and coal. But not enough was done by anyone to mitigate the impact and create new industries. The absence of a strong regional tier that could have intervened strongly to revive town centres didn't exist. Even super councils didn't have the resources to make much of a difference. Alongside

that, and less easily definable, was the surgical removal of a small town's heart – the local council. Former town halls like those in Farnworth, Dewsbury and Hyde remain partly in use by different council services. But they are no longer the local powerhouses they once were. We need them back, with real power.

The 'super councils' were a product of 1970s thinking and have had their time. Get rid of them and replace them with strong sub-regional combined authorities working with a new regional tier. Existing town councils can make a difference. Towns like Horwich, Colne and – most obviously – Frome benefit from a team of locally elected people who work together for the benefit of their communities. They need stronger powers but at least they exist and do stuff. When I lived in Farnworth we had a strong local campaign to get a town council – it was vigorously opposed by the Labour hierarchy in the Bolton super-council. The reason? It might have risked giving the Liberals a political toe-hold. I suspect that attitude is still alive and well in much of the Labour Party, though there are some signs of change (he says, with a pathetic display of giddy optimism).

Our vision for local government should align with our larger vision for a socialist society. If you believe in centralisation and distrust the idea of community empowerment, stick with your 1970s 'super councils'. There's a ready-made excuse now with austerity why they can't do anything. But it's not true. People can make a difference if they have meaningful control. But we need to get back to a genuinely local scale. Frome works because it has a combination of dynamic and engaged people with a local council that can make a difference. We need to tempt bright, creative people back to the Farnworths, Darwens and Dewsburys. It's the people who will make a difference but they need to have the tools to do it. Small, energised local councils. **C**

This is based on a piece in *The Northern Weekly Salvo* – see <http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk/2017/12/15/northern-weekly-salvo-248/>

# Legacy of failure

**Dave Toke**  
on Gove's  
smart  
career  
move

**David Toke is  
Reader in Energy  
Politics at the  
University of  
Aberdeen**

**M**ichael Gove has not only charmed green gurus such as George Monbiot but he has also bucked the trend of many past environment secretaries by appearing to support, rather than junk, green priorities. Looking at the environment (DEFRA) secretaries of state under the Conservatives since 2010 it is not difficult to see why. Caroline Spelman (2010-12) cooked her goose when she decided to launch a sell-off of publicly owned woodlands, only to be forced into a humiliating retreat afterwards. Then came Owen Paterson, the avowedly keen badger culler and pro-fox hunter who described a set of anti-GMO campaigners as 'wicked'. He was reshuffled away after just under two years. Just after he left office he was busy ingratiating himself with the climate sceptical Global Warming Policy Foundation. Elizabeth Truss didn't exactly enamour herself with her green interest groups, and was effectively demoted after another two years. Then came Andrea Leadsom whose most noted contribution was delaying a report on pollution caused by diesel vehicles until after the 2017 General Election. She was probably saved from oblivion by the fact that she wasn't in office for quite long enough to blow herself up.

So now Michael Gove has apparently learned the way to being a successful environment minister; - give the impression that you are protecting the environment! Gove hasn't had much of a chance to expose his green credentials before, although when Education Secretary things didn't seem to augur well for his future role as it was rumoured he wanted tone down education about climate change. Apparently the original aim was to stop climate change being taught in geography and have it shifted to science. I suppose Conservatives, remembering their public school days, may feel that scientists are a little less agi-



**Michael Gove at the Green Alliance summer reception**

tated that these social science geogers types with their beards and penchants for field trips. Far too wet! But the plan was abandoned anyway. Climate change is still taught in Geography lessons. But they still don't teach people that in winter the temperature in Aberdeen isn't worse than lots of places in England. It's just that the summers are lousy!

Greenpeace and other environmental groups are pressing Gove to organise the introduction of a deposit scheme for plastic bottles. The Toke plan is simply to ration the stuff rather like is done with the carbon emissions trading scheme. Maybe with plastics it can be done better, with a cap on plastics sales being steadily reduced each year.

Meanwhile (according to Labour's Environment Campaign, SERA) Haringey Council is blazing a trail that Michael Gove will follow with a 'zero carbon' by 2050 plan. This includes cutting carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2020. Councillors Clare Bull and Joe Goldberg are praised for their efforts in carbon reduction. So there, I'm not just going on about some Tories. **c**

## Jewish Socialists' Group statement on Trump's announced move of the US embassy to Jerusalem

Donald Trump's order to move the American Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, claiming that "Jerusalem has been and always will be the eternal capital" of Israel, is an attempt to humiliate the entire Palestinian people, Muslim, Christian and those of no faith. It will also strengthen the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and provoke violent conflict. As Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinians' UK representative, has said, this amounts "to declaring war in the Middle East".

Jerusalem is of great religious significance to all the Abrahamic faiths, but this aggressive move is not about religion. Trump and his allies try to distort the politics of the Middle East, and reduce it to a conflict between Jews and Muslims. It is not. This is all about expanding American and Israeli military and economic power and control in the region, regardless of the cost in human suffering and lives damaged and lost.

Trump's announcement is an attempt to demoralise the opposition - to normalise and legitimise the illegal annexation of Jerusalem, which has been ongoing for several years, and, by "creating facts", to undermine resistance by and support for the Palestinian people.

We support the right of the Palestinians, whether under military occupation in the West Bank, under blockade in Gaza, facing ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem or facing oppression and discrimination in Israel, to resist this process. We believe that Trump's move will further undermine the position of Israel's non-Jewish citizens.

The President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Arkush - one of the first to congratulate Donald Trump on his presidency - has, predictably, come out strongly in favour of Trump's provocative move. But we support those Jews, both in the diaspora and in Israel, who oppose the racism, occupation and annexation being perpetrated by Netanyahu and Trump. As Jews who believe in coexistence and equality, we reject any attempts to set Jews and Muslims against each other. People of all faiths and none, within and beyond the region, urgently need to find ways to reject and challenge this agenda so we can fight together for an end to the occupation of Palestine, and for social justice and human rights for the Palestinian people.

<http://www.jewishsocialist.org.uk/news/item/jsg-statement-on-trumps-announced-move-of-the-us-embassy>

## BREXIT

# BREXIT – TORIES SKATE ON EVER THINNER ICE

**John Palmer** on a deal that buys time for divided Tories but a formula that cannot be delivered. Labour should ready itself for a new European deal and revocation of Brexit



Juncker and May- last minute smiles won't last long

**T**he 11th hour agreement with the European Union allowing negotiations to finally begin on the long term relationship between the UK and the EU only highlights the extraordinary precarity of the May government's Brexit project. In a fudge designed to buy May a little more time, it is simultaneously being sold as preparation for a complete break with the EU and a deal which locks Britain into almost all the obligations of membership but with no voice or vote in law making. It is a formula which cannot and will not be delivered. Both the Euro-sceptic right and the 'soft Brexit' Tory factions know this. Both are manoeuvring to get a tactical advantage ahead of what all agree will be an eventual, unavoidable and full scale crisis. There must be a serious prospect that when the likely terms of the long term Brexit agreement do emerge, May will be toast and the Tory party might face a split on the scale of the 19th century free trade crisis. In

the meantime no one, on any wing of the government, can really explain how Belfast and Dublin can be guaranteed no return to a 'hard' Irish border without the UK as a whole replicating virtually unchanged the terms of existing membership of the Customs Union and the Single Market. The one possible fudge – having a customs border between the north of Ireland and mainland Britain – was seen off by the hard line DUP. The EU institutions and member states have told London not to be under any illusion that it can 'cherry pick' the vital advantages of being in the CU and the SM while ignoring the obligations which go with that. The UK will not be able to negotiate trade deals with

Trump or China or whoever by slashing health, environment or labour standards and retain access to the EU market. Right wing Brexiteer MPs comfort themselves with the belief that the EU needs a long term trade agreement as much as the UK. That is true only up to a point. The EU 27 do sell much more to,

than they buy from the UK. BUT the dependence of the 27 on exports to Britain are a small fraction of the UK on its exports to the EU. It is virtually impossible to know who will win the low level civil war between hard and soft Brexiteers in the cabinet and Tory party. The commitments May agreed to in the first preliminary phase of the negotiations (continuing to pay into the EU budget for years to come, observing all EU laws during the so-called "transition phase" to 2021 and the continuing obligation to observe European Court of Justice rulings for a further eight years) are very difficult for the Tory Leavers to swallow. But they seem to be gambling on the very real possibility that the talks on a final deal fail and the UK might still be able to launch itself over the cliff without any agreement except minimal WTO terms of trade. That is what scares witless big British capital (and big foreign capital invested in the UK). The likes of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Phillip

**John Palmer is a former European Editor of the Guardian and chair of Greenwich Momentum**

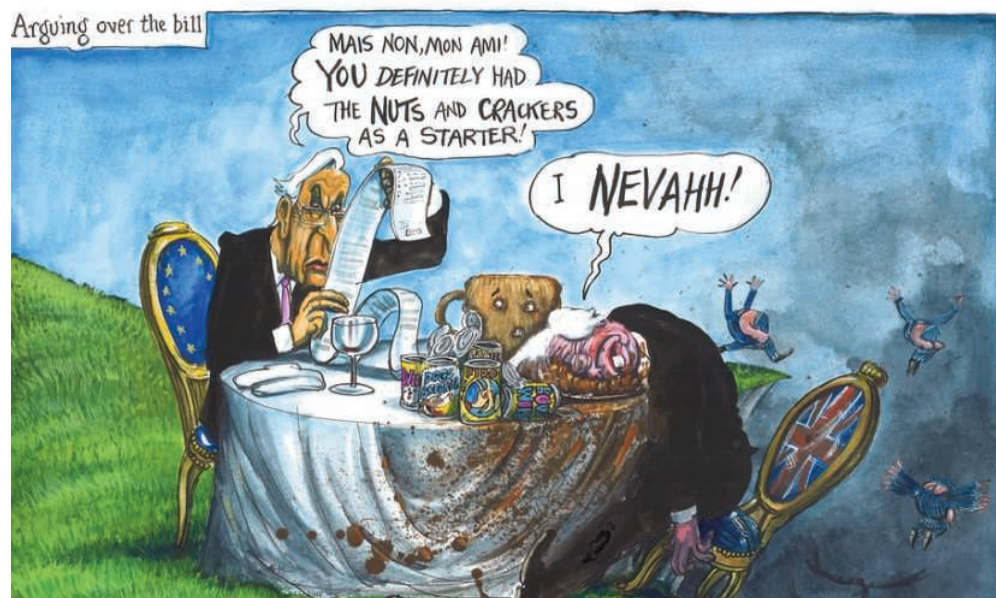


Hammond, and the so-called 'realists' know this perfectly well. Some of them seem to be counting on a Parliamentary vote designed to pass final judgement on the eventual agreement blocking any jump-over-the-cliff. They have some grounds for believing this. Quite apart from those MPs who have already declared their intention of blocking a hard Brexit, the Labour Party leadership is now clearly moving to the demand that the UK – in effect – remains part of the single market and customs union. Presumably worried that any overt commitment to retaining full EU membership might anger the tiny minority of pro-Leave Labour MPs (and an indeterminate minority of pro-Leave Labour voters) this is as far as the leadership is ready to go at present. But that is to ignore the increasing attention which Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are paying now to the wider debate within the EU about the need for a new direction for economic, social and environmental reform. In recent speeches in Brussels and in Geneva, Corbyn stressed

### Whatever the final outcome of the Brexit negotiations; this government looks to be in terminal decline

Labour's continuing commitment to solidarity with workers' demands for radical policy changes at EU level. One example of these trends is the outline support for a strengthened EU pillar of social rights and in particular the creation of a new European Labour Authority. This body is – for example – seen as an instrument to reform the EU Posted Workers' Directive whose abuse by employers has led to the erosion of workers' pay and conditions. Meanwhile pressure is growing on the government in Berlin to abandon its crazy austerity economic strategy (which was used to crucify the Greek people). This is coming not only from avowedly left wing governments like the Portuguese coalition but even from the Macron centre right government in Paris. If Chancellor Merkel is obliged to form a coalition with German social democrats, Berlin may have to adjust more to the new mood than it would wish. Which

Arguing over the bill



(Credit: Martin Rowson)

Arguing over the bill

is not to underplay the potential risks involved with centre right and centre left politicians clinging together in a desperate attempt to keep the extreme right at bay. In the period ahead it would be good to hear more about how Labour wants to work in and with the EU to block some of the terrifying plans of the Brexit right to destroy social, labour, environmental and other standards in the cause of a Trump-style trade strategy. BUT however soft an eventual Brexit might be, an agreement leaving the UK (assuming it does not break up before long) with virtually all the obligations of membership but none of the democratic rights is not acceptable. Leaving the British people as law takers and not law makers must be rejected.

This need not be the choice. Whatever the final outcome of the Brexit negotiations – and they will take much longer than anyone in Whitehall is yet ready to admit – this government looks to be in terminal decline. It is even possible that Jeremy Corbyn will lead Labour into a new general election well before the final shape of Brexit is agreed. Certainly the polls point to the probability of an overall majority for Labour from any election. This is hardly surprising given the near collapse of the NHS and many other public services, falling living standards and growing popular anger about grotesque inequality and hardship. If the worst Tory Brexit can be blocked by Parliament over the next year or two the question will arise: what now? The answer from a newly elected Labour gov-

ernment should be clear (indeed Jeremy Corbyn has already hinted at it). In effect we should want to talk to the EU about a far wider programme of cooperation and reform on common areas of concern and one which – if successful – could lead to a decision to revoke Brexit. It is quite possible that this scenario could arise much sooner than we think. The political situation domestically and world-wide is increasingly crisis prone and unpredictable. With a deranged Trump presiding in Washington and authoritarian but unstable regimes installed from Russia, through Turkey to China and beyond, this is not the time to sever the links of solidarity and shared basic democratic values with so many (if not all) EU states. On one thing we can be sure. The ludicrous proposals for a LEXIT (Left Brexit) are dead and buried. It failed to connect with reality at almost any point. It is disavowed by the left in almost every part of the European Union – even in France where the leftist La France Insoumise which scored an impressive voter support in the recent French Presidential election has abandoned talk of 'leaving the EU' or even abandoning the Euro.

It is time for the European left to think through in some detail what concrete demands should be prioritised for a more democratic and social Europe. Of course, Europe is not the end of the road for socialists. It is, however, an essential staging post for the development of an emancipatory strategy for a democratic, socialist global order. **C**

## BREXIT

# Brexitology – a challenge for voters and Corbyn

**Peter Kenyon** explores the mysteries of Britain's application to leave the European Union as the Tories prepare for the next round of talks

**M**y formative years during the 'Cold War' were steeped in Kremlinology. A lack of reliable information about the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) forced us according to Wikipedia to "read between the lines" and to use the tiniest tidbits, such as the removal of portraits, the rearranging of chairs, positions at the reviewing stand for parades in Red Square, the arrangement of articles on the pages of the party newspaper Pravda and other indirect signs to try to understand what was happening in internal Soviet politics.

Understanding what Britain's two leading political parties' positions regarding Brexit are requires similar approaches. Unfortunately, the British electorate is way behind the curve in understanding the extent to which the Brexiteers are still seeking to confound and confuse in their efforts to pretend there is a better future for the UK outside the EU.

There is not. But the people have decided.

From an anecdotal point of view, I have heard more stories about people voting to leave the EU to kick Cameron's Conservative government than actually leave the EU. But that is beside the point now. More important is what have we learned, or what should we have learned from the Phase 1 negotiations?

British Prime Minister Theresa May decided at the start of term to take the outcome of the EU Referendum at face value. Egged on by the Brexiteers she perpetuated the myths: in short a crock of gold at the end of the rainbow. Her chosen Secretary of State for Exiting from the European Union David Davis boasted breezily about deals to be done in Brussels and Paris circumventing Brussels. Her Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox has been clocking up Airmiles in



David Davis fluffs Brexit impact assessments

pursuit of phantom trade deals with third parties, while Brussels has just been signing them. And her Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson continues to excel at making the UK a laughing stock

**There is no escaping the conclusion NOW that the Conservatives are surrendering UK sovereignty**

in the world.

On Friday 8 December May made a pre-dawn flight to Brussels much to the annoyance of EC Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to set out Britain's 'offer' in response to the EU's three preconditions for negotiating future trade relations. The manoeuvre was heralded in the Evening Standard as the 'Deal at Dawn'. My take was 'Fudge at Five'. I was not alone in taking a somewhat more sceptical view of what was actually offered by HM Government.

British nationals' rights in the EU and EU nationals' rights in the UK are not being properly protected. The financial settlement of between £35 and £39 billion to meet UK liabilities to the EU-27 (not a divorce bill) represents surrender on the part of the likes of Boris Johnson, and I quote "Brussels can go whistle". As for the NI border issue, that is fudge made of the finest cream the Irish dairy industry can produce.

It is a crock of shite. Brussels was never going to let the EU-27 be cast as the 'enemy' preventing trade talks. Worryingly, Conservative electoral support and May's political standing are on the up again (a bit).

What the Labour leadership must ponder is whether or not to engage in some forensic Brexitology and share their findings with the electorate sooner rather than later or twiddle their thumbs for the next twelve months until it is too late.

As matters stand the UK has already lost two valuable EU institutions – the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Agency. They are irretrievable lost. British voters will not be electing representatives to the European Parliament in June 2019. The only trade deals likely to be considered by the EU-27 – Norway or Canada – will require the UK to be rule-takers i.e. we will have NO say in making future EU laws.

There is no escaping the conclusion NOW that the Conservatives are surrendering UK sovereignty, squandering urgently needed tax revenues for public services on an illusory 'crock of gold' to leave the EU, sacrificing the human rights of millions of people, risking peace in Northern Ireland, pursuing phantom trade deals with third countries.

Is that what 17 million Britons voted for on 23 June 2016?

Welcome to the world of Brexitology. **C**



# Stakeholder Boards are the key to industrial renaissance

**Prem Sikka** finds Hammond's industrial strategy an empty wish list

**T**he UK economy continues to suffer from low productivity, low investment, short-termism, light-touch regulation, a weakening of its industrial base and low wages accompanied by unprecedented fat-cattery at the top. This requires a radical overhaul of economy policy, state intervention and governance of companies. Rather than addressing deep-seated problems, the government's White Paper 'Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future'<sup>1</sup> is more of a wish list rather than a concerted effort to meet the challenges.

The expression 'industrial strategy' conjures up an image of a substantial manufacturing sector. Yet the government offers no means of securing it. This is because of its hatred of public investment. Historically, the UK economy has been built by a mixture of private investment and direct state intervention. All too often, the private sector has shown little appetite for long-term risks and the state had to build airlines, telecommunications, engineering, biotechnology, nuclear and computer industries. It also reinvigorated railways, water, gas, electricity, shipbuilding and many others. The same will be necessary again not only to renew infrastructure but also to invest in new technologies, green industries, artificial intelligence and much more.

## Don't Leave it to Shareholders

A focus on the long-term is a key ingredient for any industrial renaissance, but is neglected by the government's White Paper. The UK's shareholder-centric model of corporate governance has been dogged by short-termism as shareholders push for quick returns. Shareholders provide a small fraction of total capital, at banks it is less than 10%, but enjoy 100% of the controlling rights. They have hollowed-out

companies. Andrew Haldane, the Bank of England's chief economist has noted that in 1970, UK companies paid out about £10 out of each £100 of profits in dividends, but by 2015 the amount was between £60 and £70, often accompanied by a squeeze on labour and investment. He added that "Among UK companies, share buybacks have consistently exceeded share issuance over the past decade". Short-termism has incubated economic failures.

The European Commission's analysis of the 2007-2008 banking crash concluded that "the majority of shareholders are passive and are often only focused on short-term profits".<sup>2</sup> In 2013, UK's Banking Standards Commission concluded that "shareholders failed to control risk-taking in banks, and indeed were criticising some for excessive conservatism"<sup>3</sup>. It urged the government to "consult on a proposal to amend Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 to remove shareholder primacy in respect of banks, requiring directors of banks to ensure the financial safety and soundness of the company ahead of the interests of its members"<sup>4</sup>. There have been no reforms.

Diluting shareholder control is a key requirement for rejuvenation of the economy. One possibility is to introduce a minimum qualifying period (e.g. twelve or six months) for shareholding before any shareholder can vote. This would prevent speculators from exerting pressure on directors to indulge in share buybacks, payment of excessive dividends and divestment programmes.

## Stakeholders on Boards

The above alone won't change the internal culture of corporations. This necessarily means changing the composition of company boards and give rights and powers to those with a long-term interest, including employees, in the wellbeing of companies. The Conservative government has

made some cosmetic noises. The latest draft of the revised Code of Corporate Governance, published by the Financial Reporting Council with government backing, rules out direct employee representation on company boards. Instead, it offers three possibilities: assign a non-executive director to represent employees; create an employee advisory council or nominate a director from the workforce. This tokenism cannot prioritise the long-term.

## Diluting shareholder control is a key requirement for rejuvenation of the economy

Within the European Union countries, there are two broad models of governance: the single-tier system combining executive and non-executive functions in one 'unitary board'; and the two-tier system distinguishing between an 'Executive Board' and a 'Supervisory Board' which must oversee the executives and confirm the decisions of executives on major issues. The two-tier supervisory board system predominates in almost half of EU member states, such as Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The supervisory board has representatives of employees and shareholders.

The single-tier system with places for employee representatives as non-executives is established in France (companies are allowed to choose either the two-tier or the unitary board), Norway, Sweden and many other states. Where there is a very high density of trade union membership, as in Sweden, employee representatives are usually trade union representatives appointed or elected by trade union mem-

**Prem Sikka is Professor of Accounting and Finance, University of Sheffield & Emeritus Professor of Accounting, University of Essex**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12>>



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

>>CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

bers in a company. Elsewhere they are employees elected by the entire workforce often in separate sectional votes. In some companies, worker directors are appointed on a voluntary basis.

The unitary board system has serious drawbacks. Unless employees and other stakeholders occupy a substantial proportion of the board, they risk being marginalised and will almost always lose all votes. On such boards, there is no easy way of differentiating between those decisions that are essentially about day-to-day management and those that affect the longer term strategy or future of the company.

The two-tier system is commonly associated with Germany. This was formally adopted in 1976 and confirmed by the Expert Commission reports in 2006 and 2014<sup>5</sup> to have contributed to the maintenance of a national manufacturing base, high investment and value-added economy. In Germany, enterprises having more than 500 or 2000 employees are represented in the Supervisory Board, which is composed of employee representatives to one-third or to one-half respectively. For enterprises with

more than 2000 employees, the Chairman of the Supervisory Board, who, for all practical purposes, is a representative of the shareholders, has the casting vote in the case of split resolutions.

The two-tier system emphasises the need for co-operation amongst stakeholders to generate and share wealth. It separates the executive and supervisory roles. The Executive Board makes day-to-day decisions within a strategic context established by the Supervisory Board. The Supervisory Board makes longer-term strategic decisions, notably the allocation of resources between dividends and investment, take-overs and mergers, divestment, executive remuneration packages and much more. Trade unions continue to pursue collective bargaining within the statutory framework.

The system permits the replacement of the current system for appointing supposedly independent non-executive directors, often friends of executives, with fairly elected representatives of all stakeholders, including shareholders. The membership of the Supervisory Board can be extended to include other stakeholders. For example, the names and addresses of customers at water, gas and electric-

ity companies, as well banks can easily be identified. They can act as a constituency and elect directors to represent their concerns at Supervisory Boards.

Despite the banking crash, failures of the gig economy and scandals at BHS and Sports Direct, the UK is yet to have a serious discussion about reforming corporate governance to build a sustainable economy. The Conservatives are not keen on employee and consumer elected directors. Labour party and trade unions have been surprisingly absent from the debate. Perhaps, after the electoral performance in the 2017 election, Labour would be buoyed to call for radical reforms. **C**

1

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf)

2

European Commission, Green Paper - The EU corporate governance framework (COM(2011) 164 final), Brussels: EU, 2011 ([http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/company/docs/modern/com2011-164\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/company/docs/modern/com2011-164_en.pdf)).

3

UK Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, Changing banking for good (Vols. I - VIII), London: The Stationery Office, 2013.

4

UK Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, 2013, page 344.

5

[http://www.dpdhl.com/content/dam/dpdhl/Investors/Corporate\\_Governance/Declaration\\_of\\_Conformity/DPDHL\\_CG\\_Code\\_June\\_2014.pdf](http://www.dpdhl.com/content/dam/dpdhl/Investors/Corporate_Governance/Declaration_of_Conformity/DPDHL_CG_Code_June_2014.pdf)

## Councils need coordinated national campaign

**Tom Miller** on holes in the dented shield

**L**ocal government is looking increasingly threadbare in the face of austerity. The trend adopted by localist Conservatives has been to cut and cut again. Far less resource is going into services which are run locally, with local government having been cut by over 40%. Labour councils have found themselves disproportionately cut up to 55% in a Tory attempt to punish poorer residents for voting Labour. This has not been helped by ultra-left activists in several local anti-cuts campaigns falling for the bait of targeting Labour councils rather than the people who hold power over the purse strings at the highest levels of state. Given the present legal situation of council budgets, which allows far less leeway than the circumstances of the mid-1980s, most Labour councils have adopted a 'dented shield' approach aimed at keeping services running to a decent quality and job

stability despite cuts, as contrasted to an 'illegal budgets' tactic and Tory confiscation of the cheque book – with resulting job losses. But now we have a legacy of different problems. The dented shield now has nasty holes punched through it. Councils which were pledged to innovate and protect have found themselves in a situation in which cutting children's centres or introducing shorter social care visits becomes unavoidable. The obvious challenge is one which the labour movement and party has failed to grasp, which is that of a political campaign. Labour has failed to bring together any coordinated anti-austerity campaign push from its councils. We desperately need this coordinated national budgets campaign, which could perhaps be led between unions and the party, involving TULO. It is also clear that councils need to outline positive socialist principles to take us forward. Councils need to join

workers to push for a better pay deal, such as the #paypinch campaign led by GMB. More 'invest-to-save' optimism would mean that local government can save money for the public sector as a whole by integrating social care with the NHS locally - getting people out of hospital beds, intervening early on mental health. Finally, another way in which councils can deal with budget reductions is by making sure that more is delivered in house. In Brent we brought housing management back into public ownership and control, and will use this to control contract costs and save on duplications such as expensive HR. Local government may be reaching a tipping point. We need to be organised far better with our comrades nationally to fight austerity. But we need to make sure locally that we will not compromise on conditions for workers or on basic services and better outcomes for our residents. It will be tough, but we have to fight. **C**

**Tom Miller is a  
Brent councillor**

# All aboard for social accountability?

As Tories ditch steps to workplace democracy **Bryn Jones** proposes options

**A**re the conditions right to relaunch the long dormant case for worker or trade union representation on company boards? Labour has had a longer interest than Theresa May's brief flirtation but its aims are not much clearer. The 2015 election manifesto included a tentative step towards corporate level influence. Even though it only pledged worker representatives on the remuneration committees that decide boardroom pay. The 2017 manifesto proposed instead a special levy on excessive executive rewards and legislation to limit a company's highest to lowest pay ratios to a twenty to one maximum. The 2017 Manifesto's approach to corporate governance in general was vaguer, but potentially more comprehensive. It promised to change 'company law so that directors owe a duty directly not only shareholders, but to employees, customers, the environment and the wider public'. To have any practical force, such new duties would need mechanisms of accountability to a firm's 'stakeholder' groups. However, this 'multi-stakeholder' accountability could be more feasible than the TUC's long-standing case for worker-directors. To understand why we need to compare their different historical contexts.

Jim Callaghan's minority Labour government provided the major push for union-backed employees on company boards. Labour set up a commission on 'industrial democracy', under Lord Bullock. A majority of Bullock's panel proposed equal proportions of shareholder and employee board representatives plus another, third group of co-opted independents, for bigger companies. The proposals faltered: partly because some unions were hostile, fearing union directors' need to respect boardroom decisions would undermine their traditional bargaining powers. Partly because employers' bodies were, predictably, hostile. Yet before Parliament could even consider any legislation Callaghan's government fell in 1979. The long night of Thatcherism put industrial democracy and trade union



**Workers at Lucas Aerospace-pioneers of workplace democracy**

influence into political exile.

The Labour left supported this worker representation model as did some centrist political and business opinion. Many on the left saw Bullock as but one necessary, if timid step towards 'workers' control': a campaign buoyed by the powerful shop stewards movement of grass roots union representatives and the Bennite crusade for redistributing class power. More pragmatic and mainstream opinion saw industrial democracy as a solution to the pervasive 'problem' of union militancy then capable of disrupting coal, newspaper and energy production, and public services. Some advocates believed board-level representation of workers could channel this militancy into more constructive influences on business decisions. Now, of course, these forces and conditions have faded. In the absence of union strength, would Bullock-style representation be sufficient to curb 21st century corporations' greatly expanded powers?

In continuing struggles against irresponsible corporations, unions have sometimes found new strategies and new allies. UK workers are no longer the main victims of business excess. Causes such as overseas workers' rights, environmental abuses and housing deprivation have activated consumers, communities and other civil society interests to challenge individual corporations. Alliances of NGOs and citizens' groups have campaigned publicly and sometimes successfully with their union counterparts. One significant strategy has been to buy token shares in a firm to facilitate critical AGM motions and protests at companies' general meetings, and to shame boards with negative publicity. Here are the seeds of a different counter-

veiling check that is wider than 'single channel' representation of employees' interests. Not least because employees' boardroom representatives could become isolated and ineffective or 'incorporated' into business mind sets.

In the much-lauded 'Rhenish' system in Germany and other north European countries, worker representation in large businesses succeeds because it nests in a 'two-tier' governance structure. Workers' delegates form up to 50% of the membership of a supervisory board, alongside representatives of other economic interests. This board oversees the policies of the management board through which executives run the business. Adopting this system in the UK would encounter three problems. Firstly, the UK has relatively few, large unionised companies - the 50% rule applies only to firms with 3,000 or more employees. Secondly, union delegates may collude with investor representatives to their mutual advantage but to the detriment of the rest of civil society, as with product safety or environmental pollution. Thirdly, UK replication of the German/Rhenish' system would require a complex and politically demanding overhaul of company law to replace unitary boards with a two-tier system.

However, a less drastic type of reform could empower labour and a wider range of civil society interests. Adoption of shareholder and stakeholder 'nominations committees' - to appoint the management executives - could work through the present unitary board structure. As in Sweden where these committees help shape executives' behaviour by controlling their appointment and contract renewals. The necessary democratic reinforcement would be inclusion of representatives of small shareholders, unions/employees and accredited civil society interests alongside responsible institutional investors on the nominations committees. Such a system would counter allegations of a single-interest trade union lobby. It would also make corporations' often excessive and anti-social powers genuinely more accountable to the wider society. **C**

**Bryn Jones is the author of *Corporate Power and Responsible Capitalism***

## EDUCATION

# Going radical for life long learning

**Paul Reynolds** on new ideas for Labour's post-compulsory education policy

**E**ducation was significant in the 2017 Manifesto, with its promise of a comprehensive National Education Service. The promise to abolish student fees and reintroduce maintenance grants appealed to the youth vote and has encouraged the mobilisation of youth behind Corbyn. Recent concerns about Vice Chancellor's pay have underlined the questioning of the corporate direction of universities. However, that was all that the manifesto said about universities.

The post-compulsory education sections focused on skills, with promises to introduce free lifelong education in a well-staffed and well-resourced further education sector. It promised to: equalise funding between sixth forms and colleges in 16-18-year-old Key Stage 4 education; restore education maintenance allowances and replace fees with direct funding; and develop quality teaching across the private and public sector.

The third major plank to Labour's proposals was the resourcing and improvement in quality of apprenticeship programmes from large and small/medium size employers, with trade union representation in the governance structures for apprenticeships and a specific commitment to inclusion for women, BAME, LGBT and disabled people. Only at the end of the skills section is the establishment of a lifelong learning commission 'tasked with integrating further and higher education'.

Labour can and should be more radical in its approach to post-16 policy, both to attract support and to make a persuasive case for a constructive but not singular link between education and economy. How could it enhance its proposals?

Forming a Post-Compulsory Education Commission should be a priority. It should promote the value of all three routes to meeting ambitions, emphasising a parity of esteem where all forms of education (including training) are valued for their fitness for purpose and not their status (something that currently skews universities from further education colleges). This could directly fos-



**Glynis Breakwell stands down over excessive pay**

ter an appreciation for industrial and vocational work (as it does in Germany, promoting industrial strategy) whilst appreciating the value of intellectual and cultural qualifications. This would also offset the rabid rhetoric of a crude 'vocationality' that is ineffectively being pressed in the university sector.

The Commission would licence post-compulsory educational institutions, setting parameters on remuneration, legitimate educational functions and commitments to minimise fees and maximise public engagement and benefit from services to the stakeholders and communities. Each institution would identify its mission and priorities under these parameters.

It should disentangle funding and esteem from some damaging metrics, for example the tying of quality measurement to uptakes of 'graduate-level' jobs for universities, which ignore the vagaries of employment markets and devalue other choices individuals might make post-qualification. Meaningful metrics that emphasise quality would be developed with – not imposed on – students and academic/technical staff and should ensure accountability.

Labour should show that funding post-compulsory education can be offset by employer contributions for the skills they consume, central funding that is efficiently distributed and targeted at the point of service delivery and not senior management salaries, with a principle of some return by public service (below).

It should promise a universal education 'passport' that guarantees resourcing for entry to all three features of post-compulsory education – apprenticeship, further education qualification or undergraduate degree. The resourcing need not be equal for the different choices that are made, but should enable to individual to fulfil their educational aspirations to a level of skills and competence that gives them traction in the labour market or in where they wish to achieve.

At an advanced level, where there might be some personal contribution to costs, it should initiate a system of subsidies and 0% interest loans from a national funding agency in part guaranteed by government and the regulatory institutions of post-compulsory education so that the institutions themselves are encouraged to offer bursaries, discounts and balance expansion of provision with a responsibility for its cost.

It should operationalise lifelong learning by making the passport a lifelong provision, so that even if it is spent in gaining qualifications early in life it can be credited with years of contributions to taxation, employers' contributions, by credits tied to age thresholds (recrediting at 40/45 and on retirement) or by a record of community/voluntary engagement, so there is a transparency about what lifelong learning means.

It should initiate a scheme where funding on post-compulsory courses is tied to a contractual commitment to work in the non-governmental sector with licenced social, cultural and environmental organisations that provide care, support and enabling to communities. This could augment the equalities and welfare agendas. So, an undergraduate completing a 3-year degree will commit to a 2 year 'contract'. This could offset part of the financial contributions to such organisations.

This could ground an approach to life-long learning that is coherent, transparently affordable with a clear sense of where financial liabilities lie, and geared towards a genuine sense of people choosing their education trajectories, whilst enriching the economy, cultural and social life. **C**

**Paul Reynolds is a lecturer at Edge Hill University**



# GOVE'S ROTTEN LEGACY

**Dave Lister** on why the Academy project is floundering

**T**he Tories' reverses in this year's general election spelt an end to their plans for wholesale academisation, at least for the time being. Nevertheless, measures remain on the statute book to allow for further academisation, particularly for schools that fail their Ofsted inspection. However, there is a problem for the Government in that chains or multi-academy trusts (MATs) do not necessarily want to take over schools that are failing academically, financially or both.

Looking further into the chains themselves a varied picture emerges. Some MATs

are high performing, like Harris and ARK, in terms of the Government's criteria for achievement, but equally there are a significant number that are poor or very poor. The most recent example is the Wakefield City

**There have been huge salary hikes for some CEOs over the past year - up to 141% in one extreme case. Yet the staff they employ have had their salaries pegged at 1% over the last seven years**

Academy Trust, which has foundered, announcing on 8th September that it was seeking alternative sponsors to run its 21 schools. The trust admitted that it did not have "the capacity to facilitate the rapid improvement our academies need and our students deserve".

Yet not long ago the Government was praising it as "a potential flag-bearer for its academies ...across the north of England". Another example is E-ACT which had ten schools taken away from it because of poor performance. Further, in January 2017 School Week reported that as many as 57 sponsors had been placed on the Government's 'pause list' and instructed not to

take over any new schools. At secondary level two thirds of chains are performing below national averages at Progress 8, the relatively new way of assessing progress across a range of GCSE subjects and 51% are performing significantly below national averages. The House of Commons Select Committee reported last February that there is no real evidence that academies perform better than maintained schools. Yet that is what the duffers in the DfE continue to assert.

Why are a significant number of academies failing to deliver? The answer surely lies in the Government's desperation to academise as widely and as quickly as possible. This has led it to encourage academy chains to expand quicker than they have the capacity to do, sometimes over wide geographical areas. It has also accepted bids from potential academy sponsors with little or no due diligence. In the words of Professor Hutchings: "The record of the Government in accepting new sponsors...has been that most have been accepted. There does not seem to have been a very vigorous vetting process..."

There are other issues too, such as a lack of accountability. Although Local Authority (LA) services have been cut, LAs still keep a watchful eye on their maintained schools. However academies and academy chains are ultimately responsible to one person alone - the Secretary of State. Powers are delegated to eight Regional Schools Commissioners to deal with academies in their area but they only have small teams and as the number of academies grows, their ability to monitor and intervene reduces. This has prompted suggestions that the Government will end up creating a new middle tier to take on this responsibility. I have news for them: this tier already exists in the form of LAs.

There are also concerns about how chains are run. Many CEOs of MATs are on large salaries. Dan Moynihan of Harris was on £420,000 in 2015-16 and most of them earn more than the Prime Minister, even those just running one primary school. There have been huge salary hikes for some CEOs over the past year - up to

141% in one extreme case. Yet the staff they employ have had their salaries pegged at 1% over the last seven years which represents a real term pay cut at the same time as they have faced increasing workload pressures.

We also need to consider questionable (even if legal) practices by some chains. There are cases of schools purchasing services provided by their sponsor and of staff being employed who are closely related to senior figures in the chain. Even though these practices may be totally above board, they are clearly open to abuse in a situation in which academies receive far less scrutiny than maintained schools.

How then can we expect an incoming Labour Government to address these issues? Angela Rayner said at the last Labour

**Why are a significant number of academies failing to deliver? The answer surely lies in the Government's desperation to academise as widely and as quickly as possible**

Party conference that a Labour Government "would ensure that every school in receipt of public money is genuinely democratically accountable to the people it serves" but she did not exactly pledge to return all academies to LA control. It would surely not be sensible to de-academise successful, popular schools. But many academies cannot be described in this way. Legal changes would be required and should be implemented to allow academies to return to the LA fold.

Michael Gove and his successors have inflicted significant damage on our education system. We have too many different types of school. Inappropriate courses, tests and examinations have been foisted on them. Over time Labour in power will need to be really radical in reshaping, with the profession, much of what is now taking place in our schools. **c**

**Dave Lister is a Chartist EB member**

#METOO

# Sexual Harassment, #MeToo

**Mica Nava** on why women are saying no more loudly and widely

As no Chartist reader can fail to have noticed, the last weeks of 2017 saw an eruption of condemnation and protest against sexual predators in the work place. Although it started in the US, this has become a global movement. The MeToo hashtag has trended in one version or another in a hundred countries and been posted many millions of times. Indeed, as I write, Time magazine has named the 'silence breakers' of the #MeToo movement its 'Person of the Year'<sup>1</sup> and the Hollywood Golden Globe awards have bypassed movies associated with Weinstein productions.

There is nothing new about sexual harassment. As a way of controlling women and demonstrating male power it has been around for centuries and has been focused on by feminists of the second wave since the early 1980s (although 19th century feminists were also concerned about the issues). What is different, and what the current shock wave has exposed, often in graphic detail, is the widespread and often shameless nature of this exercise of power which is wielded across the full range of work places, from parliament to the hospitality industry and schools, usually by relatively established men over younger less-established women. These acts, extending from the monumentally crude, as in the case of Harvey Weinstein, to the micro subtle impositions designed to humiliate and confuse, have not only turned out to be more commonplace than most people were aware but have also generated, in the space of a few months, an unprecedented, visceral, world-wide resistance and fight back.

So why has this protest emerged now? What is different socially and politically about the current context? How does it fit with second wave feminism? Should it be given an uncritical welcome?

It is not new to suggest that the #MeToo campaign is part of an ongoing revolt against the election of Trump and his brazen,

self-promoting – and as yet unpunished – serial sexual assaults on women in public places and an extension of the protest demonstrations in which an estimated five million women around the world participated following his inauguration. So the Weinstein revelations, although the trigger for the #MeToo retaliation, are in fact part of a longer process of growing insurrection against the misogyny and bullying that many women are subjected to on a daily basis in the work places of the modern world.

But are things worse now or are women just less inclined to endure the indignities and inequalities of everyday life? A bit of both probably. Although women are still not paid the same as men for work of equal value, over the last decades they have nevertheless made great strides in terms of their economic and social status. So although sexual harassment can be understood in part as an exercise of embedded power by men – they do it because they can, because they always have – it can also be interpreted, at least in part, as an attempt to hang on to increasingly precarious and diminishing male privilege.

**There is nothing new about sexual harassment. As a way of controlling women and demonstrating male power it has been around for centuries**

lege.

A second factor contributing to the situation today is the exponential growth of internet activity, of sexual trolling and online pornography in which the pliability and degradation of women is normalised, and which is consumed mainly by men, often over the course of the working day. The internet has however also provided the networking infrastructure for the resistance movement – the opportunity for women



The faces of five women, including celebrities Taylor Swift and Ashley Judd, appear on TIME's 2017 Person of the Year cover, representing "The Silence Breakers"

to communicate with each other, to recognise and define the processes of oppression and to fight back against bullying. Together these antagonistic aspects of social media have contributed to the growing recognition by women, especially younger 'millennial' women, of structural inequality and what is increasingly referred to as 'the patriarchy'.

Feminists of my generation, particularly socialist feminists, wrestled with this concept during the 1970s and '80s and, in part because of our roots on the left, tried to work out the relationship of patriarchy to capitalism. The usual assumption was that capitalism was the determining force, and that because capitalist relations of production benefitted from women's cheap and malleable labour, strategies were developed to maintain the status quo. Others (I was among them) argued that capitalism was indifferent to the gender of its labour

# #MeToo and Feminism

delately now and the long wave of attrition against male sexual abuse

power and that it was patriarchal structures, i.e. men as men, that kept women in their place. And I think that is borne out in the current scenario. The patriarchy we are witnessing today, in which men harass to assert and display power — sometimes simply because they have been brought up to do so, because of pervasive ideas about masculinity, and sometimes as part of a struggle to defend their ascendancy in the modern public world — is a rear-guard attempt to keep women in their place.

So, in their invocation of 'patriarchy' I think the #MeTooers have got it right. The feminism of young women today is not the same as ours. For a start, in part because of the high profile of Trump and Weinstein, it's now a mass movement — as Time magazine has shown us. Last summer an ICM survey of teenage girls reported that the majority identified as feminists.

What we are now witnessing is a surge of mainstream, populist, assertive feminism quite different from the left-wing radical and marginal versions of the 1970s. The current wave is less concerned with conceptual equivocation and, interestingly, seems rather less libertarian in its attitudes to sexuality than was ours. This too has had a bearing on the responses of older feminists to the present crisis.

One of the key demands of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s was for sexual freedom on equal terms with men. This was a reaction against conservative ideas about femininity and the constraints imposed on women and girls' sexuality in 1950s and '60s which operated even in the countercultures of political and social protest. Although the emphasis in feminist thought shifted somewhat over the course of the 1980s as sexual abuse was increasingly registered, this initial focus on liberation and pleasure made a significant contribution to the formation of ideas about sexual behaviour for a generation of women.

It is this context that also

made us fairly robust in the face of unwanted advances. It is no coincidence that older feminists have been notably overrepresented among those who have said 'we learned to cope, to be tough, to slap down wandering hands' etc. Danger and risk were all part of the public world we had felt excluded from, so we put up with what is now called 'inappropriate' behaviour (see for instance most recently Glenda Jackson in Stage).

Therefore, although feminists of my generation are

**What we are left with is a deeply complex picture. There are no easy answers**

immensely sympathetic to the #MeToo campaign they are also a bit bemused about the gravity attributed to what sometimes seems to us rather light-weight routine come-ons. I include myself here. But I have shifted in the course of writing this piece and talking to younger women. I have become more sensitive to the indignity of minor infractions and increasingly respect the courage and risk involved in taking a stand and making public accusations. The fight back is definitely to be celebrated. This will be a long war of attrition but progress is being made. Men are taking note. All that is very good news.

But significant questions remain. Where to draw the line? What should be done? The tricky issues of definition, proportionality and natural justice are hardly addressed by the #MeToo protesters or their advocates. Legal principles seem to have been suspended. Significant problems in the identification of the scale and harm of sexual harass-

ment and in knowing how to respond are unresolved. We should not be lulled by the excitement of battle into making dodgy accusations and bypassing due process. As Ruth Levine has put it, we should avoid 'yielding to the desire for retribution, which only perpetuates brutality' and instead work for 'restorative justice, which holds the potential for genuine accountability and lasting change'<sup>2</sup>

So how to move forward? The solution should surely be to focus, where possible, on change and education, not vengeance. And we must absolutely keep in mind that not all men fit the #MeToo characterisations of predatory masculinity, that men's behaviour has changed enormously in the last fifty years and will continue to do so. Moreover, women can also be liars and bullies and quite often collude in the harassment of other women (most recently Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of the extreme right-wing group Britain First, has been accused by a fellow member in her organisation of attempting to silence a woman who made harassment claims<sup>3</sup>).

What we are left with is a deeply complex picture. There are no easy answers. So, in conclusion, my message to my teenage granddaughters is: take care, be brave, organise, challenge and take action if necessary. But remember that it's important to keep things in proportion, that masculinity is constantly in flux and most men are OK, and that online fraudsters and trolls are likely to be more dangerous than your average male teacher, school mate or boss. Whether or not the advice of their grandmother will be rated, I don't know. **C**

**Mica Nava is Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of East London. Since the 1980s her work has been widely cited and reprinted and has contributed to the expansion of cultural studies in UK and abroad. Her most recent book is *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Bloomsbury)**

<sup>1</sup> <http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers>

<sup>2</sup> [http://bostonreview.net/gender-sexuality/judith-levine-will-feminisms-past-mistakes-haunt-metoo#.WivnZ\\_X8xNd.email](http://bostonreview.net/gender-sexuality/judith-levine-will-feminisms-past-mistakes-haunt-metoo#.WivnZ_X8xNd.email)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/dec/03/jayda-fransen-tried-to-stop-sex-assault-complaint>



## DEMOCRACY

# 2018: a year for celebrating and changing our Democracy?

On the 100th anniversary of female (limited) suffrage **Mary Southcott** surveys the advances and limits of democracy in Britain

**T**wo words we should love and cherish, though they are rather clunky, are enfranchisement and subsidiarity. The former as in Bob Marley's redemption song, "emancipate yourself".

So embrace citizenship, especially the right to vote, to set free, to liberate championed by Martin Luther King killed 50 years ago in 1968. Subsidiarity, inherited from the Roman Catholic church, is linked with sphere sovereignty, as in devolution where decisions are made at the most appropriate place nearest to the people and issues they affect. Some of us have never really worked out what pooled sovereignty is and live in a binary, zero sum world which negates cooperation and consensus seeking."

We need to add citizenship education, a crucial ingredient so people know how to access and influence decisions made in their name. All these are at the heart of our democracy. This year, 2018, the anniversary of the crucial decision to allow women, over 30 at least, to vote, we have a reason to look back, to celebrate these stepping stones in democracy through the Great Reform Act, the Chartists and Suffragettes to the current debate where some legislation seems designed to disenfranchise. We need also to project forward to the sort of society we wish to live in which reflects our values and vision of equality and ending poverty.

We have key moments we draw on to take us forward, starting in ancient Athens, remembering that it was only men that met at the agora to make decisions with their stone, psephos, the root of our word psephology. People who decided not to join in were individuals, idiots, which became our word, idiots. Letting others decide our lives without our having a say is just idiotic.

Thirty years ago Charter 88 picked up on the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and the Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. Unlock Democracy continues their work. The signing by King



It has been 100 since Sylvia Pankhurst and the Suffragettes won the right to vote for women

John at Runnymede was 800 before publication, by Graham Allen and the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, of A New Magna Carta?

It was the Great Reform Act, The Representation of the People Act 1832, that inspired the Chartists in 1838. Their People's Charter demands have, except annual parliaments, all been conceded. They did not even think of reversing the way the Reform Act had disenfranchised women. Before this women, without male relatives, could vote because property rather than gender defined the franchise. Voters were by definition men and the Chartists for all their positive contribution did not challenge this.

Ironically this led to the Suffragettes and Suffragists who with their supporters achieved one century ago votes for women, at least those aged 30. Looking back 100 years seems a short time in history, it is a very long time in politics. Things have not just changed, they have changed utterly. But the persistence of the 19th century voting system we use to elect MPs, the first past the post, and the centralised governance, in England at least, stands out. The emancipation of working class men moved the Labour Party into second place replacing the Liberals and also changed their attitude to elec-

toral reform until the 1970s.

The 14 December 1918 general election was not just the first where women voted, but all men over 21 were enfranchised. It is salutary to think that this was before Ireland was partitioned given the soft or hard borders discussion in Brexit negotiations. Some things do not change. Sinn Fenn's Constance Markievicz, did not take up her seat because of the policy still existing of abstention from Westminster. The DUP agreement on confidence and supply means that all voters in Northern Ireland are represented in the government rather than having any party working with the opposition under other voting systems. And first past the post is supported to avoid minority government.

Gender parity at 21 had to wait ten more years, 1928. But now no distinction is made, on gender grounds at least. There was an overlap between people who called for the vote for women and those arguing at that time for proportional representation. The Representation of the People's Act in 1948 got rid of University seats and plural voting but not before Barbara Castle had been chosen the second Labour candidate in Blackburn.

By 1968, the year that changed everything, another key anniversary, it was realised that setting the voting age at 21 meant that some people did not have their

first vote until they were 25 or 26. Votes at 18 was incorporated into the Representative of the People Act the following year. Now we are arguing for votes at 16, not because the age is magical but because usually 16 year olds are at home and at school, where ideally they can get registered, discuss politics and learn citizenship rights. The Scottish Independence Referendum showed that 16 year olds are great voters but many attainers, those approaching 18, do not even get on the register, thanks to individual registration. Should we be asking for automatic registration? There are countries which give their citizens one number which gives them access to health care, national insurance, income tax and voting. We need to look out for disenfranchisement, boundaries, registration and pilots on identification when voting.

There is equality of franchise for Irish and Commonwealth citi-

zens who live in the UK. EU member countries outside the UK, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus could lose their right to vote in local elections, for elected mayors, in European parliamentary elections which come to an end with Brexit. Their vote might have affected the result in the 2016 EU referendum. The result produces the sort of crisis that might let us look at our unwritten constitution. Labour is offering a constitutional convention. The class of 2015 and 2017 MPs are more and more in favour of reforming our voting system. Constituencies which have always assumed to be safe, where most of the MPs supporting first past the post are, are waking up to the idea that they can be taken for granted. It is the reason housing has taken so long to appear on the agenda. We are witnessing the Bootle effect where people are engaging in the conversation we need to have before Labour agrees that we will go into government committed to

changing the voting system.

So 2018 needs to be another emancipating moment. The magic 8 has resounded down the centuries. We need to be grateful to those who worked to let people decide by voting in the past and let that galvanise us to change our broken voting system. It polarises and divides, magnifies difference and undermines our ability to see our communality and ability to work together. The political culture needs to change. Equality and democracy are our values and vision. We need to change the centre of gravity of our politics. As Robin Cook said we can no longer support a system which allows us once in every two decades to seize power with minority support. "Our objective, our slogan, should be to achieve an electoral system which puts our democracy in the hands of the many voters, not the few voters who happen to be key in marginal seats." **C**

**Mary Southcott is secretary of Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform and a member of Chartist EB**

## Making all votes count

**While 76% of Labour voters support PR Alena Ivanova asks whether members are willing to back a progressive Labour-led coalition**

**Alena Ivanova is a member of Tower Hamlets Labour Party and Momentum**

**T**alking to a comrade recently about the 'dark ages' for elections in 2000s, he admitted to voting Lib Dem in 2010. This is not your typical bright-eyed student fooled by Nick Clegg's dubious charm. We are talking about a staunchly left working-class young person who surveyed the dire prospects of all parties' political programmes and decided on the Lib Dems because of their commitment to electoral reform and Proportional Representation (PR).

The second edition of the report\* published by Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform and Make Votes Matter (the cross-party campaign to introduce PR to the House of Commons) makes the case for PR in light of the surprise strong result for Labour under Corbyn and the unique position the party has found itself in under May's unstable government. The publication argues that the manifesto's commitment to a Constitutional Convention is significant but does not go far enough and, more importantly, is not reflective of the new mood to rebuild the party as a grassroots-led, truly members' organisation.

The report outlines the basic arguments against the current First Past the Post system - that it is archaic, that it rarely delivers a government that has actually won the widest support, that it polarises the political discourse and at the same time devalues political ideas, putting pressure on candidates to focus on short-term easy fixes for marginal localities, rather than big picture strategic change for the whole country. Perhaps most significantly, the existing electoral system has delivered a majority of conservative-led governments when the country consistently returns a majority of more progressive votes. The effects of this erosion of democracy are felt by all of us, not only in terms of the continuing austerity and dismantling of public services, but the apa-

thy and mistrust people feel towards the political system - often people in the demographics that Labour is polling best in.

It goes on to present evidence that PR countries have achieved better gender and BAME representation in government, as well as lower income inequality, better environmental controls, less appetite for engaging with armed conflicts and higher social expenditure.

Consistently, the report draws on existing research and modelling of previous election results to make the compelling argument that under Proportional Representation, there would be no areas in the country taken for granted, and voters in each seat will be represented in parliament. That in itself should be reason enough for Labour to wholeheartedly support an electoral reform that makes all votes count.

However, the question that left-wing activists within Labour would then need to answer for themselves is what would the effects of more coalition governments with Labour as the key party would mean for the project we are finally making headway with, namely shifting the political consensus back to the left of genuinely democratic socialism. For example, discussing the effects of FPTP during the Thatcher era, the authors clearly state:

'The point here is not that a Labour-Liberal coalition would be exactly the same as a Labour majority government, but that it would be incomparably better and more representative of British voters than the actual outcome, nearly two decades of Thatcherism.' Are Labour supporters prepared to stand by their preference for PR (76% of Labour voters believe the party should commit to PR), if it means a progressive coalition that is not necessarily aligned to the current Labour vision that is finally offering a true alternative? **C**

\*The Many, Not the Few  
Proportional  
Representation & Labour  
in the 21st Century  
Published by Labour  
Campaign for Electoral  
Reform and Make Votes  
Matter



## DEMOCRACY

# Closing the democratic deficit

**Cat Smith** welcomes the 30th October Westminster Hall discussion on proportional representation and calls for real change by government

**T**he debate was delayed by the June general election and I am sure that we all welcome the huge increase we saw in political participation. Two million young people registered to vote after the election was called, leading to the highest youth turnout since 1992. We must continue to build on this level of engagement, in which the petition process (which triggered the October debate) plays a powerful role.

The debate focused on our voting system and, particularly proportional representation. Labour is committed to taking radical steps to ensure that all eligible voters are registered and can use their vote, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss wider electoral reform.

All voting systems have strengths and weaknesses. Although the election did not produce a strong majority Government, some argue for first past the post (FPTP) based on its history of returning single-party Governments and because it retains the constituency link, a vital aspect of British political life. As MP for Lancaster and Fleetwood, I represent the people of my local area and am directly accountable to them. However, moving to a proportional system does not necessarily rule that out.

At the election the Conservative party and the Democratic Unionist party received just 43 per cent of the votes between them but gained a majority of seats. In Scotland, Labour and the Conservatives received similar vote shares, on 27 per cent and 28 per cent respectively, but the Tories won twice as many seats as Labour. Supporters of PR argue that seats in Parliament should reflect votes and that a PR system will give people the opportunity to vote for what they believe in, instead of voting tactically.

What the British public wants is unclear. Much has been said about the 2011 AV (Alternative Vote) referendum. Ed Miliband as Labour leader supported the yes campaign because he believed that it was good for democracy and accountability, and fairer



**Young voters in a record turnout in the 2017 general election**

than the current system. However, the UK voted overwhelmingly to reject changing the system, with just 32 per cent of voters supporting AV. Yet public opinion may have changed since 2011. Supporters of PR highlight recent ICM poll findings that 67% believe that seats should match votes, while 61% support replacing FPTP with PR. It is therefore important to consider different voting systems. However, chang-

**It is important that people are entitled and registered to vote, which is a challenge for private tenants, students and young people who often move house**

ing the voting system alone will not fix the disconnect between some voters and politics. We need wide-ranging transformation of our political structures to help build a vibrant, active democracy and reduce the power of vested interests and big money.

Labour's 2017 manifesto committed to establishing a constitutional convention to examine and advise on reforming how Britain works at a fundamental level. The convention would have the option to consider different voting systems and would consider extending democracy locally, regionally and nationally, starting by ending the hereditary principle and reducing the size of the House of Lords. That should

be part of a wider package of constitutional reform to address the growing democratic deficit across Britain. This is about where power and sovereignty lie—in politics, the economy, the justice system and our communities.

A recent study by Demos found that only 37% of young adults feel that British politics reflects the issues that matter to them. What are the Government doing to increase democratic engagement and ensure that voters have their say on decision making, both during and outside election time? As we approach 100 years since the start of women's suffrage, it is important to reflect on the ways in which more people can participate in our democracy. Reducing the voting age to 16 would make our constitution clearer across the whole UK. Currently 16 and 17-year-olds can vote in local elections in Scotland (and Wales is considering following suit) but they are not entitled to vote in a general election. What is the Government's position on votes at 16?

It is also important that people are entitled and registered to vote, which is a particular challenge for private tenants, students and young people who often move house. What are the Government doing to ensure that such mobile and transient groups do not fall off the electoral register every year? It is hard for people to check whether they are on the electoral roll but the London Borough of Hackney is the first council to enable people can check online. Would the Government consider rolling that out nationally?

Finally, there is no point making radical changes to our electoral system if we lack staff to manage them. Electoral services are generally administered by small, often relatively junior teams. What are the Government doing to ensure that elections are properly staffed, and what will they do to protect the mental health and wellbeing of electoral administrators?

We should review voting systems as part of a wider package of constitutional and electoral reform to address the growing democratic deficit across Britain.

**Cat Smith MP is the Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs Minister in the Shadow Cabinet.**



# Saudi Arabia: mayhem or democracy?

**Muddassar Ahmed** asks whether the young leader is ushering in a Saudi Arab Spring

**T**his is the Saudi Arab Spring" said a well-connected Riyadh socialite to me last December in a private Twitter exchange. His message, as well as his chosen medium, speaks volumes about the new Saudi Arabia unleashed by Mohammed bin Salman (known as MbS).

I've worked as a communications consultant in Saudi Arabia for 10 years. Recent events show that Saudi Arabia is finally facing up to its deep-rooted economic, social and foreign policy challenges.

Its economy is in dire need of diversification. Its foreign policy must be made more ambitious and nuanced. And its society must become fairer. Bin Salman has proven that he has the political capital and the diplomatic muscle to face up to the enormity of the problems he has inherited – and perhaps begin to solve.

It's difficult for outsiders to really understand Saudi Arabia – I'm still struggling. And my Saudi friends each have their own take.

The familiar vocabulary being used by outside analysts doesn't do justice to the complexity and significance of bin Salman's actions. "Purge" and "putsch", "coup" and "crackdown" have been thrown around. Wild conspiracy theories (even by the already hallucinogenic standards of the Middle East) about bombed helicopters and yachts containing \$1 billion have circulated unthinkingly.

More than anything, the Saudi street is frustrated at being caricatured – by the global commentary, and by parts of its own ruling elite.

Without question, parts of Saudi Arabia are a pampered petrostate. But beneath the surface, the Saudi Middle Class – who rarely make international headlines – have been squeezed for years. It is those Saudis who are riveted by bin Salman's talk of anti-corruption and a return to moderate, open Islam.

Nearly half of Saudis are



**Real change for Saudi Arabia?**

younger than 25, and this demographic bulge could almost double the size of the labour market by 2030. Many of those young people are foreign educated, thanks to the late King Abdullah's policy of providing a global education in an attempt at sustainable economic development.

Those who stayed at home for university have grown up in a social media-saturated environment few of us in the UK can imagine: Saudi Arabia tops both Twitter and Snapchat usage worldwide.

Bin Salman instinctively understands this – he is, after all, 32 years old. He has the potential to be a millennial head of state, with all the possibilities and fears that brings. His appetite for risk and apparent comfort with seismic shifts are seen by many as a trait not specifically of his nation or his class, but ultimately of his generation.

The fear among the old guard, including many of those connected to individuals detained by bin Salman's new anti-corruption unit, is that those risks will not pay off.

Important constituencies in the religious establishment are already feeling marginalized. Brotherhood sympathisers are aggrieved by recent Saudi policy against Brotherhood-supporting Qatar, while the Wahhabi establishment are shocked that the religious police (informally called the Hai'a by Saudi youth) has been all but shut down.

It would be unfair to view this

as blind social liberalism on the part of bin Salman. He simply appears more worried about young Saudis' livelihoods than their dress codes. He is as concerned about Saudi girls being able to drive as he is about them having jobs to drive to.

All Saudis – with the exception perhaps of the very old, conservative and very rich – are excited by headline-grabbing projects like the \$500 billion NEOM city in the desert, the Vision 2030 economic diversification programme and the potential for reform driven by Nazaha (the new anti-corruption commission that led arrests to arrests in mid December).

This excitement is equaled only by worry – how will the newly disenfranchised elite react? Will the revolutionaries become the new conservatives the morning after the revolution? And most of all, will these high-level changes trickle down to more equality across society, (even in 'the other Saudi Arabia' in the Eastern province)?

This is on the home front, but foreign policy is a different matter. Yemen is looking more and more like Saudi Arabia's Vietnam – with the key difference that Yemen's Vietcong are armed with missiles that can reach Riyadh, as one such missile did in November. And the situation in Lebanon is unpredictable at best, particularly after Prime Minister Hariri resigned – from Riyadh.

Bin Salman has joined the new generation of young leaders taking huge risks and potentially making transformational leaps because they stare down generational challenges and don't blink: Trudeau in Canada, Macron in France, and Kurz in Austria.

If this is the Saudi Arab Spring, Mohammed bin Salman will have to work overtime if it is to be the one instance where the Arab Spring delivered on its promise, rather than being hijacked by mayhem and destruction. If anyone in the Saudi ruling class is up to the challenge, it is him. **C**

**Muddassar Ahmed is chair of Forum for Change, a British think tank working on issues of inclusion and diversity, and a former British government adviser**

## SOFT LEFT

# Miliband as new flag bearer?

**Trevor Fisher** reflects on the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and possible successors

**T**he 2015 election marked the death knell of the old Right of the Labour Party and its close relation the New Labour tendency - the main old Right grouping known as Labour First still continues and was name checked by Roy Hattersley in the Observer on December 3rd. Progress, the New Labour vehicle started by Derek Draper continues as a marginal presence and its standard bearer Liz Kendall gained only 4.5% of the members vote in that year's leadership election. The Old Left won that election not because it was in the ascendant - Corbyn was put on the ballot paper to take votes off Burnham - but the majority of the Party membership were soft left and revolted against the three main candidates. Was this the moment for a soft left revival?

Clearly this has not happened and while there is still a remnant old Right, the Soft Left is largely invisible. Momentum will continue to rise, and is likely to take the extra three NEC seats created by the 2017 Party Conference. The soft left cannot mobilise, though Angela Rayner has come out as Soft Left and others in the PLP have similar views. But to what effect?

In 2018 will see the 20th anniversary of the folding of the most successful Soft Left group in Party history, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. What successors exist? There are really only two, Compass and Open Labour. However Compass is no longer Labour oriented, so what is the state of Open Labour which floated at the end of 2015?

Having been one of the 50 or so signatories to the press letter that started its career, two years ago, and attending the positive discussion sessions in the Midlands and the North which followed, I was surprised when a fringe at Labour Conference was addressed by ex-leader Ed Miliband. Politics Review in November 2016 described Open Labour as Milibandite, surprisingly confirmed when Miliband addressed its formal launch at a London Conference in spring 2017.

The conference approved a long policy document which was rooted in the Miliband era, and while



Open Labour declares itself a membership organisation, but there are no membership cards and voting was by holding up an Open Labour pin badge. The event was dominated by speeches, limiting movers of motions to one minute per proposal. Following this a second conference was held post the election in Manchester but with few decisions open to membership participation.

The elections for the committee were by postal ballot and the results were notified, but little else has been formally notified to members. Rumour is that there is an active social media debate. Certainly the website is active, and has been revamped. But the most prominent feature on the home page is a picture of Ed Miliband. The only sign at the time of writing in Mid December the members have a role is a call for applications for sponsorship from members - and supporters - in selection contests in Labour marginals..

Although Labour launched an election for the three extra NEC seats at the end of November, Open Labour is not supporting any of the candidates. It is difficult to see how a Miliband supporting organisation in a party

whose membership rejected Miliband in 2015 can have any influence on events.

This is still more so for Compass. It has been promoting a 'Progressive Alliance' which now seems to be morphing into a 'Common Platform'. But there is a hole in its strategy. Compass has never taken a position on the EU. Promises of a debate have yet to materialise. No other tendency has opted out of the Brexit debate. It was notable that early in its career Momentum surveyed its members showing they were opposed to Brexit by a big majority. This puts Momentum in a strong position to build membership and influence the Party development. This is not so for Open Labour and Compass, both failing to come out strongly in favour of Remain.

While 2018 may or may not see a Labour government, it is certainly going to be dominated by the struggle over Brexit. It is clear that organisations that sit on the fence particularly if they favour Ed Miliband's form of triangulation are unlikely to have any influence. Two decades after the LCC closed down, there is nothing remotely as effective as that organisation was **C**

**Trevor Fisher was a member of the Labour Coordinating Committee executive 1987-90 and secretary of the Labour Reform Group 1995- 2007. He was a member of the Compass Executive 2007-2009**

# Globalist left have it back to front

**Frank Lee** argues the death of the nation state has been somewhat exaggerated

**T**ransnational Companies can be compared to a tree: they have extensive branches everywhere, but their roots are firmly based at National HQ.

One of the contemporary clichés in the current discussion of global political economy is the rather dubious concept of the end of the nation state and the subsequent breaking of the shackles which had hitherto tied Transnational Corporations (TNCs) to specific geographical and legal locations. It is argued that these organizations have moved beyond the control of the states who can no longer exercise effective jurisdiction over their activities.

This 'state-denial' has been articulated by the influential hyper-globalist faction ensconced in the financial press, academic economics departments and political parties. In a borderless world the state apparently no longer matters; economic power has shifted from sovereign states to global markets. Markets were once fitted into states; now states are fitted into markets. This change has apparently been brought about by the revolutionary technologies in transport and communications.

Since the 2008 crisis, however, this view is more difficult to justify. It was after all the allegedly redundant state (or states) which pulled capitalism's chestnuts out of the fire with the bail-out of insolvent banks. During the meeting between Obama and the Wall Street elite at the height of the crisis the President apparently remarked that it was only himself who stood between the assembled financial movers and shakers of Wall Street and 'the pitchforks'. The US government also ponied up some US\$50 billion to bail out distressed auto manufacturers General Motors and Ford who were based in 'Motor City' Detroit. Detroit itself was also bankrupt but the Federal government was unable to find an additional US\$13 billion to bail out the city itself. Maybe – just a thought – because the population of Motor City was largely African-American.

In fact, the state always has



Global corps like Apple have nation state homes

and continues to be the most significant force in shaping and guiding national economic development, including globalization itself. Consider that an increased capability to overcome geographical distance made possible by technological innovations in transport and communication technologies is of little use if there are political barriers to such movements. Thus, policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatisation were necessary to overcome non-technical barriers to the free flow of labour, capital and commodities. Thus, the enabling force of globalization (i.e. neo-liberalism writ large) was the state. In fact, the bigger and more powerful states have used globalization as a means of increasing their power and interests.

"States actively construct globalization and use it as soft geopolitics and to acquire greater power over, and autonomy from, their national economies and societies respectively. For example the US and G7s other dominant members design and establish the international trade agreements, organizations, and legislation that support and govern trans-border investments, production networks, and market penetration constitutive of contemporary globalization. Advanced capitalist states, particularly, use these political instruments to shape international economic decision making and

policy making in their interests." (M. Gritsch – Review of International Political Economy 12: 1-25)

Moreover, nation-states protect, subsidize, manipulate currencies, impose quotas, sanctions, give tax breaks and exemptions to export industries, R&D, and grant patents, and intellectual property rights to their indigenous corporations to both protect their home markets and help them penetrate overseas markets. This is laughingly described as 'free trade'. States and corporations are not antipodes they are twins, and arguably the state is the senior partner in this arrangement.

For example, in 1934 the Roosevelt administration passed the Glass-Steagall Act. This involved a forced separation of Investment banking from commercial banking which stopped banks speculating with depositors' monies. In 1999, however Bill Clinton signed the Financial Services Modernization Act, commonly known as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, repealing the key components of Glass-Steagall whose articles became largely toothless. This was what Wall Street had been angling for and which gave an additional push to the eventual debacle in 2008.

The state giveth, and the state taketh away.

Thus, the notion that powerful trends of internationalization and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24>>



# GLOBALISATION

>>CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

interdependence have ended national sovereignty is vastly overstated. States remain in charge of the essential part of their national sovereignty: monetary policy, (except in the Eurozone of course) law-making, macroeconomic policy, finance and taxation, environment, education, labour markets, industrial relations, pensions, health and welfare, social policy, science and technology and so forth. Arguably no supra-national entity has yet been designed to replace what has been an effective system of national government. Unimpeded global flows of capital in search of lucrative investment opportunities, are hardly conducive for countries wishing to plan and stabilize their future free from the disruptive effects of mobile global capital flows (often 'hot money').

Which brings us to the EU. The state-declinst thesis seems to have gained a considerable traction with the Remain left. No less a personage than Yanis Varoufakis - the initiator of DiEM2025 (Democracy in Europe) - has been reading the last rites of state democracy and sovereignty in Europe. Apparently, the model of politics based on the nation state is 'finished'. The sovereignty of national parliaments has been dissolved. Today, national electoral mandates are impossible to fulfil. Hence, reform of the European institutions (specifically the EP), is the only remaining option.

Essentially this is the latest version of the TINA 'argument', (there is no alternative), pioneered by Mrs T and rolled out with monotonous regularity ever since by every cornered establishment politician, both left and right. As has been noted elsewhere. "Tell the population that the nation-state is 'finished,' that it is unable to guarantee full employment (or to work towards it) and you free yourself of the responsibility of even trying." The same goes for austerity or anything else. If the nation state is 'kaput' it is futile to oppose it. Globalization, however, is far from being the all-powerful and all-encompassing behemoth postulated by the declinists. "There are major cultural and linguistic differences that preclude a full mobilisation of resources across national borders. There is 'home bias' in investment portfolios. There is a high correlation

between national investment rates and national saving rates. Capital flows between rich and poor nations fall considerably short of what theoretical models predict. There are still severe restrictions to the international mobility of labour. The truth is that we do not live in a completely globalised world, far from it. Ergo, nation-states can pursue their own policies."

Corbyn's policies of peoples' QE, renationalisation of the Railways, taking into public ownership the energy and water industries together with the Royal Mail are not beyond the scope of the UK qua sovereign and democratic state. A sovereign country that issues its own currency and formulates its own fiscal policy, and if necessary can impose restrictions on the neo-liberal package of free movement of labour, capital and commodities, as well as the drive to deregulate labour markets (euphemistically, flexibilization) is perfectly capable of a policy for growth rather than for continued austerity which has become the hallmark of the EU area.

But there's the rub. How is it possible to square that orientation with membership of the EU, a structurally, neo-liberal capitalist institution. The Euro has simply been designed to ensure that Germany runs a permanent trade surplus whilst the southern periphery runs continuing trade deficits - a simple accounting identity. It is also noticeable that Germany seems to be harbouring increasingly regional hegemonic ambitions regarding the rest of Europe. Socialism or even tepid social democracy can never truly thrive within such a hostile environment.

The position of the globalist left as outlined in the DiEM2025 manifesto, however, seems like a back-to-front attempt to by-pass national institutions and to attempt through a supra-national democracy to make fundamental reforms, through a democratized and strengthened EU. Even Varoufakis regards this as being 'utopian.' But, he continues, it is 'a lot more realistic than trying to maintain the system as it is' or 'trying to leave.' (The Independent).

More realistic, really? But this begs the obvious question of why such an entity is going to be any different from the present dispensation. Is it going to be any less neo-liberal and undemocratic if it is given greater powers and is

integrated further. It seems to make more sense to work from the national to the supra-national level than the other way around - particularly given that most states in the EU are governed by centre right coalitions with social-democrats in tow and centre left parties (PS, Syriza, PSOE, PASOK, SPD) acting like centre right liberals. Moreover, the transfer of local democracy - which we are told is now obsolete - to supranational democracy contributes to a weakening of popular control. This leapfrogging of national democracy to supranational democracy perforce requires a supranational electorate. This is problematic however since "for the great majority of ordinary European citizens linguistic barriers and cultural differences impair the opportunity for political participation at a supra-national level."

A more detailed examination of constitutional issues arising from Brexit and the EU will have to wait for another issue. **C**

**LABOUR**  
**Briefing**

*Sometimes you find that only  
the original will do...*

**Labour**  
**Briefing :**  
**You can't**  
**put it down.**

*Welcome back to Labour  
Briefing. (beware of  
dodgy imitations)*

**FOR AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION  
(10 ISSUES) SEND YOUR NAME AND  
ADDRESS AND A CHEQUE FOR £20  
(PAYABLE TO LABOUR BRIEFING  
Co-OPERATIVE LTD) TO:**  
**LABOUR BRIEFING, 7 MALAM  
GARDENS, LONDON E14 OTR.**  
**SEE OUR LATEST SUBSCRIPTION  
OFFERS ON :**  
**WWW.LABOURBRIEFING.CO.UK**

# Hollywood shame factory

**A**fter nominating himself for Time Magazine's 'Person of the Year 2017', US President Donald Trump must have shrugged his shoulder pads when he learned that the iconic American magazine chose instead the many women who came forward to accuse those in power in the entertainment industry and beyond of sexual abuse. The #MeToo campaign took hold as victims of predatory sexual behaviour undertaken in the workplace spoke out against their attackers. Film producer, Harvey Weinstein, whose alleged sexual abuse was aggressive and as widespread as his Oscar campaigns, checked himself into rehab. A Republican Senatorial candidate, Roy Moore, whose campaign prompted reporters of abuse to come forward, lost his party a safe seat. Without even waiting for an accuser, documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock fessed up. The Dream Factory of Hollywood is now the Shame Factory.

But what does this mean for the film industry in 2018? Will there be a shift towards more women in positions in power in Hollywood? Or rather will there be a dart towards conservative behaviour. We have seen credits at the end of films affirming ecological practices ('Green is Universal') and declaring that no money was taken for the endorsement of tobacco products. Will there be a caption: no woman was paid less than a man for doing the same job in the production of this movie?

Pay parity was raised by Patricia Arquette when she collected the Best Supporting Actress award for *Boyhood* in 2015. However, Hollywood is undergoing a seismic shift that was unanticipated in 2016: popular entertainment is out of step with populism.

It is safe to say that the Hollywood elite predicted a Hillary Clinton victory in the race for the White House. It did not imagine that the majority of states would opt for a sexist, racist bully with no regard for the rules-based international system. Instead of containing its rivals, America in 2017 started to imitate them, throwing away decades of competitive advantage



**Battle of the Sexes, summed up how out of touch Hollywood is**

for the protectionist concept of 'America First'.

What passed for entertainment in 2016 didn't find favour in 2017. Although the live action remake of *Beauty and the Beast* and superhero movies *Wonder Woman*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Volume 2* and *Spiderman: Homecoming* did solid business (to use Hollywood parlance) every major studio released films that either underperformed (*The Mummy* remake, *War for the Planet of the Apes*, *Blade Runner 2049*) or proved an outright flop (*King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*, *Monster Trucks*, *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*).

The 'Awards bait' drama, *Battle of the Sexes*, summed up how out of touch Hollywood is. This drama retold the story of the tennis match between fifty-one year old ex-champion Bobby Riggs (Steve Carell) and Wimbledon Women's Champion Billie Jean King (Emma Stone) on September 20, 1973. It addressed the prize money point, with King and a group of women's players forming an alternative league, sponsored by the tobacco giant Virginia Slims, in order to earn sums closer to those earned by men. The league story is more interesting than the eventual match. King simply outlasted the puffing middle-aged Riggs on court. Audiences watched the film without a sense of elation or of justice being served; the big-picture 'Battle of the Sexes' (between Trump and Clinton) had already been lost and Riggs' deluded

pathos didn't resonate. The film certainly suffered from neither star being a convincing tennis player; tennis is harder to fake than boxing, hence the success of the latter genre.

For me, the only zeitgeist-stoking American film of 2017 was *It*, a horror film adapted from a Stephen King doorstep about a killer clown. In spite of the general consensus that *It* was not scary, the film managed to gross \$694.2 million worldwide against a \$35 million budget.

But what of 2018? Production schedules being what they are, there won't be a swift reflection of the #MeToo phenomenon. Depressingly, only four big budget studio productions – *The Spy Who Dumped Me*, *Blockers*, *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Darkest Minds* – are directed by women; two comedies and two young adult fantasies based on successful novels respectively. Compare it to 2017 releases *The Beguiled*, *Underworld: Blood Wars*, *Detroit*, *Everything*, *Everything*, *Unforgettable*, *The Zookeeper's Wife*, *Rough Night*, *Home Again* and *Wonder Woman* and the list is shockingly short and lacking in diverse subject matter. As far as mainstream American cinema is concerned, 2018 will see a re-evaluation of what passes for popular entertainment. If *The 15:17 to Paris*, a fact-based thriller starring a trio of real life American heroes, Anthony Sadler, Alek Skarlatos and Spencer Stone, playing themselves is a hit, then the star system could implode altogether.

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on losing  
a sense of  
humour



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Terrorism and Love

**The Dilemmas of Lenin, Terrorism, War, Empire, Love, Revolution**  
**Tariq Ali**  
 (Verso £16.99)

As the anniversary year of the October Revolution ends, why read another book on Lenin? Tariq Ali begins *The Dilemmas of Lenin* by scoring the need to “absorb the lessons, both negative and positive” that the Bolshevik conquest of power offers. Claiming to spurn the ‘Lenin cult’ he offers a “contextualisation” of the “history and prehistory” of this current.

Having “consciously used events” to win power out of Russian failures in the First World War, the difficulties he faced, in maintaining the revolutionary dictatorship, are abstracted from the repression that government inflicted on all opposition, right and left. We do learn early on, nevertheless, that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to win majorities in the soviets, “basing himself exclusively on the workers” to launch an insurrection, following “the instructions of the founding elders of the movement, Marx and Engels.” Whether these commands were behind the dissolution of the elected Constituent Assembly, in which they had no majority, is less clear.

The *Dilemmas of Lenin* contains full descriptions of the radical Russian environment Lenin came from: The background, Narodniks, Nechaev’s Nihilist Catechism, Chernyshevsky’s didactic novel, *What is to be Done?*, Peter Kropotkin – there is a long list. After a chapter on Terrorism versus Absolution there is a portrait of Lenin’s older brother Alexander Ulyanov, hanged in 1887 for a conspiracy by the People’s Will.

In his equally lengthy discussion of Lenin’s involvement in Russian social democracy Ali never explores Lars T. Lih’s *Lenin Rediscovered* (2005). Lih’s writings are at the centre of contemporary debate on the character of Bolshevism. They include discussion of the April Theses, “Lenin’s thunderbolt” which advocated a “proletarian government based on the soviets.” Whether or not Lenin “broke” from Marxist orthodoxy by jumping over “stages” to a socialist government, is far from an aca-

demical issue. The strategy meant ignoring election results and replacing a struggle for hegemony through consent with the power of soviets based on a restricted, frequently manipulated, franchise.

This active citizenship dominated by Lenin’s party stood not just against the “former people” of the Tsarist regime. Beginning not just in the armed conflicts of the civil war but domestically, terror was a key political instru-

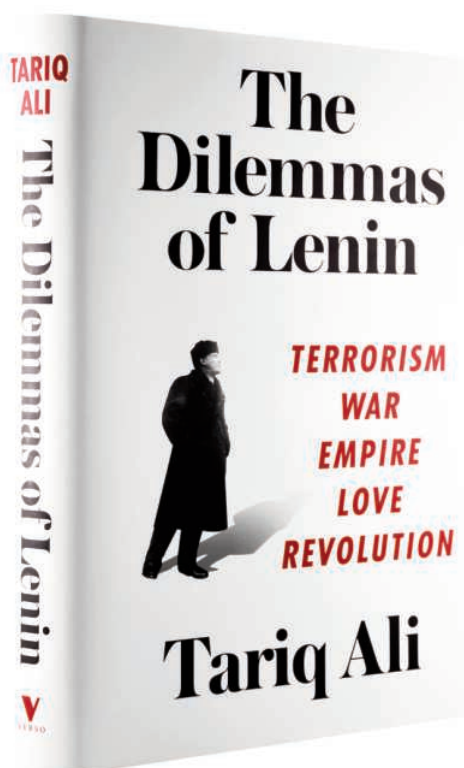
extraordinarily devoid of self-seeking, an embodied theory. The materialist conception of history, one feels, is his life-blood. He resembles a professor in his desire to have the theory understood and in his fury with those who misunderstand or disagree, as also in his love of expounding, I got the impression that he despises a great many people and is an intellectual aristocrat.” Reporting on his investigations on the ground, Russell described the repression that went with scorn for those who differed, “Opposition is crushed without mercy, and without shrinking from the methods of the Tsarist police, many of whom are still employed at their old work.”

Knowledge of this casts a shadow over perhaps the best chapters in *The Dilemmas of Lenin* that are devoted to the ‘Octobrist women’, the new state’s efforts to promote women’s equality. Clara Zetkin’s work in the hard task of helping women emancipate themselves is highlighted. Sexuality, Alexandra Kollontai advocated, should be “regulated only individual needs.” Difficulties arose when ‘free love’ became “free-for-all male-dominated fornication.” Lenin’s own love affair with Inessa Arnaud is not avoided, though not every reader,

who is aware of the terror that Lenin was prepared to use, will enjoy the references to their mutual “tenderness”.

*The Dilemmas of Lenin* hopes that some of Lenin’s ideas, “on the primacy of politics, imperialism, self-determination and the commune state” are revived. The Epilogue, *On Climbing a High Mountain* by V.I. Lenin, takes us to the sublime emotions of the “difficulties and dangers” ascending a summit of “unprecedented height”. Perhaps Ali wants us to conclude that the Bolshevik leader intended to storm the heavens, and that we, stuck in the foothills of compromising politics, should admire him for abandoning moderation and caution. Looking at the corpses in the ravines below, I for one am left more than cold: I freeze at the analogy.

**Andrew Coates**  
 freezes on  
 Tariq Ali  
 on Lenin



ment: arbitrary executions, and putting large numbers of recalcitrant workers and opponents from all quarters, including Lenin’s former comrades from the Mensheviks, in prison or exile.

Ali cites Bertrand Russell’s judgement that Lenin was “forced into dictatorship by being the only competent man of affairs in a popular movement.” Russell, sympathetic to workers’ self-management, issued a short report on a famous British labour movement visit to Russia (*The Practice and Theory*

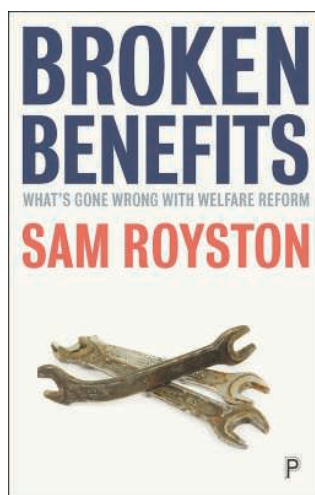
of Bolshevism, 1920). He is better known for less complimentary comments in this work on the Bolshevik Leader: “He laughs a great deal; at first his laugh seems merely friendly and jolly, but gradually I came to feel it rather grim. He is dictatorial, calm, and incapable of fear,



# Who gains and who loses?

**Broken Benefits**  
**Sam Royston (Policy Press £14)**

**Rory O'Kelly**  
 on social security



**W**riters about Social Security generally fall into three groups: practitioners, who provide practical guidance but little analysis, academics, who obsess about concepts like 'work incentives' but have no sense of welfare policy as political strategy and campaigners, intoning endlessly but vaguely about 'massive cuts'. Royston is a rare exception; a practitioner who uses a detailed knowledge of the system to explain the principles behind Government policy and identify its exact effects. His conclusions are more powerful by emerging in an understated way direct from the evidence.

Analysis is made harder by systematic obfuscation. Laws have been passed to define ill people as no longer ill and old people as no longer old. The distinction between employment, self-employment and unemployment is disappearing as Government policy generates an amorphous mass of people doing casual, low paid, unproductive work from time to time and all claiming the new one-size-fits-all benefit,

Universal Credit.

As the practical distinction between workers and others is eroded, however, the rhetorical distinction between 'strivers' and 'skivers' is made ever sharper, in defiance of personal experience. Royston cites people receiving the bulk of their income from state benefits who still do not define themselves as 'claimants' and who agree with cutting benefits, for everyone else. Against this it is a rare enterprise to present things as they actually are. The strength of Royston's book is its precise identification of winners and losers. It is hard to do justice to the detail and clarity of its analysis but two examples can be

taken.

Children are the main losers. The freezing of child benefit, the two-child limit on tax credits and, above all, the benefit cap are directed against children. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that increasing child poverty has been a conscious policy objective for Governments since 2010; possibly the only one they have actually achieved. Royston also touches on knock on effects such as incentives to family breakdown and promotion of homelessness which will disproportionately damage children.

Conversely pensioners are often seen as the main beneficiaries. The amount of extra money going to them even exceeds the amount taken from children and working age adults. Matters are not so simple however. For middle class people, with their greater life expectancy, the benefits of increasing state pensions easily exceed the losses from increasing pension ages, and with additional private pensions they will gain from increases in personal tax allowances. For poorer people, reliant on means-tested benefits, the value of the contributory pension is less and the postponement of pension credit age from 60 to 65 and beyond is devastating.

People who left school at 16 and have worked in unhealthy and dangerous environments for 40+ years often need to pack it in at 60 and if they have been paying National Insurance contributions throughout it is hard to argue with this. The right to do it has been taken away. The victims lose from the time-limiting of contributory benefits for sickness, they lose from having to claim ESA or JSA (or now Universal Credit) instead of Pension Credit and they lose from these benefits being made continuously harder to get and easier to lose, and worth less when you get them. They even lose disproportionately from the bedroom tax. For many working-class families there is a gap between adult children leaving home and official retirement age and for the Conservatives this is a window of opportunity to force people out of their homes.

These are only examples. The author's analysis of the treatment of disabled people, particularly disabled workers, of the systematic fraud committed against

National Insurance contributors and many other topics is equally acute and equally depressing. The book really does need to be read.

Its only real weakness is a lack of historical depth. Like most recent works on Social Security it starts with a quick canter from the Elizabethan Poor Law to Beveridge and then moves straight on to the present. It does not propose any fundamental alternative to the means-tested morass in which we now live, though it suggests many valuable ameliorations. It is notable that the great legislative reforms of 1975 which set about the revival of the contributory principle have been not only obliterated, by collusion between Conservative and New Labour Governments, but deleted from the collective memory.

The book is rarely directly political in a Party sense but readers cannot emerge with much respect for the Labour Party, or at least its official spokespeople. When Yvette Cooper stood for the leadership her platform included the elimination of child poverty. At the same time, however she supported the benefit cap, which is designed to increase child poverty. Perhaps the logic is that if one believes that the Labour Party should always offer people what they want it follows that when people want mutually incompatible things the Party should respond by developing self-contradictory policies.

A perhaps more serious example is the group of Labour MPs who champion the interests of older, poorer working-class voters whom they see as particularly marginalised and oppressed. This is in fact true, for reasons outlined above. Instead however of addressing the problems which their constituents actually have, as a result of Government policy, these MPs prefer to waffle on in semi-racist language about culture and community and end up supporting Brexit.

Arguments about Social Security are often conducted at a symbolic level. The main lesson from this book is to look at the facts instead. In looking at any proposal do not ask how it fits into your picture of how society should be. Ask instead who exactly will gain and who will lose, and by how much.

## BOOK REVIEWS

# 'Dignified rage' and the banishment of demons

**Don Flynn**  
on  
revolutionary  
romanticism

**In, Against, and Beyond Capitalism – the San Francisco Lectures**

**John Holloway**  
(Kairos/PM, £13.99)

John Holloway is the sort of Marxist you turn to if you think that revolutionary strategies based on the seizure of governmental power in a single country haven't worked out well for ambitions to change the world. He offers an alternative vision: a piece-by-piece revolt that aims to deprive capitalism of the power to reproduce itself in the interstices of our lives, whether it be at work, in our neighbourhoods, family life, and what goes on inside our skulls.

Holloway proclaims the revolutionary subject taking on the challenge of changing the world is nothing other than 'we' – an essence that exists prior to capitalism and which is fated to rage against the indignity of seeing itself reduced to the status of a commodity in the great pile of commodities that constitutes capitalist wealth.

His revolutionary action is the digna rabia – dignified rage – of the Mexican Zapatistas. This Mayan people, from their homelands in the Mexican south-east – was able to see capitalism arrive on their doorstep back in the mid-1990s as a consequence of the NAFTA deal. Their leaders were

gifted with the remarkable foresight which allowed them to see it would push doors open for capitalism, red in tooth and claw, to enter the lives of their people, with all that entailed in the way of corrupt government, transnational business operations, and the commodification of daily existence. The outrage to their dignity across all these issues formed the basis of the ongoing Zapatista Revolution.

Holloway sees the significance of this movement in its refusal to take power in the common understanding of the term – to establish an institutionalised system of power that simply mirrors the power of the thing against which it is opposed. Instead the Zapatista endure by their refusal to give up their way of cultivating land, educating children, and organising their communal lives. He argues that this is an approach that is available to us all, even if we don't have the backdrop of the Monte Azules to inspire our resistance.

He offers up a simple, romantic sort of message which is worth thinking about, but then imposes on it a series of jarring refusals of courses of action which, in the context of highly-developed, urbanised countries, we are entitled to think are consistent with the spirit of the Zapatista. If the refusal of commodification is so

central to this perspective, then more could be said about the social-democratic tradition and its efforts to bring human communities into existence in the ugly, poisonous sprawls of the early industrial cities. The creation of free health services, social housing and social security systems – the crowing achievements of European social democracy – all figure in the scheme of things as efforts to limit and push back at the role of the market in shaping all aspects of human welfare.

It is not enough to condemn these efforts for their ultimate fate in being infiltrated by capitalism and transformed into the social market welfare states that are under construction today. The surest thing to predict is that capitalism will push back at whatever forms of resistance to its rule are thrown up by 'we', and unless the revolution has more potential to push back and displace further encroachments, it will flounder and fail. Holloway's response, that we deal with this by continuing to build gardens and weave blankets, has more of the Gandhi about it than the Marx. His capitalism is ultimately nothing more than a phantasm that can be banished by an act of collective will, mobilised by outrage at the damage done to its dignity. If only it were so.



## Printer ad

# Green, democratic and Socialist

**Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for an age of crisis**

**George Monbiot (Verso £14.99)**

**G**eorge Monbiot has long been a trenchant critic of the political establishment, ranging from major contributions on the environmental and climate crisis to politics and rewilding. His 2016 book, *How did we get into this mess?* comprised articles previously published in *The Guardian*. He now attempts a new synthesis. His polemical edge remains undimmed, which makes for a lively and inspirational read teeming with ideas, though covering such diversity in a short volume sometimes feels rushed and lacking rigour.

Key themes are the need for a new story to displace neoliberalism, which itself benefitted from a powerful narrative to supplant Keynesianism, the importance of 'the commons' and Bernie Saunders campaign methods. The case for a cogent narrative was prompted by climate change communications specialist George Marshall.

The neoliberal creed replaced the failing Keynesian consensus since the 1970s not because it was appealing but because its narrative was successfully propagated with the help of powerful interests. Hitherto accepted values and virtues (still fundamental to us as humans) like cooperation, public service, community and fairness were attacked by selfishness, private ownership and gross inequality; this in turn feeds back towards even more individualism.

Despite Keynesianism's success between 1945 and '75, Monbiot ascribes its recent weakness to three factors: its age (81 Years since Keynes' *General Theory*, though neoliberalism dates from Hayek in 1938), changes in the global economy and its reliance on economic growth.

The limits to economic growth argument has been well rehearsed since the 1970s. However much socio-technical change and resource efficiency achieve decoupling of growth from pollution and resources, the pursuit of exponential growth is ultimately unsustainable. Monbiot takes up Kate Raworth's

concept 'Doughnut Economics', everyone has enough to live on (the inside rim) without exceeding planetary limits (the outside rim).

American ecologist Garrett Hardin coined the phrase 'the tragedy of the commons' in 1968, claiming that common lands will be destroyed by over-exploitation. This was misused as justification to commodify and privatise forests and natural resources. Whatever its accuracy in gold-rush and pioneering America, Monbiot rightly says Hardin misunderstood how commons endured in communities, bringing to my mind English common lands and numerous indigenous peoples nurturing and coexisting

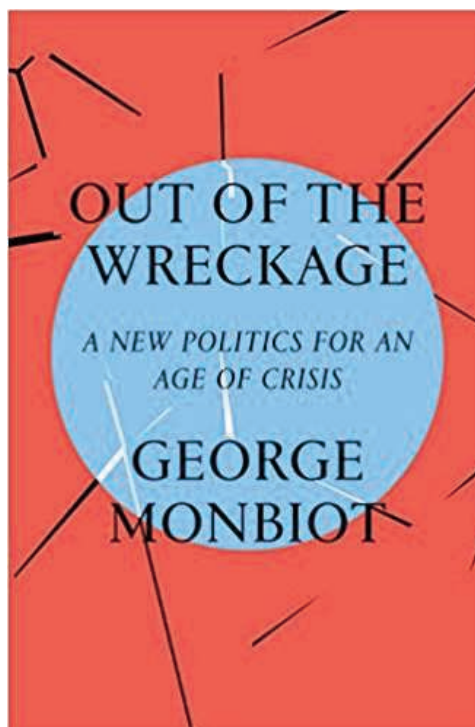
them, with concomitant risks of losing democratic control, malign capture and corruption.

There is an interesting account of the Big Organising concept used by Bernie Saunders' primary campaign. Though this was derived from the US Tea Party, it uses large numbers of inspired activists, which gives an edge to the progressive left over the geriatric Tory and UKIP right. Monbiot mentions the recent electoral advances of Labour under Corbyn but doesn't cover how such methods contributed. Both Momentum and the Compass-sponsored Progressive Alliance applied them effectively to the Labour campaign and Tory defeats.

A particularly appealing section describes the entrenched culture of demonstrations and marches, with endless speakers allocated by negotiation between sponsor groups, and a lack of strategic approach or clear aims – to me painfully familiar. He proposes moving beyond oppositional rhetoric and support for an alternative to speeches focussed on next steps, gathering of participants details and appeals for commitment. I saw similar influences at a Progressive Alliance election meeting in Lewes. Inspired by the Saunders campaign, the organisers (some new to politics) encouraged contributions from the floor and asked everyone to commit to a specific action for the election. It felt refreshingly free of the usual rhetoric and clichés we know and love/hate.

Is there anything really new here? Much will be familiar to Chartist readers: the need for democratic movements allied with electoral work at all levels to overcome the opposition of finance capital and privilege. Maybe each generation must relearn these lessons. Where could this lead in future? Not a narrow tribal Labour approach focussed solely on electoral victory, but a social alliance of Labour plus radical Lib-Dems, Greens, feminists, anti-racists, trade unions, environmentalists and other civil society groups, a reconstituted 'rainbow alliance' with a clearer campaigning vision.

All in all, a tour guide to a new politics that Chartist shares: green, democratic and socialist.



with nature in America and Africa over the centuries. What upset this balance, by enclosure and land grabs, was incipient and then dominant capitalism. Monbiot extols the virtues of the commons in various realms where they are being lost: academic publishing, (open source) software, social media data and co-operatives as well as our oceans, land and atmosphere. He over-neatly divides property holding into state, market, commons and households, a hard distinction to justify. Some state control is accountable to local people and resembles common ownership and larger units up to global scale, need institutions to administer

**Nigel Doggett**  
on a tour  
guide



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Rich compendium

**Mike Davis**  
on a  
gifted  
socialist

**Against Miserabilism Writings 1968-1992**

**David Widgery**  
(Vagabond Voices £14.95)

**D**avid Widgery was a revolutionary socialist and practicing East End GP. He was also a prolific writer of great verve, wit and prescience. He died prematurely young but in his busy life, captured here in this collection of writings (edited by his widow Juliet Ash, Nigel Fountain and Dave Renton) we rediscover the man and his mission to make the world a better place.

His range of interests was prodigious. He writes persuasively on popular music, on racism and Black politics, on sexual politics and feminism, strikes, trade unionism and Labour, on health care and the arts. Although a loyal but critical member of the International Socialists, later the Socialist Workers Party, he was not sectarian or blinkered about a politics that embraced personal life, feminism and culture.

As Sheila Rowbotham points out in the introduction to the section on 'Personal Politics' he was inspired by many sources: the surrealists, especially Andrew Breton, William Blake, Karl

Marx, the sex psychologist Wilhelm Reich, the communist Christopher Caudwell and the American thinker Norman O'Brown. He also recognised the weakness of the left's sexual politics. His 'The Other Love' in Gay Left magazine (1974) is a defiant challenge to his fellow revolutionaries and their fetishism of class.

The range of the publications he wrote for illustrates his pluralist concerns. From the underground magazines Oz and Ink to Time Out through Socialist Worker to New Society and Radical America he dissected the politics of the time enlisting his heroes and heroines past and present to shed light.

Some of the most powerful writing is about Black politics with the essay on James Baldwin containing searching insights into the subtleties of US race politics. He finds Baldwin's depth far superior to the machismo of Eldridge Cleaver. Widgery's polemic against the misogynistic Norman Mailer and his pugilistic diatribes is a searingly topical critique in these days when sexual abuse is more exposed.

Much of the writing is inspired by London's East End where he worked as a GP. His descriptions of treating patients, the poverty

of the area, fighting hospital closures and health cuts remain topical. His tribute to suffragette and revolutionary socialist Sylvia Pankhurst is magisterial while his review of anarchist Jewish historian Bill Fishman's East End 1888 is similarly perceptive.

'Enter Stage Left' an encomium to the reopened Hackney Empire and the Muldoons who secured it once more as a people's variety theatre is a classic.

A libertarian streak, sitting uneasily in the SWP, runs thorough his writings, exemplified by pieces on Victor Serge, Peter Sedgwick, William Blake and the sexpol writings.

In his piece on the poet Mayakovsky and elsewhere references to the Russian revolution and Bolshevism, a certain Leninist romanticism glints through. Nonetheless these articles reveal a truly gifted socialist writer who tempered his Marxism with an enlightened humanism and leavened his political analysis of Britain under Labour and Thatcher governments of the 1970s and 80s with coruscating humour.

This is a rich compendium that reads as fresh and absorbing now as when the articles were first written.



## Rebel politics in Spain

**The struggle for Catalonia**  
**Raphael Minder (Hurst £15.99)**

Only three months ago, our television screens were filled with distressing images: old ladies on their way to the polling stations being manhandled and brutalised by the very people charged with upholding peace. The streets of Barcelona, normally viewed as full of fun were suddenly terrifying. And the story got ever more dramatic by the day: leaders fleeing to Brussels and the imposition of direct rule from Madrid.

This book can help us try to make sense of the climate in both Barcelona and Madrid. Ideas of independence are notoriously complex and nebulous, wrapped up as they are in identity, culture, and the economy. It can be puzzling what to make of an illegal referendum.

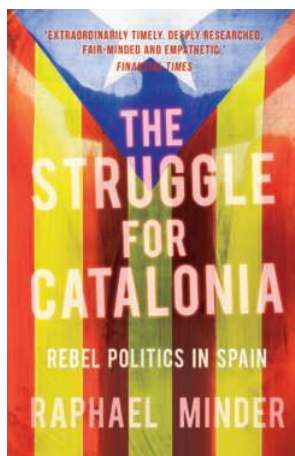
Minder charts the roots of the independence movement in

Catalonia, back to the Renaixença through pivotal moments such as the 1981 territorial division of Spain in a 'one size fits all' model, the 2006 Catalan statute for autonomy and its subsequent dismissal by the Constitutional Courts, right up to early 2017.

Whilst Minder is able to pro-

vide an engaging explanation of the legal and political system that has fostered the crisis we are now witnessing, he manages to weave in many other aspects that make up our identity. For example that the Catalan sense of humour is actually much closer to our British sense of humour than that of the rest of Spain. Comparing it with the Scottish case makes for an interesting account. Food, literature and language all play a part.

We see Catalonia in the context of a wider Spain, one that was not so long ago in the grip of a dictatorship, and that has a violent association with independence – although normally found in its more radical Basque country. Minder concludes with a call for mutual understanding and an open dialogue. In light of the more recent developments of this case it seems ever more urgent, though increasingly unlikely.



**Alice Stewart**  
on a  
European  
crisis

# New left visionary

**Andy Gregg**  
on a  
champion  
of cultural  
politics

**Stuart Hall Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and other Essays**  
Ed. Sally Davison & David Featherstone  
(Lawrence & Wishart £14.00)

Stuart Hall was one of the first people to analyse and chronicle the emergence of Thatcherism (indeed it has been suggested that he was the first to coin the term). His essays portray a political and cultural analysis of the great move to the right with the breakdown of the social democratic post war settlement into the neo-liberal world of which we may only now be seeing the beginnings of the end. Stuart Hall brought a wider understanding of politics as including and indeed often happening primarily in the realms of culture and identity rather than being located solely in the orthodox world of political parties and parliament.

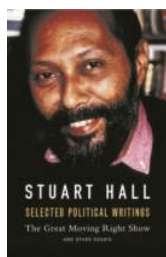
He built on Gramsci's notion of hegemony to enlarge the conception of politics and class to include issues of race, gender and culture. His writings were crucial

to our understanding of the shift to the right in the last 20 years of the 20th Century and the first few years of the 21st. They will be quite as important in how we analyse and deploy the array of cultural forces and the intersectionality of anti-racism, feminism, environmentalism and other oppositional forces that will be at the forefront of any new economic, cultural and political paradigm. One that now seems to be emerging and which has reached its conflicted and contradictory beginnings following the financial crash of 2008.

Simultaneously he was a leading commentator on the traditional political realm and the often embryonic "New Left" political forces that arose against this new world order, that he identified as the forces of radical populism. His understanding of race and the argument that any adequate understanding of social life would have to recognise the centrality of difference and the salience of popular and youth culture have had a huge influence on contemporary political thought and practice. A

number of the articles in this collection were first published in Marxism Today which sought to develop more democratic forms of socialism than the 'actually existing socialism' of the Soviet and other Eastern bloc states. When Marxism Today folded in 1991 he continued to write for Soundings and his analysis of neo-liberalism continued to interrogate the conditions necessary for the overthrow of its hegemony.

In the last piece in this collection entitled the "Neoliberal Revolution" (2011) he describes hegemony as "a process, not a state of being. No victories are permanent or final. Hegemony has constantly to be 'worked on', maintained, renewed, revised. Excluded social forces, whose consent have not been won, whose interests have not been taken into account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions." There could be few better summaries of the state we are currently in.



# Financial Armageddon and Brexit

**The struggle for Catalonia**  
**Can Neoliberalism be saved from itself? (Social Europe €6.99)**

Colin Crouch has published several analyses of the persistence of neoliberalism's all-pervasive power and ideology. Its crises come and go but the regime of unfettered markets, privatisation and public austerity still dominates. Worse, like a cancer, it metastasises into new forms and locations. Celebration of Tony Blair's apparent dispatch of the Thatcherite dragon failed to recognise that this was but the political brain of a multi-headed hydra. New Labour's compromises with the hydra's other heads contributed, ultimately to its demise in the wake of the 2008 financial crash.

Crouch starts with a somewhat over-generous balance sheet of neoliberalism's pros and cons. Neoliberalism's fiscal rigour and market internationalism may have curbed ineffective state spending and overly restrictive trading relations; but have such gains been more important than the immense 'externality' costs of

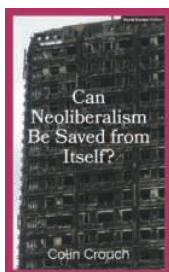
neoliberalism? Global environmental degradation and massive inequalities in markets is a devastating price to pay for business freedoms. More usefully, Crouch distinguishes between the two parallel forms of neoliberalism. One is the policy template for deregulated, competitive markets encouraged and policed by intellectual advocates and technocrats. The other is the real world of 'corrupted neoliberalism' and anti-market practices of giant corporations - to which neoliberals have willingly ceded control of international trade. Neither of these forms can resolve the social and economic crises that they generate: the destructive competition of financial markets, exemplified in the 2008 crash, and the social backlash from those disadvantaged by business elites' expropriation of the gains from expanded markets.

Crouch identifies two main long-term outcomes. One is an irresolvable financial Armageddon as worker-consumers, on ever-reducing incomes, rack up unsustainable debt to buy enough corporate

products to keep businesses in the black. A credit-debt spiral that would eventually threaten the deregulated financial system's solvency. The other outcome is an accommodation with xenophobic nationalism's opposition to neoliberal globalisation. In the Brexit campaigns, for example, smaller businesses and hedge fund interests mobilised popular support against EU 'over-regulation' to preserve and enhance speculative international finance business.

Crouch's only alternative, progressive solution against these doomsday outcomes is to democratise and strengthen international institutions. To my mind, this involves a premature discounting of the potency of national, progressive politics. Successful, national programmes for democratised and accountable economic organisations could provide springboards for reforms to international economic governance. A determinedly anti-neoliberal Labour government could set an example for other nations and a basis for alliances to transform the international economy.

**Bryn Jones**  
on  
Crouch's  
internationalist  
recipe





# Mail reporters looking for prey

Rupa Huq on the trials and tribulations of being a new British born Bangladeshi MP

**Rupa Huq is Labour MP for Ealing Central & Acton**



**Rupa Huq challenges local anti-abortion protest**

**W**ith the long hours, public-facing nature of the job where everything is scrutinised, advent of online abuse and constant need to keep several plates spinning, MPs can sometimes lose their rag. Like many, I was a bit taken aback to see the televised skirmish on Channel 4 news recently where my friend Tulip Siddiq did just that. It was an unedifying spectacle. She too recognises that and has apologised. But I can understand the exchange too.

As an MP you're expected to be expert on everything. Old and new media voraciously seek stand-out content particularly with omnipresent 24 hour news channels and we all remember slip-ups like the Mrs Duffy incident. The fact that that clanger was leaked footage from after the interview had ended is a cautionary tale of how one should never be off guard. The spilling of the beans by GQ's editor on Jeremy Corbyn's interview serves as a reminder that top politicians employ media handlers - he apparently vetoed Alistair Campbell as interlocutor and Seumus Milne turned up to the photo shoot. Those of the lower orders don't often have that luxury.

In my first year in the job I went on the Today Programme to talk about the perils of social media but the interview was tagged to a twitterstorm over Israel. Only later I learned that every other Labour Muslim MP had rejected the request as a huge potential trap for whoever the lucky winner was to be dogged with accusations of anti-semitism forever more. Because I was - n't

connected to the right Whatsapp groups nobody was able to warn me in time. Indeed since then many have sought to make what was a small media incident career-defining for me [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rupa\\_Huq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rupa_Huq), despite the fact that I've been involved in campaigns since that have even brought about government action - most recently on public safety and family planning.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/26/abortion-clinics-uk-mulls-tougher-laws-to-protect-women>

For any MP life is a juggling act. There is no clarity as to whom or where your accountability lies. There are the demands of your constituents and party that may not always be in perfect alignment not to mention lobbyists bending your ear. Add to that the dimension of your roots including religion and nationhood then things get even more tangled.

Like Tulip I'm a British born MP of Bangladeshi origin representing a seat where that group is a small minority but the expectations upon me are of the entire Bangladeshi diaspora - no pressure there then. The last available figures show that there were 218 people born in Bangladesh living in Ealing Central and Acton of 119,419 in total - 0.2%. The EDL's Tommy Robinson has chosen to tweet linking me to money distributed to Bangladeshi Jihadis (I didn't totally understand the point but then he's not big on factchecking). <https://twitter.com/TRobinsonNewEra/status/936191790356553728>

Making Channel 4 look tame in the extreme is the wrath of the Daily Mail whose column on the subject was pure hatred. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5130993/Where-Tulips-loyalties-really-lie-asks-ANDREW-PIERCE.html>

The very title of the piece recalls Thatcher lieutenant Norman Tebbit's notorious racist 1980s 'cricket test'. This is the

paper that questioned Ed Miliband's loyalty to the UK and sided with Hitler. I have been done over by the Mail on Sunday two weeks in a row even. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3567503/Blue-Peter-star-Konnie-Huq-s-MP-sister-tells-Labour-colleagues-not-worry-Corbyn-s-not-young-man-gone-soon.html>

Their political reporter skulks around the Commons looking for prey. I told him at the height of my appearances there that surely I deserved my own page or at least a column seeing as I was turning into such a regular. It'd save him the bother of the corrections that always have to follow for the inaccuracies in his copy, I argued.

There are genuine issues with the functioning of democracy in Bangladesh. I am more acutely aware of them than ever having been there on a Parliamentary delegation earlier this year. From my own circle I know of other people languishing in jail, claiming it's just for being from the opposition. I have raised concerns in our Parliament of secular bloggers getting hacked to death and dissidents finding themselves disappeared but only in a small way. Otherwise I can imagine getting sucked further and further in when like any London MP I face a high volume of constituent casework: 20,000th recorded enquiries and rising. Recently there's been a spate of urgent evictions and deportations and when Universal Credit hits this Spring locally, advice surgery queues are due to lengthen inexorably.

Human rights issues in Bangladesh are a big extra item of AOB for anyone's agenda. It's Boris really and the Foreign Office though who ought to be addressing these issues through the correct channels. I'm a relatively new MP but as far as I know international negotiations are complex and delicate matters that cannot simply be resolved on the hoof via trial by media. Just ask Priti Patel. **C**

Subscribe to CHARTIST at  
[www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)

