

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#282 September/October 2016

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Labour: self-harming



John Palmer

Europe post Brexit

Leonie Cooper AM

Kahn's 100 days

Peter Kenyon

Labour's uncivil war

Wendy Pettifer

Calais jungle

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Citizen's Convention

Julie Ward MEP

Youth in Europe

plus Greenwatch,

Points and Crossings,

Youth View, film and

book reviews

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CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

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

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

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

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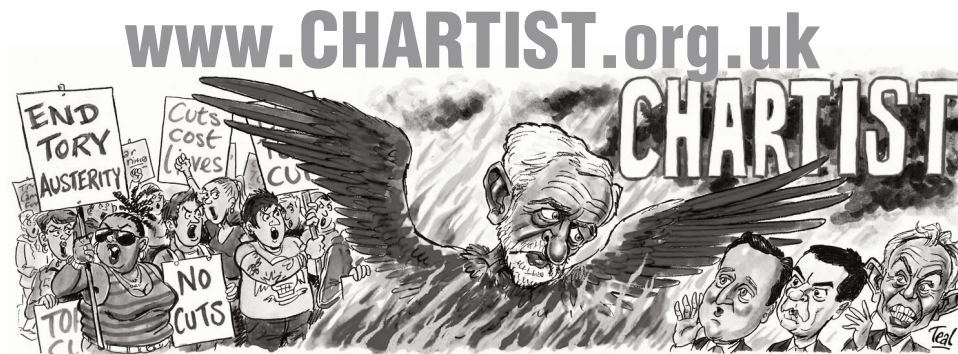
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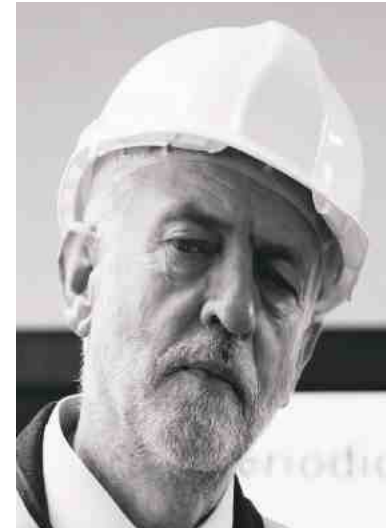
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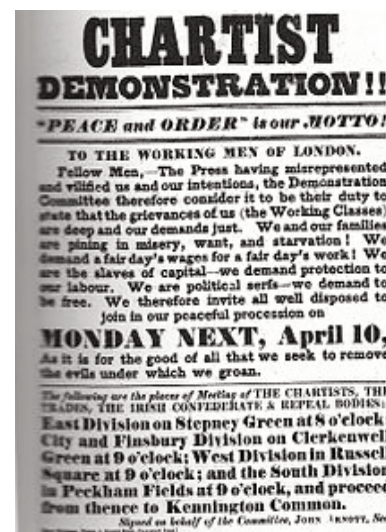
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Jeremy Corbyn prepares - page 8-9



Tories new leader - page 11



Chartist opportunity - pages 22-23

FEATURES

8

LABOUR: SELF-HARMING

Peter Kenyon suggests some remedies

10

LABOUR POLICYMAKING

Duncan Bowie calls for an end to personality politics

11

TORIES UNDER MAY

David Lister analyses Labour's challenge

12

LABOUR CHOICES

Trevor Fisher explores the scope for peaceful co-existence

13

LONDON LABOUR MAYOR

Leonie Cooper AM sees hope after his first 100 days

14

TAX HAVEN UK

Prem Sikka exposes the Tories' economic and financial ambition

15

BREXIT AND THE YOUNG

Julie Ward MEP ponders their future

16

BREXIT OPTIONS

John Palmer sets out some goals for the European left

18

BANKERS OPERATING BLIND

Frank Lee challenges the financial elite and wonders

19

RACISM POST-BREXIT

Andy Gregg reports on rising intolerance

20

JUNGLE BEHAVIOUR

Wendy Pettifer reports from Calais

22

CITIZEN'S CONVENTION

Stuart White says it's time has come

24

US PRESIDENTIALS

Paul Garver on Clinton and the Sanders' aftershock



Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
Number 282 September/October 2016

REGULARS

4

OUR HISTORY - 68

Clifford Allen - Socialism and the Next Labour Government (1925)

5

EDITORIAL

Chartist sticks with Corbyn for best chance of success against Tories

6

POINTS AND CROSSINGS

Paul Salveson on the Northern Powerhouse Tory style

7

GREENWATCH

Dave Toke on possible Brexit environmental gains for the EU

25

FILM REVIEW

Patrick Mulcahy on *The Infiltrator*

26

BOOK REVIEWS

Frank Lee on Europe, Duncan Bowie on Libya, socialists and nationalists and Russian Civil Wars, James Grayson on peace, Nigel Watt on African democracy, Mike Davis on Louise Michel and Soviet children's books, John Sunderland on Debt or democracy, and Brian O'Leary on Podemos

32

YOUTH VIEW

Harry Hayball on Labour's future

OUR HISTORY - 68

Clifford Allen - Socialism And The Next Labour Government (1925)

Clifford Allen was leader of the Independent Labour Party. A Fabian at Cambridge University, in 1912 he became President of the University Socialist Federation. Allen was general manager and then editor of the Labour Party's Daily Citizen.

In 1914, he took an anti-war position and helped to form the No-Conscription Fellowship, of which he became President. A conscientious objector, he was imprisoned several times and his health never fully recovered. After the war he was active in the guild socialist movement and appointed ILP treasurer, becoming chairman in 1923. In this role he was active in the Labour and Socialist Union which in May 1923 had reunited with the Vienna Union (or Two and a Half International) of which the ILP had been a member. Allen was to resign as ILP chair in October 1925, as the ILP became dominated by James Maxton and his group of Glasgow MPs. Allen had worked closely with Ramsay MacDonald and supported MacDonald when he formed the National Government in August 1931. He was rewarded with a peerage and was subsequently one of the founders of the cross-party Next Five Years group working with the young Harold MacMillan and Alfred Barratt Brown of Ruskin College to support national economic planning. As a pacifist, he was active in the League of Nations Union and the National Peace Council and in 1938 a supporter of Neville Chamberlain's attempts to avoid war with Germany. A biography of Allen, *The Open Conspirator*, was published by Arthur



Marwick in 1964. In the following year, a collection of his writings and correspondence was published under the title *Plough my Own Furrow* by Martin Gilbert:

"It is quite legitimate to assert that mankind is too selfish, too foolish, too cruel, too cynical for any speedy attempt to change its manner of life, or to replace suffering with happiness. For all I know that may be true, but we at least, cannot succumb to the council of despair. Is it entirely false or foolish to suggest that we happen by some favoured chance to be living at the moment when one stage of civilisation has exhausted itself, and when science and education demand rapid and immediate changes? If this be so, we can only fulfil our duty by accepting the situation forced upon us. We shall reject every political method but that of submitting to democracy the policy in which we believe. I think this favourable chance would not have come in one generation were it not for the hazard our leaders took when the Labour government was formed. The ultimate value of that bold decision depends on the use to which we now put the opportunity thus created. It may be that those who think in this way have no right to win a hearing in the world of practical politics, but at least we will declare our belief that Socialism could be accepted by this nation within our lifetime. Such a policy will require from us an utter rejection of all interest in politics as a means to personal power; it will involve a life of personal sincerity, which is not often found in the politics of any party; it will, above all things, require charity between ourselves." **C**

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For Corbyn and unity

As the gloss of Olympic success for Team GB wears off the reality of Britain as a deeply divided nation will begin to show through. The EU referendum revealed the divide. Fundamentally it is a division of wealth and power. Huge and damaging inequalities between the rich 1% and the many, between north and south, young and old, women and men are being deepened by this government.

The Brexit result was more about the 'left behinds' using the vote to register a protest against a Tory government in cahoots with the establishment than about the EU. It was a vote against Cameron and co who span a negative narrative of economic doom if we didn't back the EU. Many voted out because they were conned by the Brexiter's promise that £millions would flow into the NHS, a fear of immigration or because that found themselves powerless in the face of remote Westminster and Brussels politicians.

While the Tories were and remain deeply divided, new leader and prime minister Theresa May has cleverly put the Brexit architects (Boris Johnson, Liam Fox, David Davis) in the hot seat and papered over battle wounds. Labour too is deeply divided. Labour's divisions are about the kind of party we need in the 21C and the kind of democratic socialist politics that can overcome the deepening inequalities that scar modern Britain.

We have been plunged into an unnecessary leadership contest with Owen Smith as the ABC (Anyone But Corbyn) flag bearer. Labour is now the biggest party in Europe, with well over 500,000 members, almost treble the tally before Jeremy Corbyn. There is enormous enthusiasm for a modern socialist Labour Party.

Despite huge disenfranchisement of perhaps 175,000 members who joined since 12 January 2016 and many other supporters, including Ronnie Draper, general secretary and his deputy John Dunn, of the Baker's Union, Corbyn is making the running in the leadership stakes.

He has faced a vote of no confidence from the PLP, accusations of encouraging Trotskyist entryism from Deputy Tom Watson, charges of unelectability from Owen Smith and a sizeable section of the PLP.

However it is Corbyn who has inspired. Thousands have attended his rallies up and down the country with a majority of pundits agreeing he has had the upper hand in the TV debates with the challenger. Smith has scored some own goals most notably in implying South Wales has taken too many refugees and his sideswipe that Corbyn is a lunatic.

The Corbyn team are coming up with answers that are popular and vote winning: investment in infrastructure to create sustainable jobs and an end to failing austerity; nationalisation of key public services, particularly rail as franchises expire; a worker's voice in the workplace; rebuilding public services and rejecting privatising profiteers, especially in the NHS and education with an end to academies and grammar schools (as embraced by Theresa May), internationalism based on peace not militarist adventurism.

We backed Corbyn last time and back him again this time. But we do not do so without criticism.

Duncan Bowie echoes comments by Owen Jones that Corbyn needs to open up the policy making process to party members and specialists in the fields of public policy and on the international front, especially Europe, in the way John McDonnell has begun with economic policy. In our last issue and this Peter Kenyon explains why building bridges and conciliation has to be the route to rebuilding unity within the PLP. A united shadow cabinet is a key part of the strategy for winning. And yes, the building of a strong social movement, linked to Labour, that can reach out to alienated communities, rebuild trust in politics and nurture hope in the transformative power of a Labour party and government that puts people before profit.

Theresa May is cynically playing on the fears of the disaffected working class, many of whom have voted Labour but voted Brexit, by seeking to reposition the Tories as the Party of the disenfranchised against the 'privileged few'. She will play the populist card—scrapping the Human Rights Act, getting tough with workers and unions, tightening up on immigration and denying resident European workers' rights.

Most recently we have the announcement of a public services audit. This is eyewash to disguise the fact that billions have been cut from core services over the last six years with billions more 'cost savings' planned in the future. As Frank Lee shows the Tories economic strategy is in tatters with the new chancellor abandoning the deficit reduction targets. Prem Sikka reveals how the Tories are set on a race to the bottom where UK PLC is only top as a tax haven.

Fundamental questions of where Britain goes after the Brexit vote are posed by John Palmer. Labour has to steer a pro Europe course based on access to the single market and free movement of people as the key to economic advance. Julie Ward MEP, further illustrates why young people in particular have much to lose if Britain severs economic and cultural ties with the EU. The essential foundation for winning support for this direction will be upending the Tories, first in Parliament, on the streets, and then in elections.

Dave Lister makes clear that despite a leadership change the Tories are still the nasty party intent on making working people pay in every way for the mess they and their corporate mates have created. Andy Gregg explains why race hate crimes have been rising in the wake of the Brexit vote and why the government's approach to refugees is making matters worse. Wendy Pettifer, recently returned from the appalling Calais camp detaining thousands of refugees, describes conditions and how not one single unaccompanied child has yet been re-settled in the UK.

Whoever leads Labour will have a huge challenge in overturning the Tories at the next election, especially with the big losses in Scotland and upcoming boundary changes. We believe Jeremy Corbyn stands the best chance of putting Labour on the right tracks for victory. It won't be a short haul and the Party will need to come together and ditch all talk of splits if we are to win. **E**

The Party
will need
to come
together

Is the Northern Powerhouse running out of steam?

Paul Salveson
threatens
to eat his
cloth cap

Has Theresa May ditched George Osborne's pet project, the 'Northern Powerhouse'? Conflicting messages are coming out of government, with suggestions that the new PM wants a 'British Powerhouse' which would presumably mean that any 'special measures' to revive the North's economy will be diluted. At the same time, a new minister has been appointed for 'The Northern Powerhouse', in the shape of Tory right-winger Andrew Percy. But maybe it isn't quite dead – there's a black tie 'Northern Powerhouse Dinner' coming up in December. *Chartist* readers can get in quick and buy a ticket costing between £150 and £1,500. The pies had better be good, that's all I can say.

But doubts continue. Responding to suggestions that Osborne's baby might be unceremoniously drowned, Andy Burnham – Labour's choice for Greater Manchester mayor – said it would be 'the worst betrayal since Thatcher'. Warming to his new found regionalist faith, Burnham has more recently said that Labour should develop a stronger 'Northern' identity with the creation of a cabinet of (presumably Labour) Northern mayors, all of whom will, unsurprisingly, be men.

But let's assume 'The Northern Powerhouse' hasn't been killed off but was merely the victim of a blip following the creation of a new Government. Andrew Percy certainly thinks it's still alive, showing his commitment to the region by ostentatiously going for a burger at that well-known Northern institution, Macdonalds, on the first day of taking office. Of course it's all about signs and symbols, and Percy is trying hard to show his supposed working class credentials. If I hear another right-wing Tory going on about how s/he was brought up in muck and grime and lived in a council house, I'll eat my cloth cap.

I've argued in previous 'Points and Crossings' that there's the basis of a good idea in this 'Northern Powerhouse' mullarkey. The North does need additional investment to bridge the current yawning gap between what London gets and the rest of the UK. The large Brexit votes in run-down Northern towns should come as no big surprise. It was good to hear Ed Cox, who heads up one of the few Northern-based think tanks (CLES is another) saying "Any Northern Powerhouse has got to take very seriously the role of the five biggest cities but the research that we have taken shows that smaller towns and cities also have a very significant role to play."

Many of the large Northern towns, outside the

'charmed circle' of the five major cities (Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield) are in a dire state with boarded up shops, decaying infrastructure and an increasingly alienated population served by local authorities which have run out of money to provide even basic services. Will the Northern Powerhouse help them? It isn't showing much sign so far, though rail electrification is certainly welcome and long overdue. Maybe they should hold some black tie dinners in places like Dewsbury, Ashton-under-Lyne or Sunderland instead of smart hotels in Leeds and Manchester?

There's a fundamental problem with 'Northern Powerhouse', and that's its lack of democratic legitimacy. It's the brainchild of a Westminster politician and was enthusiastically adopted by Labour local government leaders. There are no avenues through which you can influence what this 'Powerhouse' is, other than perhaps hiring a dinner suit and hobnobbing with the politicians at that dinner I keep harping on about. This 'Powerhouse' lacks popular support, with many people 'up North' ignorant of its very existence. There are no democratic Northern institutions and the idea of a 'cabinet of the North' led by city mayors is not helpful. Not all parts of the North will have executive mayors and the model being imposed has weak accountability.

If we took Greater London as the model, at least the powerful

mayor has an elected assembly providing a degree of scrutiny. Not only that, it's elected by PR. True, the assembly should have more powers but at least it's a start and an intelligent mayor (as Sadiq Khan undoubtedly is) should use the assembly members as allies to extend and deepen his impact, not see them as interfering nuisances.

So why can't the people of Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire and Merseyside have directly-elected assemblies to provide greater accountability of their mayoralities? Basically, because it isn't in politicians' interest, either in Westminster or the mostly Labour-led Northern cities. Particularly if there were assemblies elected by PR (and it would be hard to get away with doing it any other way), the results could not be relied upon. As it is, short of an earthquake (and they do happen), we'll have Labour mayors in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and South Yorkshire, working with Labour leaders of the local authorities in their areas. Whoever else is 'empowered', it won't be the disaffected communities of Northern towns and cities. **C**



Northern Powerhouse: Tory style, shiny, but no brass

Dave Toke
sees
some rays
of hope

Always look on the bright side of life' was a song associated with the 'Life of Brian' (and within the Labour Party these days of course, but I won't go into that now). So what's good about Brexit? Well, it might be a crushing blow to our British economy and environmental laws, but in other ways it might actually help.....

One way Brexit will definitely help is that the green interest groups will find it easier to get their way on various environmental issues in EU institutions. The UK won't be around to perform their usual watering-down role! Take the issue of air pollution. The UK has been an opponent of tightening up EU air pollution regulations. As *the Guardian* reported on June 3rd this year; 'EU states have agreed to water down a proposed law aimed at halving the number of deaths from air pollution within 15 years, after intense lobbying from the UK that cross-party MEPs have condemned as "appalling"...Some 14,000 people will die prematurely every year across Europe from 2030 as a result, if the weakened proposal is implemented, according to figures cited by the environment commissioner, Karmenu Vella.'

Then there is the issue of chemicals which scientists say are killing bees. The EU banned farmers using neocontinoids in 2014, and bees are said now to be recovering, but the UK dragged its feet at first allowing the NFU to use the chemicals in 2015. In the USA the chemicals are still used widely and bee numbers are declining. In the UK the number of bees declined by 15 per cent in 2015 according to the Beekeepers Association, continuing a trend that has set in for many years.

Under pressure from the NFU the Government has allowed farmers to carry on using these chemicals. Of course, once more over the cliff, our British lemming friends must go!

Then there is the issue of renewable energy targets. The UK, under great pressure, accepted the 2009 EU Renewable target which was set as a mandatory commitment for 2020. We're now set to get 30 per cent of our electricity from renewable energy by 2020, even if we haven't met our target from energy as a whole. However the UK Government has strongly resisted a further rigorous target for 2030. Clearly, without the UK, the EU could set a stronger renewable energy and energy

efficiency ambition!

Moreover, anti-nuclear greens may be cheered by news that Chinese investors in Hinkley C are spooked by financial instability in the UK and the declining value of the £ making it even less likely that the Hinkley C nuclear power development will go ahead ahead.

Now, think about it, under Brexit, the UK will have a bad environment. But at least it will be better in the rest of the EU. Progress in implementing a range of environmental initiatives in the EU will be a lot smoother and more effective. Indeed, if by some miracle the UK does remain inside the internal market, the UK will have to obey the EU environmental laws anyway, but won't be able to have any say in making them! Ideal, you could say.

But there is one pretty sure way in which the environment is likely to benefit from Brexit, and



Under Brexit, the UK will have a worse environment!

that is reducing UK energy consumption and thus reducing carbon emissions. That's because the Brexit-inspired reduction in economic growth will reduce energy consumption. Indeed, the Government will now find that the need to build new conventional power stations is much reduced or even abolished with Brexit. The UK's power demand has, in any case, been going down since

around 2005. Now it is set to continue to decline with slower economic growth, or even plummet with a recession. Not only will we need less power plant and coal and gas burning but people will not be able to afford to heat their own homes as much. Less energy consumption means lower carbon dioxide emissions - another environmental winner from Brexit. See a previous post for more details see link one*. But of course there is the 'piece de resistance', they say, in a language now increasingly banished from English schools. That is Brexit as a means to deter any other country from thinking about quitting the EU. With so much economic and political chaos in the UK, populist politicians who were thinking about asking for referendums about EU or euro membership are now forgetting the idea or having serious second thoughts.

So as the UK descends into political and economic chaos, think about the gains, the supreme sacrifice we are making in saving the EU from the English anti-green menace....not to mention reducing carbon emissions! **C**

*Link one: <http://realfeed-intariffs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/with-brexit-uk-may-not-need-any-more.html>

Labour Party uncivil war: will it ever end?

Peter Kenyon fears the prospects are slim

Labour's right-wing declared war on newly-elected Leader Jeremy Corbyn immediately after the official result was declared a year ago. It started with a warning from Lord Mandelson reported in *the Guardian* on 25 September 2015 by Nicholas Watt: 'The former minister and adviser to Tony Blair offers his view in a private paper that circulated to political associates last week in which he urges them to dig in for the "long haul". In his paper, Lord Mandelson writes: "We cannot be elected with Corbyn as leader. Nobody will replace him, though, until he demonstrates to the party his unelectability at the polls. In this sense, the public will decide Labour's future and it would be wrong to try and force this issue from within before the public have moved to a clear verdict."'

Even assuming Corbyn survives the last minute media barrage to unsettle Labour's internal electorate and secures a second Leadership election victory, his opponents will not accept the decision of party members in 2016, anymore than they did in 2015. They are not democratic socialists. The question for the rest of the party is how can electability be restored with battalions of snipers at large?

Team Corbyn has not covered itself in glory in its first year. The management of relations with the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Party General Secretary, party staff, policymaking and the media all pose questions.

As matters stand there are no means available to the Party to hold its elected representatives to account for damaging the reputation of the Labour Party or trashing the brand. That is what has been going on now relentlessly for a year by those on the right belittling Corbyn's achievements, ridiculing his standing and asserting that he is unelectable. If they succeed, the battle-lines will simply be redrawn and the conflict will continue from the left.

There have been calls by rea-

sonable voices from both sides of the leadership contest for the result to be accepted and the PLP to get back to the business of opposing the Tories. The first test of that resolve will be during the pre-Conference season Parliamentary session. Will the Labour front-bench have a full complement of spokespersons to take on the Tories? Will the Labour benches be full to cheer on Corbyn at the Despatch Box for Prime Minister's Questions? These are questions that every Constituency Labour Party with a sitting Labour MP could be putting directly to its elected representative now. This shouldn't have to be done. But how else can those who choose to ignore a democratic vote of eligible members, registered affiliates and supporters begin to be held to

In the light of PLP behaviours over the past 12 months, there is now a strong case for the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to address disciplinary requirements for members of the PLP both in the House of Commons and the Lords

account? MPs who fail to support the Party's elected leader are on strike. In any other working situation, they would get their pay docked.

But no. They claim they are not accountable to Labour Party members. They say they are accountable to the electorate. Wrong. With one or two exceptions (if that) there is not a single Labour MP who could resign from the party and seat, trigger a by-election, and secure re-election under another label. Legal regulation of political parties by the Electoral Commission under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 means politicians cannot play fast and loose with imitation party names that could mislead the electorate. Think of it as an anti-splitters charter. Events over the past 12 months have revived the issue of parliamentary candidate selection

and brought re-selection into sharp focus. Threats of de-selection are a very blunt weapon, a bit like waving one of those oversized foam rubber hands about in a crowd.

What is more worrying is that there are so many people obsessing about the electability of the Labour Party when Gordon Brown failed in 2010 and Ed Miliband failed in 2015. Now the Tories are hell-bent on rigging parliamentary boundaries in the wake of legislation passed with the help of the Liberal Democrats in the last Parliament. At the time of writing the Boundary Commission has just published its timetable for what in effect is the opening of another battlefield for internal squabbling in the Labour Party. Mainstream media (MSM) speculation is that up to 200 Labour seats will be affected – we only have 231 MPs. So a period of sober reflection would be helpful on that matter.

From a democratic socialist standpoint, the accountability of elected representatives is an unresolved matter. The original Chartists thought annual elections were the way forward. One of the oldest institutions in the UK with local authority responsibilities that kept to that pattern until 2004 was the City of London. But most members of the establishment generally scoff whenever that Chartist demand of the 19th century is resurrected. The Labour Party has very tight disciplinary requirements of its elected representatives in local government.

In the light of PLP behaviours over the past 12 months, there is now a strong case for the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to address disciplinary requirements for members of the PLP both in the House of Commons and the Lords.

The chances of that being progressed before or at the 2016 Labour Conference are small. Not least because the NEC is finely balanced in its allegiances. New members (including the two extra pro-Corbyn supporters in the constituency section) do not take

their seats until the last full day of Conference. So they can play no part in decisions either before or during Conference itself.

There may, however, be a case for a motion to be tabled and debated at Conference about members' expectations of the PLP in future.

Going back to the mistakes made by Team Corbyn in the past 12 months, the following issues loom large:

- messages
- media management
- PLP relations
- conduct of Shadow Cabinet business

It seems clear, at least to this correspondent, that a Corbyn 'business as usual' stance is not on option. Winning back the readiness of the bulk of the 172 Labour MPs, who expressed 'no confidence' in his leadership, to support the frontbench will require changes in methods of working. Corbyn has got to get out of the bunker and into the tea-rooms. Shadow Cabinets will have to be conducted collegiately. Policy will have to be discussed and debated much more readily.

Part of Blair's legacy was accumulating too much power in the Leader's office at the expense of the General Secretary, NEC and the wider membership – trade unions, socialist societies and individuals. Part of an adult debate in the wake of the last 12 months ought to be how to rebalance that power in the interests of the Party as a whole. A starting point could be the reintroduction of Shadow Cabinet elections detested by Blair, but not formally abandoned until 2010 with the election in Opposition of Miliband as leader. Treated as a test in loyalty to the Party leader and effectiveness at the Despatch Box, they could help Corbyn confound

his naysayers. A condition of standing could be a signed undertaking to support the Party Leader, and breaches could carry the risk of exclusion from selections to stand at the next general election.

Reintroducing members back into the policy-making process is long overdue. In recent weeks there have been explicit references to democracy in Corbyn's speeches in the wake of 'exclusions' from voting by administrative means. What has been missing are effective on-line tools to enable large numbers of people to take part. Outgoing National Policy Forum (NPF) chair Angela Eagle MP commissioned a website facility called '*Your Britain*' which didn't attract many users, cost a lot of money and was virtually impossible to find. That is due to be replaced by a new front-end with a recognisable web address URL policy.labour.org.uk (or something similar). This is part of a very modest set of ideas to drag the Labour Party online in the 21st century. The ideological significance of a 'digital' membership card, or an application for smartphones and other handheld computing devices to go out talking to potential voters cannot understated. This is about empowering members. There appears to be significant resistance among Labour Party senior management and regional staff to these projects.

Democratic socialists have no difficulties recognising the significance of members to the electability of the Labour Party. We the members are not a sufficient condition, but we are necessary. In addition to the challenges for Corbyn managing relations with the PLP differently, are those mobilising members. Corbyn has been offering some easy to engage

with messages all too often drowned out by those members of the PLP with no regard for the Labour brand or the party's future electability. These are derived from Labour policies – affordable housing, free education for all, free health and social care at the point of use, secure employment, living incomes for all. Corbyn's vision has brought hundreds of thousands of people back into the party. He has now got to confound his internal opponents by mobilising that support on the doorstep. It cannot be done with Team Corbyn as currently constituted. There is a need for a committed democratic socialist at the heart of his strategic team who understands all facets of communication, including TV and social media. That requires delegation and trust. His social media team have to be liberated from internal bureaucracy in both the Leader's Office and Party HQ. They should be trusted to use their initiative.

How many families are there in the country who are not affected directly or indirectly by the risk of loss of employment, reduced working hours, loss of secure terms and conditions, illness, unaffordable housing, or disappearing public services?

Most people who voted in 2015 did not make the connection between those risks to themselves and their families, and the Tories. That has to change too. The MSM will not do that job for Labour. That is why the messages have to be clear and direct. That is why the PLP has to remember you have to be an adult to stand for Parliament. The time for behaving like spoilt children is over. Conference 2016 is the time to put an end this very unhappy episode and restore hope to Labour voters – past, present and future. **C**



From left to right (no reflection on their politics): Jeremy Corbyn - Leader, Tom Watson - Deputy Leader, Iain McNicol - General Secretary, John Cryer - Chair, PLP - who collectively have a responsibility to call a truce and make peace to fight the Tories

Policies not personalities

Labour must use its new strength in numbers for positive purposes says **Duncan Bowie**

Perhaps the personality cult which dominates internal Labour Party politics is all Tony Blair's fault? With Blair, UK politics adopted the American presidential style - you are either for or against the leader. In the recent NEC elections we were urged to support team Corbyn or the 'Save the Labour Party' team, whose main object seems to have been to rid the party of its leader. Owen Smith argues that he agrees with Corbyn's policies (which is not quite true) but that he would make a better leader. Where are the good old days of collective leadership, where the leader was someone whose job it was to hold together an alliance of different interests and different personalities with different views? Attlee was the most effective chairman of the board; even in the days of Wilson and Callaghan, the role of the leader was to arbitrate between conflicting personalities.

I have been increasingly dismayed by the hero worship and cultism that now surrounds Corbyn. To bring so many people into the party (not all of whom are entryists from Trotskyist groups) is a considerable achievement. Moreover, they are not all Corbynistas. There are young people and old rejoiners, who have been enthused by Jeremy's approach to politics. There are others who have joined or become active again in order to take the party in a different direction. These are not all Blairites or careerists, but people who want to see the party become more than a party of protest. Comrades, I have worked with for many years, whether on the left, the centre or the right of the party, or comrades focusing on specific policy issues are in despair that the party seems unable to use its new strength for positive purposes.

What is so strange is that not only are we not clear what we are protesting against except that we think capitalism is bad or perhaps not very good, is that we are even less clear what we are arguing for, except in very abstract terms. Jeremy and the team around him don't really seem to have much of an idea of what they want, and certainly no idea

**DANGER
WRONG WAY
TURN BACK**

Stark warning to Labour's elected representatives

of how to get it. I searched in vain to find any substance behind Corbyn's latest leadership manifesto. There appears to be no one in his team with substantive experience of writing policy never mind having to run a public organisation and deliver it. The residual shadow cabinet is not impressive - it's not their fault. You normally get some political experience before being made shadow Minister, and as well as lacking experience, some are doubling up on cabinet level posts, without other MPs to back them up. There is also little evidence that shadow Ministers are shadowing Ministers, never mind actually opposing what Ministers are doing or putting forward policy alternatives.

To take one example: we don't have a shadow Minister for housing and planning, while the shadow Minister for communities and local government, Grahame Morris, does not appear to have said very much since his appointment. He is also apparently doubling up as shadow Minister for the constitutional convention, but I don't think he has said anything about that either. At a time when the Government is starting to implement the most regressive housing and planning legislation since before the second world war and phasing in the abolition of all government grant to local government, this seems rather inadequate.

The weakness of the shadow cabinet is not all Jeremy Corbyn's fault, given that so many experienced MPs in effect abandoned

their posts. This was wrong. Some had a reasonable case for arguing that Corbyn was not a team player and was neither collaborating with them nor even replying to their requests to discuss both overall strategy or individual policies, but to leave the party without a coherent presence in parliamentary debates was a mistake.

At the same time Corbyn clearly made no effort to maintain some kind of collaboration with shadow cabinet members who had different views and were not his personal friends.

Whichever way the leadership vote goes, the vote itself will not solve the problem. A situation where the deputy leader and the paid general secretary of the party are trying to bring down the elected leader is intolerable. Both should resign. For a Labour Party to go to the courts to block thousands of its own paid up members from voting while allowing non members to vote for £25 is shameful. The only way the Labour Party can survive, never mind actually convince the electorate that is worth voting for, is to put personalities aside and to seek to agree a basic set of policies on which the majority of MPs and Labour Party members can stand. Moreover the shadow cabinet members who resigned, including Owen Smith, should make a commitment to work with whichever candidate is elected. This also means Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell need to state that they will serve in a shadow cabinet under Owen Smith. This works both ways. **C**

New leader—same old Tories?

Dave Lister on a new Tory enemy

It was not supposed to be all over until September, but David Cameron ended up having to vacate 10 Downing Street in a rush. This was due to a rather bizarre series of events. First there was Michael Gove's orchestrations in the dark, which led to Boris Johnson standing down. Then Gove got his come-uppance from Tory MPs for his undoubted treachery. We then had the battle of the Amazons - Andrea Leadsom against Theresa May. However it had become clear during the Brexit campaign that Leadsom had her limitations, which she compounded with her suggestion that May was not fit to be Prime Minister because she was not a parent. She also managed to accuse *The Times* of "gutter journalism". With Leadsom's withdrawal, May was elected by default.

One nation lines

Her first speech as incoming Tory leader was clearly delivered along one nation lines: "We are going to unite our country....a vision that works not for the privileged few but that works for every one of us" and her promise "to speak for the ordinary working-class family struggling to make ends meet". May also put forward the fairly radical ideas that shareholders' votes on bosses' pay should be legally binding and that employees and consumers should be represented on company boards. On the one hand, elements of her speech closely resembled Ed Miliband's address to the Labour Party conference in 2011, but the proposal to have workers' representatives on boards goes back to the 1970s and the Bullock Report. On the other hand, Cameron went through a similar phase when he first became leader with 'hug a hoodie' or a husky etc. and we all know how that played out.

In addition May's previous record is hardly a radical one. For instance she voted against the introduction of the minimum wage and was a key member of governments which brought in austerity, benefit cuts and the bedroom tax whilst cutting taxation of the rich. Her record as

Home Secretary was hardly a liberal one. She introduced a measure to curb broadcasting rights, was responsible for the infamous vans telling illegal immigrants to go home cut spending on the police and wanted to withdraw from the provisions of the Human Rights Act.

However, May's background is different from that of her predecessor in that she was largely state educated and is not a millionaire. She is also intelligent enough to see the virtue in widening the Tories' appeal. There is a famous 1867 cartoon called 'dishing the Whigs' about Disraeli expanding the franchise, which was not what people expected from the Conservative Party. May may decide that with the Labour Party in total disarray there is a real opportunity to do an SNP in England and Wales and present a programme in 2020 that wins over more working-class voters from the Labour Party and Ukip, whilst not alienating the Tories traditional middle-class vote.

At this stage we can only speculate on how the May premiership will develop. She has shown considerable ruthlessness in sacking Osborne, Gove and other key players. The new Chancellor Philip Hammond has been described as 'a safe pair of hands'. He has already indicated that he will not pursue Osborne's goal of balancing the budget by the end of this Parliament. This can mean less austerity but it is unlikely that there will be massive U-turns around cutting benefits and local authority funding for instance.

Problems may arise over her curious choice of Boris Johnson to be Foreign Secretary, which she may live to regret. Former Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has commented that Johnson's appointment was risky because "he has a humorous reputation which diplomats dislike...and now he is going to be involved in the most difficult diplo-

macy...". The French Foreign Minister has accused Johnson of lying during the referendum campaign and much has been made of his description of US Presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton as like "a sadistic nurse in a mental hospital". It will be interesting to see how Johnson's relationship with David Davis, the minister charged with actually negotiating Brexit, develops. Clearly what May has done is to put pro-Brexiteers in charge of Brexit so they cannot complain after the event and will take the blame if things go wrong.

May risks alienating

May risks alienating some of the people who voted for Brexit as it seems unlikely that Davis will be able to square the circle of remaining in the single market and reducing immigration. Ukip may well benefit from this. There is also the question as to whether negotiations over Brexit will take precedence over domestic legislation, to the extent that some projects get shelved.

As for the future, it is going to be very difficult to defeat the Tories, even if the Labour Party is able to reunite, especially given boundary changes and the situation in Scotland. It is not going to be good enough for Labour to say that it is doing as well as under Brown and Miliband. Clearly in order to win in 2020 Labour will have to do considerably better. **C**



British Prime Minister Theresa May: Labour's job is to wipe that smile from her face as soon as possible

Ending chequer board politics

Trevor Fisher on Labour's quagmire

The last twelve months have seen New Labour's dominance of the Party dwindling after two decades in control. While New Labour is far from dead, as the current leadership contest shows, the period when a neo-conservative inclined faction ran Labour is now challenged. If Corbyn wins the leadership a second time, New Labour will move into crisis.

The declining dominance of a faction that believed, as Peter Mandelson once said, that "We are all Thatcherites Now", has not led to the emergence of an analytical current. While there are some welcome signs in Momentum of a rethinking of mass politics, the dominant theme is oppositionalism and control of the party machine. In this it is the mirror image of New Labour, though reversing the old slogan attributed to Mandelson of Massive But Passive to sound like Massive but Active. However the two factions share much in common in their lack of willingness to embrace the best moments of C20th century Labour when it was a genuinely broad church.

The danger now is of a factional civil war which would damage Labour's already limited chances of electoral recovery, particularly in an era of boundary changes. The new situation demands a third road politics; possible for the first time in a generation. The theoretically possible Labour Unity position is not achievable in a party divided into two warring factions.

The most serious intellectual problem is the view of Labour politics as a chequer board, with black and white pieces combating for total victory. Despite their differences, both sides in the factional dispute share this model, a focus on which has the power to exclude the other from power.

This mirrors a more fundamental division, summed up by Martin Kettle in *the Guardian* last summer (25th June 2015 – when the Leadership election Mark I had only just begun) that there was a stark choice between Electability and Principled Politics. This is the unspoken assumption behind the current

leadership challenge, ie if a New Labour candidate ran the Labour Party this would achieve victory at Westminster. However Kettle went further in arguing that principled politics was irrelevant – something the official New Labour line does not say.

Kettle argued last summer that while Corbyn might not win – he thought he would come second – he offered "a programme of prelapsarian socialist purity, in this case centred on inequality... the Fifth Monarchy men of the 1660s would have recognised the appeal of the everlasting gospel to believers in the wilderness... Labour ...needs a 12.5% swing to win a majority in 2020.... many activists will prefer not to make the hard choices it demands".

Hard choices

This is not unreasonable, though hard choices cannot mean more acceptance of Tory dogma. He went on to argue "the question that underlies the current contest (is) purity or power. You have to face one way or the other". Here he finished, though others have taken on that theme which underlies the second leadership contest. It is a wrong choice.

The New Labour Project was based on the dichotomy offered here; it failed once Westminster power failed. And while the Blairites blame the Brownites and argue that pure Blairism will win elections, that is factually untrue. The Blairites lost votes from 2001 onward and 2005 was a knife edge election. Yet as John Harris wrote in *the Guardian* on New Years Day, Blairites argue that the 2015 election defeat was due to only two factors "Labour's failure to pay enough attention to 'economic competence', and the fact that 'the public did not perceive Ed Miliband as a credible Prime Minister". Harris argued



Corbyn coup: co-conspirators Lord Mandelson and Dame Margaret Hodge MP cheerleaders for the failed New Labour experiment

correctly that the defeat involved more factors than that.

Indeed, the New Labour formula of accepting Thatcherite terms of conflict had destroyed the party's core identity. For Harris, this was a moral failure but it was worse than that as it destroyed positive reasons to vote Labour. Only combating the Hard Right in the Tory Party and UKIP were incentives to vote, while triangulation to the Right made Labour less and less a challenge to their positions. It is this that fuels the rise of Corbynism, which has its own negatives.

Let us reformulate the challenge facing Labour and the Left. Politics is not black and white. There is no draughts chequer board where white pieces fight black pieces for victory. Neither the Corbyn Left nor the New Labour Right can balance principle and power. Any viable party must balance both.

Labour has to move beyond the principle versus power straight jacket. At present, the two factions cancel each other out. Corbyn is probably unelectable. And there is no question New Labour is politically bankrupt. Putting the two negatives together achieves only a Party polarised between unprincipled electoral opportunism and principled ethics with no chance of winning power. The route out of the impasse can only be a Third Road Politics. **C**

Be bolder, think bigger– the first 100 days

Sadiq Khan, the new Labour Mayor of London, made a number of key pledges in his campaign. **Leonie Cooper** reports on what's been happening

Housing was central to the Mayor's personal story and the housing crisis in London dwarfs the crisis that now exists everywhere. The Mayor has appointed James Murray as his Deputy Mayor for Housing, who now faces the daunting task of trying to fix the broken, over priced housing market, to enable Londoners who want to buy to get on the ladder, and to enable those who need to rent not to have to pay eye-watering amounts to private landlords. Murray has begun to get to grips with his new brief and has spoken to the Housing Committee about plans to increase affordable housing to rent and buy on all sites – but make no mistake, the introduction of the viability assessment has given developers the biggest get-out clause ever, so there will be kicking and screaming as the Mayor's pledges to ensure Londoners get a look-in are implemented. This will probably be the most difficult manifesto commitment to deliver for Londoners, especially as the review of the London Plan (which gives the Mayor clout to enforce his demands) takes about two years.....

On transport, the Mayor has announced the implementation date of the promised Bus Hopper ticket, to allow Londoners to switch buses in the space of an hour without needing to pay each time. The night tube has been launched and many bus routes are now being provided with the latest low-emission buses. The Mayor has stuck to his position on Heathrow, advocating strongly for Gatwick – and also put in a bid to take on the Southern railway franchise. Next January, TfL fares will be frozen. So things are moving ahead in several areas on transport – although there is much still to do on encouraging walking, cycling – and developing the TfL-owned public realm.

On the environment, the Mayor made tackling London's dirty air one of his key campaign pledges.

Less than a week after he took office in May, he made his first statement on improving air quality, saying that he would launch a consultation in 2016. True to his word, he chose the 60th Anniversary of the Clean Air Act, 5th July, to deliver a keynote speech that outlines some of his proposals that he wants Londoners to consider. These include a £10 Toxicity or T-Charge, on top of the existing Congestion Charge, for the dirtiest vehicles; the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expanded out to the North and South Circular roads for motorbikes, cars and vans – and made London-wide for lorries, buses and coaches; bringing in the ULEZ in 2019, not 2020 – and all double-decker buses to be compliant with ULEZ requirements from 2019 not 2020; creating clean bus corridors by putting the cleanest buses onto the dirtiest routes, in a bid to tackle air pollution hotspots. Officers are also drawing up detailed proposals for a diesel scrappage scheme, to put pressure on the government to introduce such a scheme nationally while negotiations have started on Vehicle Excise Duty. The mayor also called for a new Clean Air Act, fit for the 21st century.

As the Chair of the London Assembly's Environment Committee and Labour lead on the environment, I really welcome the fact that Sadiq has not let this slip at all, and is pressing ahead on his pledge to improve air quality. Unlike 60 years ago when city smogs caused by coal fires were visible and obvious to all, nitrogen dioxide gas and the tiny particles that lodge in our lungs are completely invisible.



Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan delivering for Londoners: the night tube

But with so many London schools situated in air pollution hotspots and many routes to school involve children travelling along the most polluted roads, we are stunting the lungs of generations to come, so there is no time to waste. Children are especially vulnerable for two reasons, as studies have now proven. Firstly, they are shorter, so they are much closer to the emission sources, but also their lungs are not fully developed and are much more susceptible to the impact of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.

We really need to push ahead as quickly as we can, taking action that will have a real impact on the situation. A new and determined Mayor, who has started by putting out some strong ideas to tackle a major health problem is a refreshing change. There is no doubt we can encourage him to go further – introducing the ULEZ in early 2019 or even in late 2018, or expanding it to completely cover London, coinciding with the Low Emission Zone are potential additional asks. The London Mayor is bound to receive opposition from motorist organisations and businesses – but I for one will be doing my best to make sure that the Mayor delivers on his pledge to clean up London's dirty air and encouraging him to be bolder and think bigger. **C**

Leonie Cooper
AM is Chair of
the London
Assembly
Environment
Committee

Brexit fallout

Post-referendum Britain needs a strong united Labour Party capable of reconciling divisions, writes **Julie Ward** MEP

As a pro-European, I am deeply disappointed by the referendum result, but I am not surprised. I came into politics primarily to defend the social Europe that I believe is possible and to help strengthen ties between us and our neighbours. I do not believe the majority of Leave voters were passing judgement on the EU on June 23rd but were rather kicking against the establishment as personified by Westminster and the political class, most of whom were advocating Remain.

Living and working in the deprived communities of northern England, I had long seen the disconnect between the forgotten post-industrial communities and the centre of power. In the pit village where I had been for nearly 30 years, the nearest city was at the end of a poorly served bus route and few of the teenagers that I worked with ever made the 50 mile round journey outside of Christmas shopping. London was another country and the idea of Europe only conjured football teams. The Brexit vote delivered by communities like this was largely a kick against that distant establishment which equated Brussels with London, and in some cases, Town Halls. The discontented were urged to agree with Cameron and his despised cronies, to kowtow to Blair and the bankers, and so they stuck two fingers up, despite the risk of self-inflicted pain.

Sphere of influence

Over the years, in my own sphere of influence I had successfully challenged limited perceptions of the EU, engaging disaffected youths in subsidised cultural exchange projects with their peers from across Europe, taking them to meet their mirror images in the safe spaces created by summer schools and youth media projects, many of which were funded by EU Youth In Action (now Erasmus+) programmes.

The young people touched by this work learnt to see themselves as Europeans with global respon-

sibilities. They celebrated Europe Day back home and invited their new European friends to visit. Long-lasting bonds were made and the 'no-hope' kids that I had taken abroad were now far more worldly wise, aspirational, employable and civic-minded than they otherwise would have been, many going to college or university, some setting up their own businesses or social enterprises, most of them volunteering in their communities, and none of them a burden on the state. However, this model and others like it, needed to be scaled up and replicated right across the country, embedded in our education and life-long learning systems.

It is this generation of young adults and the next who stand to lose the most from the ill-judged Brexit vote. The peripheral regions have always been the

It is this generation of young adults and the next who stand to lose the most from the ill-judged Brexit vote

largest beneficiaries of European Regional Development funding, money that was bolstering up businesses and paying for improved infrastructure, rural broadband, education, community and leisure facilities, and employment programmes. Labour's biggest challenge, therefore, has surely got to be how it will deliver quality services and decent work for these young people, their siblings and indeed their own children without defaulting to the pro-austerity agenda so beloved of the neo-liberals.

One of the EU's greatest achievements, aside from peace between its Member States, is surely its Cohesion Policy which addresses areas of greatest deprivation and the most marginalised communities. Post-referendum Britain needs a strong united Labour Party capable of reconciling many divisions, not only internally but also within our society. Corbyn's appeal to those who have been let down, ignored and forgotten about is that he has been consistent in his anti-auster-

ity stance, and human in his desire to include arts, libraries, youth services, adult learning and early years provision in his vision for a better society along with education, health, housing and welfare. This is the kind of home-grown cohesion policy we need to create so that young people in particular know that there are people and places who will welcome them and give them opportunities.

Beyond our borders lie different challenges, not least the issue of mobility (free movement) which will be a terrible loss for people of all ages but particularly for the young, whom it must be remembered, were more in favour of remaining in the EU. It is their life-changing opportunities to travel, study and live abroad which are in great danger of being curtailed and Corbyn has yet to reconcile the fact that his young supporters see the EU in a more positive light than he has in the past.

Collaboration and dialogue

We must keep the door open for collaboration and dialogue with our peers in other countries, through arts and science, through education and youth programmes, and by reconnecting with our sister parties across Europe and beyond, building bridges with progressive civil society movements which are gathering momentum and filling the void left by a political class mired in turmoil and out of touch. The UK's decision to turn its back on its nearest neighbours must not be taken as our abdication of global responsibility to fight for a fairer more inclusive world for everyone. Instead of simply asking what can we get out of a Brexit deal we should also be offering friendship, solidarity, compassion and practical assistance to those communities affected by conflict and disaster. The youth who support Corbyn are open to the world and welcoming to others. Through their engagement and activism we might just keep a flame of hope burning beyond the Brexit mess.

C



Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for the North West of England

Post-Brexit vote Tories signal race to bottom

Prem Sikka on why the tax haven route won't bring economic prosperity to the UK

Is the UK on the path to joining its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories in becoming a tax haven? It is on its way. Tax havens are difficult to define precisely, but have some distinguishing characteristics. These include low tax rates, secrecy and lax financial law enforcement. So how do the recent UK trends measure-up?

Major European economies compete by making considerable investment in social infrastructure, but the UK entices capital by offering low corporate tax rates. In March 2016, the UK government announced that it would reduce the rate of corporation tax rate from 20% to 17% by 2020. After the Brexit referendum, the Chancellor announced that the tax rate would be reduced to 15% by 2020 even though the UK can ill-afford to sacrifice £15bn of tax revenues. Amongst EU nations, at 12.5% only Ireland levies a lower rate of corporate tax.

Favourable tax laws

In common with many tax havens, UK also lets corporations write favourable tax laws. A good example of this is the Patent Box legislation. This enables companies to attribute some of their income to patents, which can be hired or registered in tax havens, and pay a lower tax rate of 10% on that income. The working party which designed the legislation consisted entirely of individuals with links to GlaxoSmithKline, Rolls-Royce, Eisai, Syngenta, Shell, Dyson, Arm, Fusion IP, Vectura and AND Technology Research. KPMG acted as advisers. The Patent Box concession has reduced corporate tax bills by £700m last year and is expected to rise to about £1bn a year.

The UK provides corporate secrecy by concealing the identity of directors and beneficial shareholders. Subject to certain legal formalities, UK shareholders can conceal their identity by using nominees such as banks and

accountants as shareholders. Under the UK company law, public companies must have at least two directors, but only one of these needs to be a natural person. The other can be a legal person, or another company, even though it is registered in a tax haven which guarantees complete anonymity to all the owners and controllers. This opacity makes it difficult to pursue the owners and/or directors for wrongdoing.

In common with many tax havens, the UK lacks effective institutional structures for investigation and prosecution of tax avoidance. Despite critical reports by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) there is a dearth of test cases against multinational corporations. Between 2010 and 2015, there have been only 11 prosecutions in

Despite critical parliamentary reports no test cases have been brought against Google, Amazon, Apple, Starbucks or any other multinational company for avoiding UK taxes by shifting profits to other jurisdictions

relation to offshore tax evasion. Despite critical parliamentary reports, no test cases have been brought against Google, Amazon, Apple, Starbucks or any other multinational company for avoiding UK taxes by shifting profits to other jurisdictions.

The information provided by Hervé Falciani, former HSBC employee, suggested that the bank's Swiss operations enabled wealthy people and arms dealers to evade taxes. Only one individual from the list of 3,600 potential UK tax evaders has been prosecuted. In January 2016, without any prior announcement, HMRC abandoned its criminal investigation into the role of HSBC in alleged illegal activities.

The UK government also intervenes to shield wrongdoers. A

2012 report by a US Senate Committee noted that HSBC played a central role in enabling drug barons and gangsters to launder vast sums of money through the US banking system. The banks also violated sanctions against: Iran, Libya, Sudan, Burma and Cuba.

Did not investigate

The UK government did not investigate HSBC but instead pushed the US to go easy on the bank. A 2016 report titled "Too Big to Jail" by the US House of Representatives' Committee on Financial Services noted that "The involvement of the United Kingdom's Financial Services Authority in the U.S. government's investigations and enforcement actions relating to HSBC, a British-domiciled institution, appears to have hampered the U.S. government's investigations and influenced DOJ's [Department of Justice] decision not to prosecute HSBC". The report added that George Osborne, former Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote to the Federal Reserve Chairman and said that HSBC's prosecution could lead to [financial] contagion" and pose "very serious implications for financial and economic stability, particularly in Europe and Asia". HSBC paid a fine of \$1.9 billion and avoided prosecution.

Tax haven route

The above is only a small sample of the practices used by UK government to turn the UK into a tax haven, which is seen as a route to prosperity. However, the sacrifice of tax revenues in this race-to-the-bottom reduces investment in social infrastructure, and it encourages anti-social business practice. The regulatory degradation will embolden footloose capital to indulge in even more anti-social practices and and for responsible companies who pay their way, the UK will become an increasingly less attractive rather than a safer place for business. **C**

Brexit breakdown

When time seems to speed up – so too do the challenges facing the left. **John Palmer** surveys the wreckage

Rarely has the old adage seemed more apposite: “While the events of a few weeks normally take years to unfold, sometimes the events of many years can unfold in a very few weeks.” It is something we have had a vivid reminder of this past summer. The dramatic referendum ‘Leave’ result and the remarkable upsurge in support for Jeremy Corbyn’s vision of a socialist Labour Party are just two obvious cases in point.

They are not the only examples where subterranean economic, political and social forces have suddenly broken surface. The appalling decline in real living standards and economic security have their proximate origins in the global financial crisis of 2007/8. They are only now finding expression in popular anger and a desire for radical economic and social change.

The complex of issues which have produced both a crisis in relations between the British state and within the EU itself have their roots in developments going back decades. The resulting political tremors across the EU has seen the rise of new class politics on the left (Syriza, Podemos etc) as well as a growth of right wing populists and the far right (Trump, the French FN, Golden Dawn etc).

The centre right and centre left political establishments have now reluctantly begun to recognise that the electoral ground beneath their feet is moving unpredictably. The evidence increasingly suggests that the mainstream conservative, liberal and social democratic parties are being profoundly hollowed out as their memberships and electoral bases continue to shrink.

Across Europe the speed and direction of these changes differs from country to country. The political consequences of the economic crisis and the dramatic movement of refugees from war and oppression have been different in Greece, Spain and Portugal (moving to the left) compared with France, the Netherlands Hungary and others (moving to the right).

The precise mix of pressures has been somewhat different in the UK. Here there is not only a sense of an economy perched perilously on the edge of recession yet again but also a government system in chaos. The UK itself faces the prospect of a renewed Scottish bid for independence while utter confusion reigns in the political class about Britain’s role in the world.

One example of the turmoil which now afflicts the machinery of government, following the decision to abandon EU membership, concerns its capacity to manage essential trade negotiations. The government must now first negotiate withdrawal from the EU (which involves amending some 18,000 pages of legal agreements) when the Article 50 process is eventually triggered by London possibly early next year.

This must then be followed by the negotiation of a vast range of successor trade agreements not only with the EU but also with major international trading partners including Russia, the US, Australia, Canada, India and China whose trade with Britain has been conducted through the EU. This could all take many years more.

But Whitehall no longer has any real global trade

responsibility function (which passed to the EU 40 years ago). Ministers had a shock when they realised the loss of basic trade expertise in the civil service. Little wonder panic stricken appeals are going out to banks, consultancies – even to British officials in the European Commission’s trade directorate now responsible for all external trade negotiations – to provide volunteers urgently for Whitehall.

Other ominous fault lines are opening up within the UK state. The entire withdrawal process – when it eventually begins – will require the approval not only of the UK government and Parliament, but also of the Scottish government and the elected administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland.

This will be particularly the case when any issues affected by the European Charter of Fundamental Rights arise. The sensitivity of these questions in the new devolution context goes well beyond Scotland. Perhaps the most explosive (but less well known question) concerns the future border between Northern Ireland (outside the EU) and the Irish Republic (inside.)

Given the government’s hysteria over migration, Theresa May was initially quick to announce that Irish security and trade border controls would have to be re-imposed after Brexit. Now she is backtracking from this - aware of what any militarisation of the Irish border could do to the entire Belfast Agreement.

However if the Irish border remains open to free movement, London may have to impose border controls between the north of Ireland and mainland Britain - although both would be in the UK! There is precedent for this in the temporary wartime restrictions introduced in 1941, but any repetition will be fiercely opposed by Unionists.

It is too soon to know precisely how severe a blow will be inflicted on the British economy by withdrawal. Alarm at the possibility of being outside even the EU single market is spreading among business leaders. UK economic growth is already slowing. The universities and scientific bodies are close



to despair at the prospect of pan-European co-operation on climate change and science research being undermined and UK students no longer able to access the popular Erasmus scheme.

It is likely that May herself has not yet made up her mind how to handle matters when they reach a climax – probably towards the end of 2018. Faced with the realities of losing Single Market access, she may look for a face saving compromise on free movement, possibly involving acceptance of EU single market laws and the payment of substantial budget contributions to Brussels.

But this would mean the UK accepting the main obligations of EU membership but without having any say in decision making. But if she dumps hard-line Europhobe ministers such as Fox and Davis and seeks a climb down compromise with the EU, not only renewed civil war in the Tory party but the fall of the government might follow.

We should not, therefore, assume that the present Tory government with its precarious Parliamentary majority will survive the new 5 year fixed term. Given – at the time of writing – that Jeremy Corbyn looks very likely to be re-elected leader of the Labour Party, the Tories might even gamble on triggering a general election before 2020.

So what should be the response of a Corbyn led Labour Party? Buoyed by the unprecedented influx of new members, the first priority (after expanding the new Front Bench) must be to launch nationwide mass policy consultations. Important work has already been done by John McDonnell and his collaborators in fleshing out a new economic strategy. But this must now happen across the entire policy remit.

It will be essential to extend this work to the closest possible collaboration with socialist, green and social democratic parties across the EU. This is not a genuflection to political correctness. When it comes to economic policy it is essential to have a worked out policy for coordinated EU wide economic recovery to reduce the vulnerability of any one economy bucking the trend. This will involve mounting

the maximum pressure on the EU institutions (Commission, ECB etc) to support a sustainable European growth initiative -spearheaded by a massive, publicly financed economic, social and green infrastructure investment plan.

The roots of the wider crisis in the EU also lie in decisions taken years ago. The launch of monetary union without a flanking economic union (against which Jacques Delors warned in the 1990s) is a case in point. The lurch to neo-liberal, austerity dogmas by Tory EU governments was driven by ideological development during the Thatcher period. A sustainable EU growth strategy must include far greater resource transfers between richer and poorer EU countries.

A programme for the EU institutional reform is vital. It should – at a minimum – include extending the right of legislative initiative to the elected European Parliament, strengthening scrutiny of the Council of Ministers by joint assemblies of European and national Parliaments and introducing innovative new forms of law making consultation to EU trade unions, NGOs and other civil society bodies. Such active EU wide collaboration should also include plans to convert the arms industries and the important skills workers have in those industries to alternative, socially useful objectives. Nowhere will this be more urgent than for the workers in Barrow and on the Clyde employed on the grotesque Trident nuclear missile project. Its cancellation should be a Corbyn government priority. Why not give the European Union trade unions a key role here to build on the pioneering work on socially useful alternatives first developed by the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards 35 years ago?

A Corbyn led government should hammer out urgent strategies with other EU progressive parties and social movements on issues ranging from a civilised way to receive and integrate asylum seekers to laying the basis for a radically new EU foreign policy direction.

This work should take place in part also to lay the basis for a future Labour government to re-apply for EU membership IF we really are out before the next election. Much will depend on the precise situation a Corbyn led government inherits. But, if the Article 50 negotiations, expected to last two years, are not completed the new government could announce that it no longer wants to leave the EU. Labour’s overall strategy should be an essential part of a movement, which is urgently needed, to halt and then reverse the drift to the radical right through much of Europe. The foundations for such a broader fighting European alliance of socialist, social democrat, Green and other radical parties must, however, be laid now whether the UK is In or Out.

Together the basis can be laid for a very different process of European integration not least to bring globalisation themselves under democratic social control. It will be the work for years – not months. But, by learning how to think and how to act together at both the European and global level, Jeremy Corbyn’s new model Labour Party can yet help make this alternative Europe a reality. **C**

The blind leading the blind

Frank Lee asks if central bankers know what they are doing

Anyone who still entertains the notion that central banks around the world actually know what they are doing, and have the magic box of tricks to get the world economy back on track, really ought to ask where we have arrived and where we are going.

Recently the Bank of England (BoE) governor and former Goldman Sachs employee, Mark Carney, announced a new monetary stimulus package designed to get the UK economy moving again. It consisted of the following measures:

Interest rates at a record low of 0.25%, a level not seen in the BoE's 322-year history with more to come.

An extra £60 bln of newly created money to buy government bonds, drive down gilt yields and force investors into riskier assets

A new £100 bln scheme to encourage banks to lend cheaply to UK companies

A pledge to buy £10 bln of corporate debt issued by UK companies who make a genuine contribution to the UK economy.

All of which adds up to another helping of so-called quantitative easing (QE). Is this second round of monetary easing going to be any more successful than the first? Or is monetary policy alone going to result in escape velocity and usher in growth? Judging on past performance the prognosis is not encouraging. Last time around QE – i.e. BoE purchases of privately held UK bonds (Gilts) – injected £375 billion into the economy which was supposed to lead recipients to engage in productive investment in the (real) value-added productive economy. Alas, most of this BoE largesse did not enter the real economy.

Non-financial companies invested their newly acquired liquidity in share buybacks and mergers and acquisition activities. The great paradox of QE was

that it resulted in a contraction of money supply - measured as M4 – see below – and this is why there was no generalised inflation outside of the above mentioned asset classes.

For speculators, however, there was a bonanza. They pushed up prices of three asset-classes, bonds-stocks-property, with aggressive leveraged buying from free monies lent to you by munificent chaps like Mr Carney. When the market tops out, you sell and take your profits. When the market crashes you then get to buy bargains at fire damage sale prices. The speculators win when

input (costs) will result in the long run of a fall of output (profits) until a point is reached where output turns negative relative to input and the enterprise is no longer viable. Keynes called this the decline in the Marginal Efficiency of Capital, and along with Schumpeter attributed this to the disappearance of viable investment projects and Animal Spirits.

For Marx the explanation of falling profitability was the growth in what he termed the 'organic composition of capital' which we would probably call the capital-labour ratio. Given the labour theory of value which he inherited (with modifications) from Smith and Ricardo, human labour was said to be the source of value – or what we would call value-added – and since it would be increasingly replaced by capital then the rate of profit would fall.

Global corporate profitability was around 30-33% in the early 1960s and has now fallen to less than 20%. In an attempt to overcome this stagnation debt (private and public) grew from 246% of global GDP in 2000 to 286% in 2014. All this must lead to the inexorable conclusion that since debt is growing faster than output

then diminishing returns have set in.

Where all of this is heading doesn't look particularly appetising. What is becoming patently obvious is that finance ministers, central banks, and financial elites, around the world either (a) don't know what they are dealing with (b) think they know what they are dealing, but don't, and therefore propose totally inappropriate 'solutions' (c) the masters of the universe sitting in their air-conditioned offices and trading floors, know perfectly well what is happening – but they don't particularly care; they'll just take the money and run. **C**



prices climb and they win when prices plummet. In the trade it is called 'pump and dump'.

The crux of the matter is that businesses are stubbornly refusing to invest in productive capacity and no amount of monetary easing will induce them to do so.

This of course raises the question of why. Investment decisions are related to the rate of interest. High rates of interest will tend to have a negative influence on investment and vice-versa. But of

equal and possibly more importance is the return on such investments. The theory of diminishing returns on investment projects postulates that each successive

BREXIT racism storm

Andy Gregg ponders the future of UK race relations following the Brexit vote

Pandora's Box has been opened by the Brexit referendum victory and it is difficult to see how the evils that it has allowed to escape can now be put back.

Since the referendum result was announced on 24th June there have been reports of increasing race hate crimes – many directed at Polish and other European migrants but also directed at Muslims and other migrant and minority groups. Both hard statistical and anecdotal evidence show not only a faster growing number of racist incidents, but also that they are becoming more serious and in some cases life threatening. Young African refugees that I have spoken to in West Kent report that, whilst they used to have to endure occasional hostile looks and muttered imprecations at the bus stop and elsewhere, now they have to face regular spitting, bottle throwing and open racist shouting and even attacks in the street. These kinds of incidents are happening to a wider spectrum of victims who now include those Europeans who don't speak fluent English and, on occasion, even tourists.

Although many who voted for Britain to leave the European Union were not in themselves racist, the campaign itself was riddled with dog whistle politics about migrants and foreigners. At times the sound of the whistle was obvious and audible (as with the disgraceful Farage "Breaking Point" poster of a line of refugees at the Slovakian border). Groups such as Britain First and the English Defence League are now capitalising on this climate and trying to provoke disorder, racist attacks and appeals to "send them home". However it is not just active members of explicitly racist parties who are now emerging to spit their bile. It is now clear that many people who previously harboured racist views and thoughts but kept them to themselves now feel that they have explicit permission to insult migrants and tell anyone who is not obviously white and British to "go home".

Anti racist and anti fascist

reporting sites like Hope not Hate, the Monitoring Group and Tell Mama are under significant pressure in monitoring the increasing outrages that are likely over the next few weeks and months. Many of these sites are themselves under continual trolling and cyber attacks from online racists. The notion that immigrants are to blame for most of the ills that confront less well-off members of society has now become the received wisdom, repeated over and over again by politicians, pundits and the press. Former Tory Party chairman Sayeeda Warsi has warned that "immigrants and their descendants (some who have been here for three, four or five generations) are being told to leave Britain" in the wake of the "divisive and xenophobic" Brexit campaign.

Things are likely to get worse rather than better. Over the last few years racist incidents have been rising at a steady rate, but the recent spike is a very significant change both of number and degree of seriousness. The post Brexit spike in racist incidents comes against a background of an increasing number of racist incidents even before the referendum. The Government is determined to promote a "hostile environment for illegal immigrants" but is unwilling to address the fact that this directly affects all minority ethnic groups regardless of their status or long history in Britain. Currently of course we have what can be described as relatively 'happy' racists who think that they are back in control of their country. Soon they are likely to discover that immigration is not magically declining and that not only have they not "got their country back" but also the economy has tanked because of uncertainty around Brexit. In these circumstances 'happy racists' are likely to become very unhappy ones. By definition this is unlikely to improve the situation.

As if this wasn't bad enough, in the midst of this dangerous atmosphere the government is now set to enact disastrous legislation under the Immigration Act. This legislation will compound the process of demonization of all



UKIP campaign: disgraceful dog whistle politics

migrants as well as wider minority ethnic communities. The Immigration Act will force landlords and other public officials to profile service users so as to identify those who do not have the correct paper work and permissions to work, rent, drive and receive other services. As part of its attempt to create a hostile environment for 'illegal' immigrants it will give free rein to landlords and many public servants to profile and single out minority ethnic people in ways that we thought had disappeared since the 1960s. If you have a dark skin or look or sound foreign in any way you could become a source of suspicion regardless of how many generations you or your parents may have lived in this country. Fines for landlords and employers of those found to be 'illegal' are set to mushroom and the Government – far from having any policy to try to improve race relations – is currently refusing to admit the obvious conclusion that their current policies will directly harm community cohesion. The 'Prevent' anti extremism programme is increasingly criminalising large numbers of Muslim young people without proving particularly effective in stopping radicalisation. The Government may also try to do away with the European Convention on Human Rights which is one of the few protections against the worst excesses of such racism and discrimination.

Andy Gregg is Chief Executive of Race on the Agenda

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21>>

Life in the jungle

Thousands of refugees endure a living nightmare reports **Wendy Pettifer**

My first morning on 'the jungle' as a pro bono lawyer and there's a thick mist between the A16 motorway and the arid land where south camp used to be before it was destroyed - making about 2000 migrants homeless. After seeing small phantom figures with rags around their heads, I realise that the mist is tear gas and find out later that the CRS riot squad is a permanent presence on the Calais camp.

Someone helps me find the Legal Shelter: a small caravan with two tables and six chairs deep into the Afghan section. The previous shelter was burned down. I will spend three hours here every day for three months advising on all aspects of asylum law and particularly taking charge of requests from kids as young as eight with close family members in the UK as part of a mainly French team.

Our centre has a French and an English lawyer supervising (mainly French) law students. Like the camp, it's chaotic. We have no internet, no office, no copying facilities. Even so, in the three months I was there, we were able to get 14 minors out of the camp to join family in the UK.

Horrendous conditions

Different nationalities live cheek by jowl in horrendous conditions. When I arrived in May there were around 7000 occupants, which has since grown to an estimated 9000, about 800 of whom are children.

The camp is the only refugee camp in the world which is not supported by UNHCR. Instead, over 100 French and English NGOs attempt to run the camp through a council of community members, mediating between various warring factions.

The multiplicity of services is bewildering. On the east side lies the main road to the main hub, the Jules Ferry centre, and the enclosed women's camp and the hospital centre. On the west side is a street with over 100 shops, community centres, and restaurants including the Kids cafe which provides invaluable support

port to the 800 plus children on camp. At the bottom of the street are 700 containers access to which is controlled by fingerprinting. Next to that is the Sudanese hill, the sprawling Afghan community and several mosques.

In spite of its size, the French authorities do not recognise its right to exist. The right wing mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchard declared after the UK Brexit vote that she intended to renege on the "Le Touquet" joint agreement which enables the UK to externalise its border to Calais. So far she has failed to get the necessary backing from President Hollande so the camp continues, its occupants enduring a brutal level of harassment by the French state.

Closed

On 22nd July the CRS riot police raided 13 so-called "restaurants" set up to feed the inhabitants, including the Kids Café. They were closed on the grounds of failing to pay tax and inability to meet health and safety food standards. The closures were later declared illegal by the Tribunal Administratif in Lille. The Kids Cafe immediately reopened but this is typical of the state-sanctioned harassment taking place in order to destabilise the camp and deter new arrivals.

The jungle is a violent place, not least because of this. Many

people die in the jungle mostly when trying illegally to get into lorries, but they also die in fights and fires. A massive brawl towards the end of May resulted in 40 hospitalisations and many tents and shelters being razed to the ground. Fires are a constant hazard with kids falling asleep beside lighted candles. Many fires are set by arsonists, possibly at the behest of the state.

To reach a better life

The main jungle activity is trying to reach the UK and a better life. This means illegally clambering into juggernauts travelling to the port at night. Small boys run after the lorries to try and open the back so the adults can get in. People are killed and many are injured: broken arms and legs, fingers and toes, lacerated faces and hands from scaling barbed wire fences. Calais hospital has a whole unit dedicated to treating camp occupants. In the week of 22 July three people died, including an 18 year old Eritrean girl who was run over by the lorry she was trying to get into. The French refused to allow us to hold a vigil in town.

Trying happens from after supper to dawn. People then return to their shelters and sleep until midday. An evening meal is provided at 8 pm by two large UK NGOs arriving in vans with food in plastic containers. The camp

has no means of processing rubbish, so an enormous amount of waste lies around in black bin bags, waiting to be collected by NGOs and this led to an explosion in the rat population. An extermination drive in July led to the surreal sight of flocks of seagulls feasting on rat corpses.

Living feral

Children are living feral. There's only one tiny school. They are at constant risk of abuse, hundreds of them sleeping in tents and shelters with up to six adult men. Following a UK case known as ZAT, the French have reluctantly set up a system to process the children's "take charge" requests to join family members in the UK. In 2016 over 50 children have passed to the UK but this is thanks to the efforts of the legal shelter and its UK equivalent, Safe Passage. But this is a tiny percentage and the system is hopelessly inadequate.

Currently there are 127 children in the system awaiting either approval by the Home Office or processing by the French once that approval has been granted. And there's still no system for adult discretionary take charge requests. I am about to

Although the "Dubs amendment" included in the Immigration Act 2016 provides for the safe transfer of an unspecified number of children to the UK, shamefully not one child from Calais has been transferred as a result of the provision

return to Calais to bring a 19 year old man to the UK to join his brother. He's been very ill, the Home Office has approved his request but there is no system in

place for adults to actually get to the UK.

Although the "Dubs amendment" included in the Immigration Act 2016 provides for the safe transfer of an unspecified number of children to the UK, shamefully not one child from Calais has been transferred as a result of the provision. MPs need to act now.

Humbled

If the living nightmare of the Jungle is to be humanely dismantled, the French must agree to putting serious resources into processing both children and adults who are legally entitled to join family members in the UK and assist all those who are not applying for asylum in France. Until that time I remain humbled by the spirit and generosity of both camp occupants and volunteers and I will continue to work to get children out of there and to safety. **C**

**Please lobby your MP to act on the Dubs amendment.
To donate to Cabane Juridique/Legal Shelter set up a standing order to
Credit Cooperative Bank Gare de l'Est 42559 00003 4102004152351.**

BREXIT racism storm

>>>CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Against this dark climate we must all work together to rebuild trust and defend our different communities. We must ally together against the Immigration Act, defend the European Convention on Human Rights and continue to challenge all the areas where discrimination and racism continue to scar our country – whether this is in employment and education, stop and search, the penal and policing systems and all the other areas of gross inequality. We must insist that the Government develops a positive and proactive strategy to ensure reporting of racist attacks that also aims to challenge them. The astonishing recent Government decision to award the contract for its discrimination legal advice help line to G4S shows the contempt they have for citizens' ability to get independent and effective advice to challenge racism and discrimination. We need to overthrow this decision and also mount a different kind of campaign to ensure that tabloid

newspapers can be properly held to account when they publish biased and racist articles that reinforce hatred, as they so often now do.

Even more important than EU membership is the question about what sort of country Britain wants to be, and that question will continue long after the referendum. Do we want to continue to be a positive, tolerant society capable of challenging inequality and discrimination and addressing our differences in a civil manner? Or are we going to respond by retreating even further into our enclaves and spitting hostility at each other across the growing divide? Early on the last Century, the great US thinker WEB Du Bois said that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Whether we can learn to live together better and address racism and inequality effectively will be the problem of the twenty-first century. And we have not got off to a good start. **C**



Kids cafe which provides invaluable support to the 800 plus children in the Calais Jungle

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A Chartist moment?

Stuart White calls for a Citizen's Convention

In 1839, the Chartists held a national 'Convention' to discuss how to achieve the six points of the People's Charter. People gathered in large open air meetings to elect delegates. The government considered the Convention a threat to the state. Participants were watched, some were arrested. William Lovett, a leading figure in the Chartist movement, was imprisoned for seditious libel.

150 years later political parties and civil society groups came together in the Scottish Constitutional Convention to assert Scotland's Claim of Right, a pivotal moment in the journey to a Scottish Parliament.

In September 2014, following Scotland's momentous independence referendum, two campaign groups, the Electoral Reform Society and Unlock Democracy, launched petitions for a UK-wide 'constitutional convention': for an assembly, created by Parliament but working independently of it, to deliberate changes to the UK's political system.

Political parties made similar calls: Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and UKIP. In March 2015, Parliament's own All Party Group on Reform Decentralisation and Devolution called on all parties to include a commitment to a convention in their upcoming election manifestoes. Many did so. The notable exception was the Conservatives who won the election.

The idea of a constitutional convention has apparently moved from the margins to the mainstream. But why this interest now in holding a constitutional convention? What is a constitutional convention? Does the idea still have relevance? Can it find purchase in the wake of the Brexit referendum?

Constitutional crisis

Interest in holding a constitutional convention reflects the judgment that the UK is in a profound constitutional crisis. In part, this is about the territorial division of power. As Scotland moves towards greater autonomy, and potential independence, what new powers should go to the

Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies? What should 'devolution' mean in the context of England?

These questions connect to others about the structure of representation in the Westminster Parliament. Surely we cannot continue with the present House of Lords? What should replace it? The general election of 2015 underscored the absurd disproportionality of FPTP, reanimating the argument for electoral reform. What about the role of 'money in politics', of party finance, lobbying, and so-called 'revolving doors' between government and business?

Further questions concern the protection of basic civil rights. All of these questions are posed in a context of sluggish economic performance, long-term wage stagnation for many, and entrenched regional inequalities.

Against this backdrop, the call for a constitutional convention draws on two insights. One is that because there are so many, interconnected issues on the table at once, we need a considered, systematic response. The second is that when questions about the basic structure of our political system are posed, it is 'We the people' (or peoples) who should take the lead. In part, this is because politicians themselves – of whatever party – are not suffi-

ciently impartial to make decisions about the structure of the political system. It also reflects a basic principle of democratic constitutionalism, that of popular sovereignty. In the democratic republican tradition, captured memorably in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, governments make policy within a constitution and the people make the constitution.

Design choices

A constitutional convention can be structured in many ways; the design choices are important – not least for how far a convention gives expression to the principle of popular sovereignty (Renwick 2014).

One issue concerns membership. Much recent UK discussion proposes that the convention consists at its heart of a Citizens' Assembly. Members would not representatives of political parties and civil society groups (as with the Scottish Constitutional Convention); nor would they be elected (as was the recent Icelandic convention). Rather, members would be chosen by lot, on a 'jury' principle, but in a 'stratified' way so as to create an assembly that is descriptively representative of the population in terms of selected characteristics such as gender, race and age.



Chartist gathering in Kennington from the Illustrated London News 1848

Similar Citizens' Assemblies have been used in Canada and the Netherlands to deliberate proposals for electoral reform. The recent Irish Convention on the Constitution chose 66 of its 100 members on a near-random basis, along with a government-appointed chairperson and 33 politicians. Versions of the Citizens' Assembly model were also recently tested in an interesting pilot study organised by the Electoral Reform Society and a team of academics (see <http://citizensassembly.co.uk/>, Flinders et al 2016).

Public discussion

A second issue concerns the convention's agenda and whether it has power to set its agenda. A very broad or open agenda risks generating discussion that is unfocused and lacks depth. A narrow agenda risks ignoring major issues. Also, if politicians set the agenda there is a risk that they will have too much power in the process. A possible compromise is for Parliament to give the convention a specific set of issues to consider, while also giving it the opportunity to identify some further issues for itself. One advantage of this is that citizens outside of Parliament and the convention then have the opportunity to campaign to the convention for it to address their concerns. In this way, the convention can become the site of a wider, public discussion about the political system and basic rights, enhancing the expression of popular sovereignty.

A third issue is what happens to the convention's recommendations. These could just go back to Parliament. The risk, of course, is that Parliamentarians may decide to shelve proposals they

don't like (as the Icelandic Parliament shelved the draft constitution produced by its convention). Alternatively, the convention could have the power to send its recommendations to a binding referendum. This is more consistent with the principle of popular sovereignty, though voters do not necessarily accept the proposals of a Citizens' Assembly when put to a referendum. Irish voters strongly supported the Irish convention's call to amend the constitution to allow same-sex marriage. But Canadian electorates rejected the proposals of their Citizens' Assemblies for electoral reform.

A fourth issue is how to structure a convention, or convention process, across the territories of the UK. Here it seems essential to acknowledge the UK's emerging federal character. This implies a process in which conventions in the different nations feed into and constrain a UK-wide convention. Should a similar process also apply within each nation, e.g., should English regional conventions feed into an England-wide convention?

No interest

This is all interesting, one might say, but what are the chances of getting a constitutional convention process? The Conservatives won the 2015 general election and have shown no interest in holding one.

A first response is that the urgency of the underlying constitutional questions is not going away. The outcome of the Brexit referendum has reinforced them. The 'Leave' campaign called for a take back of 'sovereignty'. But what does this mean? How can we reconcile the 'Leave' votes of

England and Wales with the 'Remain' votes of Scotland and Northern Ireland? The referendum vote highlights – without resolving – the question of where 'sovereignty' ultimately lies: with, say, the UK Parliament, or with the peoples of the nations of the UK?

Cross party interest

A second response is that there remains wide interest in a convention process across political parties. When he was Shadow Minister for the Constitutional Convention, Jon Trickett MP worked on some interesting ideas to launch a convention process from Opposition, with cross-party support. A recent debate in the Commons, initiated by Graham Allen MP, suggests that cross-party interest remains (Hansard 2016). As the search for a Brexit settlement proceeds, support may widen, taking in more Conservatives. Recent proposals from the Constitutional Reform Group for a federal restructuring of the UK show that many in the political elite now see that 'muddling through' lacks plausibility and legitimacy (see <http://www.constitutionreform-group.co.uk/>).

Outside Westminster

Public discussion and campaigning outside Westminster, such as by Assemblies for Democracy (<https://assembliesfordemocracy.org/>), is vital, both to obtain a convention and to help make it a democratic exercise. In this respect, the example of the Scottish Constitutional Convention – and, indeed, of the Chartists – may still have something to teach us. **C**

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openDemocracy's discussion of the constitutional convention, with a range of contributions from academics, activists and others is available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/collections/great-charter-convention/constitutional-convention>

Clinton clinches nomination

Paul Garver reports on the challenge of uniting the Democratic vote

I am writing one week after the Democratic National Convention ended in Philadelphia where I organized outside activities on behalf of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

During the convention I consoled Sanders delegates, both young newcomers to electoral politics and older experienced hands, many of whom were struggling with tears of anger and frustration. We believed so strongly! We worked so hard! We came so close! And now it is so hard to plan ahead.

The famous injunction of legendary labor organizer and song writer Joe Hill, executed in 1915 on trumped-up charges, “Don’t Mourn – Organize!” needs tweaking to “Mourn, Then Organize!”

Indeed, creative new organizing projects are sprouting like desert flowers after rain. Silos between the variegated causes of the American Left continue to crumble. Black Lives Matter (BLM) has announced a comprehensive political programme opposing the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), while labor and environmental organizations unite with BLM against racist policing and mass incarceration.

The former Sanders campaign organization is collaborating with internet-based progressive organizations that had backed Sanders to support left and populist candidates for congressional, state and local offices. Groups who had not endorsed Sanders, mainly ‘Warren-Wing Democrats’, have taken on recruitment, training and support for insurgent candidates. (Elizabeth Warren is the populist and popular Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, Sanders’ closest ally in the U.S. Senate)

DSA held a successful Socialist Caucus at the Convention. More than a hundred Sanders delegates, members of DSA or of the Progressive Democrats of America (which played the crucial role in persuading Sanders to run in the primaries), met with over two hundred more socialists, including numerous labor staffers and intellectuals who had not previously identified themselves as such.

The success of the Socialist Caucus demonstrates the galvanizing effect of the Sanders candidacy in injecting democratic socialist ideas into the mainstream of U.S. political discourse. Sanders won about 45% of the Democratic primary election vote, along with a majority of the Millennial vote (including younger African-Americans and Latinos).

The Clintonites tried to woo Sanders supporters through compromises on the party platform [more info requested] and on setting more democratic rules for selection of delegates to the next convention. The motivation of the party leadership was cynical and its commitment to the new progressive party agenda more tactical than principled. But by insisting on progressive economic and environmental justice party positions as the focus of the presidential campaign, Sanders is making it harder for Clinton to follow her natural bent to waffle and triangulate with Republican positions.

Simply supporting the Clintonites to defeat Trump is not an option. Hillary Clinton and vice-presidential pick Tim Kaine are already courting big-money campaign donors, and will walk away from the progressive party platform if allowed to do so.

Without the muscular economic ideas put forth by Sanders and reluctantly accepted by the Clintonites, the Democratic Party would be campaigning only on a message of social and racial inclusion and tolerance.

The strangest presidential campaign in recent American politics pits an unscrupulous, unpredictable and untrustworthy Trump against an all too predictable, cautious and untrustworthy Clinton. Sanders would have been a much more effective opponent against Trump!

It is hard to imagine a Trump victory, which would put the American Left into full mobilization and insurgency mode for survival. But Trump can still win, enabled by Clinton’s waffling on the TPP. This equivocation is giving Trump a huge opportunity in several states that normally vote Democratic in Presidential

elections (Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan) where corporate-dominated ‘trade’ treaties are widely held responsible for industrial collapse. But President Obama wants the TPP to be part of his ‘legacy’ and wings of both Democratic and Republican parties promote global corporate domination.

In the more likely case that Clinton wins in November, the Left will quickly have to mobilize, to support those political and economic reforms that will be blocked by Congressional Republicans, to block passage of the TPP and TTIP, and to oppose Clinton’s hawkish and interventionist foreign policy initiatives.


The Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein is not the logical sequel to the political revolution. She may get a temporary boost from small socialist sects urging members and Sanders supporters to join this campaign. But the Green Party is little more than an electoral ballot line, with no structure or activity between elections, and the socialist sectarians are there only to recruit for themselves.

So what priorities for the American Left for late 2016 and into the near future?

1. Defeat Trump as decisively as possible.
2. Elect as many democratic socialists and progressive democrats as possible at all levels of government.
3. Keep the Millennial generation actively involved both in electoral politics and in issue campaigns.

4. Create our own political parties based on local electoral and issue organizing.

Real power must be built from the grassroots. The USA is variegated politically. There are cities with nonpartisan races where Left alternative parties can become the major opponent to corporate Democrats. States like Vermont have a long tradition of independent socialist politics that produced Sanders.

The mourning period following the Sanders campaign is ending. Time to be agitating, educating and organizing! 

Paul Garver is a member of DSA

The flaw on drugs

Patrick Mulcahy
on the war
on drugs

Hollywood is not serious about the war on drugs. By which I mean that it does not produce movies that ask legislators to change tack. Hollywood movies are about the drug bust, the attempted disruption of a network and denying criminal gangs access to the proceeds of their trafficking. As far as North America’s relationship with its southern neighbour goes, it is not about working with Latin American governments to diversify countries’ economies so that cocaine production is not the industry of choice. Tactical rather than strategic interventions continue.

There is a reason that Colombia was for many decades a major source of imported cocaine to the United States: until fairly recently, it was the location of a bitter civil war between the FARC rebels and the government. At time of writing, a peace deal is being implemented that could offer a better hope on the war on drugs than the break-up of any criminal network, because the economic conditions that require mass production of cocaine should no longer exist.

We know from the example of Afghanistan that countries that are either pariah states (refusing to engage in the rules-based international system) or have large populations living in utter poverty that produce drugs to provide some sort of livelihood. The demand is there from the rest of the world and no amount of awareness campaigns will significantly reduce drug use in the west when there is economic inequality. First time users are driven to the flame and tell themselves that the drugs are necessary, no matter what the cost to themselves and others around them. Hollywood created the sub-genre of stoner comedies to partially make fun of drug users (mainly consumers of cannabis) but this was more of a ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’ response. Cheech and Chong, Bill and Ted, the Dudes who lost their car - they are all anti-heroes. Incidentally, I’m still waiting for the first female-driven dope-head comedy.

Directed by Brad Furman, *The Infiltrator* is the latest example of a Hollywood thriller in which the good guys – American federal agents – attempt to ‘take down’ a drug overload. Set in the mid 1980s, it is based on the real life work of undercover agent Bob Mazur, played in the movie by Bryan Cranston, who posed as an international money launderer in order to bring Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar to justice. Nominally, the hook is: what makes a man risk his life to assume a different identity and how can they balance that with a regular home life? It’s not simply about righteousness – bringing the bad guys to book. Whilst undercover, you get to do cool stuff.

In *The Infiltrator*, Bob gets to drive an expensive car and even acquires a glamorous fiancé (played by Diane Kruger, Hollywood’s Helen of Troy). When you are dealing with corrupt banks like BCCI, there is extensive travel. Whilst maintaining your cover on an anniversary date with your wife, you even get to slam a waiter’s head into a cake bearing the ‘wrong’ inscription. I really felt for that guy, traumatised in the workplace. If the incident really happened, he should be suing the FBI for unwarranted humiliation. These ‘perks’ are offset against the risks as Bob tries to get close to Escobar. In the

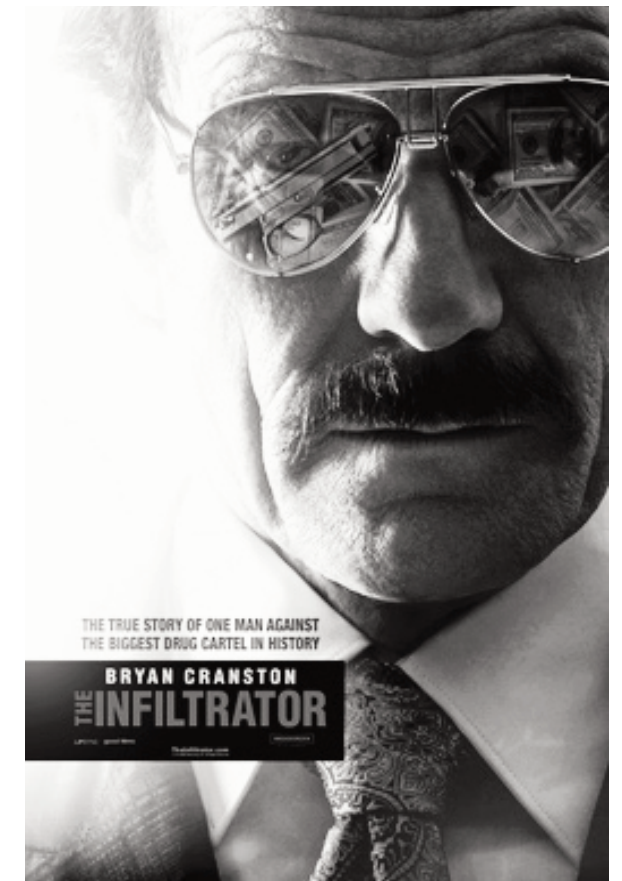
movie, people keep getting shot right next to him.

Given that *The Infiltrator* is a Hollywood film, of course Bob is shown not to ‘enjoy’ his job. Of course, he has an attractive wife (played in the movie by Juliet Aubrey) and two bright kids (though not one who asks, ‘daddy, what’s a Narco?’) Of course he resists his fiancé, who in turn is not attracted to him.

The disappointment of *The Infiltrator* is that it eschews a strong psychological portrait of the undercover cop for a series of suspense set pieces. It does however do something different. In the climax, there is no big shoot out, rather something else. This is the film’s most radical departure from the genre, but also accounts for its less than stellar box-office performance in America.

Cranston looks like he’s played this role before not least with the stick-on handle-bar moustache. At one point, a villain sketches him and you think: ‘he’s just drawn Walter White’ (Cranston’s character from the TV series *Breaking Bad*). We learn a little bit on how to become a successful money launderer – tip, small sums deposited in different accounts draw less attention. It helps that drug lords have an air freight company as a front.

At best, the film is minimally suspenseful, but it has a moment when Bob looks in the eyes of a large number of people that he has hoodwinked. You wonder about the kick of that moment, whether undercover cops can really live with the continual betrayal of people around them in the cause of justice. At best, the film gives you some sort of appreciation of the twisted life of going undercover. It can never be safe.



The EU and the Class War

EUROPE ISN'T WORKING
Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson
(Yale University Press, £10.49)

Frank Lee
on the EU
and
capitalism

The EU has been stumbling from one crisis to another. In the halcyon days before the massive market correction of 2008, everything seemed to be going so well; seemingly the only real problems with regard to the EU were those concerned with the democratic deficit. Indeed, this was a policy leitmotif of the Bennite opposition within the PLP including inter alia Benn Snr, Peter Shore, Bryan Gould and Barbara Castle, and at the time, Jeremy Corbyn. But these were a minority in the Labour party with most of the opposition to the EU coming from the hard right in the Tory party.

Elliott and Atkinson have long been outliers on the left, and they are at pains throughout this book to make manifest their opposition to the majority in the LP. Their critique was mainly directed at the euro (although they tend to use the euro and EU interchangeably) and its design flaws. These flaws were inbuilt from their origin.

The euro was a currency without a state, an experiment in monetary union without political union, and lacking the economic desiderata to qualify as an optimal currency area. This last point is particularly significant. For a geographical area to be optimal, i.e., best serve economic development, perhaps the most important condition is a currency risk-sharing system across countries.

A risk-sharing system in a currency union requires the distribution of money to regions experiencing economic difficulties, whether due to the adoption of unsuitable economic policies or simply that these areas are less developed. In any individual states there will be the necessity of fiscal transfers from the more prosperous regions to the more less developed regions. For example, this happens in the USA, with fiscal transfers from Vermont to Mississippi or in the UK from Surrey to Merseyside. However, these fiscal transfers do not present any over-riding difficulties within countries, but they do become problematic when they become policy between countries. People in London may not be par-

ticularly perturbed by regional aid to Sunderland, but the Finns and Dutch would be more than concerned about seeing their surpluses going to what they believe are the undeserving nations of the southern and eastern peripheries. This was clearly the case during the Greek sovereign debt crisis, still ongoing.

Additionally, one-size-fits-all interest rates rests on the assumption that it is possible and optimal to impose a similar fiscal and monetary regime on all states within the union regardless of their differences and levels of development. This Teutonic fixation with a hard anti-inflationary currency has led to depression conditions in the south and eastern areas of Europe.

A change to the EU came about sometime in the 1980s when a rigid neoliberal (together with an added neo-conservative geopolitical) model was imposed. The authors point out that fuddy-duddy interventionist nonsense "such as exchange/capital controls, protectionist trade measures, a de facto prohibition on the creation of new state enterprises, other than in an emergency, and strict rules on how publicly owned entities are to be financed" are all totally prohibited by EU laws.

These policies were consistent with the dreaded holy trinity of privatisation-liberalisation-deregulation; the economic template for Europe, and is now much the same as the Structural Adjustment Policies the IMF has used in the third world and now in Europe (Latvia, Greece).

The authors propose a discretionary approach to the rigid rules-based policy regime: a looser 'soft' money system. Here I part company. You can have a soft money regime or a hard-money regime, neither is ideal, both have problems specific to themselves. A fixed system like the euro where the currency is pegged to another or

gold, is one alternative. The other is a floating currency mismanaged by bureaucrats. Floating currencies are not so much of a system but more the lack of a system. A floating exchange rate system is precisely what we were gifted when the dollar went off the gold standard in 1971. We are now living with the long-term results of this fiat currency based experiment. The authors should take note of what has happened to the American template instead of, implicitly at least, offering it as an alternative.

There is no such thing as crisis-free capitalism. It is a system of violent internal/external shocks and multiple disequilibria which produce feed-back loops further destabilising an already unstable system. The post-war boom is over, this is the new reality and its most salient feature is class struggle.

The centre left imagines that a few tweaks of the social and economic variables will return us to the golden age of the post-war boom. Wishful thinking. Today the monied classes have launched a ruthless class-war. Warren Buffet, the famed US investor put it quite openly when he said: "There is a class war going on and my side is winning." Enough said.



Duncan Bowie
on
post-
Quadahfi
Libya



THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH
Peter Cole and Brian McQuinn
(Hurst, £30)

I read this book in an attempt to understand why Libya had failed to rebuild a stable state since the fall of Qadhafi. Libya tends to be only in the news in the UK as a departure point for migrants to Europe. Much attention is given to Syria and Iraq while we fail to recognise that Libya is also an example of the failure of Western powers to have a deliverable reconstruction strategy after supporting the downfall of an autocratic regime.

The book comprises 14 essays written by a wide range of diplomats, academics and NGO activists. The editors are an analyst for the International Crisis Group and an academic who advised the Carter Centre for Conflict Resolution and subsequently the UN.

The main focus is on the 2011 uprising and the following two years. It therefore does not deal with the pre 2011 relationship between Qadhafi and the UK and US and Tony Blair's support for Qadhafi against the domestic opposition. Nor does it deal with the recent deterioration in the political and security situation. Although published last year, many of the essays were clearly written two years earlier. Some essays that focus on the transitional period of 2011-2012, notably that of the former UN special representative, the highly

respected and experienced Ian Martin, now look optimistic.

The book as a whole is excellently researched providing fascinating detail on the different groups involved in the uprising and somewhat surprisingly, on the military co-operation between different groups and the various intervening powers – notably France and the UK and also significantly, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – all four countries having military advisors and/or special forces and intelligence operatives on the ground with different groups.

An essay by Frederic Webrey examines the extent to which each intervening power collaborated with different factions. It also demonstrates the extent to which opposition factions were led by returnees from the Libyan diaspora, many of whom returned from the UK as well or the US, France and the Middle East.

One of the most intriguing chapters is that by the Irish journalist, Mary Fitzgerald, which examines the rise of different Islamist groups and their roles both within and outside the transitional government. The chapter was written before the appearance of ISIS in Libya and touches on the developing link between the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and al-Qa'ida, though at that time the affiliation was only suspected. Fitzgerald also focuses on the 'radicalisation' led by survivors of Qadhafi's 1996 massacre of Islamist prisoners at the Abu Slim prison.

Another excellent chapter by the UK based academic Yvan Guichaoua examines the relationship between Libya and the Saharan Tuaregs and the role of Tuareg fighters for Qadhafi. Also reported is the situation of expelled migrant workers in the Tuareg uprisings in northern Mali and Niger, which led to a short-lived autonomous state of Azawad in northern Mali, until superseded by another group of recipients of Libyan weaponry – al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It also goes some way to explain the origins of the Tuareg managed migrant trafficking/assistance operation, which is now bringing so many sub-Saharanans to the Libyan coast in search of a better life in Europe. Other chapters cover the failure of the UN supported attempt to re-establish a judicial system, the range of regional and ethnic groups, and the revival of factionalism and inter-city and inter-tribal disputes and violence.

At one point, Ian Martin refers to the fact that UN intervention was initially welcomed by Libyans, based partly on the memory of the role of UN commissioner Adrian Pelt in the 1951 transition from Italian colonial estate and the post-war British and French military administration to an independent monarchic state. What is odd is that none of the authors, least of all Martin, examines why the 2011-2013 UN intervention was, in contrast, such a failure.

Vision of a peacemaker

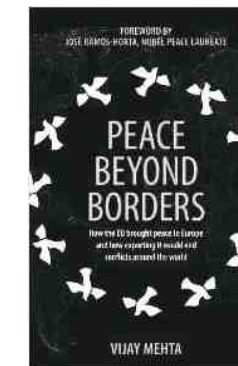
PEACE BEYOND BORDERS
Vijay Mehta
(New Internationalist Publications, £9.99 *)

Vijay Mehta's thesis is that because Europe has been peaceful since WWII one can extrapolate. He sets out ten conditions which form a sufficient cause for continuing peace elsewhere: 1) Enshrined democracy and the rule of law, 2) Economic truce, 3) Open borders and human ties, 4) Soft power and shared values, 5) Permanent dis-

cussion dialogue and diplomacy, 6) Financial incentives and support, 7) Veto and consensus building, 8) Resistance to external interference, 9) Rules for human rights and multiculturalism, 10) Mutual trust and peaceful coexistence.

But the EU lacks military forces and is mostly 'protected' by NATO which moved into the former Soviet Union sphere of influence at the first opportunity and politicians failed to consider the consequences. Nevertheless it has enjoyed internal peace for several

decades. This is a welcome contribution to the debate.



*£9.99 plus £2 post and packing available from www.europeforpeace.org.uk
or send a cheque to Vijay Mehta at 14 Cavell St. London E1 2HP

Colonial legacies

AFRICAN DEMOCRACY: ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA, KENYA AND TANZANIA
Gardner Thompson
(Fountain Books (Kampala), £30)

Nigel Watt on decolonisation and democracy

This book raises many questions about democracy that go beyond East Africa (and are relevant to our referendum blues): what is democracy, what do people actually want – and which people anyway? Thompson's first question is to ask whether the British colonisers made any preparation for a democratic outcome in these countries or did not rather provide training for dictatorship. He looks at the colonial period, the transition and the story since independence in each country and concludes that the end result is something called "democracy with African characteristics". The British ruled as authoritarians, sometimes providing good governance, and assumed they had many years to prepare for independence. Suddenly, in the late 1950s factors caused a dash for independence on 'the Westminster model. Harold Macmillan realised that post-Suez, the days of Empire were over and gave Iain Macleod full support for rapid withdrawal. Other factors included: the beginning of the Cold War, Ghana becoming independent and the reaction to the massacres at Hola Camp in Kenya and in Nyasaland (both in 1959) showed that force could no longer hold the Empire down. Then the Belgians in the Congo in 1960 showed how not to do it.

Amazingly the first elections on a full franchise in the three countries were held just before or just after independence. Although constitutions were negotiated, Britain's interest was to hand over to leaders who would serve British interests and stay on side in the Cold War. This attitude could have odd results: Britain welcomed Idi Amin but saw Nyerere as a threat.

The handover turned out to be smooth, thanks mainly to Macmillan and Macleod and a couple of wise governors, Turnbull in Tanganyika and Cohen in Uganda who wrote, "a sense of responsibility can only be acquired by exercising responsibility" – but the pressure for fast change came mainly from the

African leaders. The development (or not) of democracy in the three countries after 1960 reflected their differences: Uganda was an uneasy amalgam of strong kingdoms, notably Buganda and very different Nilotic populations in the north coupled with a bitter struggle between Catholics and Protestants dating from before independence, not to mention the Muslims. These tensions had brought the country to ruin by 1986 when Yoweri Museveni in his first years provided good governance and hope, but he has stayed too long in power, allowed corruption to flourish and lost his closest allies.

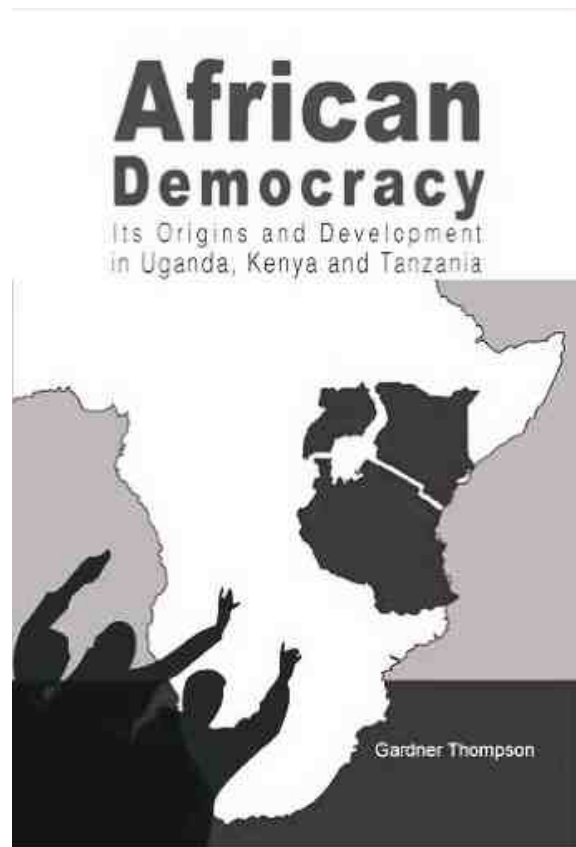
Kenya started with the potential problem of its two largest, culturally very different, ethnic groups (Kikuyu and Luo) who were rivals for power and at times also represented conservative and socialist ideas. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president, deepened the ethnic divide and his successor, Moi, perpetuated dictatorship. The ethnic divide coupled with economic hardship felt by the rapidly growing population led to the violence that followed the "stolen" election of 2007.

Tanzania had the advantage of having no dominant ethnic groups, a national language, Kiswahili, a political party with no rival which led automatically to a one party system and a visionary leader, Julius Nyerere. Unfortunately his vision was too much for a country of conservative peasants and his socialism, promulgated in the Arusha Declaration, ultimately failed when he stopped listening and in his frustration forced people into communal villages. Tanzania has now become part of the globalised economy and has a multi-party system (in which the ruling party

always wins) but presidents serve for two terms and dutifully retire.

Thompson sees uneven progress hampered by the difficult birth of independence and the huge international economic and political pressures faced by these young states. In the circumstances political parties in Uganda and Kenya have been mostly ethnically based and their main objective has been to hang on to power. The fact that governments have relied on indirect taxation and foreign aid has given the executive freedom to spend (or sometimes eat) the money on policies decided undemocratically rather than taxpayers taking responsibility for spending decisions. He is critical of aid, quoting Dumisa Moyo's book, *Dead Aid*. He shows how China's advances have been welcomed in contrast to the West constantly badgering them on things like human rights.

It helps to know something about the region first; Thompson often omits to provide the background information which many readers would not know e.g. the union of Zanzibar with Tanganyika, the fact that there are several kingdoms in Uganda, not just Buganda, the ethnic balance in Kenya. The book is very readable – and it was published in Uganda.



Duncan Bowie on a troubled relationship

HESITANT COMRADES
Geoffrey Bell (Pluto Press, £18.99)

No doubt published to coincide with the centenary of the Easter rising, this book's focus is on the period between 1916 and the Anglo-Irish treaty of December 1921, which created the Irish Free State and generated the Irish Civil War. The study is the first comprehensive study of the attitude of the British Labour movement to this phase of the Irish struggle for independence, what Bell refers to as the 'Irish Revolution'. Bell, a Belfast protestant, has previously written books on the Protestants of Ulster and British attitudes to 'the Troubles'.

The book is well researched and presents a fair assessment of the responses of different elements of the Labour movement towards developments in Ireland. What is perhaps most interesting is the limited priority within the Labour movement to the Irish nationalist movement, a contrast with the central role of the Home Rule campaign in British liberalism and the early socialist movement in the last half of the 19th century, where radicals and socialists allied themselves with the nationalist cause.

By 1916, attitudes and priorities had changed. Most of the British left, while supporting some degree of Irish self-govern-

ment, did not support the Easter Rising, and even James Connolly's former colleagues of the Socialist Labour Party considered Connolly mistaken in seeing an independent Ireland as a precondition for the Irish working class to take power.

Bell has a very useful chapter on different attitudes to the relationship between nationalism and socialism. The Rising occurred while Britain was at war with Germany and those Labour leaders who supported the war such as J R Clynes, George Barnes and Jimmy Thomas viewed Irish nationalism as a dangerous diversion, there was little sympathy for Roger Casement, executed for trying to organise German arms for the nationalists. Ramsay MacDonald who had opposed British involvement in the war supported Irish self government, with a status similar to Australia and Canada, but within the framework of a reformed British Empire. Labour leaders were to claim credit for the Anglo-Irish treaty which was based on this premise, though there is little evidence that the Labour leadership contributed significantly to the settlement, and Labour leaders were shocked by the degree of opposition within Ireland to the settlement.

Bell provides a detailed analysis of the limited discussions on Ireland within the British trade

union movement during the 1916-1921 period and provides an interesting study of William Walker and the Belfast trade union leadership's protestant sectarianism, which is perhaps part of the explanation for the British Labour party leadership's caution about explicit support for either the nationalist or the Protestant faction. Bell also focuses on the nascent British Communist party, with Willie Gallagher in 1921 apparently advising the anti-treaty nationalists to arrest Michael Collins and the pro-treaty nationalists. Bell also presents a detailed analysis of the supportive commentary in Sylvia Pankhurst's

Workers Dreadnought, the more hesitant position of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian attitude which was more hostile to Irish nationalism arguing that a form of strengthened local government should satisfy nationalist aspirations.

Bell's book is well worth reading; it presents a sound analysis of a neglected subject and raises some interesting and difficult issues as to the relationship between socialism and nationalism. It is significant that the Labour movement was more supportive of nationalist struggles in India and Egypt, both key concerns during this period, than of the struggle closer to home.

Forgotten revolutionary feminist

THE RED VIRGIN & THE VISION OF UTOPIA
Mary M Talbot & Bryan Talbot
(Jonathan Cape, £16.99)

Celebrating a tireless campaigner for equality, human rights and liberation the Talbot partnership once again collaborates to animate the life of a forgotten heroine of the 1871 Paris Commune. Louise Michel was a revolutionary feminist and libertarian socialist who not only envisioned a better life for women and oppressed working people but fought courageously for that new world.

Historian and academic Mary Talbot provides the text and annotations while husband Bryan supplies the vivid black and white graphics—peppered with red banners, neck-scarves, roses and

books—that movingly illustrate Michel's heroic life.

Michel died in 1905, the year of the first Russian revolution and the story traverses back and forth from her early days to the Commune when French workers established a short-lived socialist council in the heart of Paris to the 20th century. The device of conversations between Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the pioneer American feminist, and contemporaries of Michel, is used to tell her story.

Following the bloody suppression of the Commune Michel was fortunate to escape with her life but was transported to New Caledonia. Earlier we see her campaigning against wage slavery in France and then the real slavery and illiteracy of the indigenous people in her new

home.

The Talbots' re-examination of the idea of utopia through this enthralling life story continues to inspire all who work for a better world.



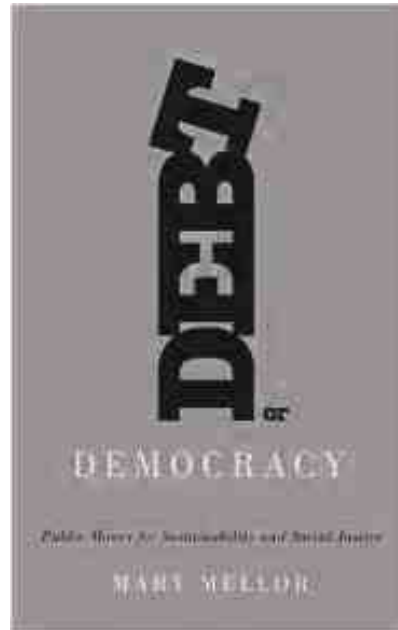
Debt or Democracy?

DEBT OR DEMOCRACY
Mary Mellor (Pluto Press, £17)

**John
Sunderland**
on the deficit
obsession

Neoliberal politics, as Mary Mellor points out, has an obsession with public debt and deficit. This world view characterises public expenditure as essentially parasitic – spending money on public services which are funded through the wealth creation of the private sector – with banks acting as honest intermediaries. Her arguments centre on the centrality of the role of money, and how the banking crisis has revealed the way in which the private creation of debt has been used as a political tool.

She seeks to expose a number of myths and contradictions of what she calls 'handbag economics' – the homespun approach popularised by Thatcher which sees national economics as household economics writ large. Common sense dictates that when households struggle with debt they get into trouble – so isn't this



the same for the country? This is a question the left badly needs to answer in a clear and credible way. The near collapse of the financial system should have signalled the end of 'handbag eco-

nomics'; in practice neoliberal politics has won out, and the orthodoxies of handbag economics remain unchallenged.

Mellor puts centre stage the role of money and suggests that the creation of debt is a positive: a means of resourcing productive activity. She identifies the way in which public money has been effectively privatised as the ultimate neoliberal deceit. She builds on this by attempting to expose one of the foundation myths about the role of money, including the idea that money is nothing more than a mechanism of exchange – facilitated by banks – based upon sound deposits and reserves of precious metal. The social and historical context in which money emerged shows this to be no more than a myth.

These ideas are part of the 'paradigm shift' in economic thinking that we need. Although this book is not an easy read, its ideas are central to the development of a viable alternative.

Ten years that shook the world

THE 'RUSSIAN' CIVIL WARS
Jonathan Smele
(Hurst £35 (hbk), £19.99 (pbk))

**Duncan
Bowie** on
a
revisionist
history

There is a massive literature on the Russian civil war, both in terms of memoirs of participants, and in terms of academic studies. I did question why a new study was necessary, but was impressed by Smele's earlier magisterial study of Kolchak's regime in Siberia (*Civil War in Siberia* CUP 1996), so was interested in what Smele had to add to the existing literature. Smele's claim to a novel approach rests on two related premises – that the civil war started before the October revolution, with a revolt in central Asia in the summer of 1916, and that the civil war was not one civil war but a series of wars which involved a range of ethnic groups and was therefore not primarily 'Russian'.

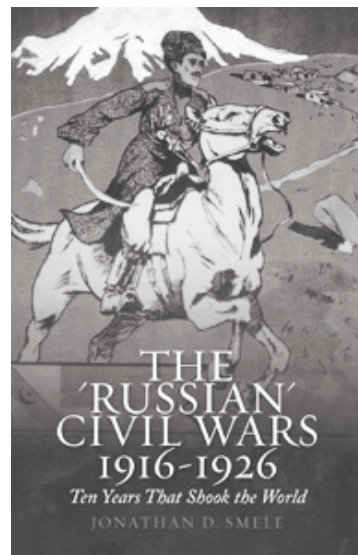
While Smele's first argument is unconvincing (and tends to rely on a recently republished study of the central Asian uprising by Edward Sokol), the second argument is valid. Much of literature by Western academics focuses on the various western interventions in the civil war (by Britain,

France, America, Japan and the Czechoslovakian legion and to a lesser extent Poland, Finland, Greece, Turkey and Iran), while Smele's focus is on the challenges to the Bolshevik rule from a series of other political and ethnic groupings.

Smele is excellent on the fluidity of alliances and conflicts and gives appropriate attention to the socialist challenges to Bolshevism as well as to the challenges from 'White Russians' and Cossacks as well as the interventionist powers. This approach is not new and can also be seen in Evan Mawdsley's 1986 study and more recent studies of politics *Behind the front lines* by Vladimir Brovkin, Geoffrey Swain and Scott B Smith.

Smele's study is the most comprehensive. He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of both primary and secondary sources, no doubt attributable to his decade as editor of the journal *Revolutionary Russia* and his compilation of a two volume *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Civil Wars* (Rowman and Littlefield £170), published last year. His new book has over 150 pages of footnotes and bibliogra-

phy to supplement the 250 page text. It is arguably a book for specialists but perhaps the new paperback edition will attract a wider readership, who will be rewarded by reading this scholarly work. As Geoffrey Swain points out, 'the demise of the USSR makes the civil wars more not less important: the foundation myths of all post-Soviet states are centred on these struggles.'



Spanish populism

PODEMOS
Inigo Errejon and Chantal Mouffe
(Lawrence and Wishart, £10)

**Brian
O'Leary** on
Spanish left
populism

The book is a conversation between the authors (Errejon is one of the central leaders of the new Spanish anti-austerity party *Podemos*). In sum it amounts to theoretical advocacy of a post-Marxist progressive identity politics and applies this to the birth and successes of Podemos.

Both authors subscribe to a reinterpretation of Gramsci's theory of hegemony that Mouffe previously developed with Laclau in the 80s. To challenge and replace the existing neo-liberal hegemony it is necessary to go beyond mere class categories and construct a new progressive 'People', which involves uniting heterogeneous social discontents. Only with this insight can an effective mass progressive subject be built. In turn this means redefining 'us and them' in more general terms.

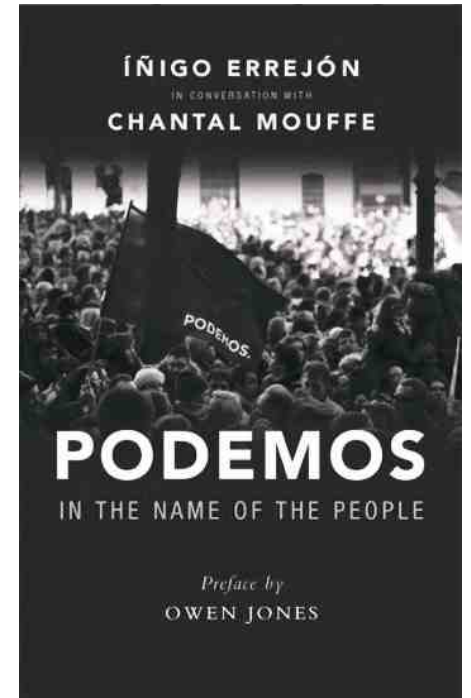
In Spain Podemos re-categorised 'them' as *la casta*, which approximates to the establishment. These are seen as the corrupt power elites of the wealthy as well as the traditional political parties that have governed since Franco. As a consequence of their

mismanagement, along with the connivance of Social Democracy, the country faced an unprecedented economic and social crisis, with 25% unemployment, as well as a legitimacy crisis, with the uncovering of widespread institutional corruption. The successes in rapidly building a popular mass anti-corruption and austerity movement and making an electoral breakthrough in 2015, critically depended upon rejecting the 'fetishism' of left and right in favour of 'an above and a below'.

Mouffe has doubts as to whether Podemos can sustain its advance in the absence of a greater egalitarian orientation and becoming unashamedly left populist. The party indeed failed in its aim of becoming the largest opposition in the recent second election. However they both agree that the general trajectory has to continue to be for a radicalisation of pluralist democracy. Is this seriously enough? Even if initially successful any extension of democracy and redistribution, unless with intermediate demands, will leave untouched national and EU capitalist power structures that will

surely bite back. Isn't this the message of the current reversals of Bolivarianism in South America?

Overall the book offers an insight into the views of those that inspire and lead one of the most electorally successful anti-neoliberal parties in Europe. While there could be lessons in tactically rethinking the virtues of a left populism it does not convince as a long term panacea.



Pioneering picture books

A NEW CHILDHOOD: PICTURE BOOKS FROM SOVIET RUSSIA
(Olivia Ahmed (curator)
(House of Illustration, £19.99))

**Mike
Davis** on
inspiring
children's
art

This relatively new centre for exhibiting the best in illustration is a must for anyone interested in modern drawing and design. The House is tucked behind the new Kings Cross station complex on the edge of Granary square and has a standing Quintin Blake Gallery. This latest show reveals the stunning innovation of illustrated children's books produced in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and early 1930s.

Displaying a selection of original artwork and rare books from the collection of Sasha Lurye, reproduced in *A New Childhood*, the exhibition underlines the way artists, designers and typogra-

phers, working together in pre-Stalinist USSR produced some of the most creative, eye-catching and influential children's books of the 20th Century. They provided the inspiration for the children's



books of Père Castor in France and Noel Carrington with the Puffin Picture book series in the UK.

Thousands of illustrators from Lebedev to Lissitzky (who worked with other Yiddish artists until suppressed) in many publishing houses, used folk tales, poetry and prose, even nonsense verse, as well as information on all kinds of life, labour and production to communicate to the younger generation.

Working in turbulent political times the children's book artists, with arguably greater freedom (for longer) than others from the dead hand of state censorship and control, sought to educate, entertain and uplift children in their endeavours. They did this in spades judging by this show. Catch it if you can, or buy the book.

Labour's mutual interests

Harry Hayball tackles the smears and calls for unity

Harry Hayball is secretary, Village BLP, Dulwich and West Norwood CLP. He writes in a personal capacity

If events of the past few months have underlined anything, it's that Labour's left and centre-left need one another, and each side's success depends on their cooperation with the other. If Jeremy Corbyn wins the current leadership election, such cooperation will be essential to preventing a damaging split, and to Labour's chances of expanding its support base in wider society. Labour's centrists are not convinced that a mass movement is needed to win power. But if Owen Smith wins, co-operation with the left will, at the very least, still be vital to avoid years of purges and factional fighting, and the Labour right successfully undermining the new leadership as they did with Ed Miliband.

Open conflict

We are, however, in the unfortunate situation where these two parts of the Labour Party are now in open conflict. Meanwhile, the right-wing, which appears to be the most adamant that it alone owns the party and knows the direction it should take, is operating mainly in the back-ground.

It is hard to know what has gone on behind the scenes and the intimate details of the personal relationships between Corbyn, his team and members of the shadow cabinet. Some of the information that has come out has revealed that Jeremy's team has not been immune to *The Thick Of It*-style blunders, such as around the appointment(s) of Thangam Debbonaire. But *The Thick Of It* was inspired by New Labour, not the left, so it is hard to see these as sufficient justification for trying to depose Labour's elected leader.

Most of the allegations, moreover, seem to have very little substance behind them: the claim that leadership staff broke into

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Malhotra's office; that Jeremy secretly voted "Leave"; and that he tried to intimidate an MP through his IRA father, to name a few.

The assertion that centrist and centre-left MPs gave their support to Jeremy also does not withstand any scrutiny. When Sadiq Khan was accused of sharing platforms with dubious individuals, the response of the entirety of Labour was to say, quite rightly, that this was simply a racist smear campaign – as Yvette Cooper put it, the racist dogwhistle was turning into "a racist scream". But similar, and even worse, smears have been directed at Jeremy throughout his time as leader, many of them promoted by parts of the Labour Party. The absolute silence of most of those Labour MPs not actively involved in these smears has been quite damning - not to mention their participation in the attempted coup, support for the exclusion of 130,000 new members from voting, and so forth.

As things currently stand, it looks like Jeremy Corbyn will be re-elected, perhaps with an even bigger mandate than last time. What is the way forward from this? I would suggest a few things.

Firstly, the centre-left need to make absolutely clear, from now onwards, that they would oppose any split and try to work with whoever is elected, including Jeremy. Their failure to convince the party electorate that Corbyn is a bad leader is not sufficient reason to completely disregard that electorate and destroy the Labour Party. Those voting for Jeremy are not fanatics, cult-members and "Militant" diehards, but people who like Jeremy's ideas and approach and want to



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn prepares for another year in office

give them a go – for a little longer than nine months.

Secondly, a "forgive and forget" - and apologise where appropriate - approach of some sort is probably needed. If different parts of Britain's left spend forever going over what has gone wrong in the past, there is not much hope of future co-operation. Corbyn has a great capacity to reach out to his supporters, and through the mainstream media the centre-left do too, so it shouldn't be hard to achieve this.

Work out a way

Finally, both sides need to work out a way to co-operate on policy, strategy and other key issues – whilst bearing in mind the proportion of the vote Corbyn has and the democratic mandate that gives him, as well as respecting party conference and Labour's internal policy-making processes.

At the moment, things look rather dire. But there is no reason why Labour cannot re-unite after the election. Most of Labour's left and centre share a fairly broad agreement on policy, and just differ over what policies are feasible and tactics for winning power. Regardless of what has happened so far, their cooperation is essential, and something we can all work to achieve. **C**

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