

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#291 March/April 2018

£2

No More Privatisation

Bryn Jones

Carillion collapse

Manuel Cortes

Trevor Fisher

Braking Brexit

Anita Nayyer

No-go mosques

Pete Chalk

Local elections

Wendy Pettifer

Refugees welcome

Darren Hughes

New Zealand Labour win

plus

Book & Film reviews



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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

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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?

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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?

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 or by emailing: democracy@labour.org.uk.

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 **FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW**



The Labour Party Democracy Review

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CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM



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Cover by Martin Rowson

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OUR HISTORY



OUR HISTORY - 77

Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time 1943

Harold Laski was professor of Politics at the London School of Economics from 1926, having held a number of academic positions in the US and Britain from 1916. He briefly worked for Lansbury's Daily Herald. He was a member of the Fabian Society executive committee and one of the founders of the Left Book Club. He turned down offers of a parliamentary seat, a peerage and a cabinet position in McDonald's government. On the left of the party, he was a supporter of the Socialist League. A member of the Labour Party National Executive Committee from 1937, Laski was chairman of the Labour party for 1945/6. Laski wrote about 20 books on political theory and practice, including classic textbooks: A Grammar of Politics, The State in Theory and Practice, Liberty in the Modern State, Karl Marx, Communism, Authority in the Modern State, Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham. Attlee considered Laski to be an unhelpful critic. Laski died in 1951. There are biographies of Laski by Isaac Kramnick and Barry Sherman (1993) and by Michael Newman (also 1993)

"We cannot hope to achieve the democratisation of economic power if those who now own and control property, especially in the era of the giant corporation, are in a position thereby either to acquire special privilege or to act in an arbitrary way. It is difficult to see how we can prevent the growth of these habits unless the vital instruments of production are owned and controlled by the community as a whole directly in its own interest. For there is no other way in which we can end that economics of scarcity which is inescapably involved in the psychology of large scale capitalism, especially where its basis is monopolistic.

I do not think this means the necessity of taking over all industry and agriculture by the state. Rather, I think it means that the bases of economic power shall be in the hands of the community; once they are assured to the interest of the many instead of the few, the economic future can develop within the framework defined by the possession of these fundamental bases by the historic methods of parliamentary democracy. These are four of these bases.

The most vital is the control of the supply of capital and credit. This means the nationalisation of the Bank

of England, the joint stock banks, of the insurance companies, and of the building societies. There is no other way to be sure that investment is directly and continuously related to public need and not to private profit.

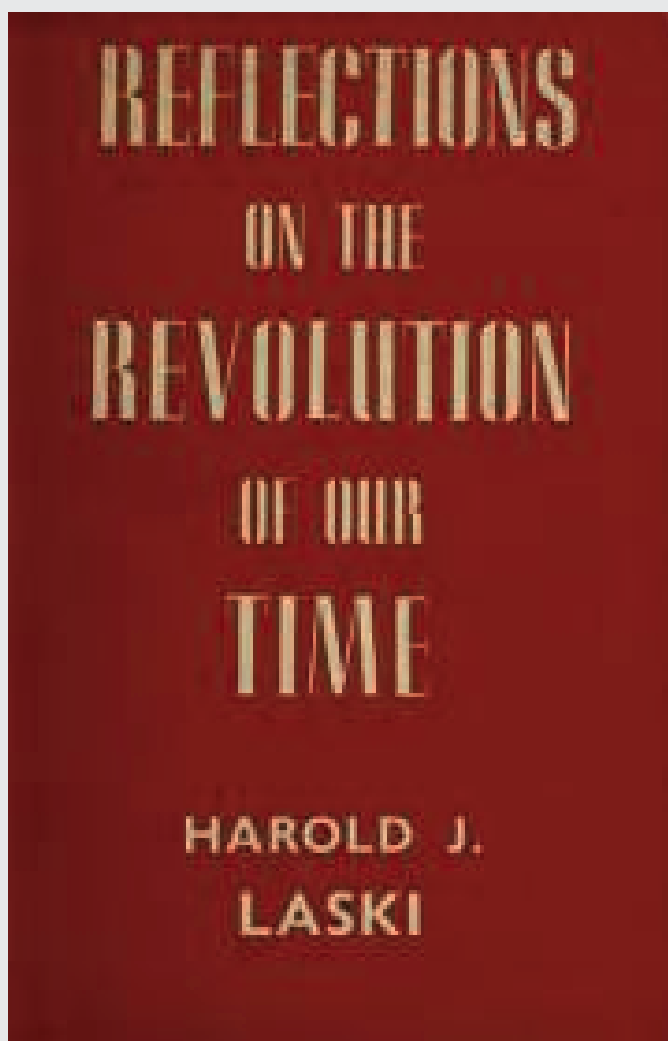
The state must own and control land. This is essential for three purposes. It is essential for the proper planning of towns, especially the blitzed areas. It is essential to secure for agriculture the proper place in our national economy. It is essential to secure both the proper location of industry and the preservation of the aesthetic amenities of Britain.

There must be state control of the import and export trade. This control is obviously vital to any planned production which has the interest of the consumer in view.... Without it, clearly, we cannot hope to fit our national economy into that international control of exchanges which is now inevitable....

There must, further, be state ownership and control of transport, fuel and power.... Without the nationalisation of shipping we cannot relate the service to the best results obtainable by state control of imports and exports. Without the nationalisation of railways and road transport, there is ... unnecessary duplication and competition.... To leave aviation in private hands, after our wartime experience, is obviously impossible... The nationalisation of coal mines is a psychological necessity... it is the only way in which scientific exploitation of coal by-products can be attempted on an adequate scale.... The case

for the national ownership of electric power is the simple one... that without the unification which national ownership will bring, rural electricity, so urgent in the rural areas and for agricultural development, will remain impossible without large subsidies to a mass of separate companies. The same is true of gas and water supplies....

It is impossible to entrust functions of this importance to men... who have a direct interest in both the present and the future of the industries they control. In the new system, the sole allegiance of the controller must be to the state he serves."



Only Labour can stop the car crash ending

The collapse of Carillion, the failure of the equally profit-hungry Virgin and Stagecoach to manage the East Coast line (and given a £2.4 billion bailout by the government) plus the profits warning from Capita reveal the folly of outsourcing. Hailed by Thatcher and Major's Tory governments and echoed by Blair as the saviour of public services opposition warnings then about allowing private companies into the public domain are being demonstrated in spades.

It is not just infrastructure projects like hospital building or transport and other country-wide services that are coming under challenge. Tory-run Northampton council outsourced almost all their services and now they face bankruptcy as company after company overcharged and failed to deliver.

Pete Chalk reports Labour activists in Haringey appear to have achieved an eleventh hour stoppage on the ex-leaders outsourcing plan to privatise council land and buildings to Lendlease through the Haringey Development Vehicle. He outlines the challenge facing prospective pro-Corbyn councils.

The outsourcing scandal is put under the microscope by **Bryn Jones** who reports on the devastating impact of the collapse of Carillion. He offers some creative alternatives based on the principles of devolution, subsidiarity and accountability. It is just one aspect of the crisis of neoliberalism and its twin austerity. Theresa's May's government is careering headlong on a double-decker downhill trajectory with austerity and Brexit.

Only Labour can stop the car-crash ending. On the austerity front Labour enters the campaign for the May local council elections with some confidence. New councils will need to join together with trade unions and community organisations to build a massive anti-cuts movement to stop the Tories austerity juggernaut.

Whatever way we look Tory policies are failing: whether it's hospitals cancelling operations, academy trusts getting emergency handouts to stay afloat, social care needing huge cash injections, rising numbers of homeless and people with disabilities failing to get their workplace facilities, Personal Independence Payments and losing out through the botched Universal Credit. As **Miro Griffiths** explains it all amounts to a fiasco with the Tories refusing to listen or acknowledge the mounting human cost of their neoliberal agenda.

Brexit is the other deck on the juggernaut heading for disaster. As **Manuel Cortes** argues, we have to find a way to stop the process with trade unions providing a key driver for the change. Evidence is now beginning to mount that should turn many Leave voters. Civil service economic impact assessments show Leave voting areas in the North and North East will suffer the harshest economic consequences from Brexit. Reports are now emerging almost daily of the negative impact of leaving the single market and customs union for jobs, the environment, food standards, scientific research or hospital staffing. Farmers report huge tracts of unpicked crops due to a lack of EU

migrant workers, dock workers speak of threats of huge lorry jams at ferry ports. The list goes on.

Without tariff-free trade with the EU (where the UK sells over 40% of its exports) prices will rocket and sales will slump. Car manufacturing could be in jeopardy, as the Japanese ambassador has warned, with multinationals relocating to Europe. Then there is the threat to peace in Northern Ireland with a return to border controls and direct rule (already virtually in place with the suspension of power-sharing).

Trevor Fisher assesses the state of the divided anti-Brexit campaigns arguing that we should back 'stay put' against soft Brexit groups and up the case for another referendum.

Don Flynn challenges Frank Lee's analysis (Chartist 290) defending a national road to socialism as a dangerous cul-de-sac at best, at worst an abandonment of socialist internationalism. He argues we need to be part of an albeit reformed EU bloc to begin to effectively counter globalised capital, promoting internationalism against the mounting perils of rightist populist nationalism.

Brexit fantasies that Britain can secure a better deal or any deal with China or the US under Trump, or Commonwealth states outside a trading bloc of 500 million people is Mad Max territory. Britain alone will have less clout, less leverage, running on an empty tank of Empire nostalgia. Third rate nationhood riven by internal divisions and a bloated English nationalism that way leads.

Labour is moving slowly towards a more progressive EU position. The fence sitting will increasingly be an untenable position. So too will any complacency on Labour's chances of forming a government. As **Pete Rowlands** argues, despite the Tories infighting and disastrous policies Labour is still not sufficiently ahead in the opinion polls to suggest a winning majority in a general election.

Labour's last election manifesto was one of the centrepieces of our advance. But policies need refining and development. Plans to bring back into public ownership rail, energy, water and Royal Mail and re-municipalisation of local services are an important ingredient in the mix. **Mike Davis, Hassan Hoque & Bryn Jones** report on Labour's recent Alternative Models of Ownership conference and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's stress on democratic control. State ownership cannot mean a return to old Morrisonian models of top down bureaucratic control. Workers and consumers engaged in a variety of management bodies have to be part of Labour's new way.

Building social movements, empowering trade unions and community organisations across national boundaries has to enliven a new model Labour Party. The Tories are weak, Corbyn-led Labour is growing in confidence. We have a world to win. Taking the right decisions against Brexit and developing a genuinely democratic Labour Party and wider movement could beckon in a society for the many, not the few.

In praise of parish councils

Paul Salveson on getting into the grassroots

One of the most significant books on politics published in recent years was Peter McFadyen's *Flatpack Democracy*. It didn't hit the headlines and was a sort of village samizdat publication, circulating amongst a small but growing community of grassroots activists involved in those reviled bodies, parish councils.

The name in itself doesn't exactly conjure up images of modern, progressive – let alone radical – democracy. Some Labour activists in areas where parish councils exist adopt a sanctimonious disdain towards them, not even bothering to contest 'pointless' parish elections. In other areas, particularly more urban communities, parish councils seldom exist. They're seen as something, at best, that might suit rural villages but aren't right for the gritty inner city. I'd argue that this is mistaken: there are opportunities to intervene in local grassroots politics through existing or new parish councils.

They have two major advantages over other local neighbourhood groups. The first is democratic – as elected bodies they can really speak for their community, rather than give the impression of being 'representative', but often aren't. The other advantage is that there is a clear revenue stream to do things. And that can be anything from building a new community centre to employing community arts workers, re-opening public toilets, running a community bus service or employing street sweepers.

McFadyen's book, currently being updated, tells the story of the re-energising of local democracy in Frome, a Somerset market town. The local council had been run by a tired group of small and large 'c' Conservatives for years and it wasn't uncommon for elections to be uncontested. Nobody was bothered – a picture all too familiar in many other areas where parish (or 'town') councils existed. A few local activists, from various political backgrounds, decided to contest the election and to their surprise did remarkably well.

Today, they run the council and



Peter McFadyen tells the story of the re-energising of local democracy in Frome-

have made a palpable difference to the town. The 'precept' – what the council can charge to generate revenue on top of the local rate – was massively increased. It was a calculated risk but the council explained exactly how the extra money would be spent: better local facilities; an improved environment. People accepted it. Unlike mainstream local government, parish councils have much greater freedom in the level of rate they can set. It isn't usually that much, ranging from around £20 to £100 per household depending on its rate. Frome raised theirs substantially and is now £143.65 per year for a Band D household.

Frome isn't an isolated example of parish democracy, and I wouldn't want to idealise it. It's a prosperous place where many well-to-do professionals have chosen to move to. But the example of Frome is relevant to many small towns or even neighbourhoods where either the existing council is useless, or one doesn't exist. Often it's about enabling things to happen, not always doing it directly. Small grants to local projects, help in setting up new initiatives or persuading the district or county council to do something are all part of their armoury.

The model is highly relevant to

smaller towns which may well have had their own council before local government 'reform' in the 1970s. Places like Farnworth in Bolton, and Colne Valley in what is now called 'Kirklees' had their own, highly effective, local government before re-organisation. They built their own council houses and encouraged local industry. But perhaps above all they instilled a sense of civic pride. Now, many people who live there – and in similar places – feel voiceless.

However, there are examples around where urban neighbourhoods have formed their own parish council, including Birmingham, Bradford, Newcastle and Queen's Park in London. They've made a real difference to their communities. (see Joseph Rowntree Foundation report <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/new-parish-and-town-councils-urban-areas>)

It has become easier to set up a parish council, with or without support from the parent authority. Obviously, it is useful to have their support; starting off in conflict with your district or county council isn't helpful. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) provides an excellent resource for both existing local councils and for people wanting to set up a new one for their community. **C**

Are you involved in a parish or town council? I'd be interested to hear about what you're doing, and experiences, both good and bad (paul.salveson@myphone.coop).

Driverless cars - are they really green?

Dave Toke is not convinced by this bandwagon

Apparently later this year a driverless taxi service will be launched in Phoenix Arizona. Maybe that's not quite Hackney – I suspect there's less sharp turns. It's also a lot warmer there and there's less rain and certainly no snow. But, once those creepy robots get used to things there they'll be coming for us sometime.

So, sooner or later, it seems, we are going to be ditching our own cars and hopping via our smartphone apps, into driverless cars. Many are saying that because they'll be electric and the number of cars needed will be much smaller than at present (because the average car will be used a much higher proportion of the time) then this is a green or greener system. But is it? Or are we being sold another bandwagon which-we-have-to join and which everything else has to fit in with - but which turns out to be not very green after all.

Count me as one of the sceptics, although I must say that a lot of my techno-smart green friends think that driverless cars are really the new biz. But surely there's something being overlooked. Like if driverless cars really are that much more cheaper and convenient than all that messing about and expense with maintaining your own vehicle won't that increase the desire to travel by car? Methinks there's something ungreen about that.

Now I must say I think that for those of us who insist on driving (as opposed to riding bikes etc) electric cars are clearly the way to go – but let's get one thing plain that is in danger of being obscured by some of the PR bling about driverless cars. Electric cars and driverless cars are by no means necessarily the same thing. Electric good, but not necessarily driverless. Got it? In fact, I fear that driverless is a new paradigm that could bring with it some unintended consequences – like much increased car travel compared to cars (electric or otherwise) which are driven by humans.

But, there are various advan-



Driverless cars could bring some unintended consequences (credit automobileitalia)

tages to driverless cars. For example, older people who have given up driving, or can no longer drive, can just hop in a driverless car, if it is cheap enough, and of course without the need to pay taxi drivers, it becomes a lot cheaper than conventional taxis, uber or otherwise. Away they go to their next bingo session, University of the 3rd Age meeting or Weatherspoons reunion ('spoonies'), volunteering in noble causes (like the Chartist?) or even, in an increasing fashion for older people - doing paid work! But that is just it. It means more car travel!

There may be solace for the youngsters who increasingly find it expensive to buy and run a car (oh, those insurance rates for young drivers! You'd think they have more accidents than those oldies!). Youngsters can cut costs by hiring rides in driverless taxis, maybe or sharing driverless vehicles. But again, that may mean more car travel than there is now.

There are potential advantages for driverless vehicles. All that controversy about being assaulted by rogue taxi drivers just goes away. No need for criminal record checks, no need to worry whether the driver is on drink or other intoxicating influences. All you need to worry

about is that the damn thing doesn't crash! Now that's scary – but then, we assume if these systems get the go-ahead they will be safe enough. Probably, they will even reduce injuries and fatalities on the road.

What happens to public transport? Do the roads get so clogged up by driverless cars that cyclists can't even weave their way through the traffic jams easily? Will cyclists now post you tube videos of angry driverless robots shouting abuse at cyclists that some (human) drivers do now?

Now there's a serious public policy point behind this flippancy. The trouble is that when bandwagons roll and there is a consensus that WE KNOW THIS IS THE FUTURE (remember they used to say that about nuclear power) all relevant public policy becomes oriented towards the bandwagon (in this case driverless cars). The interests of other road users become a secondary priority. Now that would be a very bad idea. Because whatever advantages there may be to driverless cars, I suspect that they will not end up being hailed as a green breakthrough after they have taken hold. So let's not let the planners be press-ganged into designing things all the way for driverless vehicles. **C**

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

BREXIT

Remain, Reform, Rebuild: the 3R strategy for Labour on Brexit

Labour will have to sort the Tory Brexit mess by committing to the 3R strategy says **Manuel Cortes** in appealing to left leave supporters to unite against the Brexiteers nationalist, deregulated neo-liberal future



Jeremy Corbyn, Keir Starmer and Michel Barnier

Brexit has been a Tory project long since before it had a name. The 2016 referendum on European Union (EU) membership was only ever intended by David Cameron as a staged political gimmick to out-flank the Right in his own party and to stem the desertion to UKIP from it.

It was right of the Labour Party and most of the Trade Union movement to campaign to remain and reform the EU during the 2016 referendum. We lost our battle by a narrow margin, but the struggle continues. Now is no the time to cede defeat to the 'Kipper' world view and let the Tory Right claim victory over Europe.

I know some comrades amongst us still cling to the notion that the EU is a capitalist club so we must rid ourselves of it. I believe some Lexiteers took a traditional agitational propaganda position because they, like Cameron, never believed the Brexiteers would win the vote to

leave. Old left positions became at best a bad abstentionist tactic in a fast-moving rightward drift. At worst they meant ideological principles were contorted to justify the anathema of voting with the Tories and UKIP for their dream. But comrades, conditions have changed, you can too!

My union fought for remain because we believed the referen-

Resisting the Tory post-Brexit reality of unrestrained, deregulated, free-marketeteering is now the correct strategy

dum result would lead to another binary choice Single Market Capitalism or World Trade Organisation (WTO) Rule Capitalism. There was no a la carte socialist nirvana on the menu. Our original fear is the reality we now face. Tory Brexit's direction of travel careers us



Manuel Cortes is General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staff Association

towards the dominion of (WTO) rules, where the only rights privileged are those of business and the Boss Class to exploit without impunity. EU membership was never perfect but it does come with rights which help protect workers. The WTO has always been the preferred trading club of dictators.

So resisting the Tory post-Brexit reality of a neo-liberal, Atlanticist nirvana of unrestrained, deregulated, free-marketeteering is now the correct strategy. The Tories are holding a UKIP loaded double-barrelled shotgun to our class's head. I appeal to those on the left who voted with the Tories and UKIP in the referendum to hold their hands up, admit it was the wrong tactic and now join with the rest of us on the Left in ambition to reform our relationship with Europe.

But on March 29, 2019 the facts will be as follows:

Britain will still be a capitalist country; We will still need to trade; If we simply leave the EU,

we will trade under WTO rules; WTO rules mean tariffs and no state aid as the case of Boeing v Airbus demonstrates.

This is the stark reality, as Tory right-wingers and Kippers seize their moment to end the job Thatcher started. They want to negotiate new free-trade deals, particularly one with their soul mate Trump. These will resemble the defeated Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) on steroids. It's incumbent on the Left to lead the opposition to chlorinated chickens in our shops and our NHS being taken over by private healthcare providers from the across the pond. Our resistance, will inspire fellow socialist parties across Europe to join our movement to reform and rebuild a Europe for the many. Let's not forget that it was the mobilising power of the Left within the EU which put the nails in the TTIP coffin. It was our internationalist European movement that enabled us to stand together to defeat America's might. Divided, TTIP would now rule the roost.

A transition period is no safe

Labour now faces a huge political opportunity and an even greater class responsibility

harbour. Rather it lands us in an undefined period of vassal statehood as we lose our right to any self-determination. It increases EU power over us and makes us their rule takers when currently we have a democratic voice. An eventual agreement which closely mirrors the European Economic Area (EEA), means the EU forever calling the shots. Our perpetual vassal status will be enshrined. Our ability to argue for reforming the EU, which Jeremy and Socialists have campaigned for, gone.

Let's face it, Tories and Kippers hate the EU because it's not as rabid a free-market institution as they would like. From workers rights to food standards its regulations get in the way of their foolish utopian Hayek paradise. They want out because they believe, with justification, that within it, they won't get the deregulation, privatisation and abolition of workers and human rights they so badly crave. We



European leaders gather minus May

must therefore do our utmost to stop them getting their warped wish.

So Labour now faces a huge political opportunity and an even greater class responsibility. The fate of Brexit is in our hands. The devastating consequences on working class life and jobs are just too huge. The 2016 referendum injected a toxicity into British public life which saw the right grow in confidence and an MP lose her life. Current death threats to prominent Labour, Liberal and even Tory Remainers shame all of us. We must resist this nasty nationalist turn and not go with its flow.

Labour must whip our MPs to vote down any Tory Brexit deal. This will in all certainty force a General Election. If we campaign on our Manifesto for the many, it will increase our chances of reforming and rebuilding our relationship with the EU. We must prepare for power knowing it will fall to a Corbyn-led government to clear up the Brexit mess as well as rebuilding our country after the Tories austerity programme has so badly broken it.

With Jeremy at the helm, we will stop workers in Britain being abused and exploited through a real statutory living wage of at least £10 an hour, sectoral collective bargaining and a tightly regulated labour market. Workers rights will be at the forefront of Labour's greatest reforming agenda since 1945. We will also build a new economic settlement for the benefit of the 99%. We will have a government that will invest in infrastructure from our schools to our railways and from

our hospitals to renewable energy.

Labour will ensure that its economic policies bring prosperity for all and dismantle the toxicity that is setting Britons against immigrants in what Andrew Adonis has neatly phrased Britain's Trumpian moment. As Socialists we are Internationalists. We bring people together irrespective of their differences. We are in the business of demolishing borders rather than creating barriers. The free movement of people within the EEA is a gain we must continue to cherish and must hope to extend further afield.

In the age of global capital, if we don't act together tax-dodgers and multinational corporations will always get the better of us. As the successful battle against TTIP showed, agitation across borders works. Our internationalism is the antidote to the World Bank's globalisation impulse. Remaining but reforming and rebuilding our relationship with the EU by pushing for reforms which deliver a Europe for the many rather than pull-up the drawbridge is an offer only Corbyn's Labour is capable of delivering.

Jeremy is seen by many in Europe as a beacon of hope. A Britain led by him can build a better continent and world. There is no need to become a vassal state or an adjunct of the US. We can aim for something far, far better. Remaining, reforming and rebuilding our relationship with the EU is the key to Labour delivering a Britain and a Europe for the many not the few. **C**

BREXIT

Anti-Brexit divisions

Trevor Fisher surveys the various anti-Brexit groups and prospects for success

The anti-Brexit movement started 2018 covering over serious and unsustainable cracks in its working. It

remained fragmented and without a clear strategy, badly split over Soft and Hard Brexit, and with a wide variety of diverging organisations, five having a national role - Best 4 Britain, Open Britain, European Movement, Britain4Europe and Another Europe is Possible (AEIP). Labour meanwhile had adopted a facing both ways posture that was very successful - but only in the short term.

Labour ended 2018 united and having gained support from both Leavers and Remainers, as the 2017 election showed. Though UKIP effectively collapsed in favour of the Tories, many Leave voters returned to vote Labour. The formula devised by Keir Starmer was so ambiguous that a YouGov/Best for Britain poll in December found that 32% of Labour Remain voters believe Labour is 'completely against Brexit' while 31% of Labour Leave voters thought it was 'completely in favour of Brexit'. This is unsustainable.

The splits between the five major groups had become unacceptable by the end of 2017, and Best For Britain (B4B) under its new chair Lord Malloch-Brown attempted to lead a unity initiative. The Guardian on 17th December reported "an agreement that their messages needed to be better co-ordinated" and Malloch-Brown would lead on this. There were three groups listed as co-operating - B4B, Open Britain and the European Movement. The co-ordination lasted only till after the parliamentary recess, when Chuka Umuna was reported by Labour List on February 2nd to "make the case against a hard Brexit after agreeing to lead a new grassroots campaign group".

This is linked to Open Britain and takes the form of a rebranded All party parliamentary group on EU relations but the alliance lasted less than 24 hours. On 3rd February B4B's Malloch-Brown told their supporters "Chuka chairs an important forum for



Umuna and Malloch-Brown - different approaches to Brexit

discussion which we will continue to attend. However, B4B believes that Britain should stay... in Europe and therefore cannot combine with others who support a soft Brexit. We (work)... to build a people's movement against Brexit..." and out they went.

At the heart of this dispute is the gap between soft and hard Brexit, with B4B opposed to Brexit, but Open Britain as a successor to the failed Remain campaign of 2016 accepting the referendum result and merely wanting to ameliorate the consequences for a transitional period soft Brexit. The gap between accepting and rejecting Brexit is fundamental, and those who want a soft Brexit are doing no more than following the May line of Tory appeasement of Brexit. For the anti-Brexit forces, B4B has the correct line - but how it is to be pursued is for debate, with another Referendum the core issue for discussion.

Immediately the most important issue is why the Labour oriented group AEIP opposed to Brexit, did not sign up for either the B4B nor the Chuka Umuna initiatives. On one level it is going its own way and confident it can straddle positions that remain polar opposites. Its website on 4th January announced it was "preparing for all scenarios, we will develop ideas adaptable to both a 'full scale Remain' position or as part of a soft Brexit outcome". So far these ideas have not appeared, and how ideas acceptable to both Umuna and

Malloch-Brown can emerge is a mystery. The choices really are In or Out the EU. There is no middle ground.

An indication of the thinking within AEIP may be the article by Salman Shaheen on Labour List on 4th February. Shaheen, chair of Isleworth and Brentford Labour Party and co-founder of AEIP, was not writing for the organisation but captured the dilemma the organisation faces. Shaheen wrote "Labour's policy still remains only a slightly softer version of the Brexit the Tories are offering. So far that has been enough to convince many Remainers to default to Labour..." which enables the Lib Dems to stand ready to pick up these voters, though so far the Lib Dems have made no progress.

Shaheen suggested that on the Marr show, "Corbyn ruled out a second referendum, declaring 'that ship has sailed'. I hope he finds a way to turn it round". Shaheen favours "offering a second referendum after a deal has been negotiated. It would provide a clear choice between the Conservative Brexit and remaining in the EU". It is a position I agree with. However it is very different to offering a Remain option or a soft Brexit outcome, and AEIP needs to embrace it.

In the spring we will need to raise the game if Brexit is not to gain hold as the only show in town. In the first few weeks of 2018, all we have seen so far is a divided anti-Brexit movement arguing amongst itself. **C**

Haringey – the first ‘Corbyn Council’?

As campaigning mounts for local council elections in May, **Pete Chalk** reflects on prospects for Haringey’s incoming Labour councillors

Now the dust has settled, it looks like Haringey’s new council in May will have a majority of councillors from the left, with a mountain to climb. Cuts in the budget since 2010 amount to 40% or £160m, with a further £15m cuts to be made in 2018/19. It is operating with 45% fewer staff and many services have been outsourced. Estates need regeneration, there are 9,700 homeless people in temporary accommodation and 10,000 on the housing waiting list.

Haringey will no doubt be faced with a hostile government and already the right wing press are setting up the borough to fail by labelling it, gleefully, ‘the first Corbyn Council’ – led by the right wing ‘news’ website ‘OnLondon’, which ‘revealed’ the proposal made by one Labour party member that salaries over £60k should be cut – a proposal that never cleared the first round of ward meetings!

In fact, the proposals made by the majority of Labour members in Haringey are fairly realistic – given the scale of the problems we face, this is hardly surprising. For example, there is acceptance

We are prepared to look at radical, but realistic, alternatives to austerity

of the government limit on council tax rises (5.99% this year, being implemented by the vast majority of councils of all persuasions) and a rejection of any notion of the ‘no cuts budget’ sought by hard left groups. An additional proposal is for a Fairness Commission, similar to others elsewhere, to start a genuine community consultation over a possible referendum on a higher council tax increase in 2019/20.

In addition, mindful of the disaster in Northamptonshire (a Tory borough slavishly following



Majority of Labour candidates are from the left

government policy and going bankrupt) there are several suggestions on how to avoid this happening in Haringey. For example, their policy of outsourcing everything Carillion/Capita style, the folly of the new Council HQ and the freezing of council tax all contributed to Northants’ problems – and all have been the policy of Haringey Council, hopefully soon to be reversed. Perhaps the most damning criticism of Northants came from one of their own backbenchers, quoted as saying the financial crisis is the result of a “secretive and dysfunctional leadership”. Certainly this has been the case in Haringey, with its own Scrutiny Committee levelling a similar charge against the cabinet leadership. Arguably, this is what turned the tide against the now infamous HDV (Haringey Development Vehicle: £2bn 20-year partnership with LendLease) – the fact that even Labour councillors had no idea of what deals were being made.

But ‘what is the alternative?’ is the question the right wing continually ask of the left. The answer is to look for inspiration from what is happening in other Labour councils faced with similar levels of cuts and hardship. For example, neighbouring boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Enfield have this year started relatively ambitious programmes of social housing. In Haringey the

new plan is to build 250 new council homes a year – using a housing revenue surplus of £17m to raise £49m capital and Right-To-Buy receipts of £11m we still hold (after some £21m was returned to central government by the last council). In addition, the new council will pursue a far more aggressive policy of planning gain following the example of councils such as Hackney – demanding a much greater proportion of social housing in any new build. Innovative solutions such as Community Land Trusts can bring in new money for social housing – supported by the London Mayor and housing bond issues.

So, there is an alternative. Not only in housing, but in other services, by ending outsourcing as other Labour councils have done, saving the money that otherwise goes into profits and dividends to shareholders.

We hope to follow the example of Preston and other councils by boosting the local economy – setting up our own housing and energy companies, professionalising an in-house carer workforce, employing Haringey residents, buying from local suppliers and so on.

The Barker Commission has shown how social care costs can be cut by integrating local health and social care contracts, seeing the sector as a positive local economy rather than a ‘drain on resources’ as the right would have it.

In fact, this is what is so special about the new generation of councillors – we are prepared to look at radical, but realistic, alternatives to austerity and privatisation.

The ‘first Corbyn Council’ will be under close scrutiny and will get no support from the government or mainstream media. Already we have seen seventy plus Labour council leaders line up against the NEC call for mediation between left and right – so we are under no illusion as to the enormity of the task ahead. **C**

Pete Chalk is Labour candidate for Muswell Hill Ward, Haringey in this year’s council elections. He was councillor in Haringey (1986-90) and Islington (1993-98) – where he chaired the Housing Committee

NEW ECONOMICS

Alternative models of ownership

Mike Davis & Hassan Hoque report on Labour's New Economics initiative finding there is work to do

We'll take back, railways, water, energy and Royal Mail into public ownership' declared Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell in opening Labour's Alternative Models of Ownership conference on 10 February.

Speakers including Cat Hobbs (We Own It), Andrew Cumbers (University of Glasgow), Anna Coote (New Economics Foundation) and Hilary Wainwright (Red Pepper) filled out this intention during the sessions. The 1500 strong audience heard no dissent on the proposals to renationalise these utilities—we were reminded that more than three quarters of British people support these ideas. But the element McDonnell stressed, that of 'democratic control' and a new approach from that of the 1945 Morrisonian top-down model found less of an airing in discussions.

This has to be the nub of the matter. Old style statist, bureaucratic forms of public ownership shut out both workers and consumers. There was no real worker's voice nor any channels for users to vent their views about service delivery, quality and change.

There were some good insights into how outsourced local services

had been re-municipalised in many cities around the world, with Preston Council's Community Wealth Fund being cited frequently as a model of good practice. Plans to double the size of the co-ops and social enterprise sector were prominent in the mix.

However, in one of the workshops discussing Labour's manifesto commitments to public ownership Mick Whelan of the train drivers union Aslef betrayed the deficit in current union attitudes. Yes, we want a worker's voice in a publicly owned rail service, but we don't need to discuss this until after renationalisation. On the contrary, we need to thoroughly review international and domestic ideas for workers and consumer control otherwise the default position of government appointees will take hold. Andrew Towers of the Communication Worker's Union was more prescient talking of worker and user boards for the Post Office. We need to explore the issue of worker's on company boards, with local and regional models of workers and user election to management bodies. The real expertise lies with people providing the service with a strong voice for those using it be it railways, energy or the postal service.

Bryn Jones expanded talking about principles of subsidiarity, devolution and accountability that should animate our alternative. (See Chartist Facebook page)

The workshop exploring the role of public ownership in the digital economy stood out from the rest, in that it corroborated the imperative of revisiting public ownership.

Francesca Bri, chief technology officer at Barcelona City Council presented the current digital economies focus on: automation, uberisation and platform monopolies (facebook, Google etc). She presented a compelling argument for structural interventions required to transform the digital economy from "surveillance capitalism" and "extractism" to a "data commons" and individuals with "data sovereignty". Data is the new oil, and the platforms are the new oil rigs. We urgently need to bring data back to public ownership and cities will need to play a central role in making this transformation.

Jeremy Corbyn rounded off the conference with a rallying speech focussed particularly on how the six big energy corporations were ripping off consumers and outlining a new, greener, socially owned National Grid plan. **C**



Labour's Democracy Review

The next phase of the Democracy Review asks for submissions by 23 March. We are asked for views on Diversity and Participation; the Way we Work and Electing our Leadership. Momentum has proposed some useful ideas ([Democracy_Review_Ideas_from_Grassroots_Activists_\(1\).pdf](#)). Many would echo proposals for BAME members to elect their NEC representative on an OMOV basis, similarly those for Young Labour and Scottish and Welsh reps.

On the structure of the NEC there is a good case for reducing the number of MPs to the Leader and Deputy and an end to the whiff of patronage that still hangs over our managing body. Constituency representation is now much improved with OMOV elections. Regarding the selection of MPs there is a case for extending the franchise to all trade union levy payers.

A key question is strengthening the links with trade unions. Local involvement is central. Constituency par-

ties need to be more prominent in their support for local trade union action, be it lecturers striking over pension cuts, local government workers facing staff reductions or health workers facing serious understaffing.

Showing solidarity in practice is the best way to attract trade union members to affiliate their union and get active in local Labour politics. One challenging area is that of the gig economy where hundreds of thousands of worker face zero hours, agency work and precarious working conditions. Labour needs to reach out, even if some mainstream unions are not so sympathetic, and encourage new unions to affiliate or get involved. New party members should be encouraged to join a union. Unite Community would be an obvious choice of a general union but their '15 Reasons to join Unite Community' is almost entirely individual focussed with nothing on the collective nature of a union. Again work to do. Propose ideas at www.chartist.org.uk. See details for submissions on inside page.

UK disabled people face human catastrophe – official

Miro Griffiths explains the need for a socially just welfare system

The UK government did not react with horror following the concluding observations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which indicated that austerity measures "have created a human catastrophe for disabled people". Instead, the sense of exceptionalism was apparent as Conservative Minister Penny Mordaunt insisted the UK should promote its disability policies as a catalyst for change throughout the world. Whilst this is blatant arrogance on behalf of the government, it suggests the current trajectory of distressing medical assessments, social security sanctions and devastating cuts to services will continue.

The changes to social security are relentless. Disguised as a necessity under fiscal conservatism, they demonstrate the intention of the Tories to disregard the rights of disabled people, strip away the notion of humanity and dismantle the opportunities to establish resistance.

So what is the current framework for protecting disabled people's participation within society? And how do recent welfare developments reflect the government's desire to silence and stigmatise those who require support?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the UK has signed and ratified, is all but dismissed. The Equality Act achieves very little as its foundation is built upon the subjective stance of 'reasonable adjustments', whereby those with considerable power determine if the marginalisation experienced by disabled people can be justified on the grounds of too much cost, too many resources or too much disruption to everyone else. Even the legislation that mirrors the EU treaties is likely to be shredded by the current government, as it attempts to concentrate more power by arguing that sovereign rule will improve people's life chances.

A Commons inquiry, which scrutinised the Personal

Independence Payment (PIP) assessment system, was informed - by disabled people - of the lies and misinformation perpetuated by the assessors. In late October 2017, the Disability New Service, revealed that complaints regarding the assessment process rose by 900% in one year. Complaints and appeals will continue to rise as individuals discover how assessors, commonly employed by outsourced private companies, exploit disabled people by fabricating the medical reports and omitting the personal narratives and opinions of those participating in the mandatory assessments. The injustice surrounding the PIP is long-standing, as it has taken the government four years to address eligibility concerns highlighted at a tribunal. Almost 10,000 disabled people were prevented from receiving a higher rate of support because guidance from the Department of Work and Pensions did not reflect the intention of the legislation.

The Access to Work scheme, created to support disabled people in employment by funding the incurred disability-related expenses, is subject to extensive cutbacks and bureaucratic incompetence as support is capped and conditional on the basis of an individual's salary. Further it is provided only after people are subjected to extensive scrutiny and suspicion. Whilst the November 2015 spending review pledged to increase the number of disabled people using the scheme by 25,000, currently 4000 fewer are accessing support than in the final year of the New Labour government. The Department for Work and Pensions has been accused of manipulating statistics in an attempt to dampen any criticism regarding cuts. Figures show the number of disabled people accessing support has fallen by 15% over the last seven years, with funding for workplace adaptations falling from 380 to 50 in one year and the provision of assistive technology dropping from 18,000 to 12,500.

The failure to protect disabled people during the implementation phase of Universal Credit, which

has resulted in hundreds of thousands of disabled people in debt and, potentially, homeless, signifies the intention of the Conservatives to place disabled people in further precarious conditions. It is estimated that 500,000 disabled people will be financially worse off under Universal Credit and the removal of disability premiums could amount to an annual loss of £1000.

The Tories seek to portray social security as a gift, granted to people who have failed to be productive to society. It is prescribed as a benefit to help individuals take responsibility for their marginalisation. By utilising private enterprise and expensive consultants, the design and delivery of social security is controlled by those who benefit most from the exploited communities. Focus is not on the removal of barriers or the rights of those who require support, it is to generate profit by silencing disabled people. The state views any attempt to challenge or disrupt the current assessment and review procedures as disobedience. As a result, it is of little surprise that action taken by disabled people and their allies is sporadic.

The majority of disabled people have little opportunity to exercise their rights as citizens, participate in protest and activism or be included in the political discussions that shape society. This is deliberate. Yet, the attention is directed towards the individual's supposed inability to participate or contribute, and never addresses the economic, cultural and political structures that perpetuate disabled people's isolation.

Our aim must be to radically overhaul the design, development and delivery of social security. By ensuring it focuses on the societal barriers that prevent disabled people existing as respected citizens, where people's contributions are valued beyond the eagerness to create profit and wealth, a system can be created to benefit all, not just a few. **G**

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MOSQUES

No-Go mosques

Anita Nayyar on why the British Muslim debate about women in mosques is relevant to everyone

Picture this mosque: Men and women flow in and out five times a day. At the edges the scholars of the religion can be found. The most sought-after scholars are women. Throughout the day men and women remember God & study the scriptures. Some are refugees taking shelter here. This is a snapshot of the mosque that the Prophet Muhammad ran in 7th Century Madinah. The mosque enabled community, charity and worship. For All.

Now fast forward to 21st Century Britain. Mariam is out shopping with her husband and prayer time comes in. They head to the mosque. When they arrive a man runs to find them at the door. He tells her husband sternly that women aren't allowed. She needs to find another mosque. She protests. The man shouts. The next mosque is a 20 minute walk away. It's cold and wet and in 20 minutes time, prayer will have already finished. She feels humiliated and wronged. The scene is based on actual stories I have received on a campaign page I set up in 2015 called #OpenMyMosque.

In modern day Britain more than 1 in 3 mosques have 'no facilities' for women. Yet the Islamic rules for prayer are the same whether you are male or female, we must bow our heads five times a day. The Prophet Muhammad instructed his followers 'Do not stop female worshippers from visiting God's mosques', creating a normative rule in Islam that it is haram (prohibited) to do what mosques in Britain today are doing.

Disquiet around how mosques in the UK treat women is growing amongst British Muslims. Last month a conference by the Muslim Council of Britain 'Our Mosques Our Future' was designed in part to address discrimination in mosques. OpenMyMosque have a regular flow of complaints. Some worshippers set up their own complaints pages. This one has plentiful feedback. Where prayer spaces do exist for women, they are too often second-class spaces. Ill maintained, unhygienic, inacces-



Anita Nayyar speaking at MCB's 'Our Mosques our future'

sible.

It doesn't stop at prayer spaces. When mosque elections take place, they should be our opportunity to voice the change we need. To choose the board members we want or run for positions ourselves. But the ballot papers in the mosque hallway are often not physically accessible to women. In the centenary of womens' suffrage, these mosques are able to limit their votership to men-only by the simple act of a locked door.

In Muslim areas where the door to public life is largely dependent on influence at the mosque, this limits women's access to wider public positions. As the Citizen's Commission on Barriers to Muslims in Public Life heard only too well and records in its report.

The majority of Muslims in Britain are born here. We look to the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque as our blueprint and contemporary culture for our expression of community and charity. Surprisingly though, most mosques (44%) belong to a minority of first wave immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. In particular, to a subgroup who froze their religious rulings in 19th Century India to protect the religion from British interference. Amongst their rules is an exceptional one that states that it is highly disliked (although not prohibited) for a woman to attend the mosque.

Not only is this position problematic within normative Islamic frameworks. It is problematic in a

modern Britain where equalities legislation should protect my 'religious character' and my 'gender'. I cannot be barred from praying five times a day at work because that forms part of my protected religious character. So why can I be barred from entering a place of worship (a charity) due to my gender? We do have legal precedent that penalizes mosques who bar women from elections. So why is the practice still so widespread?

Partly this is due to theological illiteracy or lack of confidence to challenge mosques amongst those to whom we turn to enforce our rights; statutory bodies and political membership groups. Many believe that this systematic sexism is integral to the religion. In one case, where a complaint of gender discrimination was raised to the Charities Commission, the mosque was able to falsely argue their right to discriminate under 'shariah law'.

Muslims of Britain are responding by setting up our own places of worship. But we also call on statutory services and political organisations not to treat us with exception when we raise the issue of discrimination in mosques. As British Muslims, we expect to be protected by equality laws in the mosque, as in every other realm of our life. And the Labour party's drive for inclusion in Muslim majority areas must acknowledge and address discrimination in the mosque to create a supportive environment for women in the community. **C**

Anita Nayyar is social psychologist and gender equalities activist

New Zealand Labour takes the reins under Ardern

Darren Hughes explains how PR and smart policy agreements helped Labour into government

There is lots to admire about Labour's recent performance in New Zealand. Led by the talented Jacinda Ardern, in the 2017 election the party secured more seats (46) in the House of Representatives than it has managed since 2005.

Despite remaining the second-largest party behind the National Party (with 56 seats,) Labour has been able to form a coalition government with centrist NZ First and the Green Party in a confidence and supply agreement.

The key to Labour's success has been the way it has managed to adapt itself to New Zealand's Proportional Representation (PR) voting system.

Known in the UK as the Additional Member System, this MMP system uses a combination of First Past the Post and party-lists and is used to elect the parliaments of Scotland and Wales, and the London Assembly.

In Westminster, MPs are elected solely via First Past the Post, and as a result the UK Labour party has tended to look at issues solely from its own perspective.

But Jacinda Ardern is young, dynamic and operates in a different political environment. She does not assume there is such a thing as a lifetime Labour voter and has sought to appeal to a broader cross-section of society.

What she did last year was to form partnerships based on policy – the smart way of building a coalition between parties.

From the very start of coalition negotiations, when it was unclear who would lead New Zealand's government, the question asked by Labour in discussion with other parties was 'how do we combine and merge our policies on these various issues and make it attractive to all of us and to the country?'

The starting-point was not 'if we team up with one party we will have a parliamentary majority, but if we join up with another party we will fall short.'

The result was that once a coalition had been agreed, there was already agreement on policy, rather than having to desperately



Ardern's bridge building ability shouldn't be overlooked as a major factor in Labour's ultimate victory

scratch around for areas of agreement afterwards.

It has meant the coalition has very quickly been able to commit to bold new policies including a promise to plant 1 billion trees in ten years and a new KiwiBuild scheme that will see an extra 10,000 affordable homes constructed each year for first time buyers.

It has been the classic application of the win-win principle which should dominate political negotiations, but all too often do not.

Conversely, the Conservative party has remained the largest in terms of its own seats, but it achieved this by eating up its potential coalition partners. It has left them marooned on 56 seats (five short of a majority) with nobody to dance with.

Jacinda realised that although Labour had a lower vote share than the National Party, if you add up the votes for those parties that want to achieve change, you get to over 50 percent.

In addition to Jacinda's ability to build bridges between coalition partners, her leadership style should not be overlooked as a major factor in Labour's ultimate victory.

She had one hour to decide to become the leader of the opposition. Then she had just weeks to negotiate a government in what was a fiercely competitive environment.

So although it is right to say her style is relaxed and personable and that people generally warm to her, she also demonstrated great steel by retaining her optimistic outlook despite the kind of pressures which most people wilt under.

It was over 20 years ago that New Zealand chose to adopt Proportional Representation for its parliamentary elections.

The current regime is now the second Labour-led government which has been achieved under this system.

This is in the context of a party which spent most of the twentieth century losing First Past the Post elections, even when it had won more votes than their opponents.

When there was Labour governments, they were single-term only (other than during the war and the highly divisive government of the 1980s.)

Because Proportional Representation allows voters to display their preferences in a more honest way, the party system has been refreshed and there are now more choices for voters.

What Jacinda and Labour in New Zealand has shown is how parties rooted in the divisive world of First Past the Post can successfully adopt to a modern, pluralist, PR environment by taking a policy-first approach.

This is the politics of give and take which fosters trust and confidence between allies on the left. **C**

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PRIVATISATION

Carillion crash and c

As Carillion, Capita, Virgin Trains and others hit the buffers **Bryn Jo**

The collapse of the PFI-peddling and public service contractor Carillion is a major embarrassment for Mrs May's government and a financial nightmare for its employees and multitude of sub-contractors. Together with similar problems at Capita, another mega-contractor, and the fiasco of East Coast rail franchises, it also represents a wider crisis for the whole outsourcing model and a golden opportunity for Labour and left policymakers to overthrow a pillar of neoliberal economic governance. Instinctive calls for returning all out-sourced contracts to public ownership and control are understandable. But there should also be some credible and workable alternatives to both marketised outsourcing and the traditional public sector management bureaucracies. This would chime in with the more efficient, accountable and democratic alternatives outlined at the recent Labour conference on Alternative Models of Ownership.

Before describing such alternatives, it's worth considering the ideology and practices leading to the Carillion crisis. Outsourcing and its related PFI model are direct consequences of late twentieth century neoliberalism. Policies flowing from this mindset, whether by Thatcherite or New Labour governments aimed at minimising public debt and spending by camouflaging it as private sector activity. In keeping with the neoliberal orthodoxy, it was also assumed that prices paid for public contracts could, nay should, be held down by getting corporations to tender competitively against each other.

Fallaciously, however, such policies presume robust market competition amongst contractors. Yet the capital needed to build a high-speed rail link or run labour-intensive operations like prisons is too high for all but a handful of big businesses. Contractors had, therefore, not only to muster significant financial clout, they also needed a business model that could shuffle finance amongst different types.

This was a capitalist fairy-tale in which success beget success: winning one large contract generated funds to bid for another. Like the similar saga of railway franchises, it wasn't long before there were only a handful of big firms with the financial muscle to out-bid others and meet the ever-increasing government demands for lower bids. These contracts are now estimated to make up half the total government spending on goods and services: up to £100bn a year.

Unfortunately this mish-mash of text-book economics, political manipulation and corporate power produced a Frankenstein's monster of business practice. Firms such as Carillion grew by chasing contracts for work ever further from their original speciality: buildings materials, maintenance and construction, in Carillion's case. The variety of public sector contracts undertaken - I.T., waste management, building maintenance, social care and defence, plus construction - has led to the main firm acting more like an old-fashioned holding company. That is one which coordinates the finances of a large range of businesses and an even greater spread of dependent sub-contractors. The massive irony here, from the point of view of business efficiency, is that consultants and pundits who promoted the virtues of market disciplines from the 1990s onwards, urged firms to abandon this 'conglomerate' model and 'focus' only on the most profitable and well-practised activities in order to maximise shareholders' returns.

The problem for Carillion and its ilk is that they must violate this specialisation principle even as they seek to satisfy its 'shareholder value' counterpart. Share dividends were generous. Between 2015 and 2017 Carillion payouts totalled £163 million; while its employees' pension fund accumulated a £580 deficit. To survive and placate their ever-hungry investors, outsourcing firm like Carillion must continuously land new public service and construction contracts.



Carillion's collapse is a major embar

Recognising that these firms are only one failed contract bid away from financial disaster governments have continued to award them, just to keep the show on the road. Meanwhile these constraints pressured Carillion to use its bargaining power to seek breathing space by delaying payments to their sub-contractors. Carillion was making its 30,000 dependent 'subs' wait four months for payment for their invoices.

Outsourcer firms are similarly hard-nosed about paying their own direct workforce. Public procurement agencies striving to come up with ever cheaper deals for maintenance, catering and care services, pushes outsourced operations to 'externalise' costs on to poorly paid and under-resourced workers. The tightening of these screws reduces state tax revenues and throws many workers on state support and services to make ends meet and patch up their fraying health. Why should any rational government persist with this bogus market charade: putting dependent sub-contractors and exploited

capitalist fairy tales

rn Jones makes the case for 're-sourcing' public sector outsourcing



rn embarrassment for the government

workers under such pressure, while virtually guaranteeing fat profits for remote investors? As speeches from Labour's top brass and local authorities' return to in-house sourcing show, the outsourcing model has to be replaced. But wholesale and rapid de-privatisation will entail significant costs and time scales. So what bigger alternative to neoliberal pseudo-market models could be developed to relinquish long-term contracts and PFI deals and invest in the necessary in-house skills and capacity?

The Smith Institute has suggested in-house provision should be the default option for public services, relegating outsourcing to a supplementary option. It also recommends having a 'central clearinghouse' to monitor company performance across multiple contracts, with a new government agency 'to regulate, share best practice and evaluate outsourcing across Whitehall and the NHS'.

This recipe envisages 'parallel arrangements for local government and the devolved administrations'. But there could be more radical delegation. From

Thatcher onwards, more and more responsibilities have been transferred from local authorities to government agencies and quangos. Instead councils could form consortia and pool their own resources where necessary for projects like regional infrastructure, replacing recently created metropolitan mayoralities which hold substantial purse strings for clusters of local councils' infrastructure investment.

As the Smith Institute also argue, democratic oversight and control has been diminished because, 'accountability is lacking' and the identity of service providers is opaque to taxpayers and users. So reforms have to make democratic accountability a priority. A Labour government should therefore explore the subsidiarity principle for a wholesale devolution of contracting from Whitehall departments to regions and local councils. The latter could, in turn, put proposals out to local voters' agreement as part of the participatory budgeting exercises which have been established in other countries: 'should service X be undertaken by the council or its agencies, or put out to tender?' A modest, but considerably more democratic measure than present practices, where services are outsourced with only box-ticking consultations.

Social justice objectives could also be pursued by strengthening the scope of the existing state rules on social and environmental considerations in the award of public sector contracts. Under the Social Value Act (2012) contracting authorities must prioritise social considerations and wellbeing above simple cost advantages, which is one of the conditions for the widely praised Preston model of economic development. If

social value were made a condition rather than merely 'a consideration' in awarding contracts, it could be elaborated to cover a range of priorities: preferences for social enterprises, such as co-ops, requirements for 'living wage' rates of pay; or even proof that bidders do not practice tax avoidance. Wider scope could cover many more contracts if the EU threshold for social value was reduced below its current £600,000 for services tendered by the central government. Again, properly accountable local government bodies would be a more democratically effective medium if big public contracts were disaggregated down to local levels wherever practicable.

The Carillion collapse has discredited the entire neoliberal rationale for systemic outsourcing based on flaky assumptions of market disciplines. The mega corporations which actually monopolise these contracts often deliver poor value, while extracting huge sums for remote investors, penalising workers and sub-contractors and adding to the state's fiscal burden, through lost tax revenues and extra demands on the welfare system. Some form of nationalisation could be a relatively simple solution in the case of train operating companies on the railways.

Elsewhere, however, it would be a fairly blunt and costly instrument to cover the myriad services and projects scooped up by the contracting corporations. Applying the principles of devolution, subsidiarity and accountability would bring these operations much closer to the workers and citizens who undertake and use them. Democratic accountability could range from involvement of worker-citizen communities in deciding between in-house and outsourcing, through local council setting of the social value criteria for new contracts, to regional consortia of local authorities commissioning, preferably local, firms and social enterprises to undertake larger projects. Of course all of this would require national legislation. So let's see such a commitment in Labour's next general election manifesto. **C**

Bryn Jones co-edited *Alternatives to Neoliberalism: Towards Equality and Democracy* (2017) (Bloomsbury)

KURDISTAN

Kurdistan-Iraq between hope and uncertainty

As Turkey mounts further assaults on Kurds **Dr Janroj Yilmaz Keles** reports on the implications of the recent Kurdish referendum

On 25 September 2017, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held an historic and long-expected referendum on Kurdistan's independence. This was a consequence of the ongoing unilateral policies of the Federal Government of Iraq which has intentionally not fulfilled its constitutional obligations toward the Kurds, including holding a referendum, mandated by Article 140 of the Constitution of Iraq and originally planned for 15 November 2007, on the future of the disputed Kurdish territories, and sharing oil and gas revenue with the KRG.

Almost 93 per cent of those who took part in the referendum voted overwhelmingly to split from Iraq. The vote was held across the autonomous Kurdish region's three provinces as well as in some disputed Kurdish territories controlled by Kurdish security forces since 2014. The referendum result was not only celebrated by the Kurds in Kurdistan-Iraq but by the 30-35 million Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria who have also faced decades of repression, racism, discrimination, genocide and colonialism. The Kurds were left without a state of their own when the British Empire and French colonial forces divided the Middle East a century ago. They are described as the world's largest ethnic group without their own nation state. The non-binding referendum shows clearly that nearly every Kurd in Iraq dreams of statehood, for which they have struggled almost a century. The referendum gave the KRG a mandate to negotiate secession from Iraq.

Prior to the referendum, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, an ostensible western ally with strong ties with Iran, declared the referendum "unconstitutional" and Turkey and Iran also strongly opposed the referendum. Both countries were worried that Kurdish aspirations in Iraq would inspire their own significant Kurdish populations to demand

independence within their territories.

The opposition of the US and UK governments to the referendum has encouraged the regional countries with significant Kurdish populations to crush the Kurds' century-long yearning for self-rule and freedom from occupation, genocide, displacement and foreign powers' interferences. In coordination with Turkish President Erdoğan and the Iranian Government, the Iraqi Prime Minister closed Kurdish airspace to the Iraqi Kurdish region and Iran shut its frontier with Kurdistan to impose a trade ban. Turkey opened its border for Iraqi forces to surround the Kurdistan Autonomous Region to force the KRG to nullify the result of the referendum and hand over border controls to the Iraqi Government.

On 16 October, the Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias of Hashd al-Shaabi in coordination of head of Iran's Quds Force, a unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Qassem Suleimani started to attack the Kurdish forces in Kirkuk province. The ethnically mixed oil-rich city Kirkuk is the centre of the conflict. More than 78% voted in favour of independence. The use of military force against the Kurds was a violation of the Iraqi constitution (Article 9) which clearly indicates that "[t]his Iraqi armed forces... shall not be used as an instrument to oppress the Iraqi people". Baghdad has taken further punitive measures such as reducing the Kurdistan Region's budget by almost 5 percent (from 17% to 12.6%) in the proposed 2018 Iraqi state budget.

Masoud Barzani, former President of the Kurdistan Region, openly criticized the US and UK allies fighting ISIS for assisting the Iraqi government in attacking the Kurdish forces and allowing the Iraqi Government to use US weapons which should have been used only for fighting ISIS. British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson described the mili-

tary attack of "Iraqi forces" as reasserting "federal control over disputed territory, including the city of Kirkuk".

So what are consequences of these new political tensions?

Since its establishment in 1991, particularly after Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed in 2005, the KRG had made significant economic and political advances until the attacks of ISIS. It created a de-facto Kurdish state where secular, democratic, gender-inclusive and humanitarian values have been implemented in some degree, providing a relative functioning public service (health, education, water, electricity) to 5 million people. With its military forces, the KRG has not only protected the people of Kurdistan in its internationally recognized Kurdistan Autonomous Region, but paid a high price to protect the population (Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christian) in the disputed Kurdish territories abandoned by Iraqi forces when ISIS captured a significant proportion of Iraq.

The KRG has used its economic opportunities, geopolitical location and military power to demonstrate friendly relations with the US and other western powers and good neighbourliness, mutual respect and cooperation with Turkey and Iran since its establishment. In doing this, the KRG hoped to buy security, peace and international recognition. As part of this policy, the KRG has allied with the US, the UK and Iraq in fighting ISIS, pushing out ISIS from the disputed territories of Kurdistan, taking control over the disputed territories, and helping Iraqi forces to take over Mosul from ISIS in 2017. It has also encouraged the decline of conflict between the Turkish Government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Today the KRG hosts 1.8 million refugees from Syria and internally displaced Arabs, Kurds, and Christian and Turkmen minorities since the Syrian conflict and the rise of

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ISIS. After the re-occupation of disputed Kurdish territories by Iraqi forces in November 2017, the killing of Kurdish residents and destruction of homes in Kirkuk Tuz Khurmatu by the Iranian backed Shiite militia has caused further displacement into the KRG controlled region. This is the second time Kurds have been massacred and displaced from Kirkuk. During Saddam Hussein's regime, the Kurds experienced atrocities including use of chemical weapons in Halapje in 1988, when over 5000 people lost their lives. Kurdistan Autonomous Region made a historical mistake in relying on its good relations with the US and the UK. The Kurdish political establishment thought they could overcome their geopolitical captivity through building good relations with their allies in London, Washington and Brussels but it appears the economic interests and national interests of the western powers are more important than having a stable, secure Kurdistan. The dysfunctionality of Trump's foreign policy, lucrative oil deals and ongoing political insecurity have led to the status quo being upheld in the region. Therefore the US and UK foreign offices emphasise the "restoration of stability" and the "national unity" of Iraq. The policy of Western powers of "a unified, stable, democratic and a federal Iraq" has not worked so far. The Iraqi government's punitive measures in coordination with the regional countries, using the referendum as an excuse, are an attempt to eliminate the existence of the Kurdistan Region. But the dysfunctional state of Iraq under the influence of Iran and the ongoing sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni and ethnic conflict between the Kurds and Iraq as well as power struggles between corrupted political leaders and groups continue at various levels. In a Guardian interview, Barzani emphasised that "we are not a part of Iraq... We refuse to be subordinates." Therefore unity in Iraq is no more than a fantasy. A similar independence demand has already been voiced by the Sunni Arabs who have been heavily excluded from political and economic participation in Iraq.

The KRG calls upon the international community to mediate between the KRG and the Iraqi Government. The existing tension between Baghdad and Erbil can be solved through the Iraqi con-



KRG forces have suffered high casualties in defending the newly autonomous territory

stitution which clearly states that as part of a planned plebiscite, the Iraqi government must hold a referendum on the future of the disputed Kurdish territories in Northern Iraq so that people can decide whether these territories should become part of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region or part of Iraq. The displacement of the Kurds and the Arabization policy employed by the Saddam Hussein regime during the 70s and 80s in disputed Kurdish territories has caused constant crisis in the region. Further displacement from the disputed Kurdish territories will only contribute to more political and military tension, and huge human tragedy including a refugee influx like in 1991 when Saddam Hussein attacked the Kurds and two million people escaped from their homeland to the neighbouring countries and to Europe. To prevent more human tragedy and new conflicts, the international community should exert diplomatic pressure on al-Abadi to reverse his hugely detrimental and divisive policies.

Moreover the competing regional powers including Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are using all available measures to win influence in the Middle East. With increasing influence of Iran over Iraq through Iraqi Shiite militia and in Syria, Iran becomes the winner of the regional actors. The Kurdophobia of the Turkish government may lead to domestic and nationalist support for the increasingly authoritarian and corrupt Turkish government. Turkey has lost the opportunity to provide a reliable and sustainable peace and reconciliation with the Kurds in Turkey and missed the opportunity to build good

political and economic relations with the KRG. The neo-Ottoman dream of the Turkish government has isolated Turkey in the region and elsewhere and also led to polarization and conflict in Turkey. However history has once again shown that Turkey, Iran and Iraq put aside their political differences to coordinate a collective punishment policy of the Kurds and their aspirations. The abandonment of the Kurds by their western allies in Iraq and Syria has left the Kurds in a more precarious position than ever. For instance, there is not any international reaction to the Turkish military attacks on the Kurdish populated city of Afrin in the Kurdistan Region of Syria and killing of many civilians. This is another clear sign of the isolation of the Kurds in the Middle East.

On my recent visit to the Kurdistan region, a Kurdish politician told me that "Kurdish people can no longer live like this, suppressed in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria". In this context, the Kurdish question is an international issue that needs an international response. The UN, EU, US and Arab League can play a crucial role in a peaceful solution to the decades-old problem. The Kurdish political leaders should also reflect and learn lessons from their mistakes in terms of their inability to overcome internal divisions, lack of long-term political strategies and unwise use of existing resources. Beyond being a landlocked de-facto state, surrounded by hostile countries, these aspects have also dramatically contributed to the postponement of their aspirations for statehood and peace and prosperity for the Kurdish people. **C**

LABOUR PROSPECTS

Whither Labour?

Pete Rowlands cautions against triumphalism in the Corbyn camp



Corbyn on campaign trail

The apparent loss in November of what had previously been a small majority in the polls had to be matched against a poll in early December by Survation, (yes, they accurately predicted Labour doing well in the election) which gave Labour an eight point lead, since when seven polls, to late January, have given Labour a marginal lead (41/40) over the Tories. This makes us more or less even, and does not justify what I sense is a mood of triumphalism that has gripped much of the party. Remarks by Corbyn that he would probably be PM next year, and by Diane Abbott that Labour would draw well ahead in the polls in 2018 are symptomatic of this.

To be fair, this mood is understandable. The Tories are manifestly a laughable shambles, beside whom Labour appears competent, resolute, and prepared for office. But as many have pointed out, this should mean that Labour is well ahead of the Tories, not neck and neck.

Some may object to the emphasis on polls in this analysis, but the truth is that apart from by-election results, (which broadly support what the polls are saying) there is no body of widespread or ongoing evidence that can be cited, leaving us with the feelings and observations of commentators, which however perceptive they may be are at best impressionistic. Triumphalism, which as explained above does have an apparent rationale in terms of the contrast between Labour and the

Tories, is nevertheless ultimately based on faith.

Part of the reason for the state of the polls is Brexit, with the Tories boosted by switches from the rapidly disappearing UKIP vote, and much of the Labour Leave vote, while Labour is supported by Tory Remainers and some Lib-Dems. (Their attempt to become the Remainer hub has clearly failed, as most potential supporters have concluded, post election, that there is no basis for it and have looked to Labour to carry the Remain flag). This of

Tory rebels would probably prefer, rather than an election, to support a minority Labour government

course poses problems for Labour in the shape of the substantial numbers of Labour Leavers who stuck with Labour at the election, estimated at about three million and whose support Labour must retain if it is to win an election, with 120 Labour seats estimated to have voted Leave. It is this that accounts for Keir Starmer's ingenious fudge, which offers something to both Leavers ('we respect the result') and Remainers ('we want a long transition period while we remain in the Single Market'). Many members, from MPs downward, appear to not understand the importance of maintaining the support of this Labour Leave vote, although some MPs are continuing to use it as a means of

undermining Corbyn.

Let us look at what might happen next year to bring about an election or a change of government. The crucial fact is that according to Electoral Calculus Labour needs to be at 45% and eight points ahead of the Tories to win a bare majority. This is possible, but more likely is a hung parliament with Labour looking for support from the Scot Nats and possibly the Lib-Dems.

But how would an election be triggered? If the government fell after a vote of no confidence, which Tory rebels could bring about, then an election would take place if no government could be formed within 14 days. Tory rebels would probably prefer, rather than an election, to support a minority Labour government if it was then committed to either a second referendum or a parliamentary vote to oppose what is likely to be a non deal, both aimed at reversing Brexit. (If an election was held Tory rebels would be mainly deselected by pro Brexit local parties, and while their future would not look promising as they would have been the means by which Labour formed a government, avoiding an election would give them some breathing space. They would be the ones to choose what happened, but tacit support for rejoining the EU would not be likely to be followed by support for even the mildest Labour measures, and an election would probably happen in 2019.)

An alternative scenario could be an election called by the government if polls indicated a possi-

ble win. This is unlikely, given the drift to Remain and growing evidence, orchestrated by big business, of economic decline following Brexit. Another leadership contest makes it even less likely that they could win a majority and DUP support must be questionable this time round. The most likely result would be Labour as the largest party but without a majority.

It would of course be quite possible for Tory rebels (apart, probably, from Ken Clarke), to decide that their jobs were more important than their principles, and for a majority to vote for what had been agreed, which would probably fall well short of a trade agreement. This would probably be followed by mounting economic crisis as trade and revenue deficits ballooned, with the government probably collapsing well before 2022, and a Labour or Labour led coalition government elected under challenging circumstances, to put it mildly.

I will not speculate further, but the electoral facts and possible outcomes I describe are not being addressed by and large within the party, and should be.

As to winning an election next year, a number of things need to

be done.

Firstly, campaigning to win back some of the working class (social groups C2, D and E) and over 55 voters who actually swung to the Tories in 2017. Labour is unlikely to win a majority without this. This is ongoing, on bread and butter issues like the NHS and housing, but there is certainly more scope for campaigning around pension issues. New Labour's Pension Credit reforms lifted large numbers out of poverty after years of Tory immiseration. This and Labour's record in seeking to protect and enhance pension provision should be stressed.

Secondly, a renewed promotion of Labour's manifesto, which it is generally agreed was a vital factor in the election campaign but about which there has not been much publicity since. A revamped version, attractively presented and accompanied by illustrative comment is vital.

Thirdly, a strong emphasis on unity, meaning no drive for mandatory reselection (this does not mean there should be no deselections, which are quite possible under the existing rules), or for nuclear disarmament, both of which are divisive issues which

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cannot be sorted out this year.

The Brexit issue requires a degree of unity at MP and other levels which we have not yet achieved. A united position, whatever that turns out to be, is essential, particularly if the Tories split which is likely.

Nothing is likely to come from the Compass promoted 'Progressive Alliance', not because it is wrong in principle but because there is not yet a sufficient basis of mutual agreement and respect for it to work, and Labour is right to not seek participation, although DIY tactical voting will no doubt continue.

Labour can win, but that is not a foregone conclusion. It is more likely, on the basis of current polling, to be the largest party rather than win an overall majority, as outlined above, which would indicate a coalition with the Scot Nats and/or Lib Dems, or a minority government, all of which would cause huge problems. Let us hope that Diane Abbott is right and that we win sufficient extra votes in the coming months to enable the election of a majority Labour government that can start implementing the policies that the country so desperately needs. **C**

UK and other Europeans must welcome refugees

Wendy Pettifer reports on improvements against the odds for refugees in Greece

Wendy Pettifer is a lawyer who has worked in Calais and Athens assisting refugees

TAs part of a Greek Solidarity Delegation to Athens in February 2018 I saw an improvement in the situation for migrants since my first visit in October 2015 when thousands were sleeping rough in the city's squares and in Piraeus dockyards as the refugee crisis exploded onto Greek shores.

Since then the Syriza government has struggled to comply with the bail out conditions imposed by the Institution/Troika Memoranda as it lays the foundations of health and social security systems for Greek citizens for the first time. It has relied on millions of Euros from the EU and UNHCR to fund shelter and prevent the destitution of over 70000 refugees. The EU/Turkey deal of October 2016 staunched the flow of refugees into Greece. Thousands are now trapped in dire conditions in camps in Turkey with many being forcibly detained and removed.

Of the estimated 3270 unaccompanied children in Greece, over 1000 are accommodated in the city in hotels and shelters which are staffed 24 x 7 to prevent abuse. UNHCR rents apartments for about 200 families as well as paying their utility bills and providing 150 Euros a month per person subsistence.

UNHCR also funds Skaramanga camp outside the city which accommodates about 600 families in containers with access to education and health care.

On the islands conditions are worse. Moria on Lesbos houses 7000 migrants and 3000 are now

accommodated on Crete. There are also camps on Samos, Chios and Lesbos. Refugees can only leave the islands for the mainland if they pass an assimilation test estimating the likely chances of success of their asylum claim to be over 75%. Otherwise only the vulnerable can legally access the mainland, with its tantalising hope of access to other European states. On 1 February 2018 an Algerian drowned trying to escape Lesbos for the mainland, a few days later a mother and her two young children similarly perished.

The Greek Asylum Service has expanded four-fold since 2015 and now employs 800. But it will take many years to process 70000 asylum claims. It's the endless waiting which destroys refugees' hope. They cannot find work in a country where unemployment still runs at 20%.

Greek people themselves surviving the harsh years of austerity, opened their hearts and homes to refugees in 2015. There is no policy led 'hostile environment' in this generous nation of travellers.

But as Northern Europe erected fences, it did not give Greece sufficient resources with which to manage the crisis. We were told that school children in Skaramanga have nothing to eat, because NGOs are not allowed to provide food and their parents have no money.

It is only when all the European states agree to accept a quota of refugees that there can be any hope of resolving the crisis. With Brexit looming that is a distant goal for the UK. In the meantime refugees keep drowning in their endeavours to reach safe shores. **C**

GLOBALISATION

Nationalism will not set us free

In Chartist 290 Frank Lee argued that left wing success in attaining governmental office and the opportunities this gave it to control state power would facilitate the end of neoliberal globalisation. In this rejoinder **Don Flynn** argues the futility of this route against globalisation (the latest form of imperialist capitalism). He argues we cannot postpone the urgent task of building socialist internationalism

Franks Lee patches together a lot of disparate items and assorted folderol to make the case that there is such a thing as a 'globalist left' that takes the view that the nation-based state is now an irrelevance to the power games being played out in the 21st century.

A "hyper-globalist faction ensconced in the financial press, academic economics departments and political parties" seems to be setting the scene for "state-denial". It wilfully ignores the importance of the rescue mission mounted by national governments after the 2008 crash, with the apparent majesty of the economic might of transnational companies fading overnight when the extent of the bad debt they were enmeshed in came into plain sight.

The long quote from Gritsch, reminding us that global markets

States have powers over economic processes which can be considered unlimited

are the creatures of state policies and actions is there to remind us that these institutions that condense political power in a given territory do more than 'pull chestnuts out the fire'. We have this thing we call 'globalisation' today because a bunch of state-based politicians and central bank bureaucrats took deliberate decisions to set the system up in exactly this way. Every significant step that has taken us down the current neoliberal path, from Nixon's scrapping of Bretton Woods, the proliferation of Eurodollars as the basis for world money, the 'Big Bang' deregulation of financial institutions, the neutering of the Glass-Steagall Act, etc, etc, all had their origins in decisions made by national political authorities.



DiEM25 members in Hamburg: Not globalists but left wing internationalists

From this Lee seems to feel it is safe to conclude that states have powers over economic processes which can be considered, potentially at least, unlimited. The left need not despair that control over the movement of the factors of production has now moved beyond all hope of control in the interests of the well-being of the great mass or ordinary people; the political will to make use of the latent power of the nation state is the thing that is needed to get us back on the road to some sort of socialism, or at least social democracy.

It is at this point that his argument ceases to make headway. If nation states are capable of so much, why does the record show they have achieved so little? There are now 195 entities in the world that qualify for the category of 'sovereign states'. As Lee says, each of them has sufficient authority over their national societies to make laws, shape macroeconomic policy, determine levels of taxation and public spending, structure labour markets, and run policies for education, health-care, pensions, etc. With all this power at their disposal it is shocking to find that the populations of one-third of these nation states are classified as being 'low'

or 'low middle income', with gross national income (GNI) per capita of less than \$4000. Of this group, 31 have GNIs of \$1000 or less.

Perusing the World Bank figures which rank nations into the categories of 'low', 'lower-middle', 'upper-middle', and 'high' income countries is instructive because it shows that the incidence of wealth is only weakly related to the way in which the sovereign power of the state is exercised, and is much more closely aligned to the ways in which states are aligned with the circuits of global capitalism. Issues of domestic governance probably have a strong influence on the fact that Zimbabwe is listed among the poorest nations on the earth, whilst its fellow African state of Ghana is at the giddy heights of 'lower-middle'. But the fact that only three sub-Saharan African countries (Equatorial Guinea, Namibia and South Africa) are listed in the 56 nations in the upper-middle category, and none at all among the 78 high income (GNI of \$12,236 or more) is entirely bound up in the subordinate role these poor states play in the structures of global capitalism.

That is the gross weakness of Lee's attempt to fit his argument

Don Flynn is on the Chartist EB and an Associate with the Migrants Rights Network

about the state and the economy into his claim about a debate which is polarised around the fiction of 'hyper-globalised' and, presumably, state-leadership factions. It entirely misses out that world capitalism is, first and foremost, an imperialist system, and for all its interesting unique features, neoliberalism serves the cause of the leading imperialist blocs. Not all states have equal standing in the global system and for close on 30 years the prospect of advancement has depended on governments making decisions on how useful they could make their national economy to the global circulation of capitalism along the lines required by the neoliberal prognosis.

It is a complex arrangement of power relations and the capacity of individual nations to optimise their standing in the bigger system often depends on their ability to cluster with other countries who stand in the same range of interests as their own. The European Union is an obvious example of an effort of this sort; the current efforts of the Russian Federation to dominate a bloc that extends across Central Asia and into Europe is another. Relative fortunes wax and wane and once secure alliances encounter unexpected stresses and strains they begin to fall apart. Throughout all this the integrity of the bigger system is preserved intact and works to establish the real parameters of what is possible in terms of democratic power and economic well-being.

Lee's schema tells us that it "makes more sense to work from

the national to the supra-national level rather than the other way around". This is intended as a rebuke to none other than Yanis Varoufakis, the instigator of the DiEM2025 (Democracy in Europe) project which Lee disparages, but who ought to be acknowledged for his role as finance minister in the Greek government that attempted to challenge the power of the globalist 'troika' which imposed such draconian measures of austerity on his country in 2015. The stand was defeated not only by the fact that the leaders of this effort ran out of all the options for

World capitalism is, first and foremost, an imperialist system

maintaining their resistance compatible with a society that had been pacified across decades by their integration into the norms of European Parliamentary democracy, but also by the failure of the left in other EU states to rally to their support. DiEM2025 stands today as an attempt to learn the lessons of this defeat, and to prepare for future struggles by building a stronger network of, not globalists, but left wing internationalists whose strategies for advance include the dislocation of imperialist economic chains, as well as real progress in building the capacity of national societies to strengthen democracy and provide for the well-being of their populations.

Learning these lessons could not be more important than it is

today, when a newly-energised, popular Labour Party stands on the threshold of government office once again. Lee suggests that it will be sufficient for it to simply make use of the authority it will have at the helm of a nation state to enact a programme of radical left wing reform. He does the discussion a disservice by failing to acknowledge that, from day one, this will be a government that will come under assault, not only from the EU, but also Washington, and, no doubt, the Beijing government which now casts itself as the true upholder of the globalist faith. Britain, a country which for centuries has had no other means of making a living for itself other than exploiting its position in the global imperialist system, will buckle under this pressure long before it gathers its senses and begins to think about the 'supra-national'.

Which is why no task is more urgent for the left in Britain today than to break the ideological and material shackles of nationalism and to frame the entirety of its programme in terms of building networks of solidarity and action which go beyond the borders of the state and into the class struggle between labour and capital as it is taking place across the world. It is unreasonable to deride DiEM2025 for a claimed lack of realism, and ignore the fact that the fantasy of socialism-in-one-country offers the left in the UK and the rest of Europe nothing but the assurance of further episodes of demoralising, and possibly bloody, defeats. **C**

Printer ad

LABOUR LEFT

Which way the Labour left?

Soft, hard, old, Milibandite left? We need to see beyond these labels says **Nigel Doggett**

Trevor Fisher's article on the Soft Left and Ed Miliband (Chartist 290) discusses some important issues for the future direction of the Labour left. Unfortunately, it is marred by incoherence and jumps to some unwarranted conclusions. He describes Open Labour as a 'Milibandite' organisation and says both Compass and Open Labour should adopt and campaign for clear anti-Brexit positions but have failed to do so, jeopardising their membership and influence.

The 'soft left' label emerged in the 1980s when Tony Benn's deputy leadership campaign revealed differences between the uncompromising 'hard left' and those (even those of us who 'critically supported' Benn) who saw the need for more flexible consensus building. The predominance of 'hard' rhetoric provoked the SDP breakaway which split the centre from the left, contributing to Thatcherism's hegemony into the 1990s and beyond. Soft/hard labels have persisted ever since, but can be misleading, obscuring points of agreement.

Neal Lawson of Compass wrote in 2015 on Guardian Online that the soft left 'combined ideology and pragmatism, that was more democratic, pluralist and green than the rest of the party, and which mediated the hostile relationship between the right of the party and the hard left'. Both Open Labour and Compass define their approach in similar terms. The essence is means rather than ends, and focus on the Labour party or in Compass's case reaching out beyond it.

Focussing on Ed Miliband, Fisher labels Open Labour as a 'Miliband supporting' organisation, and Labour 'a party whose membership rejected Miliband in 2015', but this refers not to Ed but brother David, ignoring the essential leadership choice in 2010 between David's continuity New Labour and Ed's attempt to learn the lessons and move beyond it, however hesitantly.

Open Labour's limited influence appears to reflect teething troubles rather than a political position such as association with Ed Miliband, though its website



Miliband brothers. Ed (left) sought to move beyond New Labour

still pictures him alongside others. Fisher fatuously claims it was 'confirmed as Milibandite when Miliband addressed its launch'. How would he characterise the Chartist, with its wide range of contributors?

As Fisher says, most party members in 2015 were 'soft left'. In my experience most Labour members, whether long-standing, new or re-joiners, try to balance realism with radicalism. Fisher also says the 'old left' won the leadership, but Corbyn's Momentum supporters are far from just old, or hard, left. Its

The future will be based on dynamic processes, not fixed blueprints

social and environmental objectives and vision of a grassroots movement are similar to Compass and Open Labour. Momentum's success based on the Corbyn tidal wave has crowded out the market, leaving little space for others on the left, but this may not last.

Fisher considers Compass's 'opt out' from the Brexit issue a 'hole in its strategy'. Clearly Brexit will continue to dominate the political landscape for a few years and the Leave vote was a major setback for the left, whose effects we need to reverse or minimise. This doesn't resolve Labour's Brexit dilemma which contrasts the Remainer cities with deprived post-industrial heartlands (repeatedly documented by The Guardian's John Harris).

The need to maintain communication with 'Leave' voters and communities has been widely dis-

cussed elsewhere. But Remain campaigners have struggled to understand the socio-political causes and have no strategy to overcome them. The complications and risks of Brexit to all (especially 'leave' areas) become clearer every day but Labour has yet to effectively address the socio-economic and cultural roots of Brexit sentiment.

Compass seeks to provide a bridge to those on the other side. A recent consultation of its members revealed overwhelming opposition to Brexit alongside solid support for its existing priorities, not taking an explicitly anti-Brexit line. If reversal becomes a real option, those who have prepared the political foundations will be more credible than those starting from an explicit 'Stop Brexit' position.

As I stressed in Chartist 285 (Mar-Apr 2017), even a rejuvenated Labour can only get us so far under the current electoral system. Yet any credible cross-party alliance must be based on shared principles, hence Compass's promotion of a Common Platform. Many progressive Remainers 'lent' Labour their votes in the special circumstances of 2017, but we must never make the mistake of taking these voters for granted. To adapt Peter Hain's (and Heineken's) old phrase, we need to refresh the parts that Labour cannot reach, attracting progressives who don't identify with public sector statism or traditionally expounded socialism. Just as a direct assault on Brexit would jeopardise our message so a more open approach to wider politics is necessary. In both cases, the facts and figures may be clear to us but we need to act with respect for what voters currently think and feel. As we are often reminded, support is won more by emotion and symbolism, personal example or assistance by a local councillor or activist than by rational thought.

The future will be based on dynamic processes, not fixed blueprints. Some profusion of groups on the left is healthy, if they play to their specialities and strengths. In the current fluid landscape we need an open discourse, including Open Labour, Compass and Momentum. **C**

Nigel Doggett is a member of Wealden CLP, Compass and Chartist Editorial Board

Egregious wrongs and Divine Order

Patrick Mulcahy
on female
suffrage
campaigning
Swiss-style



Released to coincide with International Women's Day (8 March), Petra Volpe's feel-good drama 'The Divine Order' (die Göttliche Ordnung) is a reminder of the deleterious impact of direct democracy. It describes the build up to the 1971 Swiss referendum on extending the right to vote to women, many decades after universal suffrage had been achieved in the rest of Western Europe. Switzerland is a country in which the population can vote on any legislative decision agreed by their representatives, provided that at least 50,000 signatories (registered voters) support a motion to hold a referendum on the matter. The Swiss voting public can therefore put a check on any decision taken at national or local level to prevent it from being passed into law. In the case of extending votes to women, in 1959, the male Swiss public voted by 67% to 33% not to do so. Volpe's film opens with a montage depicting the violent struggle for civil rights in America contrasted with the picturesque placid beauty of a Swiss village in which no such dynamic battle is taking place.

Volpe's hero is Nora (Marie Leuenberger), a housewife with two young children whose husband, Hans (Max Simonischek) has just been promoted. Nora wants to take a job at a travel agency to do more in her life, but Hans disapproves; in Switzerland at the time, a husband made decisions on behalf of his wife. Meanwhile Nora's niece, Hanna (Ella Rumpf) has been grounded after forming an attachment with a motorcyclist. After Nora facilitates a supervised date between the pair, Hanna flees, but is later apprehended and institutionalised. When the unmarried factory owner, Dr Wipf (Therese Affolter) organises a collection in favour of a campaign not to extend the right to vote to women, Nora refuses to contribute and forms a friendship with Vroni (Sibylle Brunner) a much older woman who lost the bar where she worked after her late husband gambled and frittered away the proceeds. The pair decide to campaign for extending the vote to women, aided first by Graziella (Marta Zoffoli), an Italian woman who had bought



Volpe's film is a reminder that countries proceed with direct democracy at their peril.

Vroni's bar, and then by Nora's sister-in-law, Theresa (Rachel Braunschweig).

The film conflates extending the vote to women with women being given the right to manage their own affairs, a law not passed in Switzerland until 1985. Direct democracy is an instrument to maintain the status quo, to put a check on social progress. In 2014, the Swiss voting public rejected a proposal for a basic minimum wage (around £14.70 per hour); in 2016, they similarly rejected a guaranteed income for all, the equivalent of social security. Direct democracy allows self-interest to triumph over fairness and for prejudices to be maintained.

Whilst fairly generic, 'The Divine Order' is a lot of fun. Whilst Hans is on his national service, Nora and Vroni take part in a protest march in Zurich and Nora learns to love her vagina, 'a tiger', according to a set of pictures that she and other protestors are shown. After Nora suffers a setback at a village meeting, she and her suffragist friends decide to go on strike. A Fourth Act tragedy occurs and Nora faces defeat, until an unexpected piece of news encourages her to make one final push.

Volpe's mixture of comedy and drama is adroitly judged. There is nothing quite so warming as individuals agreeing to settle their differences over a cup of (strong) coffee as happens early on. However, Volpe doesn't really explain the change in public mood that accounted for the 1971

referendum result. Did women pressure their men into voting in favour or was there really an intellectual change of heart?

Volpe's film is a timely reminder that countries proceed with direct democracy at their peril. Such votes inevitably exclude affected groups, such as the Brexit referendum that denied the vote to British nationals living overseas for fifteen years or more, yet who will be affected by the result. The numbers don't suggest that long term overseas residents could have stopped the United Kingdom from leaving the European Union, but the decision to deny them the vote left them out of the debate and feels, even two years on, like an egregious wrong.

The other aspect of direct democracy that countries could do without is the impossibility of the people overseeing implementation of their will, at least in the near term. Saddling politicians with a 'popular' policy makes them uncomfortable, especially when economic realities almost always force them to make unpopular but necessary choices. If a public could be trusted to make these choices, it wouldn't need representatives. Perhaps a mobile phone app could help individuals to understand, something for the 'Black Mirror' TV series to explore.

**The Divine Order is
released in UK cinemas on 8
March 2018**

BOOK REVIEWS

Political mayhem

Peter Kenyon
on Tory trials

Fall Out
Tim Shipman
(Harper Collins £25)

If you want a fly-on the wall account of political mayhem in Brexit Britain before and after the surprise 2017 general election, this is a must read.

Tim Shipman, whose day job is political editor of the Sunday Times, interviewed over 100 of the main players between July and October last year. Avid followers of current affairs might think there is nothing new to know about this calamitous government. Well....read on.

Fall Out is arranged into four parts, amusingly entitled Genesis (The Battle for Brexit September 2016 to March 2017), Hubris (The Chiefs covering the same period), Nemesis (The General Election – February 2017 to June 2017), and Catharsis (The Fall Out – June 2017 to October 2017).

This is a story about a Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May and her two closest aides: Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill detailed in Hubris. May had been 'crowned' as party leader by her party's parliamentary wing, in the absence of any other contenders. For the avoidance of doubt of just how little prepared the Conservatives were for Brexit, Shipman, quoting a senior cabinet minister, tells us: "There hadn't been a stroke of work done under Cameron, so all this [Brexit committee work] was all from scratch. The initial meetings covered what the questions were, then by late autumn [2016] we were beginning to get options. In the new year [2017] we started answering those questions." Worse, many pages later Shipman reveals Cameron instructed the head of Civil Service, Sir Jeremy Heywood, NOT to do any work scoping what would be required in the event of a Leave vote. This begs the question for us democratic socialists about what inspired Jeremy Corbyn's post referendum call to invoke Article 50 immediately. The Tory Government was not prepared for Brexit then. As Shipman reveals in painstaking detail May and her ministers are

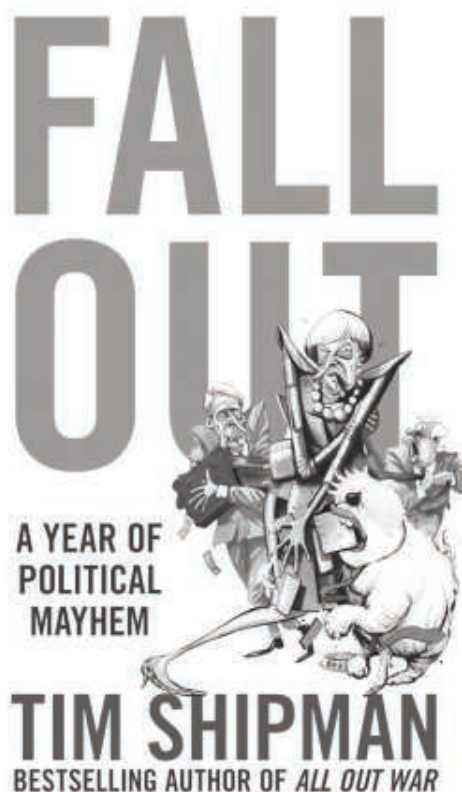
still at loggerheads with themselves about their Brexit objectives 20 months later.

The Tories are still in government. These are not One Nation Tories. There is a visceral hatred of the left deeply embedded in the 'Nasty Party'. Her two principal political advisors (dare one say soulmates) Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill met in 2006. Shipman quotes Hill as saying; "We fucking hate socialism and we want to crush it in a generation." A state-

that Brexit meant leaving the Single Market and the Customs Union. An unnamed senior civil servant cited by Shipman stated, "the customs decision was taken the day they created DIT [Fox's department]". Four months down the line the government still didn't have a 'central plan' for Brexit." But May ploughed on regardless of the consequences for jobs and investment. Thanks to her Chief Whip Gavin Williamson, May outwitted Labour over the issue of when to invoke Article 50 setting the timetable for the UK's possible withdrawal from the European Union. Labour's Brexit Secretary Keir Starmer tabled a House of Commons resolution calling on the Government to give Parliament a vote over whether to activate Article 50. Williamson added an amendment tying in a deadline of 31 March 2017 passed by 461 votes to 89. Labour's front bench voted to impose a three-line whip. It took Starmer many months to distance Labour from a Tory Brexit. Tory remainers, on whose shoulders rest the future of May's government, also voted with the government (with the notable exception of former Tory cabinet minister, Ken Clarke). Shipman reports they did not wish to be labelled 'Brexit deniers'. Some six weeks later the fateful

deed was done. A leading Leave campaigner is quoted as saying that the triggering of Article 50 before there was a proper plan was akin to 'putting a gun in your mouth and pulling the trigger.'

In the meantime, the terrible twins, Timothy and Hill had been scoping the case for a snap General Election since May's coronation the previous year. Labour denied them an opportunity over Article 50 by voting with (not against) the government. May was 20 points ahead in the opinion polls. The rest is history. May lost seats. Labour gained. Despite being exposed as cold, shambolic and a fatally flawed personality unsuited to lead the country, May is still PM.



ment I would say that does not bode well for the NHS, comprehensive education, affordable housing or living incomes. These are the people who were reportedly more powerful than any other cabinet minister under May, until they got their P45s.

The absence of preparatory work for Brexit has dominated British politics ever since that fateful decision by Cameron to call an EU Referendum and the failure of Labour to oppose. May's government has been blundering around ever since her coronation. The three Brexiteers – Boris Johnson, David Davis and Liam Fox according to Shipman agreed shortly after their appointments to the May Cabinet in July 2016

Ordinary lives

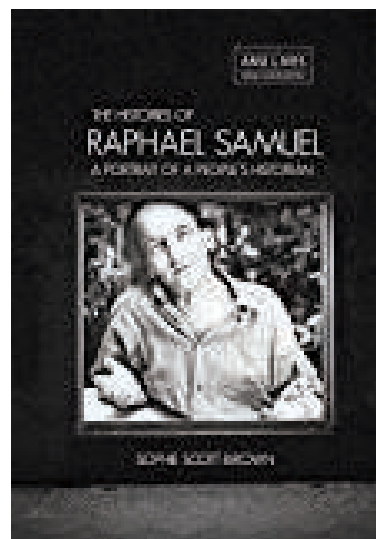
**Duncan
Bowie**
on
radical
history

The Histories of Raphael Samuel
Sophie Scott-Brown
(Available for download from
Australian National University Press)

This is the first time that I have reviewed a biography of someone I have known. Scott-Brown is an Australian academic who is now based at the University of East Anglia, who I suspect must be too young to have known Samuel. This perhaps makes the study more independent and less hagiographical as Samuel has become somewhat of a cult figure amongst radical and socialist historians. Ralph Samuel is best known as the founder of the History Workshop movement, but it is his political trajectory as well as his historical methodology and writing that makes him an interesting subject for a biography. Most historians are certainly not worthy of a biography.

Samuel grew up in a communist family and was politically active at a younger age than most of us – attending meetings of the Communist Party History group while still a schoolboy of 16. A student at Oxford from the age of 17 in 1952, he was secretary of the University's Communist Party and wrote for the Oxford Left journal. On graduating in

1956, he moved to London to start a PhD at the LSE on unskilled workers only to abandon it in favour of political activity. Active in the protests against the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, he left the Communist Party to become involved in what was to be known as the 'new left', helping to establish the Universities



and Left Review and running the Partisan café in Soho.

Scott-Brown has produced an excellent study. She has interviewed many of Samuel's col-

leagues and provides excellent contextualisation for Samuel's political and historical work. She has clearly read everything Samuel wrote and provides a solid and readable analysis both of Samuel's work and his historical methodology. The trajectory of the History Workshop movement is traced with a good analysis of the debates within the movement, Samuel's role within it and his relationships and differences with some of his fellow historians. She also examines the controversies around Samuel's later work on heritage and patriotism and also summarises Samuel's impact and legacy.

The study is well informed – sympathetic without being uncritical. The book engages with the debates over socialist history and theory without adopting the over-theorised academic style of much of the new left writing epitomised in the jargon ridden elitism of the contemporary New Left Review, which has distanced so much leftist historical writing from the wider socialist and activist readership. The book is also a reaffirmation of why history can be relevant and that the history of ordinary lives is as important as the history of the rich and powerful.

Counter narrative

**Jenny
Bowie**
on gender
inequality

Of Women
Shami Chakrabarti
Allen Lane £20)

This is Shami Chakrabarti's second book, having published *On Liberty* in 2014. In this new book she puts forth the case that gender inequality is the greatest human rights abuse on the planet. Chakrabarti, former Director of Liberty and now Labour's Shadow Attorney General, sets out in detail, the state of gender injustice from political representation to health and reproductive rights to education. Chakrabarti delves into the complexities of these topics with the descriptive detail you would expect from a lawyer, but brings in stories of people she has met and interviewed over the years, and shares her personal reflections and experiences, bringing a human face to the somewhat depressing state of affairs. Chakrabarti successfully conveys

the scale and depth in which gender injustice underpins society around the world, tackling both social, economic and political aspects.

This book seems to be seeking to achieve a dual purpose, to both document the state of gender inequality at this current time in history, and highlight approaches being taken to overcome it, from the infamous Everyday Sexism Project to the attempts by the Nepalese government to stamp out the practice of *chaupadi* (isolating women, often outside, during their period). In outlining the state of affairs, Chakrabarti tends to jump from topic to topic, maybe to express the interconnectivity of issues, however it can make for a slightly confusing reading (many a moment of "sorry...What?" as I tried to connect the dots).

For any man or woman who doubts the need for feminism and thinks we should probably all just get over it as you know "we're

basically equal now", this book couldn't fail to make them question this assumption. It raises awareness of the deep injustice women face around the world on a daily basis. However, I was looking for clearer solutions for how to overcome, what is described as, an "apartheid". Chakrabarti does hint at a few proposals which have her support, from temporary quotas to a basic income to give greater value to domestic work. Maybe I will have to wait for the next book to understand how we can make these a reality.

Chakrabarti, despite the scale of the crisis she lays out, concludes on a positive note. "For every expression of prejudice, division, hate, greed and entitlement, there is a counter narrative of curiosity, unity, love, solidarity and equality". Let's hope she is right, and we can all mobilise to put gender inequality firmly into the history books.



BOOK REVIEWS

What the British did to India

Duncan Bowie

a counter-blast to imperial apologists

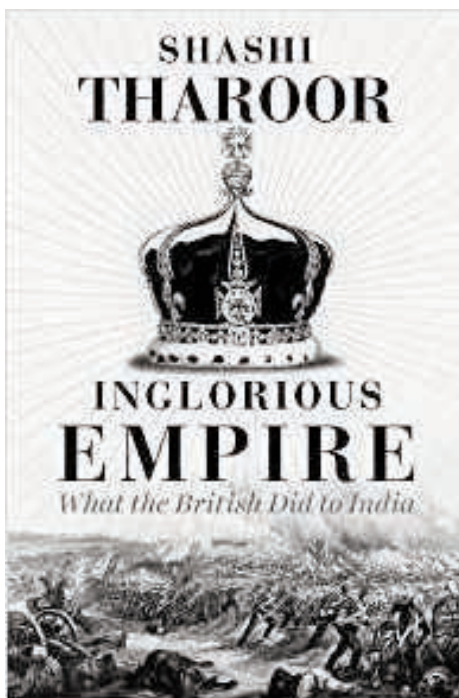
Inglorious Empire
Shashi Tharoor
(Hurst £20)

Tharoor is a Congress MP and a former Minister in the Indian government. In May 2015, he gave a speech at the Oxford Union on the issue of reparations. His speech consisted of an attack on British colonialism which provoked considerable controversy. This book is a sustained polemic which defends his position and responds to his critics. It is primarily an attack on the current nostalgia for the Raj in the popular media and defence of empire by academics such as Niall Ferguson and Lawrence James, written by the author in Himalayan retreat as the guest of the King of Bhutan – far pavilions rather than dreaming spires. The book is well researched though no doubt selective in its use of evidence. He uses a wide range of sources such, as Dadabhai Naoroji (Indian nationalist and MP for Finsbury in the 1890's) and the American journalist Will Durant in the 1930's.

The book's main argument is that the Indian sub-continent was civilized before the arrival of the colonialists and that the occupation, first by the East India Company and then by the British government, damaged India's economy and obstructed its progress. The polemic is sustained and effective. Tharoor first demonstrates that the focus of British policy was to extract India's wealth for the benefit of Britain – the chapter is appropriately titled 'The Looting of India'. He then challenges the claim that the Raj united a formerly divided sub-continent before seeking to disprove the arguments that the British brought democracy to the country. He provides a detailed critique of the British role in partition. Tharoor seeks to argue that the Congress Party was pluralist and included Muslims as well as Hindus and that it was the British government's support for (and encouragement of) Jinnah's separatist Muslim League that led to partition. Tharoor's case is convincing,

though his attack is focused more on Jinnah than on Mountbatten, Wavell and Attlee. Tharoor is vitriolic when it comes to Churchill who is perceived as racist.

Tharoor attacks the notion of a benevolent administration, giving numerous examples of both violence (including but not limited to the 1919 Amritsar massacre) and the famines, which he sees to have been caused or at least wors-



ened by British economic policies. He argues that there have been no substantive famines in the sub-continent, either before the Raj or since independence. He takes specific examples of Britain's so-called civilizing influence – the railways and education, and seeks to argue that policies were not developed to be in the interests of Indians. He discusses the role of the English language but is highly critical of anglophones amongst Indian academics. He is extremely hostile to the Bengali historian, Nirad Chaudhuri, who dedicated his classic Autobiography of an Unknown Indian 'to the memory of the British Empire'. I remember meeting Chaudhuri in Oxford as the grand old man of Indian history – fortunately Tharoor is less critical of my tutor on the Indian nationalism module, Gyanendra Pandey, whose research on communalism is referenced to support Tharoor's

hypothesis.

In his chapter on what he calls 'the remaining case for empire', after discussing the railways, education and language, Tharoor discusses somewhat frivolously the shared Indian and English love of tea and cricket – this appears to be in an attempt to demonstrate that as an individual he can still enjoy tea and cricket (and write in English) while still arguing that the British brought no substantive benefits to India. In a final chapter on the 'messy afterlife of colonialism' he broadens his attack on colonialism beyond the British rule of India to argue that wars in central Africa and the Horn of Africa are largely the legacies of colonialism. He also attacks the non-violent approach of Gandhi, basically arguing that it is force that wins power – his argument is that it was mutinies by Indian soldiers in the British army that brought about independence for the Indian sub-continent and not British benevolence or satyagraha. In my view his final chapters tend to weaken Tharoor's overall argument. Despite its limitations, this book is an extremely useful corrective to nostalgic imperial history and well worth reading.

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A sad afterthought

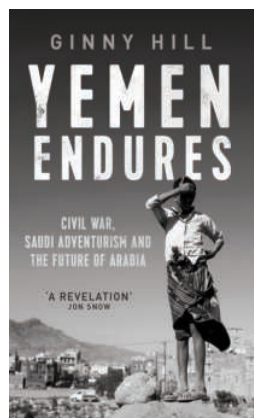
Ben Francis
on the background to the conflict

Yemen Endures
GINNY HILL
(Hurst £25)

Yemen has become the sad afterthought on a list of global concerns around conflict and humanitarian crises. It's not that the world has forgotten about the dire situation there, it's just that, like the ongoing Sahel crisis or the Rohingya issue, it has been continually overshadowed by conflicts and other global issues of more strategic geopolitical significance to the developed world; Syria, North Korea, Russian election tampering, Brexit, ISIS, Afghanistan.

What Ginny Hill does well in this book is to use her deep knowledge and experience of Yemen to not only explain the complexities of the current conflict, but to also place them in an historical and social context. This goes a long way to presenting the reader with a more nuanced picture of the situation than most will have gleaned from three minute news clips or the occasional on-the-ground article or NGO report.

By mixing a solid and detailed mastery of the facts with a series of personal anecdotes and the



occasional flourish of ornate descriptive language the writer is able to draw you in to a world in a deeply engaging and sometimes emotive manner. Telling the story of Yemen and the wider region through this powerful yet still journalistic prose makes for a genuine page turner and places the book in the tradition of other easy to read contemporary history books around the issues that have emerged since the Arab Spring began so hopefully in 2011. Those who enjoyed Lindsey Hilsum's *Sandstorm* or Jeremy Bowen's *Arab Uprisings*, for example, will find a great deal here to sink their teeth into.

Furthermore, Hill does a great job of unpicking the complexity of Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime, the intricately balanced systems of patronage that his decades long longevity was based upon, and the events that led to its downfall. Amongst the dozens of insightful anecdotes included is the fact that, when Saleh took power in North Yemen in 1978, a book was run at the highest levels of the CIA on how long he'd live, with the shortest odds offered on just a couple of months. One wonders how many of the gamblers he had outlived by the time he was killed at the end of last year by his former Houthi allies.

Yemen Endures suffers, admittedly, from being a book written about a conflict which is still evolving. Even for such a contemporary publication there is something of a sense for those familiar with current events that it is somehow already slightly incomplete. Fortunately, it never really tries to be a book about the Yemeni civil war, or at least not just about that, and the rich background and wider analysis mean that it remains a worthwhile read for anyone trying to place current events in context.

Common sense Marxism

Duncan Bowie
on an essential new left read

Communism and Democracy
MIKE MAIKIN-WHITE
(Lawrence and Wishart £18)

This is an important book with a focus on non-Leninist forms of communism. It presents a history of the development of different forms of communism, with a comprehensive historical narrative and analysis of the development of communism in theory and practice. The book is thoroughly researched and the author demonstrates an extensive knowledge of the literature. The study is clearly based on the author's own experience in the break up of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the unsuccessful attempt to develop a form of democratic Marxist politics through the short-lived Democratic Left. Maikin-White demonstrates a strong sympathy for Eurocommunism without having been captured by the cul-

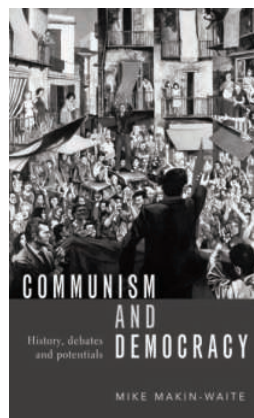
tural turn of the Marxism Today group which carried many communist intellectuals into the New Labour camp.

Maikin-White situates the work of Marx within the enlightenment tradition, while Engels is seen as the main originator of a rigid Marxism. The divisions between the Marxism of the Second International and the

vanguardist approach of Lenin – as much an opportunist split as an ideological one, are considered in depth. Maikin-White demonstrates that he is on the side of the Mensheviks who argued for a working class based mass movement rather than the insurrectionary capture of power by an intellectual leadership. He tackles head on the key question of the Bolshevik's closing down of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly.

Maikin-White's treatment of Soviet power and Stalin is balanced, recognising Soviet achievements while criticising the increasingly autocratic and violent form of Soviet government. He then examines the attempts to build more democratic versions of communist government, first in Hungary in 1956 and then in Czechoslovakia in 1968. He also examines the experience of the Allende government in Chile, its

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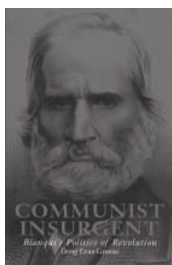
BOOK REVIEWS

Blanqui's politics of revolution

**Duncan
Bowie**

on
insurrection

Communist Insurgent
Doug Enaa Greene
(Haymarket \$19)



This book by a Boston based independent socialist historian is targeted at American leftists who have fairly limited knowledge of European socialist history. It seeks to introduce Blanqui, the leading conspiratorial insurrectionist in mid 19th century France. Blanqui is mainly known in socialist historiography as the basis for attacks by democratic Marxists such as Karl Kautsky and the Russian Mensheviks attacks on Lenin's approach to democracy and power – Lenin being accused of Blanquism. There are a number of scholarly works on Blanqui, by the Americans Sam Bernstein in 1971 and Alan Spitzer in 1957. We have the classic study by Maurice Dommanget from 1935, which has yet to be translated into English. We also have Patrick Hutton's study of the Blanquists from 1981 and more recently Jill Harsen's *Barricades* – a study of Revolutionary Paris 1830-1848.

Greene's study is a helpful guide to Blanqui for those not familiar with this literature. Greene also uses the internet archive of Blanqui's works established by Peter Le Goffe and Peter Hallward at Kingston University. The book is however in a revolutionary romantic tradition and largely uncritical. I read this book while I was in Paris and visited the Pere Lachaise cemetery for the first time. Though I admit to not finding Blanqui's grave, I did unintentionally visit

the castle court room in Bourges where Blanqui was tried and sentenced for insurrection.

Blanqui spent much of his life in prison. His main insurrectionary attempts were in May 1839 and May 1848 (after which he was kept in prison by the republican radicals and socialists of the second republic) and again in October 1870 when he attempted to name himself as a member of a provisional government. Blanqui actually missed out on the Commune as he was in prison again, having for the second time attempted an insurrection a few months before the actual revolution occurred. He was not released until 1879 and died two years later.

Blanqui made no attempt at building a mass movement or other forms of democratic politics. He believed in the capture of power by a small group of conspirators, in the belief that the masses would follow. His list of any new government always comprised himself and his fellow conspirators with little programme of what he would actually do in government other than establishing a revolutionary police force. He was a communist in so far that he opposed established governments and capitalism, but was closer to the Jacobin tradition than to the communist tradition of Cabot or Dezamy.

Some of Blanqui's followers joined the Second International to support Marx against the anarchist/libertarian supporters of Proudhon. In the Commune some Blanquists had significant roles – such as Raoul Rigault as

prefect of police (though not appointed by Blanqui as Greene states). Blanqui generally argued with other revolutionary leaders such as Raspail and Barbes, not just over revolutionary tactics, but basically over who was the most revolutionary revolutionary and lead a revolutionary government. Some of Blanqui's followers in the Central Revolutionary Committee, notably Edouard Vaillant, were to have leading roles in the unified French socialist party, having moved on from insurrectionary politics to that of democratic socialism and representative democracy. Others in the Socialist Revolutionary Central Committee supported the attempt of General Boulanger to overthrow the third republic and became virulent nationalists and anti-semites.

Lenin was not a Blanquist in that he attempted and eventually succeeded in building a mass party. It was however not a majority party – the October 1917 revolution was an insurrection against a radical/socialist coalition government and his dismissal of the Constituent Assembly because non Bolshevik socialist parties had a majority was inherently anti-democratic. Blanqui was an authoritarian insurrectionist seeking power for himself – his dictatorship of the proletariat was to be a dictatorship over the proletariat by himself and those co-conspirators who were not rivals to him – echoes of Lenin perhaps, but without even a pretence of democratic means or egalitarian ends.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29>>

failure to create strong alliances against attacks by the US supported right and its impact specifically on the Communist Party of Italy who in their 'historic compromise', sought alliances with other progressive parties rather than seek power for themselves. He discusses the influence of Gramsci and the relationship between political power and cultural hegemony. Maikin-White then studies the growth of Eurocommunism, which he sees as a democratic and pluralist interpretation of Marxism – in effect as 'Menshevism reloaded'.

The final chapters trace the collapse of communist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

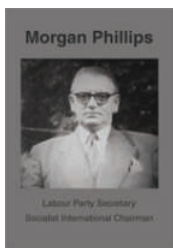
and the victory of neo-liberal ideology, examining the negative consequences of this dramatic shift. Maikin-White then discusses the responses of the left to both globalisation and environmental concerns, and the growth of radical opposition movements such as Podemos and Syriza. He is critical of those theoreticians such as John Holloway, Michael Hardt, Tony Negri, Slavoj Žižek and Alan Badiou, who have become oppositionists with romantic notions of empowerment through protest. This is seen as non-Marxist. He agrees with Ernest Laclau that 'the horizontal dimension of autonomy' cannot achieve a radical transformation

of the state. Instead Maikin-White recognises the need for vertical political structures which involve participation in organs of government. He recognises the importance of democratic accountability and argues against the counter-posing of direct democracy to representative government. While not naïve or over-optimistic, Maikin White does point to a way forward for democratic Marxists and this book is essential reading for political activists who want to move beyond arm-chair intellectualism or self-righteous oppositionism, as well as being far more readable than most contemporary left political theory.

Cold War Socialism

**Duncan
Bowie**

on post-war
Labour Party
and post-
war Europe



**Memoirs
Morgan Phillips
(Spokesman for Labour Heritage
£14.99)**

Morgan Phillips was a Welsh coal miner who was general secretary of the British Labour party between 1944 and 1962. These were the years of Labour's greatest achievements – the 1945 election and the Attlee governments of 1945-1951. The later years of Phillips time in office also saw the rise of Bevanism and the transition to Gaitskell's leadership and also the election defeats of 1955 and 1959. Phillips tells the story of the organisation of election campaigns and the internal disputes within the party. Unlike his successors, Phillips was allowed to present party policy to conference as well as speak on organisational matters.

It is however the second part of his memoirs, which cover his role as chairman of the Socialist International after the war, which are perhaps most interesting. There is a chapter in the third volume of Julius Braunthal's history of the international as well as Denis Healey's memoirs and Healey's Labour Party booklets Cards on the Table

of 1947 and The Curtain Falls of 1951, which respond to the communist take-over of socialist parties in Eastern Europe (Healey was LP international secretary and coordinated liaison with the social democratic parties in Eastern Europe and later in London exile)– but this is an understudied period. The British role in rebuilding Europe after the war and the role of the British Labour party, with Labour in government in the UK is an important part of European history and worth reflecting on at a time Britain is withdrawing from Europe, while still concerned with a new Russian expansionism. Part of Phillips' role was trying to rally European socialists to counter Stalin's take-over of Eastern Europe and to support the social democrats who were being first ousted from their national governments and then imprisoned.

Phillips' memoirs are a reminder of how internationalist the Labour party once was. As well as chairing the revived Second International (initially known as COMISCO) through a difficult period when socialist parties in formerly occupied countries tended to oppose the reintegration of the German socialists

into the international movement, Phillips also participated in socialist delegations to Russia (in a failed attempt to convert Stalin to pluralist democracy), to China to meet Mao and Chou-en-Lai, to Rangoon to attend a conference of Asian social democratic parties and a tour of South American socialist parties. He also visited Tito in Yugoslavia as well as socialist groups in Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in an attempt both to provide international solidarity and protect these dissidents from communist oppression – not always successfully.

Unlike many party memoirs, Phillips' story is important, and the memoir includes some interesting photographs, so congratulations to Spokesman and to Stan Newens, the Labour Heritage president who writes a preface, for publishing this. I would also recommend reading the Socialist International's 1951 declaration on The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism, which is included as an appendix to the Braunthal volume – as relevant now as it was at the time it was published. Our current party leadership would learn a lot from reading it!

Another evil empire

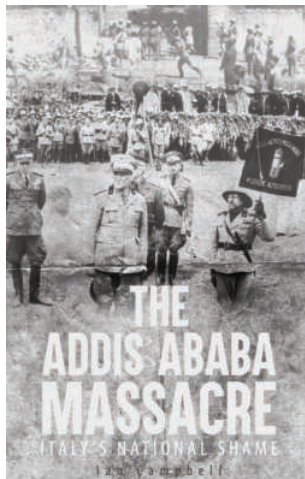
Nigel Watt
on Italian
colonialism

**THE ADDIS ABABA MASSACRE
Ian Campbell
(Hurst £30)**

Italy's record in Ethiopia is a real horror story. Desperate to avenge the total defeat of the Italian army at Adwa in 1887, Mussolini wanted to create an African empire to keep up with other Imperialist countries. He invaded in 1935 and this time the Ethiopians were defeated, the Emperor Haile Selassie fled to England and tried to fight through the League of Nations. On 19 February 1937 (12 Yekatit 1929 in the Ethiopian calendar) the Governor General was shot and injured while making a speech.

The Italian response was totally savage. Ethiopians were hunted like dogs, their houses burnt with women and children inside. Killings went on for three days, bodies piled up in the streets,

educated people were specially targeted. The worst killings were the work of fascist 'blackshirts' who revelled in the killings, shouting "Duce! Duce!" but many Italian civilians joined in and the regular army was only slightly less implicated.



This massacre compares to Hitler's holocaust as one of the century's greatest evils, yet it is little known. Ian Campbell has spent years uncovering the reality of this tragedy and has written a very detailed account. He calculates that an estimated 23,000 died including a majority of those whom Haile Selassie had sent for education abroad. Evidence was collected by a Hungarian doctor and by the American consul but Britain's role in this story is again far from glorious.

Although the consul reported the atrocities to London, the government suppressed the news as it wanted to have good relations with Mussolini to keep him from allying with Hitler. Even after the liberation of Ethiopia and although the Emperor was flown home in a British plane the Foreign Office made sure that the scale of the massacre was never allowed to be publicised.

WESTMINSTER VIEW



Wales shows the way

Susan Elan Jones on changing and extending the vote

Susan Elan Jones is MP for Clwyd South and vice chair Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform

As an abstract principle, tactical voting is nonsense, but there is one exception to that great rule, which is when people happen to vote in Clwyd South as they did in last year's general election. It was quite magnificent, because as well as talking to those who were unsure how to vote, much of my time was spent talking to people who desperately did not want a Tory MP or one of those sheep who would come here to vote for a hard Brexit. I hope I have managed to provide them with good representation on that count.

Really and truly, most people—excluding certain Government Members—know that there is much wrong with our voting system. The Member for East Ham, Stephen Timms, must be one of the most popular, decent and nice MPs. He is a great person and a thoroughly thoughtful parliamentarian, and I am delighted he is back here, but I am not sure he needed his majority of 39,883, which is 70.4 per cent of all the voters in that seat.

Several MPs have quoted the late great Robin Cook. I remember something he said. Under first past the post, if a floating voter was found in the Amazon, people would go over there and bring them back to make sure they could vote in a marginal seat. That raises the question, if we believe in democracy and claim to be pluralists—I appreciate that not everybody does—should we not have the guts to back a fairer system? The

1997 Labour Government did that for the National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Parliament, the London Mayor and the Greater London



Welsh assembly elected on a proportional system

Authority. As a Welsh MP, I do not think it has been unbridled joy in Wales. In fact, sometimes it has been a right pain in the neck, but I do not believe that our National Assembly, of which I am passionately in favour, would have seriously developed the breadth of reach across society and the inclusivity had we not gone for that proportional system.

Many people say that under first past the post at least we get stable Governments. We have one now, do we not? I do not think many of us would say that that is true any more. The Government is weak and wobbly, to coin a phrase. I know that no voting system is perfect and that we need sensible thresholds. I also know that, across this country, most people are not that bothered about constitutional issues. Having been fairly interested in them when I came here several years ago, I am probably allergic to them now, but that is not the point in the debate about voting reform. We can be as concerned about bread-and-butter issues as we like, but if our vote does not actually matter because of where we live, what on earth is the point? Our voice is either likely to go totally unheard or, at best, be of marginal importance. Rather a lot of things have happened since

the 2011 referendum, but that was not really about a proportional system. So much has changed.

It is high time that we had an honest, open debate. I have every confidence in Cat Smith on the shadow Front Bench. She is a fair-minded person and a good pluralist. There are members of the Conservatives in Wales who advocate passionately for electoral reform. We have to look at this issue for the sake of not just my tactical voters in Clwyd South, some of whom said they like voting for me and would like to do so again, but people right around the country. If democracy matters, it has to matter for everyone and for general elections not just devolved assemblies.

The 1997 UK Labour Government showed real progressive zeal in committing to an element of proportionality for the National Assembly of Wales. Our Welsh Labour Government has shown equal vision by leading the way on votes at 16 for local Council elections. As our National Assembly assumes greater powers it is right that the number of elected representatives be increased. I hope too that we will see votes at 16 extended to all elections and pluralism maintained for our electoral system to the National Assembly. **C**

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