

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#292 May/June 2018

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## Saving the NHS

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*Selling our health*

**Bob Littlewood**

*Council's in frontline*

**James Anderson**

*Ireland borders*

**Ruth Taylor & Janey**

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*May 1968*

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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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Cover by Martin Rowson

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## OUR HISTORY - 78

### COMMON WEALTH MANIFESTO 1943

The Common Wealth Party was a Christian socialist political party founded in July 1942, by the alliance of two left wing groups, the 1941 Committee, supported by Picture Post and J B Priestley, Spanish Civil War veteran and Communist Tom Wintringham and the neo-Christian Forward March movement led by Liberal MP for Barnstable, Richard Acland.

It appealed to egalitarian sentiments and hence aimed to be more appealing to Labour's potential voters, rather than voters leaning Conservative. Common Wealth stood for three principles: Common Ownership, Morality in Politics and Vital Democracy. Disagreeing with the electoral pact established with other parties in the wartime coalition, key figures in the 1941 Committee began sponsoring independent candidates in by-elections under the banner of the Nine Point Group.

Following the electoral success of Tom Driberg in Maldon with this support in 1942, there was a move to form the Committee into a political party, through a merger with Forward March. This was led by Sir Richard Acland, Vernon Bartlett, J.B. Priestley, and Tom Wintringham. Its programme of common ownership echoed that of the Labour Party but stemmed from a more idealistic perspective, later termed 'libertarian socialist'. It came to reject the State-dominated form of socialism adopted by Labour under the influence of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, increasingly aligning itself instead with co-operative, syndicalist and guilt socialist traditions.

Vernon Bartlett was elected as an independent in Bridgwater in 1942. Common Wealth intervention in by-elections allowed a radicalising electorate to return socialist candidates in Conservative heartlands, in Eddisbury, Skipton and Chelmsford. In the 1945, general election, Commonwealth held the Chelmsford seat, but the MP, Ernest Millington joined the Labour party in 1946. Before the 1945 election, Common Wealth had asked the Labour Party to let it have a free run in 40 seats, a proposal rejected by the latter. Acland joined the Labour Party as did Driberg. Bartlett kept his seat as an Independent. Very little has been written about Common Wealth. A 1968 PhD by Angus Calder has never been published. Vincent Geoghegan's 2011 Religion and Socialism: Roads to Commonwealth is a

study of four radicals who were involved in the party. The Common Wealth party had no significant impact after 1946 and was finally closed down in 1993.

"The age that is ending is based on competition between men and nations. It was the age of capitalism and monopoly, nationalism and imperialism. It has greatly increased the productive capacity of the world: built railways; grown cotton; dug coal. It has also built slums; grown hatred; dug graves for two generations of youth. It was not without value in its growth and flowering, but it is now outgrown and decayed. The beliefs and forms of authority that shaped it are today shackles on humanity.

Our proposals, we gladly admit, do not make sense in terms of the ideas of the City or the Foreign Office. They cannot be understood by those who think that if all men and nations pursue their own interests, universal prosperity and good will must result. Our programme is based on completely different ideas. We say that it is no use patching up a way of living that has changed into a way of death. We believe the British people will not turn back towards the old world; they will pioneer towards a new social order.

In this new social order:

Fellowship will replace competition as the driving force in our community.

Co-operation with our fellows, not the pursuit of self-interest, will be the driving force in the lives of men and women.

Life will come before property.

A society built on these principles will be inspired by vital democracy, a democracy which is a living freedom, not dead, formal or buried in red tape.

Work, responsibility and wealth will have to be shared according to the needs and abilities of all men, women and children. Today this means the common ownership of the great productive resources, with democracy in industry as well as in politics.

There will have to be security and equality for all citizens. There will have to be colonial freedom and an advance towards world unity."



## Tory Brexit dreams hit reality

Brexiters crow about the great prospects for Britain's future trade and prosperity outside the EU. The freedom to strike trade deals as 'global Britain' is held up as the alternative to the domination and bureaucracy of Brussels. The emptiness and duplicity of this promise was further revealed by two developments last month: first, Trump's trade war threat and secondly, revelations over the 'Windrush generation'.

Trump threatened huge tariffs on European and Chinese steel and oil exports, to which the EU and China responded in kind. This action if pursued opens the way to a vicious trade war which could translate into a loss of 100,000s of jobs and company bankruptcies. Of course, Trump is the big change since the UK EU referendum. This is the 'America First' president, as **Paul Garver** reports, playing the populist nationalist cards to white Anglo-Saxon Americans. No way is Trump going to be giving preferential treatment to UK firms in any future trade deals. Rather the UK will be exposed with no effective trading bloc for protection.

Nor will the Commonwealth countries provide an economic refuge. These countries of the Empire, currently of a UK trading value of 9% compared to 44% with the EU will be looking elsewhere for their economic development. Liam Fox is whistling in the wind if he expects India, now assuming its place as fifth largest world economy, is going to do favourable trade deals with UK.

This links with the Windrush scandal long highlighted by backbench Labour MPs, migrants' rights groups and a sustained campaign by The Guardian. It is the threat of deportation and denial of rights to over 50,000 British citizens as a consequence of Theresa May and Amber Rudd's 'hostile environment' for migrants. Revelations finally hit home during the week of the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in London. Cue huge embarrassment. All those Indian and African sub-continent students denied any long term rights in the UK. The regime of landlords, schools, health professionals expected to undertake checks, the Theresa May 'Go Home' buses all begin to come home to roost as cheap election ploys. So behind the Windsor Castle flattery the reality is alienated Commonwealth countries.

As **Don Flynn** points out, this is but the tip of an iceberg and requires Labour policies which unashamedly say that long-term residence in the UK does lead to permanent residence; that migrants in all categories will be protected from adverse discrimination whether in employment, housing or the use of public services and citizenship and a right of appeal will be available to all who want to settle here.

Of course, it also connects to the rights of the 3 million EU citizens working in the UK and the million plus living in Europe. Labour has rightly said that their right to UK citizenship will be a number one commitment. Not so with the Tories.

Much comes back to Brexit and its follies.

**Stephen Marks** discusses a new must-read pamphlet arguing the left remain case for a European recovery and reform programme within the EU. **James Anderson** puts the spotlight on the big issue which could upset the whole Brexit apple cart, namely the Irish border. He outlines the minefield in difficulties in avoiding a hard border unless agreement on a customs union is reached. **Julie Ward** MEP reports on Brexit negotiation developments, the inadequacies of UK lead David Davis and the need for Labour to firm up its position.

Meanwhile chancellor Hammond continues the tough austerity regime hammering public services, pay and living standards. **Bob Littlewood** reports on the opportunity in local council elections for Labour to clear out many Tory controlled authorities but it has to be an anti-austerity campaigning message from Labour. There is no room for business as usual. **Alena Ivanova** reporting on Preston's Community Wealth plans and Paul Smith highlighting Bristol's radical housing initiatives provide two examples of a progressive alternative for Labour.

While outsourcing is becoming increasingly discredited following the collapse of Carillion, tin-eared Tories like Health secretary Jeremy Hunt, put the NHS at the sharp end of two frontal assaults: big effective cuts in funding allied with a determined push to privatise. **Stephanie Clark** outlines the threat from the likes of Virgin Care and US multi-nationals given a further green light from newly launched Accountable Care Organisations.

**Rory O'Kelly** exposes the Tory assault on the poor and disadvantaged through Universal Credit and changes in the social security system. Labour needs to sharpen its focus on this assault on the most vulnerable, he argues.

Getting our system of democracy right is fundamental to making effective social change. **Billy Hayes** outlines an initiative aimed at trade unions to reform our antiquated electoral system while **Ian Bullock** examines the strengths and weaknesses of representative, direct and soviet style democratic systems.

Our current flawed democratic systems continue to alienate millions. As **Ruth Taylor** and **Janey Stone** celebrate the events of May 1968 in France we are reminded that engaging and empowering citizens in political life, whether in the community, trade union or government, is not an optional extra but the only true safeguard of our liberties and rights. Populists, authoritarians and racists of the right, in Hungary, Poland, Turkey or the US can only triumph if the people are passive and disempowered.

The challenge for Corbyn-led Labour is to build an active social movement based on our common interests for equality, solidarity and social justice. This means reaching out also to our brothers and sisters in the EU and beyond. As the students in '68 demanded: 'Be realistic. Demand the impossible'.

**'Be realistic. Demand the impossible'**



# How Labour can put the wind up the Tories

**Dave Toke** calls for more onshore windfarms



**L**abour is well placed to embarrass the Tories by attacking the Government's war on the onshore wind industry in the UK. Despite onshore wind now being the cheapest widely available electricity source the Government is actively sabotaging the industry by refusing to allow long term contracts to be issued to wind developers. Meanwhile large subsidies are being offered to gas, coal and nuclear power stations.

Under the last Labour Government incentives were given to build up a large increase in onshore wind power, which now supplies around a tenth of UK's electricity supply, with offshore wind and solar farms now supplying around another ten per cent of UK electricity. But right wing English Tory pressure has prevented any move towards enabling long term contracts to be issued so that new windfarms can be financed. Meanwhile the UK risks becoming increasingly dependent on supplies of gas from places like Russia and Qatar.

The Labour frontbench is beginning to realise that young people in particular want to see green energy being given a chance, and, for example, John McDonnell has recently attacked the Tories for failing to do anything to revive support for the feed-in tariff scheme that helped people install solar panels on their roofs. But attention ought also to be turned to promoting

onshore windfarms. Doing so would embarrass the Government and also sow division inside the Tory ranks. More practically, it would offer hope to people who are working in the industry that they might have a future. Places like Grimsby are benefitting from offshore wind projects which are still being built, but onshore wind factories are being closed down, the latest being the Glasgow based Gaia Wind.

Independent experts say that onshore wind can be built costing the consumer less than new large gas fired power stations. However orders have dried up because the Government is refusing to organise long term guarantees of prices paid for electricity to be generated by the wind farms. Long term contracts are needed because the technology is capital intensive meaning that while the wind is free, the money for the equipment needs to be paid for at the start of the project. Hence effective (say 15 year) long term price guarantees are needed to persuade banks to offer loans to support windfarm construction.

The majority of the capacity of UK's onshore windfarms have been installed in Scotland. Despite the fact that the Scottish Government is keen to have more windfarms, control over what contracts are issued for electricity supply rests with Westminster. Yet it is English Tory MPs, often allied to the climate-sceptic Nigel Lawson and his 'Global Warming Policy Foundation', that are pre-

venting the Government from providing opportunities for onshore wind.

The Minister of State for Energy, Claire Perry, has, in recent months, been making some encouraging noises about providing some 'contracts for differences', CFDs as they are known in trade-jargon, available for onshore wind. They were available for onshore wind when the CfD system was launched in early 2015 but since then, while some offshore wind contracts have been awarded, onshore wind has been carved out of bidding for such contracts. Yet Perry appears to lack the required political clout to do much that changes anything, especially to overcome the vocal hostility of the climate-and-wind sceptical group of Tory MPs.

Making a priority of embarrassing the Government over this issue should be a win-win situation for Labour. Renewable energy, including wind power, is very popular among all voters, especially with young voters. On the other hand by supporting onshore wind Labour can proclaim it is promoting consumer interests of obtaining electricity - above all clean energy - from the cheapest possible source. Attacking the Government for its failure to support onshore wind is a very good way of taking votes from the Tories. Please, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, spend some time on this! Put some real wind up the Tories! **C**

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

# New voice in town-part of the solution?

**Paul Salveson** on local surprises

**I**n previous issues of Chartist I've commented on the appalling state of the town where I spent most of my childhood - Farnworth - and questioned why people weren't rioting on the streets. Well it's started. A ward by-election a few weeks ago saw new political party Farnworth and Kearsley First (FKF) win by a substantial margin over Labour. Traditionally, Farnworth has been a rock-solid Labour area. Yet FKF's Paul Sanders won with 1,204 votes while Labour came second with 969. UKIP got 169 votes while the Tory garnered a mere 153. The Lib Dems did much worse, polling just 23, with the Greens getting 18.

So what's going on? Part of the problem is the marginalisation of small to medium-sized towns following local government reorganisation in the mid-1970s, coupled with the catastrophic collapse of traditional industries, mainly cotton. There's something about having your 'own' council that bolsters identity and engenders a sense of pride, and participation, in a place. Being part of larger units, often with meaningless names which mean nowt to nobody (Kirklees, Tameside amongst others) only make things worse. 'Huddersfield' is a big enough place to have its own council, but so is Dewsbury and possibly Batley. Lumping them all into one unit and calling it something meaningless in the hope that people won't think Huddersfield, Bolton or Bury dominates, is laughable. In the case of Farnworth, Horwich and Westhoughton whoever decided these things had the sense to call the new council 'Bolton' which is the obvious dominant town, but it didn't make the loss of your local council any more palatable.

With even the best of intentions, a local authority in which one centre dominates will always be seen by the smaller towns as being against their interests. Often there's more than an element of truth in the perception. It's a particular problem (in my experience) with Labour authorities in which most of the elected

members are from the large centre, which is often economically deprived. It's not uncommon for the smaller 'satellite' towns to be more affluent 'outer suburban' places often returning non-Labour councillors. So the governing Labour elite can justify ignoring the 'satellite' towns on the basis that a) they don't vote for us and b) they've fewer social and economic problems anyway. Yes it stinks, and it's politics. In cases like Farnworth, where the 'satellite' town is both Labour-voting and economically dead or dying, the excuses are even thinner.

The new leader of Bolton Council has gone on record suggesting that the regeneration of Farnworth is a high priority, but a lot of people would say it's far too late in the day and the rot set in back in the 1980s, with precious little having been done since. The so-called 'trickle down' theory that investing in a large centre will somehow help the peripheral towns is a fallacy.

Turning it all round is difficult. But where smaller towns have their own council (be it parish or town) they can make a difference and bring a focus, in a way that Labour's much-loved 'area committees' or similar, never will. But it's ultimately down to the communities themselves, supported by their councils, having the guts to get stuck in, stop blaming everyone else, and just do it. So, forming your own political party - like Farnworth and Kearsley First - could be part of the solution. It will almost certainly bring out the worst in many Labour politicians but they should realise their own failings and understand why groups like FKF have come into being. If they had any sense, they'd extend a hand of friendship to the new councillor (and others to come) and work with them in the interests of the town.

A town council for Farnworth and Kearsley, matching what other Bolton 'satellites' Horwich and Westhoughton already have, would make a lot of sense and give a real focus for the town's regeneration, even though town



**A wake-up call- Farnworth Keale First elected councillor**

councils have limited powers. That should change.

The debate on what makes for an appropriate size for a local authority is an interesting one and I would always go for small units with a manageable size and identity. Farnworth has a population of 30,000 which for local authorities in many towns in countries like France, Germany and Italy is on the large side. Yet in the UK there's still a mentality that going for bigger and bigger councils (as in Wales at the moment) brings benefits. It's nonsense. Small councils bring focus, good governance and strong community support. It makes sense to share appropriate facilities with neighbouring councils but above all maintain that local democratic base. Let elected regional authorities have responsibility for the strategic stuff.

From what I've seen of them, FKF supporters aren't local UKIPers - they're the sort of people who would be involved in community activities and probably in the past would have naturally inclined towards Labour. The May elections will show whether Farnworth and Kearsley First was a by-election flash in the pan, or the beginning of a much bigger shift in people's thinking. Like its more affluent neighbour in Frome, Somerset, Farnworth could shake the establishment's foundations. I hope it does. **C**

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



## LOCAL COUNCILS

# Local change-makers

**Bob Littlewood** on prospects for Labour councils in the face of continuing austerity



Brent Labour campaigning in local elections

At election time we talk about Labour Councils' achievements rather than the effects of austerity in order to convince people we make a difference. So often when we make cuts we present changes in too positive a light-- transforming services, protecting the most vulnerable, efficiencies, etc. We DO make a difference, but too often it's quite marginal. Local turnout does seem to indicate that there are many people who believe that local Councils don't make a difference.

Thatcher was determined to neuter socialist Councils through rate-capping and forcing Councils to outsource services, stopping the building of Council houses, the right to buy etc. and she abolished the GLC. Socialist Councils who defied the Government in the 1980s failed. The current government is determined to keep local Councils in their place, whether through cutting grants or using legislation/regulations to prevent a challenge to private interests-- landlords, developers and profiteers providing public services.

In the new Labour era the pressure eased a little but the basic furniture of central/local relations remained the same. Indeed the statist insistence on performance indicators and targets for everything actually made things worse. It's an unfortunate truth that a succession of Labour ministers with a responsibility for local government thought that they and their civil servants

knew best and were there to control rather than enable Councils to decide what to do locally.

And our failure on housing in particular was scandalous.

Outright resistance and acting illegally in the way that Lambeth and Liverpool tried in the 1980s isn't back on the agenda. Instead we must hang our hopes on the election of a socialist Labour government and make changes within our Councils.

So it isn't surprising that local Labour is inward looking and on the back foot, given our approach to elections and the concentration of power in too few hands in so many Labour Councils.

It's possible that an intake of left Councillors in May might change this outlook. Enormous efforts have been made by Momentum and the Party's left to select candidates for Council who want to be local change-makers and challenge local establishments to be more outward looking and confrontational, but there are good comrades who think that being on the Council won't change anything. They are wrong. If we want to make real change we must have the right people in place.

It's just possible that local Council leaders from the left will emerge and want to co-operate as a group to take the fight to the Tories. Our national leadership must support them and encourage members to do likewise.

We need also to make a better job of encouraging groups with relevant single issues (e.g. disability, homelessness, mental

health) to take action together. With us.

We do need rank and file Councillors to give full support. The concentration of power within Councils (Mayors, strong leaders and Cabinets not accountable to rank and file Councillors and the local party membership) is something which needs to be confronted. As long as elites call the shots countering austerity together will be a tall order.

On a positive note, there are Labour Councils that are taking steps to be ready for the time when more resources and powers become available to them: Fairness Commissions which inform them in detail about inequalities; progressive procurement policies supporting local enterprise, including co-operatives (well done Preston); service provision in genuine co-production with users; wholly Council owned development companies, and of course the prospect of taking services back in-house when contracts expire.

And there are many individual Councillors giving support to residents in difficulty and bringing the knowledge of this into what they say and do in the Town Hall.

So there needs to be change at all levels.

Turnout this time will be higher where local parties have been focusing on the Council campaigning against Tory austerity. Those who voted in the general election because they were inspired by the message of hope will turn out where candidates put a clear anti-austerity message.

**Bob Littlewood is aiming to continue as a Labour councillor in the London borough of Redbridge**

## Community wealth fund Preston-style

In the wake of Carillion's collapse, **Alena Ivanova** reports on an alternative model for delivering council services

When it comes to the loss of control and accountability that we all feel when our services end up in private hands, previous Labour governments and current Labour local authorities have plenty to answer for.

A recent success story comes from a northern local authority where councillors reached out across the pond for guidance on how to take back control of their procurement for the benefit of the residents, not international corporations. The 'Preston model' has become something of a buzzword in the past 18 months. A democratic control workshop at the Labour Alternative Models of Ownership conference (see previous Chartist report) had Cllr Matthew Brown, Ted Howard, from Cleveland, Ohio - the inspi-

ration behind the Preston Model and Heather Wakefield from UNISON explaining the initiative. Brown explained that through using anchor public institutions Preston have leveraged their substantial procurement power to breathe life into local businesses by deliberate reorganisation of the whole procurement network, as well as embedding core principles of public control. Ted Howard then expanded on those principles.

- 1) First principle of the local economy - keep as many people as possible in work, rather than make capital happy;
- 2) Local broad-based ownership matters - so does local decision making;
- 3) Economic multipliers are extremely important;
- 4) Investment vs extraction;
- 5) Economic partnership



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

has multiple stakeholders - it is not business first;

6) Place matters - growth outside the neighbourhood doesn't trickle down! Hyper localised investment is needed;

7) It's about a systemic change.

As inspirational as the session itself was, the following Q&A was more informative: participants asked when this will be official Labour local government policy, when their local authority will start implementing some of these principles, rather than selling off land to private developers. Further, why is this only gaining momentum now, when local candidates for council have been selected and manifestos drawn up, most not mentioning community wealth building? Party members need to raise this approach now with councillors if we want it to happen. **C**

## Social housing Bristol fashion

**Paul Smith** on using council land ownership to boost social housing

The 2016 local elections in Bristol saw the first Labour majority in a dozen years and an overwhelming backing for the Labour Mayoral candidate. One of the headline promises in that election was to increase the number of affordable homes built from between 100-200 up to 800 per year by 2020.

The key to such delivery would be a combination of land use, financial investment and rigorous use of the planning rules. Bristol has a significant land holding but the previous mayor promoted massive asset stripping in the city. In October 2015 he issued a prospectus to sell 80 hectares of housing land, 80% of the total available. On being elected Labour quickly halted these sales and stopped his programme of auctioning empty city centre council housing.

Of all the powers councils have, land ownership is the strongest in our ability to deliver social housing. If a council is the landowner, it can decide what is built on its

land and even be the developer itself. Bristol has a council house building programme and is setting up a wholly council-owned development company, which can access both borrowing and council land. Bristol has allocated a five-year housing fund of £220m, the equivalent of a national programme of around £25bn (compared to the programme announced but not yet released of £2bn).

We are applying a filter to our land; if we can't develop it, then we will look to housing associations and community-based housing organisations. Only if neither the council nor our partners can take a project forward will we look to the private sector.

Half of the housing land in Bristol is privately owned and we want affordable homes built there too. We are one of three local authorities that publish developer viability assessments unredacted. We also have a planning committee which has the confidence to challenge developers who have not costed our plan-

ning policies into their land deals or have unconvincing arguments for why affordable housing is not viable. Once projects have planning permission we have a housing association fund of £57m to pay for additional rented homes. This both allows associations to buy homes directly from developers and to compete with them for sites to develop themselves.

The empty properties which we were told were too expensive to repair and had to be auctioned off are now all publicly owned and let. Some are general council housing, some are used by the council as temporary accommodation and some have been leased to housing and homelessness charities on a peppercorn rent.

We are already seeing a significant increase in affordable homes being built, which will flow through into meeting the manifesto pledge. What we have shown is that we can implement socialist housing policies under a Conservative Government. Imagine what we could do with a Labour one. **C**

**Cllr Paul Smith is Cabinet member for housing, Bristol City Council**



# Ireland's Brexit Borders?

Could Ireland's border be the stumbling block for Brexit? **James Anderson** on carrots and sticks and collateral damage

What are Britain's Brexit negotiators up to on Ireland's borders? We still don't know, nearly two years after the Brexit vote and less than a year before the UK exits the EU. It's a major sticking point, and unsurprisingly many in Ireland and among 'Remainers' in Britain have been quick to conclude that the British Government is so divided it doesn't know what it wants. However perhaps too quick - it's never wise to underestimate an opponent. Possibly they have a rabbit to pull from the hat, though maybe later rather than sooner as they focus on getting to the exit in March 2019.

On substantive issues, Britain's negotiators have actually been quite consistent, if coyly unspecific, about what they want. They have talked about technology to avoid a 'hard' border, but no examples of this exist where the two sides are in different customs unions, and most take it with a large pinch of salt. It's true the British side have shown a remarkable lack of interest in securing their land border with the Irish Republic and implied if anyone creates a 'hard' border it will not be them but rather the Irish Government and the EU to protect their Single Market. So much for "taking back control of our borders" to stop unwanted immigration, but here the British know the leaky Irish land border is unfit for purpose and they can always fall back on the Irish Sea border with checks at their ports and airports in Britain.

More seriously, they've also said they want a customs 'arrangement' where they 'mirror' or 'shadow' EU standards and regulations, presumably to argue that they should therefore have access to the Single Market. Moreover as they are explicitly not in a customs 'union' they could further argue that they should also be able to make their own trade deals with other countries, such as the USA. This could be what 'having their cake and eating it' really means.

Many will dismiss this as totally implausible, already ruled out



Brexit must not mean return to hard borders

by the EU to protect its Single Market. But what if we see the negotiators bargaining in relative terms with the British getting some limited access to the Single Market and some new trade deals, by using the Irish border as a 'carrot and stick'. The merely 'implausible' becomes 'perfidious', indeed Machiavellian. It would provoke opposition - which may explain British delays on being specific. But in a weak position it may be their strongest bargaining ploy.

The 'carrot' is the claim that the UK getting what it wants

## A very uncertain future could boil down to an Irish land border disaster

removes the need for a 'hard' border which it is widely agreed would be a disaster - disrupting the integration of the all-island economy and the Good Friday Agreement that brought relative peace, still leaking like a sieve and providing a smugglers' bonanza (not Single Market protection), and an attractive target for dissident republican paramilitaries. The 'stick' is the UK not getting what it wants and handing the EU and the Irish Republic the 'hard' border disaster. Northern Ireland would be collateral damage, with its Democratic Unionist Party collaborators in

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supporting the British Government.

Of course such a ploy may not work. Indeed some Brexiters may already conclude as much and are simply waiting for the exit date without an overall deal, or want out just as soon as 'an unreasonable' EU can be blamed for their exit. This is probably why the EU and the Irish Government tried to force the UK to agree the 'fall-back' position of Northern Ireland staying in a customs union or in alignment with the Single Market in the event of 'no deal', and the British negotiators seemingly agreed to this so talks on trading arrangements could start.

But the Democratic Unionist Party opposes any separate or 'special' status for Northern Ireland because it necessitates an Irish Sea border. This, they claim, would undermine the UK's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, the reality is that Northern Ireland's constitutional position as part of the UK can only be changed by referendum votes in both parts of Ireland. On Brexit the DUP does not command a majority in Northern Ireland where 56% (including a third of unionist voters) voted Remain, and they could be vulnerable if it emerged they'd been 'DUPed' into supporting a British ploy where Northern Ireland was collateral damage. A very uncertain future could boil down to an Irish land border disaster versus an Irish Sea border as the more practical solution. It's still all to play for. **C**

# A Corbyn government with a new EU vision

Stephen Marks outlines ideas to stay and reform in a new pamphlet\*

Four 'left remainers' - Luke Cooper, Mary Kaldor, Niccolò Milanese and John Palmer - have written a socialist case for 'Remain'. *The 'Corbyn Moment' and European socialism* gets off to a good start.

'The problem with some Remainers' it tells us 'is that they often seem to be demanding a return to the pre-referendum status quo. If Labour wants to change the status quo for the better (and not for the worse as it will do with Brexit) then the key is tackling the problems of inequality and deprivation, which are inexorably linked to free market globalisation'.

To do this, as Corbyn has stressed, would require taxing multinationals, controlling financial markets and addressing climate change. As the authors point out, this would need at best close co-operation between a Labour government in Britain and the EU, which in its turn would require what they modestly describe as 'a high level of agreement amongst the EU27 which is unlikely to be forthcoming'.

This, they appreciate would mean fighting for these proposals across Europe. 'Ultimately this means building a mass movement for these goals, working with other parties and social movements'.

But such a social movement is not something to turn to 'ultimately' but is actually a precondition for change at the level of EU governments. And favourable references by some of the authors to various proposals coming from the Great White Hope Emmanuel Macron would not be taken kindly by the SNCF workers whose hard-won gains he is trying to destroy or the students who are showing them solidarity in defence of their own struggles. Faced with a new 1968, he is more likely to prove De Gaulle than Mendes-France!

However there are many excellent recommendations in this text which, in or out, could and should be the basis of a Corbyn govern-



ment's approach to cooperation with other progressive forces in Europe - though with the exception of Portugal these are unlikely to be found among the Social Democratic parties which are increasingly vanishing down a centrist plug-hole.

They form a useful foil to the vacuities of 'Lexit' whose proponents have offered no viable socialist strategy for a post-Brexit Britain unless it be a sort of 'politique de la pire' in which an isolated Britain would somehow be forced into a 'siege economy socialism'.

And this would be the least likely outcome. As the authors rightly point out:

'...a post-Brexit Labour government would have to use all its energy to fend off predatory action by larger economic blocs or financial markets, and unpicking trade deals with the likes of Trump that the Conservative party will have left as a poisonous legacy.'

They rightly point out that unlike other supranational organisations the EU does contain a political and democratic framework; social legislation, however minimal; and environmental

rules which are actually superior to others on offer.

'The EU has the capacity to tax or regulate 'global bads' (close tax havens, regulate financial flows, control carbon emissions, for example) and to promote 'global goods' (overcoming inequality, bringing peace to conflict zones, constructing resource-saving infrastructure).'

They also set out a number of areas in which a Corbyn government could act as 'a beacon for a radical new agenda' and '... promote policies at an EU level that would facilitate social justice and democracy at regional local levels in all EU countries, especially the UK'. These could include: taxing multinationals; regulating financial flows and controlling banks; protecting migrant workers; digital rights; and climate change.

I feel more cautious about endorsing some of the proposed areas of security and defence co-operation, which could all too easily slide into the sort of adventures which have justifiably given 'humanitarian intervention' a bad name.

As the authors rightly conclude, this 'will require progressive governments inside the EU to overcome the big business lobbies, short sightedness and national chauvinism that too often hijack good intentions.' Indeed.

But with Brexit of some sort or another looking increasingly inevitable it seems more useful to look as Varoufakis has suggested, at a 'Norway plus' solution by which a Corbyn government could be a pace-setter for Europe even from a semi-detached position and a National Investment Bank could still co-operate with the EIB.

The same goes for many or most of the other policies in the document. While the socialist 'remain' argued for here would be the best outcome, a Corbyn government could still fight for this alternative European vision from a semi-detached Norway plus position. Especially with the future of the EU itself as we have known it, increasingly in doubt. **C**

**Stephen Marks** is a member of Oxford Labour Party



# Politics for the many

To secure a democracy 'for the many', we must reform our broken politics says  
**Billy Hayes**

A few weeks ago, Electoral Calculus – which regularly projects the results of future elections in the UK – predicted a disturbing outcome if an election was held now.

It showed that in a fresh election, the Conservatives could win 40.5% of the vote and 297 seats, whereas Labour could win 279 seats on 40.7% of the vote.

In other words – Labour would win the election, but would be denied office by Westminster's voting system.

It's a problem that's more common than it seems (a 'wrong winner' result locked Labour out in 1951, and the other way round in 1974).

But it's not just progressive parties damaged by First Past the Post. Progressive policies in the UK, as things stand, face an uphill battle.

That's not because there is a lack of support for policies like redistributive taxation or a strong welfare state.

Last year, the archaic 'one-person-takes-all' method of counting votes completely discounted the voices of millions of voters.

At the last General Election it was 22 million to be exact: that's the number of votes cast which had no impact on the result.

And one in ten voters felt obliged to 'hold their nose' and opt for their second or even third choice at the ballot box.

The consequence of this is that governments are formed with minority support but wield complete power – the 'elective dictatorship' outlined by Tory peer Lord Hailsham in 1976.

A new report by trade unionists seeking democratic reform has highlighted just how damaging this is for progressive policies – and how more consensual structures are much more amenable to progressive ends.

Landmark studies, from which the report draws, have shown that democracies with more consensual structures have more progressive social outcomes on a range of measures – from a larger welfare state to more money spent on foreign aid and lower rates of prison incarceration.



**Billy Hayes (second from right) protesting government cuts**

When everyone's vote counts, parties have to seek the votes of all voters – regardless of where they are. From almost exclusively targeting swing voters in wealthy suburbs, parties are forced to campaign for every vote – no matter where it is cast. Those post-industrial areas left to wither on the vine are no longer ignorable.

There is also a multitude of studies, including Ljiphart's *Patterns of Democracy*, that point to consensual democracies – where the proportion of votes broadly matches the proportion of seats in the legislature i.e. proportional representation (PR) systems – having lower economic inequality.

For too long, political equality and economic equality have been viewed as totally separate entities. Far from it – true political equality requires a level playing field in the economic sphere, while economic equality can only be won through giving working people a real voice.

The mechanics behind this reality is that under consensual political systems, different parties have different electorates to satisfy. When they work together in government, they are therefore dependent on a broader range of support, and must satisfy a broader electorate.

The difference between the consensus required by a proportional voting system, and the consensus required by a hung parliament under Westminster's system, is that the latter tends to advantage negotiations with parties with defined geographic bases.

This means resources are often

spread solely on the basis of geographic concerns – think of the recent influence of the DUP on spending in Northern Ireland. Yet in a PR system, other groups and interests can achieve recognition more easily: a green or feminist party can suddenly exert influence in a way that only a regionally-specific party could have done before.

Beyond these studies on policy, the concrete evidence shows that counties with a proportional voting system tend to elect more progressive governments. A less polarized political system means that for those parties in the middle, the best strategy is to work with the left to create a strongly redistributive state.

Time and time again we have seen voters opt for a 'progressive majority' – only to be denied a progressive government because of 'vote splitting' on the left, and a more party-united right.

Trade unionists gathered in Scotland in mid April for the STUC's Congress – with many hoping to build a movement for real political reform.

While Scotland has used proportional voting systems for years, 'Politics For The Many' – a new group of trade unionists – is stepping up to fight for electoral reform across the UK.

As things stand, the forces at play in the Westminster system are aligned against progressive politics.

But a new democratic system can help us build a new economy. We will not build a socially-just Britain on the back of a rigged politics – but through the 'kinder, gentler' politics we deserve. **C**

**Billy Hayes of Politics for the Many is also trade union officer for Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform**

# Robert Kennedy and the decline of liberalism

Fifty years on **Nigel Doggett** assesses the legacy

Has anybody seen my friend Bobby? Can you tell me where he's gone? He freed a lot of people, but the good die young. I looked around and he was gone."

This line from the song Abraham, Martin & John was written in 1968. Starting with the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, it concludes with Robert Kennedy who died on 6 June 1968.

It is hard to overstate how the Kennedys loomed over the 1960s political landscape: John (JFK) as US President from 1961 to 1963 and his brother Robert (RFK), his closest political ally, US Attorney General, and after JFK a New York Senator.

Their reputation has since become tarnished and their legacy contested. How does Robert emerge after 50 years?

The anniversary King's assassination on 4th April 1968 has been widely commemorated. But the loss of RFK was also tragic as he advocated a new politics attracting radical young people.

The Kennedys came from a privileged background, as sons of Joe Kennedy who was deeply ensconced in the Democratic party machine. RFK gained a reputation for ruthlessness doing JFK's dirty work during the election campaign and after, which he found hard to shake off.

He also worked for Senator Joe McCarthy during the infamous witch-hunts, though his own role was in trade and sanctions during the Korean war. He also gained notoriety for his investigation into the Unions, uncovering corruption in the Teamsters led by Jimmy Hoffa.

Both Kennedys were implicated in the run up to the Vietnam quagmire but the commitment of ground troops and bombing the North were ordered by new President Lyndon Johnson (LBJ).

Anti-communism was standard rhetoric for US politicians during the Cold War. RFK put forward the notion that to resist the attraction of communism required the 'free world' provide

real freedom and prosperity for all, an aim targeted at South America as well as Vietnam and much of the USA.

As Attorney General he took an unprecedented activist stance in using Federal Marshalls to enforce racial desegregation of education in the face of challenges from the South. By his forthright actions he alienated some formidable foes – the Mafia, corrupt Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa, Cuban exiles, FBI chief J Edgar Hoover and Southern racists. The strong suspicion of involvement in his death as well as of JFK, lacks firm evidence, as detailed in David Talbot's *Brothers: The Hidden History of the Kennedy Years* (2007).

A new account by John Bohrer, *The Revolution of Robert Kennedy - From Power to Protest after JFK* (2017) shows how RFK attempted to continue the legacy of the JFK presidency, whose mantle had fallen on his shoulders. He embarked on a series of tours, notably of South America, the Southern USA and finally South Africa, which served to channel the reactions to John's assassination. Whereas JFK had projected a patrician coolness, RFK appealed vehemently to a sense of injustice, speaking in venues where opposition was expected (such as Southern university campuses) and did not shrink from arguing with both the right and left, seeking out student radical and South American communist opponents, earning their respect if not agreement.

Disappointingly, Bohrer omits Robert's presidential primary campaign which ended in the California Democratic Primary victory and assassination in June 1968.

LBJ's 'Great Society' programme continued JFK's work by confronting the interlinked issues of poverty and racial inequality but was jeopardized by ballooning spending on Vietnam. Ironically, the war was overwhelmingly fought by black and poorer Americans from the very communities targeted by this programme.

RFK increasingly grappled



**Robert Kennedy on campaign trail**

with the need to challenge LBJ on both domestic injustice and Vietnam without appearing disloyal. Only when LBJ escalated the military campaign by bombing the north did RFK finally break with him.

Though forced from a position of power into opposition RFK never succumbed to 'oppositionalism'. He stood for interventionist government backed by a movement of young people. Such proactive liberalism is now close to extinct, supplanted by Tariq Ali's 'extreme centre' of Blair, the Clintons and their ilk. We still grapple with the tension between opposition and engagement. It takes talent to challenge the consensus and gain respect from across the social and political spectrum.

The left often distrusts emphasis on leaders and rhetoric (Corbyn notwithstanding). The great speeches of JFK, Clinton and Blair now ring hollow in the light of their legacy. But the best progressive leaders personify their cause and by identifying with the poor and deprived focus attention on remedies.

Glenn Close recently suggested "We always need someone to say 'I hear you', someone who can put their words into unity and hope – and we don't have that. I think the last person may have been Robert Kennedy." (Guardian Magazine, 16 Dec 2017)

Today, with the 1960s youth reaching their 70s, new movements campaign in both the US and UK on resurgent issues of inequality, racism and gun violence. In JFK's memorable phrase "The torch has been passed to a new generation." **C**

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



TRUMP

# Trumping Trump

Paul Garver asks can the 'American Resistance' defeat Trump in 2018?



**W**ell into the second year of the Trump presidency, over a third of Americans support him despite (or because of) his toxic combination of incompetence and overt attacks on basic norms of fairness, civility and responsible governance. This is a more disconcerting sign of political dysfunction than Trump's election.

Opposition to Trump policies continues to flourish. Less visible in the streets than the giant women's and pro-immigrant marches of early 2017, organized resistance has entrenched itself at state and local governmental levels, focusing on progressive issue campaigns and, in the few electoral opportunities prior to the mid-term elections this November.

Centrist Democrat Conor Lamb, backed by a vigorous campaign from trade unions, narrowly defeated a right-wing Republican in a Western Pennsylvania Congressional district that voted heavily for Trump in 2016 and had been gerrymandered to be a safe Republican seat. Growing numbers of Republican House Representatives are choosing not to run for reelection, judging they

cannot win due to Trump. The reactionary National Rifle Association lobby has become toxic following massive demonstrations organized by students against gun violence.

State and local governments retain certain powers to resist national political policies. California as the most populous state can resist right-wing

**Democratic Party apparatchiks talk #Resistance, but actually mean #Restoration of an idealized Clintonian Presidential era**

Republican efforts to allow oil drilling off its coast and to roll back other environmental protection. It is restricting cooperation of state and local police forces with immigration enforcement agencies. Other relatively liberal coastal states are following suit.

With efforts to raise the abysmally low federal minimum wage blocked nationally, many states and cities have yielded to well-organized Raise Up cam-

paigns to raise the hourly minimum wage to \$15. Many similar widespread initiatives are organized through autonomous social and political movements, which are burgeoning in today's USA.

But there are sharp limits to the scope for local resistance. National budget priorities are set by a Congress controlled by an unholy alliance of reactionary Republicans and Corporate Democrats, both wings of which support bloated military spending over domestic priorities. Under inexorable pressure from the new "tax reform" legislation that slashes taxes on corporations and the wealthiest, while discouraging tax deductions that permitted more progressive states to finance education and social welfare programs, attacks on such essential programs will multiply. Even without full support from local police, immigration enforcement agents are targeting millions of undocumented workers and families for deportation.

The challenges the left faces in mounting a successful Resistance are manifold. The Presidency, House of Representatives, Senate and Supreme Court remain controlled by reactionary Republicans. Most state governors and legislatures are also

Republican controlled; due to widespread gerrymandering of districts, more Republicans are elected even if Democrats win more votes overall.

Since Citizens United and other Court decisions cut restrictions on campaign finances, the plutocracy can purchase politicians and policies with impunity. The official Democratic Party has adapted by courting its own wealthy and corporate donors, de-emphasized door-to-door canvassing, and minimizing influence by unions and workers.

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to rule shortly in the "Janus" case that public sector unions have no right to collect fees from public employees they represent, crippling their political activities.

However, Bernie Sanders' presidential primary campaign demonstrated that money could be raised from small donors, that enthusiastic volunteers could bring voters to the polls, and that a more populist and progressive position on economic issues resonates with many voters.

Democratic Party apparatchiks talk #Resistance, but actually mean #Restoration of an idealized [Bill] Clintonian Presidential era by merely electing more Congressional Democrats.

But most White Americans still support Trump and his racist and reactionary policies across the country except for big cities and some coastal enclaves. Right-wing populism [or "racialized xenophobic tribalism"] fanned by toxic media like Fox News is difficult to address by the Center and Left alike. But the neoliberal economic policies of austerity and corporate friendly trade pacts championed by the Clintons devastated formerly Democratic-leaning unionized industrial regions that then swung towards Trump in a politics of racialized resentment and frustration.

It is not certain that Trump and the Republicans will lose their monopoly on national political power in 2018. One increasingly likely scenario is that the Trump administration, beleaguered on all sides domestically, will launch military and/or trade war campaigns designed to fire up its populist/nationalistic base for the elections. The Corporate Democrats, without a serious critique of militarist imperialism or a coherent progressive economic policy, would likely bungle the challenge.

The good news is that the Left



Bernie Sander's campaign demonstrated that progressive economics draws votes

is not twiddling their collective thumbs while the Democratic Party fiddles. Dozens of Left candidates have made successful bids for local and state office, from legislature to district magistrates to county executive. For example, Lee Carter, a young DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) member and military veteran, defeated an incumbent Virginia Republican legislative leader in a general election.

**Fashioning a new majority left of center party will require decades of common work building coalitions among divergent interests**

Thousands more candidates, many new to electoral politics, are stepping forward to be trained and supported by of newer and older small-donor financed progressive groups. Several Left organizations with aspirations to create lasting federated structures are competing (and sometimes cooperating) to fill the vacuum left by the Corporate Democrats.

The Sanders campaign demonstrated that the Millennial generation is much more likely than their elders to identify themselves as "socialists". The post-election membership surge in the DSA stemmed largely from well-educated millennials identifying as members of a "precariat" burdened by student debt, locked into insecure "gig" jobs, and ready to make a long-term commitment to political struggle.

Their natural instinct is to seek alliances with other members of the "precariat" that are even more vulnerable because of

race, gender identification, immigration status, confinement to prison, etc. The excluded must be able to organize and defend themselves against the politics of contemporary capitalism. A politics of democratic inclusion must include struggles against voter suppression, for effective civil liberties, for prison reform, for the rights of undocumented immigrants, for access to better public education, for workplace rights etc.

This mirrors the main social base of the Democratic Party, also drawn from well-educated urban professionals and communities of color loosely held together by a politics of inclusion.

Democratic 'Restorationists' and democratic socialists are merely the right and left wings of the Resistance. Most of its foot-soldiers, who show up for marches and rallies, canvass door-to-door, phone bank for candidates, lobby for progressive bills in state legislatures, are neither committed Democrats nor identify themselves as Socialists. They are typically well-educated women working in human service or technical occupations, newly politicized or recently re-engaged. They strongly identify with a politics of radical inclusion, while deeply suspicious of the pervasive role of big money in politics. If the symbol of the Trump victory became the alienated, racially resentful and frustrated formerly unionized industrial worker of the Midwest, Resisters like these may come to personify a successful pushback. They might also determine the struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party.

In the short term, Trumpism must be thoroughly defeated. In the long term fashioning a new majority left of center party will require decades of common work building coalitions among divergent interests. It must be much more multi-racially led and class diverse than today's Left.

Interweaving the variegated strands of Resistance into an effective social and political movement capable of wielding power will require sophisticated political strategies that have yet to be discovered. From my own youthful experience with radical politics, a politics based on militant ideological expression rather than an orientation to long-term results is normal for persons newly involved in politics. Generations on the Left need to learn from each other how to contribute to that long-term effort. **C**



# NHS –not safe in Tory hands

**Stephanie Clark** explains that both cutbacks and creeping privatisation is threatening the NHS in England and how to stop it

On 1 April the first Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs) were due to be introduced into England's NHS. Concerns about the lack of consultation and parliamentary process involved in this radical re-organisation by the non-statutory body NHS England are currently being considered by the House of Commons Health Select Committee. Its Chair, Sarah Woolaston, asked Jeremy Hunt to pause implementation to allow her committee to complete its investigation. He refused, but has been forced to concede a consultation on the new ACO contract first.

At the same time, Judicial Reviews initiated by NHS campaigners are challenging the legalities involved in this process and the national ACO contract and have caused local plans for ACOs and hospital closures to be put on hold. The collapse of Carillion has added to nervousness about proceeding with further extension of private-public partnerships into the heart of the NHS.

The risks and democratic deficit involved in the massive re-organisation of the NHS, alongside draconian cuts in budget are pushing health and social care to breakdown. There is far greater public awareness and concern about cuts, however, than understanding of the complex programme for NHS re-structuring and privatisation.

Dismantling and privatisation of the NHS has been a clandestine 40 year project by those ideologically opposed to a socialised health service. Margaret Thatcher went as far as she could in introducing limited outsourcing but her ambitions were constrained by practicalities. However, the Conservative Party's privatisation ambition was embodied in Oliver Letwin's 1988 book, *Privatising the World: A Study of International Privatisation in Theory and Practice* (preface by John Redwood). Letwin was David Cameron's Chief Policy Advisor and got into hot water for his leaked message to a private meeting in 2014 that the "NHS will not exist" within 5 years of a Conservative election victory.

The Blair/Brown Government increased investment with £5bn a year to the NHS, but also extended privatisation. Health Minister Alan

Milburn introduced Foundation Trusts & the 'internal market', and Gordon Brown energetically embraced the Major Government's Private Finance Initiative. The NHS was left with £81.6bn to pay off in debts –the cost of privatising hospital construction and outsourcing services via PFI deals - and paving the way to the Carillion disaster.

But privatisation has been accelerating since 2012. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act, drafted by global management consultants, McKinsey & Co, set the NHS up for the purpose. It removed the government's duty to provide a universal, comprehensive NHS, replaced strategic planning and commissioning with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, handed buildings to NHS Property Services, introduced full marketisation of the NHS imposing competitive tendering of all services, and increased the cap on NHS hospitals' private patients to 49%. It also left governance in a complete mess.

As at 30 Nov 2017, nearly £10bn of NHS clinical contracts are now held by private companies, and only 34% of contracts tendered last year went to the NHS. Among those with contracts are Care UK, which has links to the Conservative Party. Care UK runs the NHS 111 call centre and, alongside Virgin Care, has seized the opportunities for potentially lucrative community-based health services opening up as the national strategy for moving care out of hospitals into the community is being rolled out.

Virgin Care has won well over £2bn of NHS "business" over the past 7 years – several large contracts in community health, and £1bn of NHS contracts in 2016/17 – over 400 separate NHS contracts. In 2017 Virgin Care won a 7 year £700m contract to run Bath and North East Somerset's community care and health services. This is the first time a for-profit company will run a council's adult social care services.

Virgin also exemplifies the vulnerability of the NHS to being sued where companies fail to get the contract they have sought. Virgin Care sued the NHS after it lost out on an £82m contract for children's services in Surrey. Damages have been kept secret but campaigners have discovered through an NHSE source that they amount to £2m.



**Stephanie Clark is a member of Keep Our NHS Public and local health campaigns, and Tower Hamlets CLP**

In a further development this year – and rare success for the public sector – a Lancashire judge has blocked the contract awarded to Virgin to run the Lancashire County Council's Healthy Child Programme.

Virgin is an example of a predatory company ruthless in extracting profit from NHS patient frontline patient care, beginning with loss leading bids to gain foothold in a lucrative future health care market. And Virgin, based in a tax haven, pays no tax.

Five years on from the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, there is widespread agreement that it has been a disaster. The fragmentation of services, the destructive effect of competition and shocking contract failures have ostensibly been addressed by Simon Stevens, head of NHS England, the body set up by the Government to run the NHS after the 2012 Act. Stevens' plan, "Five Year Forward View" (5YFV), published in 2014, to transform the NHS is being implemented through Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). The country has been divided into 44 areas for STP delivery. These have been established as vehicles for cuts of £25bn and privatisation, but are presented as plans for the delivery of improved health outcomes with lower costs. How to achieve this miracle?

Informed commentators have castigated the process dictated by NHSE, the "savings" required to eliminate the deficits within the timescales demanded and with no planned eval-

uations of pilots and no plan for social care. The national rollout of the STPs in December 2015 was condemned at the time by Julia Simon, until 2016 senior NHS England director, as "ridiculous", "shameful" and "mad" and the plans full of "lies".

The plans require co-operation between the NHS and local authorities at a time when both NHS and social care are in crisis due to underfunding. But, both CCGs and, in many cases, local authorities are being sidelined as the new organisational structures are being set up. It is NHSE's intention that a multiplicity of interim arrangements will over time evolve into ACOs.

So what are ACOs? And where do they come from?

Simon Stevens' 5YFV plan for the NHS mirrors the blueprint developed over 2012 and 2013 at the World Economic Forum at Davos. Simon Stevens was leading that project team in his then role as President of Global Health Division at the US health corporation UnitedHealth. (Previous to that, Simon Stevens was health policy advisor to Tony Blair.)

The WEF group commissioned two reports from McKinsey & Co to develop a global template for transforming "socialised" health systems. The reports' recommendations, now being implemented through the STPs, are to:

- Lower costs with new payment systems
- Reduce capacity in costly settings

like hospitals

- Promote 'self care'
- Redefine 'health industry' to allow global corporations to take over more public services
- Introduce new ways to deliver 'integrated' or 'accountable' care based on models like Kaiser Permanente in the US, and the Alzira model in Spain and called Accountable Care Organisations, or 'ACOs'.

An ACO requires a corporate entity to be set up: a commercial – non-NHS body, though NHS providers may be included among its constituent members. There is nothing currently to prevent a private company, including a global corporation, from taking over the contract as a whole. (The "accountability" of ACOs relates to financial accountability to partners, not to the public.)

Jeremy Hunt referenced Kaiser Permanente and Alzira as his two models for restructuring the NHS in addressing the Health Select Committee on 9.5.16.

Kaiser Permanente in the US is a company running its own hospitals and primary care, with its own health insurance plan. Its business model is based on saving money on treatments and denial of care.

The Alzira model appears, however, to be the preferred option of Simon Stevens. This model (named after the town Alzira in Spain where it was piloted) functioned in part like a UK PFI for a new hospital (the first privatised hospital in Spain) but also included providing the actual health care. The Alzira model was credited with bringing down costs and was extended to other regions but became mired in scandal over strikes, allegations of premature deaths and banking corruption and in 2017 the Valencian government passed new legislation to return the Alzira health concession to direct public management.

Centene is a partner in the Greater Nottingham ICS, has its UK base in the Kings Fund premises in London and has recently appointed Alan Milburn to its Board. Centene's role in Nottingham is as a "Care Integrator" – a key new role in ICSs with particular potential for the private sector and critical to the evolution into ACOs.

Optimum UK, the UK arm of

UnitedHealth, is another example of a company in pole position to benefit from the evolution of ACOs. It already has NHSE contracts for commissioning support as well as community services. Optimum declare they are: "One of the few companies in the world that provides fully integrated solutions to deliver NMC [New Models of Care] requirements, from back-office transactional support to front-line delivery".

In July 2017, NHSE announced 8 areas that would become ACSs (now ICSs), working towards becoming ACOs, originally intended from April 2018.

In this 70th anniversary year of the NHS, we have reached the end game of a long project to destroy it.

We cannot stand by and let this happen. **C**

## What can you do?

**Support the Judicial Reviews, which are the best current hope for frustrating the privatisation and the cuts.**

## National challenges:

**#JR4NHS, was supported by Stephen Hawking among the 5 campaigners**

**To be heard 23-24 May 2018**

**#Comprehensive healthcare for all, challenging the legality of the new draft ACO contract due to be heard on 24 April in Leeds**

**Local legal challenges in South Yorkshire, Huddersfield, Barnsley and Rotherham stroke services, Dorset and Forest of Dean and South Tyneside.**

## Sign the online petitions:

**Stop Privatisation of NHS Services - to be debated in the House of Commons on 23 April**

**- And ask your MP to attend**

**STOP the new plans to dismantle our NHS**

## Build support for the NHS Reinstatement Bill.

**This is being tabled for the third time as a 10 Minute Bill on 11 July**

**Join the demonstrations planned for the NHS 70th anniversary on 30 June**

**Work within the Labour Party to gain understanding of what is happening to the NHS, get discussion informed by the health campaigns to embed the 2017 national Conference NHS policy to oppose ACOs and work for the reinstatement of the NHS. If you have a Labour Council, do what you can to ensure it is adopting national conference policy and opposes the ACOs and cuts to health and social care.**

**Support the local campaign in your area. Consider joining Keep Our NHS Public**



MAY 1968

# PARIS MAY 1968- Revolution of ideas

On the 50th anniversary of the May 68 events French workers are again striking. **Ruth Taylor** and **Janey Stone** recall the nearly revolution

**F**ifty years ago we were doing Europe. It was an Australian tradition. We two 21 year old women were told about a hostel in the 19th arrondissement, a working class suburb of Paris. The hostel was run by a group of anarchists, who supposedly held all possessions in common, even toothbrushes! There was an exciting mix of residents, from an African American deserter, stationed in Germany, to Greeks and North Africans who were lodging there long term. In a way it epitomised the spirit of 1968 - the youthful desire for freedom from restriction and authority.

Unbeknown to us, political unrest had already started on 22 March at the new University of Nanterre, a branch of the Sorbonne. Students agitated about their living conditions, restrictive rules on visiting times to the women's dormitories, and the rigid, archaic academic environment. The police repeatedly broke up protest meetings, provoking the students to go on strike and occupy the campus. One of the leaders, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who was expelled from France on 22 May for being a 'seditious alien', subsequently became a legend.

On 3 May, when students at the Sorbonne in central Paris met to protest against the closure of the Nanterre University, there were clashes with the police. Following a protest demonstration of 20,000 on 6 May, they took over the Sorbonne and the surrounding streets. Over the next few days there were repeated demonstrations and fighting. The police routinely tried to disperse the crowds by charging and beating them.

Although we did not closely follow the newspapers we knew major events were happening around us from the reports of the anarchists and other residents who returned bloodied from the daily demonstrations. The atmosphere was highly charged. One



Cohn-Bendit at a student meeting

of us, Ruth, a trained nurse, attended the returning injured.

There was the story of a gendarme throwing a tear gas canister into a café. Another of a demonstrator whose arm was broken by police, only to come out of hospital, be recognised and beaten again. We were shocked by the reports.

Our daily lives in the hostel were also affected by the police. A contingent of 400 gendarmes belonging to the force that specialised in public order and crowd control, had been transferred from Lyons and taken up residence in the school next door to our hostel. The street was closed to traffic with a security check at both ends.

The hostel was host to animated discussions of the crisis, ranging from opposition to capitalism, to bureaucracy, class privilege, and authority. This generation wanted autonomy, open discussion, the power to make a difference, to build a fairer, freer kind of society.

The night of 10 May was witness to the famous Night of the Barricades, when the students who had been battered for hours by the police decided to stand their ground and fight. By midnight, finding themselves holding the Latin Quarter, they built up their barricades. Thousands of people joined this spontaneous movement. They tore up cobble

stones from the streets and built over 60 barricades using anything they could find. As one observer described it, "women, workers, bystanders, people in pyjamas, human chains to carry rocks, wood, iron".

The trade union federation, responding to the students' actions and police brutality, then called a strike for the following Monday 13 May. Within a fortnight, in a largely spontaneous movement more than nine million workers from all sectors were on strike, the largest workers' strike in French history.

But on May 12th, not knowing where its persistent turbulent state was about to lead, we decided to leave Paris, and continue our travels. The next day we learned that the national strike had brought France to a complete standstill.

We had been present for the supporting act but had missed the main event.

The mass strike was an enormously powerful act, but the addition of workplace occupations upped the ante considerably threatening implicitly the owners' right of property and management's right to manage. One of the most remarkable things about the events of 1968 was the energy, the excitement and creativity that was unleashed. This was evident in the poetry, posters and slogans that were created, one

famous to this day: "Be realistic. Ask the impossible".

The strike covered all parts of society. Banks and television stations, undertakers, the Folies Bergere, schools and hospitals, car factories and public transport. Petrol was rationed. Cars out of petrol blocked the streets and moped sales rose.

By 22 May the Trade Unions, started negotiating an improved wage and conditions package with employers.

On 29 May President Charles de Gaulle, fled Paris, but later returned to dissolve the National Assembly and announce a general election for June. It was a challenge to the country to defy the revolutionary process. De Gaulle ordered workers to go back to work or face a state of national emergency. Workers did gradually return to work and the police re-took the Sorbonne on 16 June. The June 23rd general election returned the Gaullist party with a stronger majority. The party

banned a number of left wing organisations.

On Bastille Day, 14th July 1968, there was a further demonstration by students and left-wingers which was again harshly suppressed by the Parisian police and security forces, with many injured. That was to mark the last gasp of the May '68 protests in Paris.

Having been derailed into an electoral direction, the strike movement itself did not produce any major improvement in wages or conditions. But in a larger sense Paris May 1968 had an impact beyond the immediate events. The atmosphere throughout Europe and many other parts of the world in that year was inspired by the French experience. We saw student demonstrations in Vienna, witnessed Germans and Czechs discussing the Prague Spring when we were in Bulgaria and large anti-Vietnam War demos in London. There were strikes and student

rebellions in Spain, Mexico, Germany, Poland, Jamaica, and the US. In the following years the student and anti-Vietnam war movement exploded, women's liberation and gay liberation movements took off, there were workers struggles from the factory occupations in Italy to the defeat of the penal powers that had been used to prevent strikes in Australia.

Paris May 1968 remains a crucial milestone for the international working class. In a highly sophisticated advanced capitalist country, working class power called the whole system into question. The mass strike penetrated every sector of society, and raised demands that went far beyond the confines of trade unionism, questioning control at the centre of society. Crucially it was a youth-initiated movement, youth who did not accept what the previous generation had handed down to them - a revolution of ideas. **C**

## FROM THE ARCHIVE: The Spirit of May

Ten Years After: Author-Martin Cook, Chartist May 1978

**A**fter the May Events the authorities symbolically laid asphalt over the pave (cobble) in the Latin Quarters— weapons the students had so effectively used in the street fighting. But the memory of what had occurred would hardly be so easily effaced, either in France or elsewhere.

May 68 burst on the Western world grown smug and complacent in 'affluence and 'consensus' where politics had become a bore and the Cold War taken for granted.

Its links with the Third World Liberation movements (the Vietnamese 'Tet Offensive' and the anti-bureaucratic movement in the East were strong and well-understood. Internationalism was a key aspect: when the government and the Stalinists denounced the 'foreign agitator' Daniel Cohn-Bendit, students marched chanting 'We are all German Jews!'.

While on the one hand the power of the general strike gave the lie to the theory that workers in the West had been irretrievably 'bought off', at the same time the appearance of new sectors in the struggle with new problems and demands made it clear future revolutionary movements would not be simple re-runs of the past.

In its zest, its radical questioning of received ideas, its hostility to hierarchy and bureaucracy of whatever kind, and in its fresh and imaginative posters, the May movement often approached the spirit of surrealism. "Run Comrade, the old world is behind you"... "Power is in the streets"... "Take your wishes for reality"...ran the



world renowned slogans.

Far too often, of course, the youthful iconoclasm of the student revolutionaries led to ultra-left disdain for parliamentary democracy, the traditional workers' parties, the trade unions and the 'battle for hearts and minds' generally, especially after 1968 with the constant attempts to start May all over again with the magic formula revolt-repression-revolution. There was often a mood of violence and irrationality, against the boring normality of the status quo.

The movement notably brought into play a whole range of groups not normally linked to left politics and trade unionism. Showgirls and prostitutes in Montmartre,

lawyers and sometimes supervisors and scientific staff joined in. Students, film-makers, journalists, architects, technicians and others produced critiques of the way their world was organised in bourgeois society, of the authoritarian structures and alienation from fellow workers, together with bold and imaginative plans for 'self management', with schemes for putting their skills at the service of society rather than of profit.

Unfortunately, rather than take up the challenge of such new dimensions to a socialist transformation of society, too many of the left groups have been mired in fruitless searches for latter-day Bolshevik parties and Soviets.

May saw the eruption of millions of ordinary people on the stage of history for a brief moment. If they do so again, will the left be able to come to terms with their manifold aspirations for personal and social liberation?



## DEMOCRACY

# Working Class Democracy?

Ian Bullock reflects on problems of direct, soviet-style and representative democracy

**S**cepticism about politics and politicians long predates the MPs' expenses scandal, never mind the 2017 revelations about sexual harassment at Westminster. Nor is it confined to the Left.

*Here richly, with ridiculous display,*

*The Politician's corpse was laid away.*

*While all of his acquaintance sneered and slanged*

*I wept: for I had longed to see him hanged.*

Making a point many of us felt very keenly, the Daily Mirror used Hilaire Belloc's verse in December 2006 at the time of Pinochet's funeral. I'm not sure when Belloc wrote this – but since he died in 1953 it could not have been the dictatorship in Chile that he had in mind.

The case against representative democracy is not difficult to make. It's a con-trick. The candidate tells you what you want to hear, makes all sorts of commitments then – safe for the next five years – does a Clegg. In the nineteenth century the Left thought the answer was to shorten the parliamentary term – the Chartists' demand for 'annual parliaments' – or insist on an imperative mandate which the elected had to respect.

Then, in the early twentieth century with first syndicalism and then the Russian soviets the notion of a distinctive working-class form of democracy gained ground. Essentially, this would be workplace based delegate democracy. Fred Jowett, a lifelong advocate of radical parliamentary reform and long-time Labour MP rejected the 'soviet' form of delegate democracy many in the ILP were advocating in the interwar period. In such a system voters, he maintained, quickly lost touch with those indirectly elected – even more, he said, than with MPs. This was in speech at the ILP's 1919 annual conference. But an opponent was able to retort that the ILP was based "on the system of delegation which Mr Jowett attacked." So were trade unions and many other working class institutions. But before we reject Jowett's argument we should take an honest look at how delegate democracy



Lenin at the October Congress of Soviets-but problems with the system

actually operates in different contexts.

Delegate democracy tends, inevitably, to be 'activists' democracy.' One only need observe that Left wing parties and factions that have very little – or no – traction in 'ordinary' national or local politics, often have an important presence in quite a few unions. This was so also back in the 20th century. It is not hard to see how this works. To get elected as an officer or a delegate you have to actually attend meetings regularly. This enables the keen activist to exercise a great deal of influence. Quite legitimately. And most of the time it's also a really a good deal from the standpoint of the 'inactive' members. They can be pretty sure, in the case of unions, that the activists will pursue pay and conditions claims relentlessly. They can also be sure that, should they find themselves in difficulty with the management they will be steadfastly supported as a matter of principle. And they get a really good deal in other ways. If all the work done by branch activists was 'professionalised' many more paid officials would be needed. Subscriptions would rocket upwards.

The way delegate democracy is supposed to work is quite clear. At base level- typically the branch – members meet, debate issues and reach conclusions by a vote which then mandates their delegates at the next level of the organisation. It is quite legitimate for political factions – where

they exist – to operate at this level. But no further. Logically, political parties or factions can only function at base level. Beyond that the only guidance to be followed by delegates are their mandates.

My own experience of delegate democracy was mainly in a union context. By and large delegate democracy worked reasonably well in my branch, at regional level, and at the annual conference. But even so there were sometimes people who didn't understand the distinction between a delegate and a representative. They would insist that through the former they had the right, even the obligation, to behave as the latter. They could exercise their 'judgement' or follow their 'conscience' in a way that Edmund Burke would have approved even when the collective decision was clear, no new arguments had appeared, and the circumstances had remained exactly the same. One instance that springs to mind was in the early '80s when there was a move for our union to affiliate to CND. I was in favour – but both my branch and our region were opposed. But several of our annual conference delegates voted for affiliation. We tried to explain that for this form of democracy to work a delegate not willing to follow the instructions given on any issue is duty bound to declare this and allow the meeting to replace them with someone who is willing to pursue the meeting's decisions. But it didn't stop it happening

from time to time.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the rules of delegate democracy are sometimes followed less than consistently, delegate democracy does work reasonably well in trade unions, political parties and other essentially voluntary organisations. It is worth considering why this is so. Part of the reason is surely that there are safeguards – sometimes formal ones – against the possibility of the organisation's policies getting too remote from those favoured by the membership as a whole. Often there are rules that allow for the calling of special conferences or membership referendums. A political party example is the ILP 'plebiscite' in 1936 when there was major disagreement over the party's response to Mussolini's invasion of what was then called Abyssinia.

Moreover, in the final analysis if you are that much opposed to the policies adopted by your union or party you can always decide to leave it, join a rival one, or even start a breakaway. Most trade unionists will recoil with understandable horror, especially from the latter option, but the threat to leave can be a real one even if just implicit. The history of the political Left, in Britain as elsewhere, can be told as a series of 'splits' alternating with 'unity' campaigns. In unions, at least, the prospect of a significant loss of members is always likely to act as a deterrent against pursuing a truly unpopular course. The price of political disunity is all too

obvious. Part of the problem with early 20th century notions of 'working class' democracy functioning in idealised versions of the soviets as a replacement for parliamentary style regimes is that one can't opt out of the state like you can opt out of membership of a political party, trade union or any other sort of voluntary organisation.

Delegate democracy works reasonably well in political parties because a large proportion of members are at least occasionally 'active.' It works reasonably well in unions because the range of issues with which they are mainly concerned is a fairly narrow one – chiefly of the 'bread and butter' variety like preparing negotiating positions concerning pay and conditions.

But states are different. Not only is the range of issues with which they are concerned almost infinitely wider but they are a prey to what Harold Macmillan famously called 'events.' Certainly we can –and should – mount protests when governments respond to the latter in ways we disapprove – the lunatic invasion of Iraq, for example. There was a long lead up to that particular 'event' – but the notion that there would be time in most instances for grassroots debate followed by local, regional and national councils made up of delegates to make the definitive decision before any response could be made by the government is difficult to sustain as a realistic proposition – to put it mildly.

Sylvia Pankhurst's' A

Constitution for British Soviets' of 1920 with its basis in 'household soviets' representing about 250 people, not to mention an incredibly complex structure which included 'Educational Soviets,' and, among many other varieties, 'Public Heath Soviets,' was admirable in its intention to involve the entire population in the detailed formulation and execution of policy at all levels. But it was hardly a realistic notion of how soviets might actually operate.

When Pankhurst's own paper The Workers' Dreadnought gave actual examples of the sorts of 'mandates' given to delegates elected in revolutionary Russia they were hardly the sort of clear detailed instructions that her proposed constitution for Britain implied. In one case they were simply told to 'stand firm' and carry on an "unfaltering labour policy without political compromise with the Capitalist Class and to remember that behind them stood the workers, ready to lay down their lives for the great Russian Socialist Revolution." In another the instructions were 'to support the Soviet Government with all their energies, to defend and strengthen the conquests of the November proletarian revolution.' Hardly the sort of mandate that enthusiasts for 'working class democracy' envisaged. Nor a great advert for either soviets or the superiority of delegate democracy. Attempts to practice this form of democracy at state level have not been exactly a series of run-away successes. **C**

Ian Bullock's latest book is *Under Siege-The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain*, AUPress

## Printer ad



# Brazil: Lula-a symbol of resistance

Corruption charges, violence and imprisonment of ex President Lula might yet unite the progressive left says **Thomas Zicman de Barros**

**T**hey want to stop me from talking, but I will talk, throw your voices". With this statement, former president and leading presidential candidate Lula da Silva alerted thousands of supporters that rallied in front of the metallurgical union where he started his political career almost five decades ago. His imprisonment may well jeopardize his ability to travel and make speeches, but instead of killing him politically, it is transforming him. Lula is no longer a simple leader. He is now an idea – which makes him much more powerful. Like others in the past, it is in the moments of apparent weakness and defeat that he gets stronger.

What makes Lula's support even more extraordinary is that it takes place after more than four years of constant political attacks. Lula, the first and only working class candidate to be elected president in the country, left office in 2010 with an indisputably positive record. Despite the contradictions while in power, his almost 90% approval ratings were the result of a government that transformed Brazil into a global player and generated economic and social prosperity, removing tens of millions from poverty.

For years now, however, the media in collusion with important sectors of the judiciary incited right-wing groups by depicting Lula as the root of all evil and corruption in Brazil – despite sufficient evidence of any wrongdoing on his part. Hate was irresponsibly inflamed to the point that, for a growing far right, Lula became a scapegoat that must be eliminated at any cost – leading to a shooting of his convoy in the south of Brazil on March 27th. This fury against him established the background for his controversial – and sometimes Kafkaesque – high-speed condemnation. Like the Queen of Hearts in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, the judges decided Lula's sentence first, their verdict coming afterwards. A right-wing clamour followed pressuring the Supreme Court to enforce Lula's immediate imprisonment – against the con-



Former president Lula da Silva idolised by crowds  
Photo: Francisco Proner Ramos (Midia Ninja)

stitution that guarantees the right to appeal before gaol. In a scene that reminds us of darker moments, even the Army commander, general Eduardo Villas Bôas, implied that troops could intervene to avoid possible "impunity". The goal is clear, and has been openly declared many times: Lula must be arrested because, if he runs again, he might well win.

Lula's imprisonment is, in many ways, a new step in the con-

**Lula's arrest was not the result of a fair trial, but a symptom of the slow death of democracy**

servative hold on the country. The process is complex, with many expressions and actors. It got traction during the parliamentary coup that overthrew president Dilma Rousseff in 2016, when a circumstantial and sometimes paradoxical alliance was formed. It involved notoriously corrupt politicians from catch-all crony parties – such as the former Speaker of the House, Eduardo Cunha, and Michel Temer, Rousseff's vice-president – fringe extreme-right leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro, the big media groups, and an hypertrophied Judiciary that frequently violates the constitution in order to "make justice".

After Rousseff's unseating, this alliance weakened, but while sometimes fighting each other, the participants continued to push the country to the edge. The

new all-white-men conservative government approved privatizations and rudimentary austerity reforms – such as a constitutional amendment that freezes the total amount of public expenditures for the next twenty years. On February 16th, facing growing popular dissatisfaction, Michel Temer decided to make an audacious political move to set a new agenda, declaring a federal military intervention in the state of Rio de Janeiro to solve a so-called "security crisis" in the region.

As usual, to every complex and delicate problem there is always an easy, demagogic, authoritarian – and wrong – answer. It was clear from the beginning that the federal intervention was a pyrotechnical move to produce positive media coverage. The reality on the ground, however, was the absence of control and the lack of any action plan. It was from this intervention that Marielle Franco, a left-wing, slum-dwelling, black, lesbian city councillor was brutally executed with her driver when leaving a debate on black feminism in downtown Rio on March 14th.

It may seem that Marielle Franco's assassination and the witch-hunt against Lula are not directly related. However, there is now a growing consensus on the Left about their connection. On April 2nd, in a rare moment of unity, politicians and political activists from the entire progressive spectrum gathered in Rio. The message was clear: all forms of persecution against the Left are fruits of the same anti-democratic ambience, and define a common adversary.

Lula's arrest was not the result of a fair trial, but a symptom of the slow death of democracy, where those elected are removed from power, those who protest are silenced or killed, and those who dare to mobilize a popular resistance are imprisoned. Those who welcome his imprisonment ignore, however, that they might inadvertently unite progressive struggles. The future is uncertain, the Left can still make mistakes, but, like Lula, it remains alive. **C**

# Time to stand up for the poor

As benefits disaster looms where does Labour stand on Social Security asks **Rory O'Kelly?**

**T**he revolt within the Labour Party leading to the election of Jeremy Corbyn was triggered by his willingness to oppose the Government's Welfare Reform Bill. One might have thought that Social Security, where the issues have been substantially unchanged since 2015 and even 2010, would have been a major concern of the current leadership. Strangely this is not the case.

The fundamental problems with the Social Security system are familiar. Benefit levels, particularly for non-working people of working age, are impossibly low. Child poverty is increasing dramatically, fuelled by devices such as the 'benefit cap' which puts a ceiling on benefits payable to families, regardless of size. This is targeted directly, though not explicitly, at children. The introduction of ESA has reclassified large numbers of people who cannot work for medical reasons as unemployed rather than sick and increases in pension age (particularly in respect of Pension Credit) have further reclassified many people from 'pensioner' to 'unemployed', leading to large falls in income and exposure to punitive sanctions. The proportion of housing costs covered by benefits is falling, through both general restrictions on Housing and Council Tax benefits and their replacements by specific devices such as the 'bedroom tax'.

All this is about to become much worse. So far the impact of benefit freezes has been slight, because inflation and wage growth have been very low. As an example, the benefit level for a single unemployed person fell from just over 20% to just over 10% of average earnings between 1979 and 2010 but this figure has hardly changed since. As inflation increases, assuming real wages no longer fall, the gap will widen. Further attacks on children and sick people will build up cumulatively. Withholding benefits from 3rd and subsequent children starts for children born in April 2017. People who fall ill from the same point on will normally be restricted, however long their



Shadow minister Debbie Abrahams too quiet

incapacity may last, to the same benefit level as for unemployment, which is usually short-term.

Faced with this catalogue of looming disasters, what does the Labour Party have to say? The answer appears to be not much. The 2017 manifesto had some useful proposals, particularly on restoring benefits for people incapable of work and abolishing sanctions, but these seemed derived from a pic'n'mix exercise rather than a systematic analysis.

More recently the National Policy Forum has published a truly bizarre consultation document In work poverty and working age inequality which, despite the title, says very little about Social Security and literally nothing about personal taxation. The title itself is telling. The Party seems deeply ashamed to be associated with the sick or unemployed, though it has at least dropped its claim that its name was chosen to signal its repudiation of such people. It is true that working people now form a large and growing proportion of poor

people and benefit recipients but it is equally true both that non-working people are generally even poorer and that low pay is frequently associated with very intermittent work. It cannot be said too often that 'workers' and 'claimants' are not two distinct groups of people.

The initial solution to these problems is actually quite simple, and would start with reversal of virtually all the changes to the Social Security system since 2007. Everyone should have the security of knowing that, whatever their changes in circumstances, they will be able to feed and clothe themselves and their children and keep a roof over their heads. Modest aims but beyond the hopes of many people in Britain today. For people in work pay and security of employment are crucial and are a better approach than means-tested supplements but while people are not working there is no way around the need for benefits which are adequate and which maintain their value.

In 1977 the Labour Government started to introduce a genuinely revolutionary Social Security system based around contributions and earnings-relation of benefits. This was systematically demolished by the Thatcher Government. It is a strange irony that the best aim we can set ourselves for the immediate future is restoration of the system as Thatcher left it.

To move beyond this we need some serious thinking in the Labour Party. This seems a more remote possibility than ever before. The current shadow Secretary of State for the DWP, Debbie Abrahams MP, though her always inconspicuous performance has become more so as she has become embroiled in one of those incomprehensible disputes about whether she is bullying someone or someone is bullying her. It does not seem to have occurred to her or any of her colleagues that the most striking example of institutional bullying in British society today is the treatment of sick and unemployed people. **C**



## IMMIGRATION

## Windrush scandal

**Don Flynn** on urgent need for a comprehensive immigration policy review

Few readers will be surprised by the revelations that have filled the news media about the injustices suffered by migrants from the so-called Windrush Generation because of the 'hostile environment' rolled out over the country during Theresa May's time as Home Secretary.

The Parliamentary Labour Party, with David Lammy and Diane Abbott playing particularly important roles, has done well to press the government on this issue and demand changes that will meet the immediate needs of the people so seriously affected by these measures. But the bigger issues behind what some are describing as a 'cockup' need to be brought to the forefront in a campaign for comprehensive change to immigration policy.

In a line that goes right back to the days of New Labour prime ministers and home secretaries, the approach to managing migration has been that we strip newcomers of the rights they once had of protection from discrimination and the assurance that, if they adhered to the rules, they could look forward to the prospect of citizenship within a time span of five to ten years.

In the place of rights, New Labour created an immigration control system that resembled an obstacle course filled with traps and snares designed to undermine the migrant and show her the door once a limited period of leave came to an end.

This was the first of what came to be a great many steps culminating in the viciousness of the hostile environment. Labour needs to dismantle this whole edi-

fice by developing a strategy to get a rights-based approach back at the heart of immigration policy.

We need policies which unashamedly say that long-term residence in the UK does lead to permanent residence; that migrants in all categories will be protected from adverse discrimination whether in employment, housing or the use of public services; and citizenship and rights of appeal will be available to all migrants who have kept to their side of the implicit deal.

If Labour under Jeremy Corbyn is prepared to commit to these principles we can look forward to the ending of scandals of the magnitude of that inflicted on the Windrush generation. **C**

**Don Flynn is former director of Migrant Rights Network**

## Hue and cry

Labour's anti-Semitism—is it inflated by a McCarthyite moral panic asks **Bryn Jones**?

Between 18th March and 9th April a British national newspaper included 20 news stories, eight commentary pieces and two editorials directly, or implicitly critical of the Labour and Jeremy Corbyn stances on antisemitism. Investigation or analysis of the strength, or sources, of the evidence was minimal. Yet this coverage was not in a right-wing tabloid, but in the most left-leaning 'quality' paper, the erstwhile Labour-supporting Guardian.

That source might support allegations of an endemic and dangerous form of antisemitism pervading the Party and its leadership. Especially as Labour and Momentum leaders eventually admitted that there was a 'widespread', if 'unconscious', antisemitic bias in the Party. Yet the evidence for institutionalised antisemitism as unconscious bias is difficult to prove, without a massive social scientific investigation of hundreds of members. On the other hand the variety of accusations from mainstream Jewish opinion to anti-Corbyn Labour and Tory MPs and their media sympathisers could equally indicate the occurrence of what

sociologists call a 'moral panic'. That is, an emotive campaign in which a few genuine cases are inflated by media hyperbole, accentuated by political opinion makers.

Complaints that the sacking or suspension of apparently culpable office holders and members constitutes a medieval-style 'witch hunt' are predictable. However, the wider media campaign is more redolent of twentieth-century McCarthyism. Between 1947 and 1956, Senator Joe McCarthy led a media-driven and state-supported campaign to identify and root out Communists from public and civil sectors. With media support, Mc Carthy or his allies used Congressional committees, notoriously the House of Representatives' Un-American Activities Committee, to arraign and discredit leading figures in US society: State department officials, Hollywood actors, directors, screen-writers, as well as seamen and dockworkers. Especially relevant to the current drive against antisemitism are the McCarthyite techniques for identifying unpatriotic and potentially traitorous beliefs and activities. Communist 'witchcraft' could be proven simply by suspects

holding relatively mild socialist or leftist views, because the McCarthyites managed to equate these with a commitment to the overthrow of American democracy and a Soviet takeover.

Similarly today, anti-Labour voices aligned with pro-Israel opinion argue that leftist supporters of the Palestinian cause inevitably cleave to antisemitic language and ideas. To support this thesis they can cite the anti-semitic rhetoric in the more radical wings of the Palestinian cause. Corbyn's rapport with militant Arab and Palestinian groups provides a convenient lightning rod for such allegations. But such a McCarthyite logic is fallacious. Did support for Afro-American civil rights automatically entail support for the extremes of the Black Power movement in the 60s and 70s? 'Moral panics' inevitably turn out to exaggerate perceived threats to moral or civilised orders. As Labour tries to identify and correct the antisemitism in its ranks it should sort the McCarthyite/moral panic chaff from hard grains of deliberate antisemitism. However, the prospects of even our allegedly liberal media conducting any forensic treatment seem remote.

**Bryn Jones is a sociologist and Labour Party member**

## FILM REVIEW

## A working class hero is quite hard to see

**Patrick Mulcahy** on *Funny Cow*

Class is fluid. My mother went from middle class (professional trained nurse in Yorkshire with an interest in mountain climbing) to working class (office worker living in council accommodation in South London, raising four children) back to middle class in retirement (home owner). The 2013 'Great British Class Survey' conducted by the BBC Lab UK identified seven different classes, from the elite (those with the highest economic, social and cultural capital) to the 'precariat' ('precarious proletariat'), 'the poor most deprived class scoring low on social and cultural capital'. This survey has not informed current perceptions of class.

The old class distinctions still hold up. You can replace upper, middle and working class with CEOs, middle management and service workers, with educational qualifications having little bearing on where you end up. The modern working class doesn't necessarily have paid employment. You won't necessarily find them in pubs. They are not even unified by proximity – council estates now a patchwork of lets, sub-lets and owner occupied properties.

Television reflects working class life as a problem in programmes such as 'Undercover Benefits Cheats' and 'Saints and Scroungers'. The working class are objectified as loud and argumentative, unsettled and sentimental. TV soap operas, arguably the most sympathetic to the working class, are stuck in the eras in which they were devised: 'Coronation Street' in the 1950s and 'Eastenders' in the 1980s, with the local pub as the centre at which the characters all meet (the Rovers Return, the Queen Vic) being its most inauthentic element.

Cinema offers the opportunity to give the contemporary working class a sympathetic hearing, yet few filmmakers in the UK are able to make a living out of doing so. Ken Loach has consistently represented the working class but almost always in opposition to a system, whether administering disability benefits ('I, Daniel Blake') or giving approval to open



**Maxine Peake in *Funny Cow***

a community hall in Ireland ('Jimmy's Hall'). The most striking British film of recent years to tackle working class life is 'Tyrannosaur' about an alcoholic (Peter Mullan) who forms a relationship with a charity worker. Its narrative addresses its protagonist's aggression in a far more unsentimental, honest way than Loach's own take on the subject, 'My Name is Joe', also starring Mullan.

Currently in cinemas is 'Funny Cow', a showcase for Maxine Peake, written by her friend and sometime soap actor, Tony Pitts ('Emmerdale'). Set in the 1970s, when the North of England was intolerant of foreigners and homophobic (remember then?) it deals with a working class woman who chooses stand up comedy as a means of standing up for herself. Broken into sections 'the first bit', 'the next bit' – and moving between three time periods – Funny Cow as a girl in the 1950s, as an abused wife in the 1970s and eventually as a success being interviewed and confronting her past, is mainly about a woman who flees from her abusive husband, Bob (Pitts) and moves in with a cultured bookshop owner, Angus (Paddy Considine, the writer-director of 'Tyrannosaur') who is her polar opposite.

The real subject of the film is class mobility – or the psychological impediments to this. The nameless Funny Cow exclaims

that she doesn't want to be 'no Eliza f-ing Doolittle' – it is one of the script's anomalies that she knows who Eliza Doolittle is. She finds life in Angus' spacious home stifling and when he takes her to see 'The Red Balloon', she is non-plussed.

'Funny Cow' is like a reverse 'Educating Rita'. Funny Cow isn't interested in 'high culture'. She's not even curious. What she wants is the safety of a stage to say what's on her mind – and to put down anyone who wants to shut her up. She sees the power that a comedian can have but not yet how it can be used.

Peake only performs one stand up set in the entire film and it has the impact of the final fight sequence in a boxing movie, full of verbal blows to a heckler. Funny Cow's set is as offensive as the male comics that were her contemporaries, so it doesn't become a release for the audience. The comedy, such as it is, comes from a group of acts auditioning for a talent show (including Vic Reeves, John Bishop and a mime).

What is most disappointing about 'Funny Cow' is that it does not examine truthfully the rage that Bob experienced that drew him towards violence. Brutal bullies live in fear of being found out and found wanting. 'Funny Cow' gives its protagonist her dignity and also a new focus but it does not fundamentally ask its audience to reconsider perceptions of class.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Andrew Coates**  
on  
Socialism  
and  
Populism

**Rethinking Democracy, Socialist Register. 2018.**  
**Edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo.**  
**Merlin Press £17.95.**

For Leo Panitch and Greg Albo 'the social revolution of building capacities for self government' is more important than gaining state power. 'Actually existing liberal democracy' is entangled with anti-democratic institutions. The 2018 edition of the Socialist Register aims to offer 'socialist democracy' against reactionary 'populist' appeals in the name of defending 'our' democracy.

The electoral appeal of democratic socialist ideas – they cite Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders – inner-party democracy and social struggles have come to the fore. Ramon Ribera Fumaz and Greig Charnock offer a valuable account of the 'citizens' revolution' attempted by Barcelona en comú (BeC). But, away from its ideology and programme, what of the political history of BeC's ally, Spain's national Podemos, from personalities to strategic difficulties? The electoral bloc that has enabled the Portuguese left to win power and govern successfully, involves not just 'new' forces but some old ones, including the Socialists and the very old Portuguese Communist Party (PCP).

Do neoliberal elites 'fear' democracy? A number of contributors work with Jacques Rancière's claim that elites, believers in a technocratic competence, have a veritable hatred of the demos. James Foley and Pete Ramand detect this in a fear of referendums. Rancière claimed that the No vote in the 2005 French Referendum on a European Constitution was a major set back to those who wished their 'science' to be acclaimed by the masses (La Haine de la démocratie. 2005).

That popular consultation witnessed a division on the French left, inside both radical and reformist camps. It was between those supporting national sovereignty and those who favoured European unity, however imperfect. The rejection of the European Constitution only happened with the help of the votes of the far-right Front National, and conservative 'Sovereignists'. The result, many say, strength-

ened not democracy but appeals to France, the Nation, not just by the right but also by left-wing French politicians. After eventual French endorsement, the EU went ahead with its plans anyway.

Denis Pilon's 'Struggle over Actually Existing Democracy' offers a critique of 'proceduralist' democracy. Alex Demiorović considers Radical democracy, from the recently deceased Miguel Abensour (indebted to council communism), Rancière, to the familiar figures of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Enthusiasts



of abstract theory will find much to mull over.

Do these theorists offer 'innovative democratic strategies'? Should we consider one of the few concrete ideas offered by Rancière, who looked to Periclean Athens and found public office open to selection by lot? The French La France Insoumise (LFI) led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, practices this procedure for selecting delegates to its Conferences. It means that there are no formal currents, organised differences of opinion, inside his movement. This is even less attractive than the 'consensual' decision-making imposed in the Occupy! movement.

The 'fear' of populists of the left and the right fails to look into why socialists may oppose populism. It is not disdain of the great unwashed, but differences over the claim that there is left-wing potential in the present ways the 'people' can be mobilised against the 'elite'.

Donald Trump once declared, "The only important thing is the unification of the people –

because the other people don't mean anything." Can the People become Sovereign on conditions that they are hurled against the 'not-People'?

Foley and Ramand take on board Perry Anderson's critique of the 'vagueness' of the term elite, and the idea that this is the Enemy. Three contributions on the media also register another side of his doubts, the way it neglects the way hegemonic ideas gain acceptance. They offer useful insights into the role of the media in constructing ruling class hegemony. The revelations about Cambridge Analytica indicate that grand ideas, from Laclau and Mouffe, about the Enemy, and the need for democratic dissent, may be less attractive in the face of manipulated hatred. The benefits for the equally elusive People in this form of politics are less than evident.

This fear of Others perhaps sums up right-wing populism, and mass conservative ideas, too neatly. If liberals, or the very different European left turn to Othering the rightwing Populists – and why not? – it is because their policies place them as Corporate ventriloquists. Martijn Konings brings us back to the importance of economic rationality. He indicates how a 'commitment to the speculative logic of risk' continues to be attractive to some voters. It can, paradoxically, be worked into appeal to the People. While many during the Brexit Referendum claimed to defend our Home against the outside, the neo-liberal wing of the Brexit campaign offered to make Britain a free entrepreneur on the world stage. Trump embodies both at the same time: he is both a free-marketer and determined opponent of open markets.

Rethinking Democracy is thought provoking rather than answer-offering. The accelerating crisis of most of European social democracy is now provoking reflection and soul-searching. Recent elections have left Italian socialists of all stripes voiceless, the Dutch Labour Party has been overtaken by the Greens, and, after the long-signalled melt down of the Parliamentary left, the anti-populist President Macron and his La République en marche (LRM) hold all the reins of power. There is much to think about.

**Duncan Bowie**  
on religious  
socialists

**The Labour Church**  
**Neil Johnson**  
**Routledge £115**

This is the first monograph on the Labour Church, the movement established by John Trevor which flourished in Manchester and the north West of England in the 1890's and early 1900's. There have been two previous PhD's on the subject – one by D F Summers in 1858 and one by Jacqueline Turner in 2010 – Johnson draws heavily on the former and to a lesser extent on the latter. There have also been chapters on Trevor and the Labour Church in what in my view are the best studies of the early British labour movement – Stanley Pierson's 1973 volume on Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism (not referenced by Johnson) and Marc Bevir's 2011 study on The Making of British Socialism. Peter d'A Jones' 1968 The Christian Socialist Revival and Leonard Smith's 1993 Religion and the Rise of Labour also include material on the Labour Church.

My main difficulty with the book is that Johnson, who is a Methodist Minister in Birmingham, seeks to locate his study, not within the context of the early labour movement or within the context of late Victorian Christian socialism, but within a theological context. Johnson invents the term 'theological socialism' to describe Trevor's religious views and 'theological socialists' to describe the Labour Church activists. The problem is this term was never used by either Trevor or other Labour Church members. Trevor, like many of his colleagues, was actually a unitarian Minister and maintained links with that church. His theology, so far as that existed – was that 'God was in the labour movement'. The Labour Church was established as a meeting place for religious socialists to participate in the emergent labour movement – and to meet on Sundays. The Church had a hymn book which relied more on Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter than on any specific Christian tradition and, like the unitarians was religious without any creed or ritual and with little mention of either 'God' or 'Jesus'.

## Theological Socialism

Trevor's religious spirit was very pluralist, while some of his colleagues focused their attention on more secular aspects – Fred Brocklehurst was to have a central role in the founding of the Independent Labour Party, while the Rev Philip Wicksteed, another unitarian minister who took a leading role within the early years of the Labour Church, focused on developing a Christian egalitarian economics. In the longer-term Brocklehurst and Wicksteed had much greater impact on the wider labour movement than did Trevor, who aban-

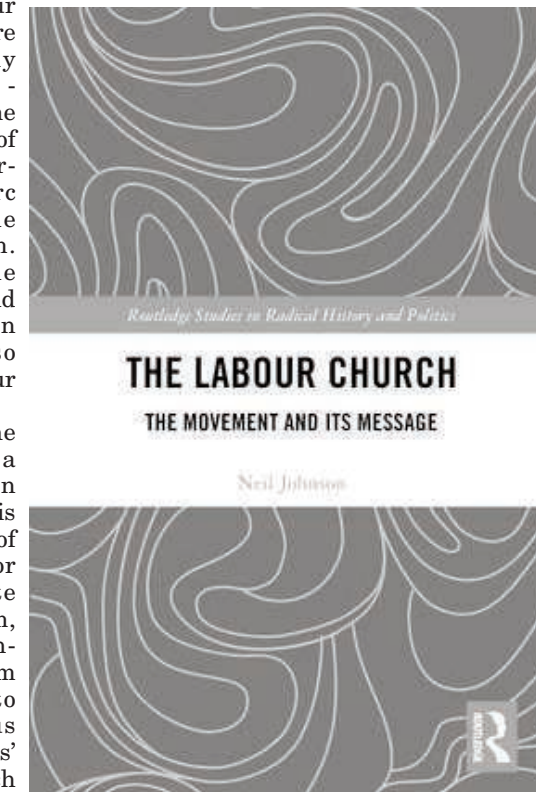
Church relative to other Christian socialist groupings. Firstly, its northern base and the fact that it was a working-class organisation operating independently of both established religious institutions and largely free of any links to the intellectual liberal Christian reformers of London and Oxford. More surprisingly, he does not examine the Labour Church's links to the Unitarian Church or discuss how Trevor's religious views diverged from unitarianism, if they did at all. The Labour Church was not about theological differences but

was primarily an organisational structure within which socialists were free to express religious views, or to put it a different way, that people with religious views were free to express socialist views.

In his conclusion, Johnson recognises that the Labour Church was in practice a somewhat undefined religious component within a much wider and disperse range of ethical socialisms in the period studied, a range which included secular and rationalist elements. This rather negates his whole thesis that there was a distinctive 'theological socialism'. Labour Church members had multiple affiliations and political and religious trajectories.

The final sections of the book seek to relate the discussion to contemporary politics by pointing

out that a range of contemporary politicians also have religious beliefs, going so far to reference not only Tony Blair, John Smith, Gordon Brown, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer, Tony Benn, Salma Yaqoob (of RESPECT), and Sadiq Khan, but also mentioning Margaret Thatcher, David Cameron and Theresa May, the Dalai Lama and the Ba'ath Socialists (though not naming Saddam Hussein). I am unclear what point Johnson is trying to make here, other than that a range of politicians look to religious inspiration – unfortunately, religion does not necessarily make you a socialist. Overall a disappointing and at times frustrating book.





## BOOK REVIEWS

## Walt Whitman and British Socialism

**Paul Salvesson**  
on an  
inspirational  
poet



**Paul Salvesson's**  
book *With Walt Whitman in Bolton: spirituality, sex and socialism* is available price £9.90 including post and packing. See [www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)

**Walt Whitman and British Socialism**  
**Kirsten Harris**  
**Routledge**

The contribution to the development of British socialism by the great American poet Walt Whitman, (1819-92) has been sadly neglected by historians. Whilst the influence of William Morris has been rightly celebrated, the immense impact of the writings, and philosophy, of 'the good, gray poet' has gone virtually unnoticed by contemporary accounts of early socialism. So Kirsten Harris' study is a very welcome addition to the history of the broader radical history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

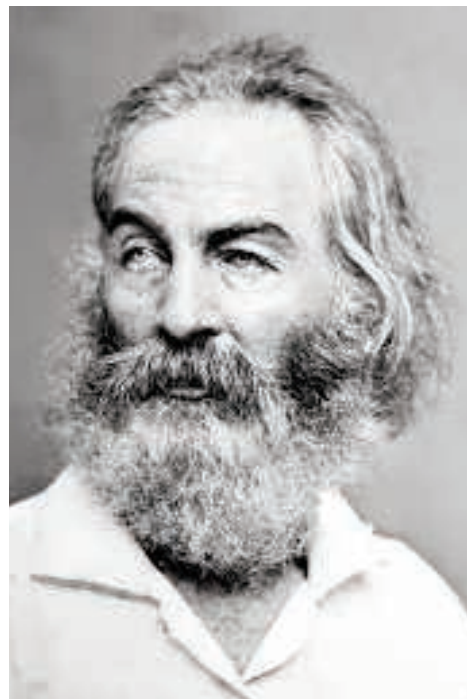
By the time of his death in 1892, Whitman was lauded as one of the great influences on that 'ethical socialism' which was exemplified by figures such as Keir Hardie, the Glasiers and Robert Blatchford. Its institutional base was the Independent Labour Party and the wide network of Clarion clubs, the Labour Church movement and very localised groups and clubs.

Harris' book is primarily an intellectual history and she carefully unpicks the various philosophical strands that permeated Whitman's own work, including eastern religious thought, and its links to more well-known figures on the British left including Edward Carpenter, whom many saw as 'The English Whitman'. At the same time, Whitman's celebration of 'manly love' made him an appealing figure to the broad, but often submerged, gay men's culture of the late 19th century of which Carpenter was part.

Much of the credit for disseminating Whitman's ideas and poetry in Britain was down to a remarkable figure called James William Wallace who lived a modest existence in Bolton for much of his life. Harris devotes a chapter to Wallace and the Bolton 'Whitmanites'. Wallace became a member of the ILP's National Administrative Council and used the position to promote the importance of Whitman's teaching to the British left. He was a close

friend of the Glasiers – Bruce and his wife Katherine. Bruce edited The Labour Leader for many years and Wallace used the paper to promote a Whitmanite sense of democracy, comradeship and love of the open air.

Wallace, and his close friend Dr Johnston, a Bolton GP were regular visitors to Edward Carpenter at his home on the outskirts of Sheffield, and Carpenter reciprocated



by attending the celebrations of Whitman's birthday on May 31st, which were revived by local socialists in the 1980s and continue to this day.

Perhaps the most influential publication of the British left in the 1890s and early 1900s was Robert Blatchford's Clarion, initially published in Manchester. Wallace cultivated Blatchford and persuaded him to promote Whitman as one of the great 'prophets' of the new enlightened age of socialism. The paper spawned an array of cultural and social institutions whose relevance to Whitman's idea of loving comradeship and the outdoors were a perfect blend: the cycling and walking clubs, field naturalists, but also choirs and club houses.

Whilst Wallace and his Bolton 'Whitmanites' were an entirely male group at first, female socialists including Katherine Glasier and Caroline Martyn became a

part of the wider circle. Both were well-known figures on the socialist lecturing circuit, with Caroline wearing herself out by the strain of her incessant travelling. She died in Dundee whilst visiting female jute workers. She had earlier written to Wallace saying "that the great joy of Walt Whitman's teaching has not been the capacity to love but the strength to express it". Harris notes that Martyn's religious socialism was far from conventional, with strong elements of mysticism influenced by Whitman.

The late 19th century saw a blossoming of the socialist press and Harris devotes a fascinating chapter to its treatment of Whitman. Whilst national publications such as Labour Leader, Clarion, Commonweal and Justice were of great importance, Harris recognises the perhaps even greater influence of very local, or regional, publications. Allen Clarke's Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly ran from 1896 to 1908 (with various changes of name) and circulated in the textile areas of Lancashire and the West Riding. It had a circulation at its peak of around 35,000 but would have been read by many more. Clarke used every opportunity to promote Whitman and his poetry. In the August 8th 1896 issue he urged his readers to study Whitman's "strange yet beautiful and homely poetry." Similarly, papers like Rochdale Labour Journal, The Bolton Socialist, Bradford Forward and Keighley Labour News helped spread the word to a predominantly working class readership.

Whitman didn't consider himself a socialist. His political core was that of a radical democrat, taking shape before socialism came to the United States. Yet his followers, such as Horace Traubel and J W Lloyd were libertarian socialists and in many cases overtly anarchist. He was admired by Emma Goldman, Max Berkman and Eugene Debs. These towering figures of the American left corresponded with the English Whitmanites and some of them, including Lloyd, visited the Bolton group.

Harris has done a fine job in rescuing an important but neglected current of ideas that helped shape British socialism in the 20th century.

**Stephen Marks**  
on  
participatory  
economics



**A new politics from the left**  
**Hilary Wainwright**  
**Polity Press £9.99**

Ever since the days of the Lucas workers' corporate plan in the 1970s and her work in the Popular Planning Unit at Ken Livingstone's GLC, Hilary Wainwright has pioneered and expounded a radical version of 'socialism from below'.

She believes as she put it in her latest book, that 'The daily flow of the production of meanings and problem-solving knowledge, like the development of product designs or of new ways of organising, is often the result of serendipity, intuition and hunch and other forms of tacit knowledge which are often difficult to codify in statistical or other centralisable forms'.

This point has always been made, by free-market economists like Hayek, as an argument for the 'free market' and against the idea of an all-embracing plan. But this practical knowledge, Hilary insists, is collective and thus shareable and therefore 'a vital dimension of creative and also experimental collaboration'.

That, she argues is the basis of 'a new politics from the Left' where participatory economic decision-making can bring politics

and economics together in a new way, based on cultural, economic and cultural democracy.

But that all sounds rather fluffy. What is the programmatic political conclusion? Well the whole point is that it can't be produced in a ready-made manifesto. As the man said, you can't, or shouldn't, write 'recipes for the cookshops of the future'.

But she takes us through examples aplenty, from the oft-quoted Lucas Plan through Newcastle Unison members promoting, with temporary success, democratic alternatives to privatisation in the early 2000's. We are also taken on a rather breathless European and world tour from radical municipalities in Europe to participatory budgeting and La Via Campesina in Brazil.

But how does this work out at the level of government? All too often, as Hilary illustrates, the promise is to use elected office to empower movements at the base. But in practice the two push in opposite directions with the movements relegated to a walk-on role in support of those elected to government.

How can this dilemma be resolved in the case of the Labour Party? She notes that since the election one section of the PLP has been supportive of Corbyn's

leadership; impressed by his ability to win votes, and previously supportive of his policies but sceptical of his electability.

They are now 'on side' - for the moment. But a Blairite hard core remains intransigent. Hilary leaves the question open, and as we have seen, it continues to unfold. Its resolution is linked to a second question - can Momentum combine 'the internally oriented process of changing the Labour Party...with the outward-reaching engagement with...social movements and productive civil initiatives...?'.

On this she is optimistic. But surely the key to success is to combine both strategies. The social movements - activists for the low-paid, black and minority ethnic activists, workplace trade unionists and campaigners for employment rights and the living wage - can and must be brought into the party and transform it into a space where the machinations of the Blairite hard-core will find no foothold or echo.

Is this Hilary's conclusion? She leaves it to the reader; 'Shutting up is not always my strong point but I think now is the time to practice what I propose, to let go and leave the development of a new politics to you, the reader'.

## Turning things around

**Nigel Watt**  
on a  
guide for  
action

**Making Africa Work, a Handbook**  
**Greg Mills, Jeffrey Herebst, Olusegun Obasanjo and Dickie Davis.**  
**Hurst £16.99**

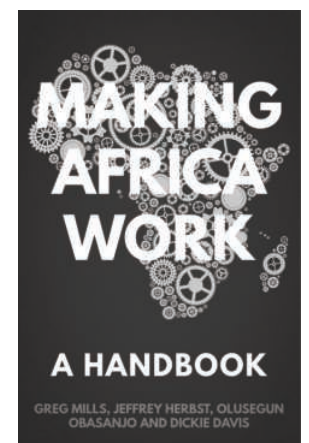
Africa seemed to be doing well in the early 2000's due to high commodity prices and a lot of Chinese investment. Today most African countries are doing worse than those in other continents. This book attempts to be a practical guide to how to turn things around with case studies of how, for example, Vietnam, Mexico, Panama have done it. The book gives solid background on factors such as the rapid population growth, urbanisation, infrastructure and the usefulness of democracy. When prescribing the 'cure' each chapter starts with 'five steps to success,' summarising the more detailed recommendations.

While it is true that economic

progress has been held back by poor leadership, red tape, inefficiency and corruption the proposed remedies suggest that the way forward has to be through opening up to private enterprise based often on foreign investment. There is not much examination as to whether a reformed and better organised state role could work. There is recognition of some significant African achievements such as the Kenyan invention and development of M-Pesa, the money transfer system using mobile phones. The authors believe that democracy helps promote good development while also noting the 'Singapore' option of enlightened despotism which has brought progress to Rwanda and Ethiopia.

It is interesting that praise for this book comes from opposition leaders in Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe and from Joyce Banda,

ex-President of Malawi, who wished she had it when she was president. The book is meant to be a guide for action and if it is used intelligently by African governments and agencies it could result in some positive outcomes. Let's hope so.





## BOOK REVIEWS

# Death of social democracy?

**Marina  
Prentoulis**  
on  
premature  
burials

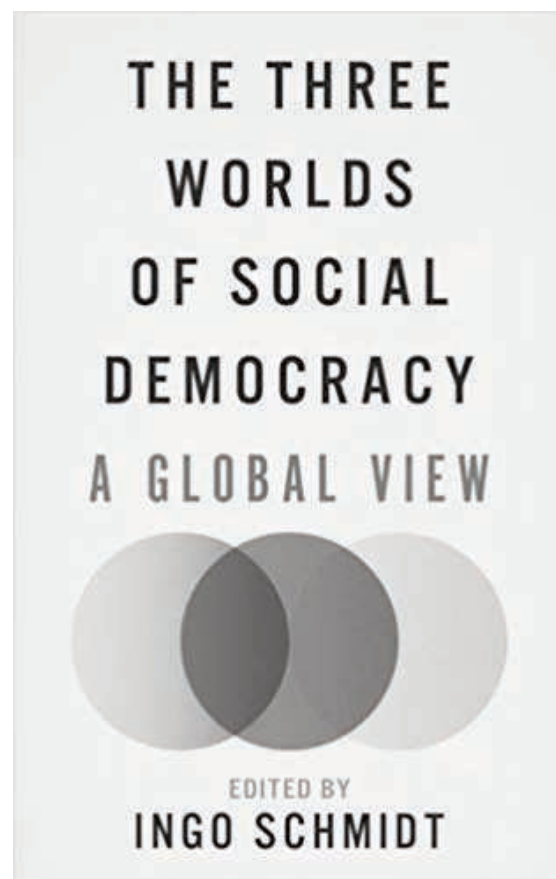
**Three Worlds of Social Democracy: A Global view**  
Ingo Schmidt (ed.)  
Pluto £19.99

Since the 1990s sociologists and political theorists declare the death of social democracy. Ralf Dahrendorf announced 'the end of the social-democratic century' in 1992 because according to him the social-democratic parties had succeeded in fulfilling most of their aims. The sociologist Claus Offe arrives at the same conclusion but through a different reasoning: his argument is that this end is due to the immense pressure of the welfare state from the mid 1970s. His position becomes more topical after the German election in September 2017, which gave the SPD (Social Democratic Party) its worst result since the Second World War and more crucially, it forced the party to face a huge dilemma over its involvement in another Grand Coalition with the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union).

Rejecting the coalition and having a new election would strengthen the right wing and especially the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Accepting it, allows the AfD to be the official opposition party. But more importantly for the SPD, it does not allow for a clean break from the previous Merkel administrations. The latter is what a significant part of the party's grassroots want, especially the young: to confront the Conservatives head on. Damned if you do, damned if you don't and damned it is, as the agreed coalition secures Merkel a fourth term in power.

As the 'death of social democracy' becomes the most widely circulated banality within academic and political circles and the a-historical 'Pasokification' concept works as a welcomed excuse for avoiding a nuanced discussion and criticism, Ingo Schmidt's edited volume *The Three Worlds of Social Democracy* is an excellent read engaging an impressive range of authors. They are able to

assess the historical development of social democracy in different national contexts, from Western European countries like France and Norway, to European and non-European peripheries like Greece, Slovenia and Chile, to the emerging regional powers like India and Brazil. This allows for a sophisticated discussion which is aware of the different strands within social democracy and willing to engage with alternatives for the future.



In the introduction, the editor outlines the different responses of social democracy from the 1980s onwards. In other words, the responses to the Reagan/Thatcherite offensives of neoliberal globalization, which divided social democrats into left wingers focussing their energies on defending what was left of the welfare state and right wingers accepting the neoliberal logic. The chapters that follow examine the different national contexts before the general central thesis of the book: "These changes led to a dramatic internal shift from reformist socialists whose defence of the Keynesian welfare state appeared both defensive and

backward, to capitalist reformers, whose Third Way message sounded fresh and open to the future".

The geographical scope of the chapters is impressive and cannot be discussed here, nevertheless there are some examples from the European periphery which demonstrate how the book responds to contemporary challenges. In the introduction the editor discusses how in Eastern Europe Stalinist rule effectively discredited all kinds of left wing politics and the discontent in these countries, was ultimately articulated in nationalist terms. Examining closely the process of this articulation is crucial in understanding the contemporary politics of the Visegrad group that divide Europe.

Equally significant is the understanding of the exceptions. Why for example, countries like Slovenia did not follow this path and instead, managed to articulate left alternatives. Anej Korsika's chapter explains the particularity of Slovenia, compared with the bloody experience of the other ex-Yugoslavian republics, which put Slovenia in a different trajectory. This trajectory led to the formation of IDS (Initiative for Democratic Socialism) and a United Left Coalition in 2014, with a successful (even if limited) parliamentary presence but with long term goals for transforming Slovenian society.

Similarly, the chapter on Greece by John Milios, offers an historically grounded interpretation regarding the crisis of PASOK and the politics of SYRIZA. According to the author, both political currents, that of PASOK and that of the Communist parties of Greece, self-annulled their socialist rhetoric by remaining within the 'dependence' and 'inadequate development' of Greek capitalism discourse. Even if one disagrees with some of the arguments, the historically grounded analysis furthers a more sophisticated debate not only of what has already happened but also on what a left alternative may look like.

# Scrutinising autocracy

**Mary  
Southcott**  
on  
Erdogan's  
Turkey

**The New Turkey and Its Discontents**  
Simon A Waldman & Emre Caliskan  
Hurst £14.99

Anyone watching what is happening in the Middle East, with Russia, Iran and Turkey meeting together; Russia selling Turkey S400 missiles; Theresa May's early visit to Turkey to sell arms; Trump's reversal of US support of the Kurdish YPG for fighting ISIS, now reversed to take out what they say are Assad's chemical weapons; leaving Syria in bits, creating more refugees than EU has paid Turkey to keep within its borders; or who question either the UK's or Turkey's membership of NATO, should read this book.

The Introduction distinguishes between the deep state (a phrase the authors do not like) and the weak state, they believe Turkey to be, and the Conclusion sets out possible futures. The intervening seven chapters, with great titles, cover *The General's Last Sigh* (the Military, the coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980 and the Erkenekon trials); *The Irresistible Rise of the AKP* (the Justice and Development Party from its roots in the Islamist Welfare Party); *Erdogan's Way* (Majoritarianism, Paternalism and Authoritarianism); *Breaking the News* (difficulties of any independent journalism); *the Politics of Ecekondu* (settlements around the main cities and the role of urban planning); *Waltzing with Ocalan* (the Kurdish Question); and *Davutoglu's Rhythmic Diplomacy* (Turkey's very own Kissinger whose book, *Strategic Depth*, foresaw zero problems with Turkey's neighbours, Turkey as a model for Islamic Democracy, the Arab Spring, which turned into a winter, and eventually Davutoglu's sacking as Prime Minister).

The book starts with an invaluable List of Abbreviations and Organisation, a Timeline of Key Events and a List of Key Figures and finishes with over a hundred pages of Notes, Biography and Index. These are worthwhile not just to Turkey watchers or other readers of this book but for following the events unfolding in Syria, with the Kurds, Cyprus and relationships with Russia, Iran and Israel.

For those who want Turkey's back-story, rather than more recent events, this book explains its transmogrification from Kemalist secular to a virtual Islamic (some say fascist) state. One can feel the tensions this is causing not only for secular Turkish citizens, but Turkish Kurds and Turkish Cypriots, as first Prime Minister and now

the elections change anything, the authors believe "Turkey will still face the problems: the Kurdish question, the nature of the future constitution, troubled neighbourhood policies and international relations, identity politics, secular-religious divides and majoritarian-style politics." Consensus-based politics, a new Turkey, vibrant, dynamic, modern, inclusive, democratic and secular, seem further away.

Two recent events illustrate how Turkey is seen from up close. In January when Afrika newspaper editor, Shener Levent, in northern Nicosia, likened Turkey's invasion of Afrin to the 1974 events in Cyprus, Erdogan said his supporters on the island knew what to do. They attacked and would have killed the journalists. The police under Turkey's military control at first ignored the Turkish Cypriot Leader, Mustafa Akinci when he tried to help. The subsequent demonstration by thousands of Turkish Cypriots for peace, democracy and freedom of the press showed the distinction between their secularism and the existing attitude to the rule of law and democracy in today's Turkey.

The spat with Israel is deeply ironic. President Erdogan took the side of Palestinian demonstrators calling Israeli terrorists. Netanyahu's response was "He who occupies northern Cyprus, encroaches on Kurdish territory and massacres civilians in Afrin cannot preach to us on values and morals."

Turkey does not get the Western scrutiny it deserves, although Gezi Park protests in 2013 perhaps marks a threshold before which Turkey was simply a loyal NATO member excused for things found unacceptable elsewhere. Now other considerations seem to weigh more: its human rights record, its corruption, its support for ISIS against Assad, and then joining the joint bombing of ISIS as an excuse to bomb the Kurds, and the Kurdish militia in Syria, armed and trained by the US, hated by Turkey because of their close ties with the PKK. This book can only help update our views of today's Turkey and perhaps even push it in a democratic direction.



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has to seek support from the fascist MHP party to become the first elected President with executive powers in the snap elections on 24 June 2018. These were scheduled for 2019 or even the second anniversary of the 15 July 2016 coup, blamed on Fethullah Gulen, who remains unextradited in the USA. The State of Emergency was imposed then and is still being extended.

Despite its usefulness this book basically ends with that coup. The authors say: "No freedom of expression has been more stifled in Turkey than that of the press." Educated Turks are talking about leaving their country. When Ataturk said a Turk is a Turk he was talking about moving together as equal Turkish citizens. His secularism was underpinned by the military. Now we have attacks not just on Kurdish citizens and institutions but the Alevis, anything but the Sunni Muslim religion. When and if



## VIEW FROM STRASBOURG



## No laughing matter

Julie Ward on the sick comedy act from David Davis and co

Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for North West England

The European Parliament plays a key role in assessing the progress of the Brexit negotiations, scrutinising the Commission proposals and the subsequent Council conclusions. Any final deal will come before myself and the 750 other MEPs from the 28 Member States for approval. This is a fact that few British people seem to be aware of. At each stage of the process the European Parliament's Brexit co-ordinator, Guy Verhofstadt MEP, together with Danuta Hubner MEP, Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, and the Brexit Working Group comprising representatives from five of the eight political groups, meet to communicate concerns and discuss new developments with each other and with the wider parliament in order to arrive at a common position.

The EU established its priorities for the negotiations early on and communicated its red lines but David Davis doesn't seem to be listening. He arrives in Brussels late and ill-prepared and leaves early. A taxi driver told me how much he admired Barnier's team who turn up well-prepared, having done their homework and with reams of documents.

May herself is inconsistent, saying one thing to appease EU officials and contradicting herself as soon as she is back in London, as she did regarding her recent commitment to honour the divorce bill - or not as it later seemed. Meanwhile, Boris

Johnson's crass and careless comments about the Irish border have rightly raised alarm bells at home and abroad. British politi-



Barnier &amp; Davis-nothing to grin about

cians of all colours should go back to school and learn their history - the EU won the Nobel Peace in 1952 for presiding over six decades of relative stability after the obscenities of two world wars. Whilst Eurosceptics joke about this, Europeans remain proud of the achievement. It must be remembered that more than 3500 people were killed in 'the troubles' and Brexit is now the greatest threat to that peace.

Despite some concerning election results in Italy, Austria and Hungary recently, the EU 27 are largely united behind Barnier and his team, and the European Parliament's resolutions tend to reflect this consolidated position. However, individual sensitivities can influence voting positions. Within the EPLP we discuss whether our position is in line with the Labour Party's position.

To date there have been four European Parliament resolutions on the Brexit negotiations, each coming swiftly after the EU-UK negotiation rounds. I chose to go against the EPLP whip in the December 2017 resolution and registered an abstention as I was concerned that the negotiations had not sufficiently addressed the citizenship rights of certain groups of vulnerable children, e.g. foster children. My punishment was a short meeting but when Tory MEPs Richard Ashworth and Julie Girling defied their

whip they were summarily left out in the cold, demonised on the front pages of the Tory newspapers and have subsequently joined the centre-right EPP group. The threat to citizens rights continue to concern many of us greatly. The Petitions Committee regularly hears heart-breaking and complex cases of people whose lives have been thrown into chaos as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU. To try and strengthen support for citizens rights I have therefore facilitated the establishment of a Citizens Rights Friendship Group which is gathering support for a European Green Card proposal and consolidating relationships with supportive MEPs from many different groups and from other Member States.

Whilst the most recent European Parliament resolution supported the Commission proposal to create a framework for developing a new relationship with the UK, David Davis once again jumped the gun and suggested trade negotiators get themselves over to Brussels to nail down an agreement. He was promptly put in his place by Barnier whose red lines stay put. Observing the ignorance and incompetence of the UK government is sometimes like watching a comedy series, except that the joke is ultimately on all of us and it is no laughing matter. **C**

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