

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#303 March/April 2020

£2

Mr Toad's playbook

Clive Lewis MP

DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Don Flynn

NEW WORKING CLASS

Jake Woodier

GREEN NEW DEAL

Alice Arkwright

MIGRANT CLAMPDOWN

Peter Kenyon

BREXIT SURRENDER

Andrew Coates

Jon Lansman

LABOUR LEADERSHIP

Plus

**Book reviews and
regulars**



ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE

03 >



770968 786001

www.chartist.org.uk



Editorial Policy

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

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

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active 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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

Contributions and letters deadline for

CHARTIST #304

10 April 2020

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

Receive Chartist's online newsletter: send your email address to news@chartistmagazine.org.uk

Chartist Advert Rates:

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

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

Editorial Board

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

Production: Ferdousur Rehman

Contacts

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

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

Website: www.chartist.org.uk
Email: editor@chartist.org.uk
Twitter: @Chartist48

Newsletter online: to join, email webeditor@chartist.org.uk

Printer ad



Greening the economy to combat warming - Page 13



Sinn Fein tops Irish poll - Page 17



Tory refugee clampdown - Page 22

FEATURES

8

BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS

Don Flynn on rebuilding the working class

10

EU PHASE ONE SURRENDER

Prepare for stream of hatred says Peter Kenyon

11

DIVIDEND BONANZA

Prem Sikka on widening income divide

12

AUSTERITY CON

Dennis Leach exposes Johnson's economic prospectus

13

GREEN NEW DEAL

Jake Woodier say GND is way for climate & economy

14

DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Clive Lewis MP lays out his charter for change

16

SCOTTISH LABOUR DOLDRUMS

Can Labour recover in Scotland asks Gerry Hassan

17

SINN FEIN TOPS IRISH POLL

Jerry Fitzpatrick on what election victory means

18

LIMITS OF DEVOLUTION

Duncan Bowie on promise and pitfalls of localising power

19

LABOUR LEADERSHIP 1

Jon Lansman roots for Rebecca Long-Bailey

20

LABOUR LEADERSHIP 2

Andrew Coates finds Keir Starmer the stronger candidate

21

PATIENTS NOT PASSPORTS

James Skinner and Aedin O'Cuill on Docs not Cops

23

CONSTITUTION THREAT

Trevor Fisher on battle of 2020

Subscribe to **CHARTIST**:
£18 ordinary subscription
£35 supporter subscription
(6 issues)

Visit
www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe
for details



Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Number 303

March/April 2020

REGULARS

4

OUR HISTORY 89

Tony Benn's Arguments for Socialism

5

EDITORIAL

Johnson uses Trump playbook

6

POINTS & CROSSINGS

Paul Salveson on crumbling red wall

7

GREENWATCH

Dave Tuke on Offshore Wind

22

YOUTH VIEW

Alice Arkwright on asylum clampdown

24

FILM REVIEW

Patrick Mulcahy on Misbehaviour

25

BOOK REVIEWS

Glyn Ford on fighting fascists; Duncan Bowie on Peterloo, Armenia and privatisation; Sarah Hughes on South Sudan; Bryn Jones on Finance Capital; Andrew Coates on Livio Maitan; Steve Cushion on a Peruvian revolutionary; Don Flynn on immigration

32

WESTMINSTER VIEW

Cat Smith on Tory northern rail mess

OUR HISTORY

OUR HISTORY - 89

TONY BENN

ARGUMENTS FOR SOCIALISM (1979)

Tony Benn, previously known as Anthony Wedgwood Benn, was a Minister in Wilson's 1964-70 and 1974-7 governments and Callaghan's 1977-9 government. He was at various times Postmaster General, Minister for Technology, Minister for Industry, and Minister for Energy. He was the son of William Wedgwood Benn, Attlee's Secretary of State for India; his grandfather, John Benn had been a Liberal MP, having been leader of the London County Council. Tony Benn was first elected to parliament in 1950, succeeding Stafford Cripps in Bristol East. He first came to public attention in 1960 when he had to fight a legal battle to avoid being disbarred from parliament on inheriting his father's peerage, a precedent which was followed in 1963 when Lord Home was able to renounce his peerage to become Prime Minister. In 1965, he published a book on *The Regeneration of Britain*, supporting Wilson's vision of a New Britain supported by 'the white heat of technology'.

Benn's experience in government moved him to the left. Interested in the history of ethical socialism, having been sympathetic to the wartime Common Wealth party in his youth, Benn became interested in a more libertarian socialist approach, supporting the syndicalist Institute for Workers Control and the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders workers cooperative of 1975 and advocating industrial democracy. He opposed EEC membership on the grounds that it involved a loss of sovereignty. Benn became seen as the leader of the left-wing of the party in opposition, standing unsuccessfully against Denis Healey for the deputy leadership in 1981. In 1988, he stood unsuccessfully against Neil Kinnock for the party leadership. He continued to campaign for democratic reform, supporting a series of Socialist Society conferences in his new constituency of Chesterfield in 1984, when his previous constituency had been abolished. He sat in parliament until 2001. He opposed the invasion of Iraq and served as president of the Stop the War coalition from 2001 until his death. He was a regular speaker at anti-war events and at historical commemorations such as Tolpuddle and the Levellers day at Burford.

Benn published nine volumes of diaries, detailing his political career in government and opposition. He died in 2014.

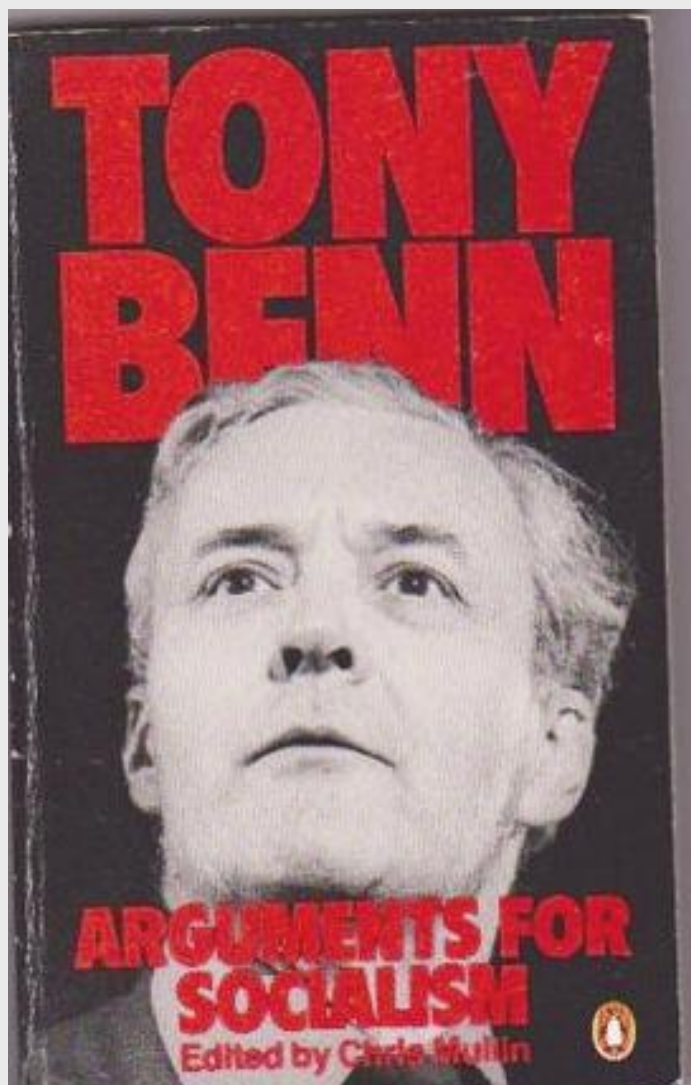
Arguments for Socialism, was published in 1979 just after Labour went into opposition with the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister. It was a composition of previous speeches, essays and articles edited by Chris Mullin. A second volume was published in 1981 as *Arguments for Democracy*.

"Democratic Socialism. This is very much a home-grown British product which has been slowly fashioned over the centuries..... The Labour Party comprises within its ranks representatives of a wide range of opinions. We have been wise enough not to seek to impose a common socialist dogma on anyone. Indeed, our socialism grew out of experience and was not handed down from above, or received from outside. The British Labour Movement was born out of the chapels of dissenters and the struggles of factory workers who campaigned for trade union rights, then for the parliamentary vote, then organised themselves to nominate candidates in a separate Labour Party and finally adopted an explicitly socialist approach, based on a full commitment to a democratic system, and personal freedom."

"We too accept that any society requires discipline, though the discipline of the market place and the discipline imposed by the top people are both equally unattractive. We believe that the self-discipline of full democratic control offers our best hope for the future, and is the only real answer to inflation, because it confers real responsibility."

"The Labour Party has worked on the basis that the investment gap must be filled by public investment, with proper public accountability and public ownership, and that only public expenditure can convert human needs into economic

demands able to command resources and help restore full employment. Indeed, we believe that the nation can earn its living efficiently and profitably only if there is a new balance of wealth and power in favour of working people. And to avoid corporatism creeping in as a by-product of these public initiatives we have been working for a wider and deeper accountability of power through greater democratic control by Parliament and of finance and industry and of the institutions of the Labour Party itself....The next decade will see a growth of democratic socialism against the ideas of monetarism and corporatism."



Johnson learning from Trump playbook

Already Johnson's Tories are reneging on commitments made in the EU Withdrawal Agreement to adhere to worker and consumer rights and environmental standards. Johnson talks about not taking EU rules, previously agreed by his and other governments. Their agenda is clear. To create a low tax, low wage, long hours, reduced rights economy in which 'free ports' are established and corporate capital can exploit labour with little restriction.

Peter Kenyon outlines further details on the 'Get Brexit done' show. The fallacy is that this is the end of the process. Leaving the EU on 31st January was just the beginning of phase one. As the process unfolds we will witness the banging of the nationalist drum on every issue from fishing to free trade, with Brussels and the EU states generally being labelled obstructive and uncooperative.

In his speech at Greenwich the prime minister indicated a preference for heavy tariffs on traded goods rather than stick to agreed standards. We have been warned. Meanwhile, not satisfied with blocking the free movement of EU citizens the government seems set on creating a yet tougher environment for all migrants and asylum seekers. **Alice Arkwright** explains how the government is planning to defy international law in stopping refugees, while tightening still further restrictions on children. For those already settled here the environment becomes more punitive. **James Skinner** and **Aedin O'Cuill** illustrate this from the experience in the NHS where staff are being pressured to snoop, refuse treatment or charge heavy fees for those in need of care. The Cameron/May immigration (failed) targets have been ditched but with the nonsensical points system beckoning immigration looks set to become an even more politicised field with harsher and more expensive entry criteria. Home Secretary Priti Patel's new system seeks to further cherry pick. Unskilled and semi-skilled migrants wishing to work in Britain are out while so-called skilled workers face a slightly lowered earnings threshold of around £25,000 to gain entry. Besides being discriminatory and short-sighted the policy will lead to labour shortages with many services and businesses suffering as a result.

Promises to end austerity and invest in industries and northern areas suffering from ten years of Tory squeeze and neglect ring hollow when set against the realities of continuing cuts to local councils, schools and hospitals. The infantile mantras chanted by docile cabinet members to build more hospitals, and spend more on police and buses are a pathetic distraction from the realities of the amounts of investment needed to reverse the erosion of public services.

Denis Leach exposes the fault-lines in the Tory economic strategy showing that austerity may be modified with un-costed promises but the underlying story of wealth redistribution to the rich remains. **Prem Sikka** further highlights the ten year bonanza for shareholders while the income gap has widened with the earnings of most workers

still below the 2008 crash levels.

Getting Brexit done also means ignoring the majority in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is leading to further pressures towards the break-up of Britain. **Gerry Hassan** analyses the plight of Labour in Scotland, with the party securing just one seat in the General Election. Prospects for Labour look bleak in his analysis of the options for political recovery.

The results of the Irish elections, which saw the leftist Sinn Féin top the poll, mean that a border poll on Irish unity seems likely within the next five years. While **Jerry Fitzpatrick** sees the SF success as largely built on its progressive social programme the national question will not be in the shadows for long.

Johnson and his chief adviser Dominic Cummings ape the Trump playbook in seeking to choose what journalists get briefing invites while planning to weaken public service broadcasting with attacks on the BBC and its licence funding regime. More broadly they seek to undermine the constitution. **Trevor Fisher** sees the big battle during 2020 being the protection of the judicial and rights based system that has emerged over the past 100 years.

As these menacing threats grow Labour is embroiled in a third leadership contest in five years, so its attack on the government currently lacks focus and drive. We print brief outlines of the case for the two front runners in the battle to lead Labour. Both Keir Starmer and Rebecca Long-Bailey have merits, but besides clear-sighted, competent and radical socialist leadership what the party desperately needs is a transformation of its culture, begun by Corbyn but stalled over the last two years.

We reproduce the prospectus for democratic revolution produced by **Clive Lewis** MP, who did not make it into the second round. His manifesto could be a lodestar for whoever succeeds Jeremy Corbyn on the path of changing Labour into a thoroughly democratic party with a clear plan for transforming the antiquated British state.

Local and city regional government could be a key terrain for Labour to rebuild its influence and support. **Duncan Bowie** argues that first Labour needs to be clear on what kind of devolution it wants.

Don Flynn widens the terrain of challenge for the left in identifying a fragmented working class. Modern capitalism has changed the nature of this primary agency of social change. The technological revolution is producing new forms of worker. Unless the left, particularly Labour and the trades unions are able to create a new politics and structures to get 'beyond the fragments' Labour's chances of forming a government in 2025 look bleak. A key element of Labour's offer must continue to be a radical Green New Deal as outlined by **Jake Woodier**.

Labour needs to maintain commitment to core socialist values and policies developed in the Corbyn period whilst becoming smarter at countering the new right Tories. A populist nationalist rhetoric, drawing from the Trump playbook, blaming the other whether it be migrants, Europeans, women or other minorities will get louder. Labour needs to respond with a positive internationalist and inclusive political counter-attack.

**Labour needs to
maintain commitment to
core socialist values and
become smarter at
countering the new
right Tories**

What's all this 'red wall' stuff?

Paul Salveson examines the myths on Northern Labour

It's 'The Great Red Wall' that never was. The idea that huge swathes of the North of England have been rock solid Labour since the world began is a nonsense. It's true that some constituencies in the North of England, south Wales and the central belt of Scotland had – fleetingly it now seems – very large Labour majorities, but it was patchy. Some Lancashire seats had long traditions of working class Toryism, whilst parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire were traditionally Liberal. Labour's so-called 'red wall' was at best a temporary '1945' phenomenon, taking place amidst a wave of post-war exuberance and hope. Yes, Ken Loach's film was a great piece of political nostalgia but the idea we can recapture that particular kind of politics is a bit like saying we should revive the Chartist movement of the late 1830s and 1840s (come to think of it...).

Labour's success under Attlee was down to very specific circumstances which no longer exist. For a start, wars can stimulate rapid change, for better or worse. Labour's success in 1945 was down to a mobilised working class, determined – after fighting a war against fascism – not to go back to the 30s. That working class was organised in strong trade unions and bolstered by the co-operative movement and a plethora of institutions which no longer exist, at least in the form that they did. As the traditional industries (mining, steel, textiles) died, so too did the unions based within them. But it was more than that, the communal culture of many working class communities (which had its bad as well as good points) died with it.

So some parts of the North, Scotland and Wales erected a kind of red wall but it was built on shaky foundations. These began to collapse in the 1970s. Many Northern local authorities have fluctuated between Labour and Tory (sometimes Liberal) control over the last few decades; so too parliamentary constituencies. These have included places like Liverpool, Sheffield, Bolton, Kirklees and many others. Labour's support base has never

been as solid as some people, looking back with red-tinted glasses, often think.

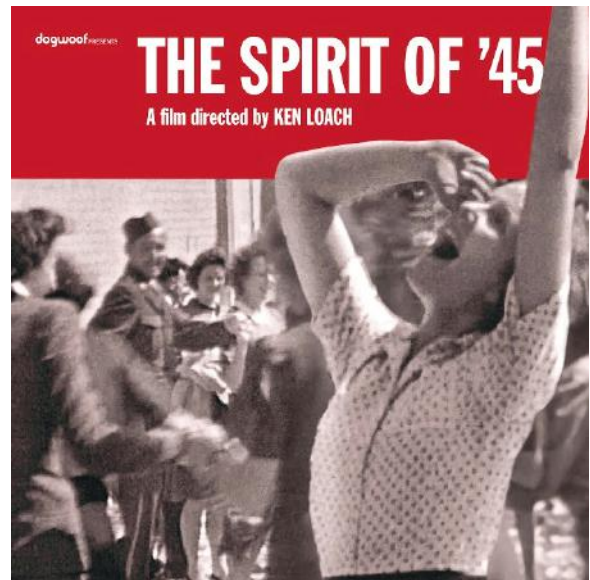
But let's drill down a bit further and ask a few questions about the traditional 'Labourism' which did have a base, however exaggerated its hold may have been, in Northern working class communities. It wasn't the sort of red-blooded socialism which was found in west Fife or the Welsh valleys. It was comfortable in a sort of Wilsonian social democracy which included the NHS, free education, council housing and cheap public transport. To an extent, it was distrustful of 'the state' and continued to treat the nationalised industries not as 'ours' but 'theirs'. It was more comfortable with institutions like the Co-op, but never extended the co-operative vision to social ownership. Trades unions were something you had to join; few members were actively engaged.

Perhaps this is a view of my own territory – the former cotton towns of Lancashire. Yes, there was a vibrant socialist culture, stretching back to the late 18890s and expressed through the Independent Labour Party and, to a degree, the Social Democratic Federation. But it was only attractive to a minority of working class people. The relationship with Labour, once it had established itself as a major political force, tended to be instrumental – or 'transactional'. "We'll vote for you, if you give us council houses, cheap buses, schools and social care."

By the 1980s Labour councils were less and less able to deliver. Thatcher went on to strip them of more powers, whilst at the same time decimating the industrial working class as it had emerged over the preceding century. Yet Labour clung on to the idea – at both national and local level – that "we can do it for you" when it was becoming increasingly obvious they couldn't (whatever 'it' happened to be).

So where does that leave Labour now? What would make it attractive to working class voters in the misleadingly named 'red wall' towns? It's a very hard question.

I don't think trying to cloak ourselves in the union jack and



Loach's 1945 - great political nostalgia

declare for some pseudo-progressive 'patriotism' will get us far. At the same time, we should rid ourselves of some misplaced ideas about 'the white working class'. It's much more diverse than a lot of commentators suggest. It contains multitudes, with a wide range of attitudes and opinions. One thing that does unite a lot of people is a belief in 'democracy' which is where Labour fell down over calls for a 'second referendum'. It was seen as going against 'the people's will', right or wrong. As someone who voted remain and reluctantly favoured a second referendum, I have to admit they were right.

To be positive, Labour could do a lot to capture the 'democratic imagination', which is really a cross-class thing. Electoral reform, votes for 16-18s and stronger local and regional democracy would help – and be in keeping with socialist values. Labour still has a strong pull on issues like the NHS and protecting the elderly. But I don't believe Labour's 'transformational' policies on nationalisation cut much ice. Re-discovering Labour's co-operative heritage and promoting social ownership could find a positive response.

Whoever inherits the leadership of the Labour Party will have the most difficult job facing a party leader since 1931, and it was only a war that got us out of that mess. A safe pair of hands won't be enough. **C**

Paul Salveson's blog is at www.paulsalveson.org.uk

See trailer for Paul's new novel on page 31

Offshore wind – the force is with you

Dave Toke on the power source that could blow all other power sources away just on its own



Offshore wind farm of Equinor company

As offshore wind technology fully blooms as its own distinct mass industrial technology producing power at low prices, and as the prospect of floating wind turbines comes closer, the potential for the technology threatens to eclipse everything else - at least in countries with a large waterline, such as the UK.

In reality solar pv technology costs are coming down at least as quickly, so that what is likely to happen in the coming years is that these two technologies will compete with each other (and onshore wind of course) for market share. Indeed such is the rate of cost reductions that some are now suggesting that the way to approach 100 per cent renewables targets is to minimise the use of batteries and other storage techniques, and simply to build gross overcapacity in wind and solar. That of course ushers in the possibility of uses for excess production, such as conversion to hydrogen, but that is another story.

The story here is that on its own the offshore wind available could generate over five times the anticipated total energy requirements for the UK in a 'net zero carbon' scenario. That is, based upon the Committee on Climate Change estimate that a mainly electric economy supplied from low carbon sources would require 645 TWh of power generation in 2050. Wind power could do this as

the cheapest electricity source available - apart from solar power of course, with which the competition will probably be intense in the future.

BVG Associates, in collaboration with Wind Europe did a study two years ago of offshore wind potential in North Europe alone. It concluded that just on the basis of the North European exclusive economic zones (EEZ) (excluding Norway's EEZ) offshore wind could generate over 10,000 TWh a year - that's actually rather more than three times the current total of EU electricity consumption. Much of this potential resides in British waters. The International Energy Agency did a study last year which came to broadly similar conclusions.

The development of floating wind turbines would be important to realise this for approaching half this potential - they are not yet as developed as the monopile or jacket based 'fixed' machines that are mostly used at the moment. But even here optimisation is being achieved quickly, with Equinor recently announcing a project near the Canaries with a capital cost that has dropped quickly, travelling towards the levels at which fixed offshore is now. Rapid advances in improving turbine efficiency mean that even the criteria used by BVG Associates is being surpassed with the latest machines such as the 12 MW GE machine which, says GE, boasts a

capacity factor of 63%.

Costs for the fixed offshore windfarms continue to plunge downwards, with the latest contact prices dropping well below £50 per MWh for the Dunkirk offshore windfarm granted by the French authorities as well as British offshore windfarms such as the massive projects to be built at Dogger Bank. These prices are very competitive with even power from gas fired power plant. Sceptics who say that such prices should be taken with a pinch of salt are being confounded by preparation for the commissioning of such projects, the first of these approximately £50 per MWh schemes being the Danish Kriegers Flak scheme which is now being installed (contract awarded in 2016).

The latest British offshore wind auction, which took place last September, produced contracts with prices of £40 per MWh payable for 15 years. That is to be compared with the price awarded to EDF to build the Hinkley C nuclear power project. This amounts to £92.50 per MWh to be paid over 35 years from the time the plant starts generating (whenever that will be, given the delays in construction).

Of course, the onward march of the offshore windfarms won't happen very quickly unless Government issues enough long term power purchase agreements, which they call 'contracts for difference' (CfDs). **C**

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

WORKING CLASS

Beyond the fragments

As has happened before, the working class has fallen into a state of division and fragmentation. **Don Flynn** argues a socialist narrative which centres on the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism will be needed to rebuild working class identity



Durham Miner's Gala 2018 - miners no longer a significant part of working class

A large part of Labour's dilemma seems to come from the fact that it has lost the support of the 'traditional' working class but has not yet gained the endorsement of any 'new' proletariat.

What is behind this terminology of 'traditional' and 'new' working classes? A collaboration between the sociology departments of several universities produced the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) results in 2017 and came to the conclusion that the class structure of the UK can be boiled down to seven categories, ranging from the elite to the precariat, with the "traditional working class" listed as a mere subset. Various categories of occupations are referenced as the jobs typical of each of the survey's classes, but the most important element is the socio-economic-cultural conditions of the class of worker, irrespective of the actual work they engaged in. The post of care worker, for example, appeared in three of the categories described as traditional working class, emerging service worker and precariat.

So, what is doing the work of structuring these class relations if it is not the nature of the work itself? The GBCS saw the decisive factors as being the varieties of capital (cultural, economic) available to the workforce and the extent that this produced different outcomes in terms of advantage or disadvantage. Care workers included in the traditional working class category, for example, had that status because of their deemed poor economic capital, limited housing assets, few social contacts, low highbrow and emerging cultural capital. Their counterparts among emergent service sector workers were distinguished by virtue of having relatively poor economic capital, but reasonable household income, moderate social contacts, high emerging (but low highbrow) cultural capital. Small differences you might think but producing bold assertions about a uniquely fragmented working class.

Claire Ainsley's highly considered work for the Joseph Rowntrees Foundation builds on the schema elaborated in the GBCS but attempts to innovate by gathering

together the traditional working class, emergent service sector workers and the precariat, branding them as the new working class. Her argument is that these groups form a relatively clear segment of the population, "with a common economic experience" that has been "fractured by the changes of the past few decades." These are broad categories to offer up as the defining characteristic of the new working class and at some points seem to mean not much more than their subjective feeling that 'things are getting worse'.

A defeated class

The logic of this approach is to lock the ideas of defeat, disempowerment, and disadvantage into the very idea of the working class which Labour is bound to depend on as its social and political base. Added to this is the emphasis that the social survey analysts place on the atomised, disparate, fractured character of this class formation, made up of people with multiple social identities and a correspondingly weak capacity for collective action. Labour, it seems, has pledged itself to society's losers and even then,

Don Flynn is
Chartist's
managing editor

has failed to get any significant endorsement for its policies from their ranks.

Ainsley's answer is to continue the approach that the liberal and social democratic left has been following for the last century, requiring detailed social and economic analysis of all aspects of the life of all the fragments of the working class and from this proposing sets of policies which they hope might prove popular enough to attract votes in elections. Whilst it would be wrong to disparage the value of the analysis and development of detailed policy it is also very difficult to see how it might, on its own, conjure up a newly united working class ready to endorse a radical reforming Labour government.

History has a great deal to tell us how progress is made in forging both unity of identity and also of purpose among the class of society.

The 2019 election manifesto was criticised as being a 'wish list' of all the good things that a Labour government would conjure up in a socialist la-la-land

E. P. Thompson's classic account of the making of the English working class explains how groups that would have been every bit as disparate as those represented in modern class surveys acquired a consciousness of collective identity. The earliest working class is depicted as being made up of field labourers, artisans and weavers who experienced emerging capitalism in different ways. What kept them in correspondence across their social fragmentation was, firstly, the 'moral machinery' of a brand of Christianity which generated the idea of a standard of justice to which all should aspire.

Secondly, at iconic moments in the history of this class the attempts to suppress 'combination', of the order of Tolpuddle martyrdom and the Peterloo Massacre, provided an understanding of the nature of ruling class power which fuelled the militancy of the early working class movement. The second half of the 19th century provided more examples of heroic resistance to capitalist power which was sustained in insti-

tutional form by the emergence of the modern trade union movement and, eventually, the Labour party.

History will not go down precisely that same path again. Whether a new working class identity rises over and above its current state of fragmentation depends in the first instance on the narration of experiences which are common to wage earners even when they range across social groups that can, at the moment, be represented as 'affluent workers' right through to the precariat.

Absence of crisis

The class survey approach has little to say about the nature of a capitalist system which periodically throws up the turmoil of class reconfiguration, generating new sets of winners and losers among the wage-earning groups. Its view of change hinges on technological developments which make some occupations redundant and others in great demand. The impact of dramatic political events, like the imposition of new social policies of the order of the hike in university tuition fees, the rapid deterioration of the NHS and the closure of the possibility of home ownership for younger workers, hardly figures at all in this type of analysis. The fact that the larger social and economic system itself might be subject to further shocks of the order of the 2008 recession, with all the implications this has had for wage stagnation and prolonged austerity, is left out of consideration whenever talk switches to the types of policies that might prove popular when the next election comes along.

If the instability and recurrent crisis forms the backdrop to politics and the way classes react to new and various situations then Labour needs to do better in providing a popular narrative of how all the fragments of the working class stand in relationship to post-industrial capitalism. It will be an account of the way in which some groups will be able, for a time, to draw on assets that are not available to others and maintain the delusion that they stand above the turmoil. Others have already lost the access they once had to social resources that kept their heads above the water and now have to live as best they can on a day-to-day basis. This narrative will track the policies that Johnson and his government improvise as they attempt to plot post-Brexit pathways in a world that shows us all what a small country the UK has now become.

The 2019 election manifesto was harshly criticised as being a 'wish



list' of all the good things that a Labour government would conjure up in a socialist la-la-land. Centrists and Fabian policy wonks complained that the party had forgotten that politics is about priorities, and when everything from the Green New Deal through to free 5G broadband is a priority then nothing is a priority.

A more accurate criticism is that the manifesto failed to provide a convincing account of the pressing reasons why many new deals of several sorts are needed, and why the state had to take on leading responsibility for investment in an industrial economy which would be democratically accountable to citizens. No fantasy wish listing here, but an account that is rooted in the failure of a forty year experiment in free market capitalism and a narrative that links with the insecurity and experience of exploitation which millions of people will recognise as being true.

Knowledge is power, to use a hackneyed phrase. But the purpose of a socialist narrative is not to tell ordinary people how abject and miserable they are in the manner of a social science survey, but how power is within their grasp if only they were to acknowledge the potential of their collective strength. The working class ought still to have the end goal of becoming the class which rules society by democratic means within its sights, and Labour should be doing better offering the mapped out route which will get it there. **c**

EU WITHDRAWAL

Surrender – Phase 1 complete

Peter Kenyon reviews the consequences of Britain's withdrawal from the EU

Prime Minister Boris Johnson surrendered the UK's vote and voice in the European Union on 31 January 2020. Some confusion is already reported at border posts around the now 27-member state economic giant, with UK citizens bemoaning queues at non-EU, EEA, Switzerland passport control. An irate Brexiteer at Schipol Airport in February was reported as saying: "This isn't the Brexit I voted for."

Disgruntled travellers are not the only ones who will be echoing that sentiment as events unfold over the rest of 2020.

Industry, finance, science, academia and fisher folk (to name just a few) are demanding clarity from Johnson's government about future relations. They will continue to be disappointed. In the meantime, nervous investors are doing what has been predictable since 2016 - moving to the continent.

This destructive ambiguity is what the new leader of the Labour Party has got to focus on: the negative consequences in terms of jobs and investment, loss of influence and the UK's diminished stature in an increasingly interdependent world must be spelt out. Johnson having "Got Brexit Done" will blame Brussels for any suggestion that actually he has not delivered. The Leader of the Opposition (LOTO) must restore rapid rebuttal.

A new Business Secretary has been appointed by Johnson. Alok Sharma has his work cut out, taking over from lacklustre Andrea Leadsom, as secretary of state for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and combines that job with that of president of the next UN Climate Change conference in Glasgow in November 2020. At the time of writing he has not uttered a word in public on either brief.

Whitehall's short-lived Department for Exiting the EU has been shut down now that Phase 1 of Surrender is complete. Responsibility for negotiating future relations with the EU-27 (Surrender Phase 2) has notionally been shifted to the Foreign Office under Dominic Rabb, but there have been reports that the Cabinet Office under Michael Gove will have a role, and the over-riding suspicion is that each step will be decided by mission control under Johnson's



David-Maria Sassoli - President European Parliament

Senior Special Advisor, the un-elected Dominic Cummings of the illegally-funded Leave Campaign.

Meanwhile, in Brussels, negotiator par excellence, Michel Barnier, is close to securing agreement on a comprehensive negotiating mandate from the EU-27 heads of government. So every time Johnson seeks to point the finger at Brussels - Labour will need to call him out. The EU-27 heads of government may meet in Brussels. But they are not based there. Instead they come from Helsinki, Stockholm, Tallinn, Riga, Copenhagen, Vilnius, Dublin, Berlin, den Haag, Warsaw, Prague, Luxembourg, Paris, Bratislava, Vienna, Budapest, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Bucharest, Sofia, Rome, Madrid, Lisbon, Athens, Valletta, Nicosia, as well as the federal capital of Belgium.

The main sticking point between those 27 capitals and London is well known - regulatory alignment or a level playing field in future trade. At the time of writing the EU-27 have still to agree their own position on this aspect of the talks. In plain language, if Johnson wants a free-trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, he has to accept EU rules. He can huff and puff as much as Cummings demands, but he will not blow the EU-27 house down. Since Johnson's election victory on 12 December last year, reference has been made to an EU-Canada FTA and latterly an EU-Australia FTA, which is highly illustrative of Johnson's flailing around - as there is no such EU agreement with Australia.

The best available guide to EU-27 thinking currently available is

encapsulated in a European Parliament (EP) resolution available on the EP website at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doc/eo/document/B-9-2020-0098_EN.html

The EP resolution repeats calls for the UK to align itself as closely as possible with the EU by citing the need for that famous "level playing field," which should ensure "equivalent standards in social, labour, environmental, competition and state aid policies, including through a robust and comprehensive framework on competition and state aid control."

For avid followers of UK/EU relations, this begs the question why did the UK ever consider surrendering its veto and its voice in the EU institutions under former prime minister David Cameron, let alone actually do it as happened at the end of January. It is one which the bulk of the UK media is reluctant to pose, and is anathema to Johnson and his government. But that day of reckoning is not far away. A critical date is set out in the EP resolution concerning fishing rights - any EU-UK free-trade deal must be conditional on a prior agreement on fisheries by June 2020. This poses a particular challenge for the Labour Party. Does it stick to its agreed EU policy on close alignment? Or does it succumb to a temptation to echo Johnson's blame-game during Phase 2 of his "Get Brexit Done" plan?

Peter Kenyon is a member of Cities of London and Westminster CLP and Chartist EB

Either way brace yourselves for another stream of hatred directed by Johnson and his supporters in the media at Brussels - oops, the EU-27 during Phase 2. **C**

The Dividend Curse

Prem Sikka explains how income inequalities have widened during the shareholder bonanza of the last ten years

Class politics in the UK are highly evident. The government has imposed a benefit freeze and wage freeze on public sector workers. Labour has been systematically weakened through anti-trade union laws. Inevitably wages have stagnated and failed to keep pace with inflation. For November 2019, average regular pay, before tax and other deductions was £511 per week in nominal terms. The figure in real terms (constant 2015 prices) is £472 per week, which is still £1 (0.2%) lower than the pre-economic downturn peak of £473 per week in March 2008. The equivalent figures in real terms are £503 per week in November 2019 and £525 in February 2008, a 4.1% difference.

Meanwhile, there are virtually no constraints on payment of dividends to shareholders. In 2019, UK's largest listed companies paid out a dividend of £110.5bn. This compares to £99.8bn in 2018 and £95.1bn in 2017. This does not include share buybacks totalling between £15bn and £20bn a year.

Rising dividends are part of a shareholder-centric model of corporate governance where maintenance of the share price and returns to short-term shareholders takes priority over the long-term success of the company, employees and the interests of other stakeholders. The vast amount of dividends are neither attracting new investment in productive assets nor fuelling the economy. But company directors are besotted with paying ever increasing dividends. Their bonuses are often linked to share prices. At Carillion, directors engaged in aggressive accounting practices to boost profits and borrowed money to pay dividends. The obsession did not have a happy ending.

With the exception of the recession period after the 2007-08 banking crash, major UK companies have paid dividends at a higher rate than their counterparts in other economies. Andrew Haldane, the Bank of England Chief Economist, noted that in the 1970s major companies typically paid £10 in dividends out of each £100 of profits, but by 2015 the amount rose to between £60 and £70, often accompanied by a squeeze on labour and



investment. After the 2007-08 banking crash, corporate profits have increased, but payments to shareholders in the form of dividends and share buybacks have increased even faster.

Dividends are being paid at the expense of employee wages and investment in productive assets. The UK invests around 16.9% of its gross domestic product in long-term productive assets and languishes near the bottom of the EU member states' investment table. Low wages and low investment inevitably lead to low productivity.

It isn't just Carillion which borrowed money to pay dividends. A Bank of England survey showed that only around 25 per cent of finance raised by companies is spent on investment, with the remainder split between purchasing financial assets, distributing to shareholders and keeping as cash.

Neoliberals claim that dividends stimulate the UK economy, increase the tax-take and help pension funds. The reality is quite different. Some 54.9% of the value of the UK stock market is held by individuals and entities outside the UK. So the payment of dividends results in a huge export of capital. Generally dividends are paid-out without deduction of income tax at source. Foreign recipients do not pay any UK income tax. Pension funds and unit trusts hold about 2.4% and 9.6% respectively of the value of the UK stock market. Therefore, the benefit from dividends is comparatively small.

High dividends have not enabled UK companies to attract new investment in productive assets. The Bank of England's Chief Economist noted that among UK

companies, share buybacks have consistently exceeded share issuance over the past decade, albeit to a lesser degree more recently. The UK equity market does not appear to have been a source of net new financing to the UK corporate sector. The daily turnover of shares is effectively money exchanged between speculators or what Marx called 'fictitious capital'. None of it goes to companies in the form of new investment.

Companies need to be weaned off high dividends and short-term returns and focus on their long-term success. Corporate governance reforms are needed. Employees have a vital interest in the long-term success of companies as their jobs and pensions depend on it, but they have no say in dividend or investment decisions. This needs to be changed by requiring all large companies to have a substantial number of employee-elected directors on their boards.

Employees should also vote on executive pay as they have a better idea of the performance of directors and are in a good position to reward them for promoting the long-term success of the company.

Directors should not be paid in shares or share options as that creates temptations to support share prices through excessive dividends. Executive bonuses should only be paid for extraordinary performance in specified long-term objectives rather than on manipulation of share prices. Approval from 90% of stakeholders should be required. Such developments would help directors to concentrate on the long-term success of companies rather than hyping share prices through excessive dividends. **C**

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

AUSTERITY

The austerity con

Dennis Leach rebuts 'the economy as household' analogy along with the lie that Johnson will be ending spending cuts any time soon

During the election campaign the chancellor Sajid Javid said that, after ten years of Tory austerity, there is now 'fiscal space' to boost public investment.

He announced new fiscal rules that the government would no longer seek to eliminate the total deficit but would aim to balance day-to-day spending by the middle of the next parliament, 2022/23 and borrow to invest in infrastructure up to 3% of GDP. Previously the rule for borrowing to invest in infrastructure was 2% of GDP.

His new fiscal rule is a slight loosening but it is not the end of austerity. And his claim that austerity has been an economic success is nonsense.

First, there never was any need for austerity: it was only ever a political project on the back of a fallacious economic argument. Imposing austerity on an economy already weakened after the 2008 crash resulted in untold harm to the lives of millions. Moreover it was not only unnecessary, it was counterproductive, in that it slowed recovery while failing to achieve its aims of reducing debt. Geoff Tily, the TUC economist has shown that this recovery was the slowest compared with all others in the past two centuries.

Second, austerity has not ended and the government's focus on budgetary balance is set to continue, albeit with looser fiscal rules and a new emphasis on regional rebalancing.

All spending departments have been told to cut their budgets by at least 5% and to offer up ten projects to be cut in the autumn spending review. The only exceptions will be health, police and regional infrastructure.

This fixation on balancing the budget results from a neoliberal view where the government is seen as a household: if it is in deficit it cuts its consumption to live within its means. But that analogy is false when government represents nearly forty percent of the economy. Its budgeting behaviour must be understood using Keynesian macroeconomics, which teaches that changes to government spending and taxation affect the size of GDP, and hence



Javid and new chancellor Rishi Sunak -austerity not over

its own income. It follows that austerity reduces growth, and prolongs the recession - exactly what happened under Osborne.

This mistake has been called the austerity con by the Oxford economist Simon Wren-Lewis. Most of the media and politicians bought it. It is an example of how common sense can be seriously misleading. Labour MPs too must share the blame for failing to argue against it. John McDonnell, faced with this, had little choice but to adopt a neoliberal fiscal rule for the deficit for Labour's manifesto.

An important new book by Robert Skidelsky called *Money and Government: A Challenge to Mainstream Economics* rebuts this household analogy and, more generally, the neoliberal way of thinking about money, that since Reagan and Thatcher has become mainstream. Left activists need to use these arguments if we are to challenge austerity.

Johnson has declared his ambition to be worthy of the votes that the post-industrial constituencies in northern and midlands towns "lent" him at the last election. His plans include spending £100 billion over five years on "levelling up". He sees the problem of low productivity in those areas as due not only to lack of infrastructure,

but also poor education. Not only is this an inadequate sum, the problem goes much deeper.

To reduce the enormous inequality between the booming London and the south east and the other regions he needs to look at its causes. Why the once industrial areas that used to have well paid, highly skilled jobs in manufacturing, making cars, trains, ships steel, no longer do so. The economic policies of Thatcherism in the eighties closed many of the factories but replaced them with only low skilled work such as in call centres and warehouses.

The UK now has a much smaller manufacturing sector than comparable countries in Europe. The main reason is that the UK economy is dominated like no other by financial services based in the southeast, which is booming. It is not enough to invest in a northern powerhouse idea, there needs to be the demand side factors as well. If Boris Johnson is serious about rebalancing the economy he should do what the New Labour government failed to do and create the conditions under which manufacturing can begin to thrive again. That means regulating the City at the same time as promoting a regional industrial policy. I doubt he will be prepared to do that any more than Tony Blair was. **C**

Dennis Leach is a member of Bethnal Green and Bow CLP & Emeritus professor of Economics, University of Warwick

A world economy working for all

Jake Woodier says a Green New Deal is the path to tackling both the climate and economic crises

In October 2008 the government announced £500 billion finance to tackle a crisis, demonstrating the vast state resources available when deemed necessary. But it dashed hopes of an economic turning point to tackle multiple crises simultaneously. The crisis prioritised was the global financial crash - the banks were too big to fail. Another - climate change - was still tomorrow's problem. Meanwhile a group of progressive thinkers proposed a Green New Deal (GND), a transformative economic programme to tackle the climate crisis and address an economy ripping apart at the seams. However, spearheaded by the UK, global politics took a 'business as usual' fiscal approach to the global financial meltdown, stifling momentum for the early conception of a GND.

A decade later the climate crisis is still in practice tomorrow's problem. Global efforts still face a lack of ambition, conflicting interests and resistance by powerful actors. However, across the Atlantic, hard work and deep organising by the Sunrise Movement for the GND emerged with support from Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. This launched the GND across US politics and became a marker in the Democratic primaries for those most committed to climate action. Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democrat, Senator Ed Markey submitted a resolution for the Federal Government to introduce a GND. The momentum subsequently returned to reinvigorate the climate movement in the United Kingdom, from the climate strikers to Green New Deal UK. Last September Green MP Caroline Lucas and Labour's Clive Lewis proposed the Decarbonisation and Economic Strategy Bill, the first attempt to legislate for a GND in the UK. Meanwhile Labour for a GND, successfully campaigned for the Labour Party to adopt it at the 2019 conference.

It's important to view the GND not as a singular policy, but a transformative programme centred on the needs of people and environmental protection above profit-seeking and growth. Practically, the idea involves leveraging the power and resources of the state to intervene



and finance the transition from a fossil fuel based economy to a renewable economy. This must address historic and current injustices, recognising the causes of climate change and inequality as interrelated as we transition away from fossil fuels. To deliver on such a scale we need collaboration, ambition and resolve to challenge the current political establishment and powerful vested interests enriching themselves under the status quo.

What could Westminster legislation mean in practice? One example is the 'Warm Homes for All' policy - a mass retrofitting of housing stock - championed by the Labour Party in the 2019 election campaign. The policy wouldn't just improve people's lives and health, it would reduce bills and return money to those who need it most. With domestic housing accounting for a fifth of UK emissions, wholesale retrofitting is also necessary to achieve ambitious emissions reductions. The plans would create hundreds of thousands of jobs and stimulate local economies after decades of underinvestment. Under a GND, jobs created would provide meaningful work, fair compensation and union security.

We can also envisage applying a GND to transport. Replacing traditional petrol and diesel vehicles with electric models won't sufficiently reduce emissions so wholesale change is necessary to swap traffic jams for trains, buses, bicycles and pathways. A GND would treat transportation as a public good to end our reliance on cars and provide truly affordable, efficient methods of travel that don't cost the earth.

This is just a glimpse of a GND's potential to reorient our economy and social values to cherish things that matter to us all: well-paid and secure jobs, safe and warm housing and sustainable public services.

To advance a transformative GND programme in the interests of the majority, we must build a social movement too powerful to ignore. This means rebuilding connections in villages, towns and cities across the country while maintaining an internationalist outlook. It means demanding GND thinking at Westminster and all levels of government wherever possible. It means working with trade unions, especially those that represent workers in high emissions sectors to guarantee a just transition. It means working within legislatures at all levels to drive impact and enact GND policies at the local, city and municipal level while the government drags its heels. Nottingham's target for carbon neutrality by 2028 demonstrates what's achievable outside Westminster politics.

A Green New Deal organised by and for the majority can topple our extractivist economic system that's treated people and the planet as expendable in the pursuit of profit. A world that works in the interests of everyone, a world in which clean air, water, and a safe climate are valued is eminently possible. The effects of climate breakdown are already apparent, but worse is to come if left unchecked, with consequences that are near unimaginable. We're rapidly running out of time to do so, but we must organise for that better world before it's too late. **C**

Jake Woodier is a campaigner and organiser with Green New Deal UK

CLIVE LEWIS

For a democratic revolution

Clive Lewis did not make the cut for the leadership election but he set out a bold plan for people to take real control and transform society and the party. We reprint extracts below to inform debate on renewing Labour

After the defeat of the 2019 election, it is essential that Labour maps out a new plan not only for the party, but for the country. The danger of a racist and authoritarian backlash under this Conservative government is very real; so, too, is the risk of continued austerity. We will continue to fight, as part of a global movement, against the greatest threat of our age – that of climate change. But beyond the necessity of opposing Boris Johnson's government, and working with others to do so, we must lay out a clear and credible route back to government, since it is only in government that we can transform our country.

The 2019 Manifesto presented an alternative vision of our country; we seek in the following to sharpen and simplify that picture, so that it can be presented as a clear and necessary case for every part of Britain. These proposals are intended to provide a signpost for a possible future, not a complete prescription for government. They are raised to promote further discussion in our movement. All policy should be assessed for its impact on people with protected characteristics, including women.

Our route back to government begins with a recognition that the core question we face today is that of democracy. We must answer the demand for greater power and control in people's lives not only by providing the material means by which people can live better – from higher pay to public services that work – but by transforming the institutions under which we all live, from Parliament to local authorities to how our businesses are run. And by working with others today, we can show how, in government, we can meet the demands of our people for a fundamental change in how our country is run and how their lives are governed.

By placing democracy at the centre of what we do, by changing our internal party cultures and procedures, by learning to work better with others beyond our own

ranks, we can build the movement needed to defeat the Conservatives and form a genuinely transformational government. Confronted by the great challenges, from climate change to the emerging digital world, we must demonstrate that we have a powerful and effective case for meeting them and building a fairer, more sustainable, and more equal country.

Our political system is broken and our democratic institutions are not fit for purpose

- We must introduce proportional representation. Our current electoral system is failing all of us. A majority of British voters in the last two elections voted for parties of the left and centre-left, but this is not reflected in the results. In government, we should commit to the introduction of genuinely proportional representation.

- We must abolish the House of Lords. We will only support replacements that are genuinely democratic and elected on a proportional basis.

- We must put power back in the hands of local councils. Local councils have been stripped of their authority, whilst a decade of austerity has seen their budgets fall by 60%. We must transfer powers back to councils and local governments, removing the Westminster diktat, granting them new revenue-raising and spending powers, and expanding their procurement and planning powers. We will also look at ways to make Councils more accountable and democratic as institutions.

- We will establish a Constitutional Convention to create a written constitution. Learning from examples like Iceland, we will create an open, democratic national Constitutional Convention, free from Westminster influence and with the maximum public participation, to draw up a new, written constitution for the United Kingdom.

- We must recognise the sepa-



rate demands and democracies of Wales and Scotland. We will not oppose a second referendum on independence in Scotland, if the Scottish people want one, but we will argue for the maximum possible devolution of powers inside the United Kingdom to its constituent nations.

- We will create a new democracy in England. The Westminster system has also failed England, leaving local councils without powers, and an undemocratic Parliament in Westminster, whilst Scotland and Wales enjoy devolved governments. We will create new democratic Assemblies for the English regions, with real powers and budgets.

- We will extend the franchise in national and local elections to all UK residents aged 16 or above. If you live here, you should have the right to vote, regardless of which passport you hold.

- We will establish a national mechanism to bring women and girls' voices into government. Since the Women's National Commission (WNC) was abolished, there has been no public body to represent women's voices to government.

Our media favours the interests of the super-rich and their hangers-on.

- We must retain all of our 2019 commitments to implement Leveson, and democratise the BBC. Public trust in the BBC as a public service broadcaster has taken a hammering, perhaps especially during last year's election. To end the capture of the BBC by elite interests, we will devolve programme-making and editorial functions to the nations and regions, and establish a system of localised, democratic management and commissioning established, with licence-payers and BBC staff electing regional boards.

- In return for radical democratic reform of the BBC, it must be freed from the persistent fear of political interference. We propose 20-year charter renewal alongside democratisation of the BBC Board, and placing the BBC itself on a permanent, statutory footing. The new British Digital Corporation should operate on the same basis.

- We will support a far broader media ecosystem. We will entrust the National Investment Bank and regional development banks with support the development of new and independent media at a national and local level.

- We will explore as a matter of urgency the creation of new publicly-owned platforms enabling content-producers to distribute and sell music, film and other output without having to surrender the bulk of their revenue to global corporations. The problem of how to support professional artists in all fields, in an era of free digital content, is an acute and urgent one.

We need to change our party's internal culture, putting aside our tribal differences

- The challenges we face, from the climate emergency to the threat of war in the Middle East, are bigger than what we as a party alone can tackle. We must actively seek to work and engage with all those, whether in another party or organisation or none, who want to help us change the world we live in.

- We will only become a social movement party when we are open to others. We must change an internal party culture that is too often impenetrable and uninviting to new members and non members. We should provide support and resources for branches and CLPs seeking to broaden the Labour Party's activities, including political education, cultural events, and the provision of

relief measures to deal with austerity.

- We must practice what we preach internally on income inequality. We should impose a pay ratio between best and worst paid Labour Party staff of no more than 5 to 1.

- We must as a party look to help build and support a new media ecosystem. We should look to build working relationships with new media and support party members establishing new outlets, particularly on a regional and local level.

- We will hold a deliberative convention in our Party to formulate and agree on a package of democratic constitutional reforms for Labour. We should look at reforming and democratising the National Executive Committee, including greater transparency, broadening the procedure for election of a leader, and creating a more functional, democratic policy process with a sovereign conference at its heart.

- Our representatives must be accountable to the movement that put them in office. This means introducing Open Selections for all candidates at every level of the party, and giving members more say over the leadership of Labour local councils.

- We will open up a "Democracy Review 2.0" starting with the question 'How do we put more power in party members' hands?'

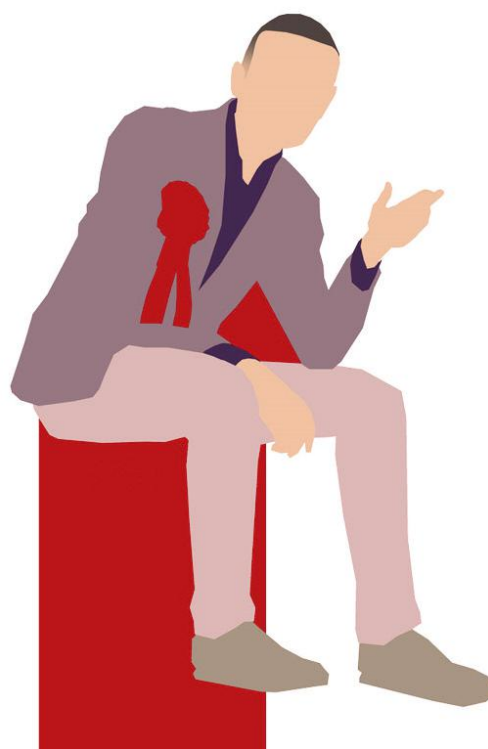
- We will set up an independent complaints function to deal with cases of racism, antisemitism, sexual harassment, discrimination against protected characteristics, and bullying.

We must strive to lead a decentralised social movement, distributing resources and autonomy to our regions, whilst also building alliances outside of the Labour party on key issues.

- Our alliance with the trade unions must be broadened and strengthened on the ground. Labour and the unions must work together on a radical programme of organising in our communities and in the workplace. Only one-third of party members are individual members of a trade union – every party member will be encouraged to join.

- We should allow Scottish and Welsh Labour Parties full autonomy to decide on questions such as independence. They must become the Labour Parties of Scotland and Wales, not Scottish or Welsh branches of a largely English Labour Party.

- We should allow



Constituency Labour Parties the option to decide if they will stand down in favour of better-placed candidates with the same values. We must be open to creating alliances of progressive and socialist organisations on a local level, particularly given the undemocratic electoral system we face.

- We will invest in community organising, ensuring every council candidate and councillor receives community organising training. We will create a formidable Labour presence in our communities, affecting real change in local areas, underpinned by a community organising strategy for each CLP.

- We should be seeking to help to mobilise national demonstrations against spending cuts, privatisation and restrictions on union rights, as well as supporting movements against foreign wars.

A modern economic framework that lifts all in our society

Our plan for economic renewal is based on our understanding of the failings of 40 years of neoliberalism for large parts of our country. But the challenges of the future cannot be met by a rerun of policies from the past. We must use twenty-first century technologies to give everyone more control over their working lives, and over the profits that they produce. **C**

For detailed plans for democratising and transforming work and the full manifesto see <https://www.cliveforleader.com/manifesto/>

Clive Lewis is Labour MP Norwich South

SCOTTISH LABOUR

A better yesterday?

Gerry Hassan says Labour has to execute a dramatic forward-looking change if it is to reverse decades of decline

Scottish Labour has been on a downward spiral for a long time. The recent UK election saw it win a mere 18.6% of the vote, in third place behind the SNP and Tories, and reduced to just one seat – the same total won in the 2015 almost wipeout.

The Scottish party has barely said anything relevant to debates since it lost power to the SNP in 2007 and is currently going nowhere. This has consequences not only for Labour's path back to office in the UK – meaning the party has to win big in England to the extent it did in 1945, 1966, 1997 and 2001 – to offset Scottish losses. Politics north of the border suffer from the absence of a coherent, plausible alternative to the left of the SNP – the Greens not being powerful enough to fulfill that role.

Post-election Labour are revisiting their position on independence and the constitutional question. There are at least five distinctive positions. First, it could double down on status quo unionism. However this is dressed up it is a complete dead end for the party confirming it as an advocate for constitutional conservatism.

Second, it could embrace federalism – often cited rhetorically by Gordon Brown. The devil in this is in the detail – and so far Labour in Scotland and the UK has not produced in its entire history one detailed set of proposals.

Third, is the position currently being debated of supporting a future referendum. This can be seen as a narrow process point or about the principle of democracy and self-government, but does not really go far enough in addressing what Labour stands for on this big question.

Fourth, the party could decide that having moved on the above it was too much to take a stand on independence. Rather it could say that it was trying to heal a divided Scotland and concentrate on bread and butter issues. This has echoes of the abdication of responsibility that was Labour's policy on Brexit post-2016 which cost it dearly in 2019.

Fifth, would be Labour in Scotland supporting independence. This would be a dramatic shift and isn't likely in the near-future, but



Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard

could happen if a referendum is further down the line with a chaotic, damaging Brexit where it became clear that Labour couldn't win in England.

This is what happens to a party in serious decline. No option comes without risks. Doing nothing carries threats as does every other choice. The Labour experience of Brexit points to the dangers in trying to be all things to all voters. But it also underlines the damage that can be caused by delay and dithering, which increases the prospect, once a change policy has been adopted of voters questioning its sincerity, hence undermining its effectiveness.

It isn't very surprising that at every Scottish Parliament election since 1999 Scottish Labour has fallen back. It won 908,392 votes in the first Scottish elections constituency vote and by 2016 had fallen to 514,261 votes in constituencies – a fall of 43.4%. Meanwhile its Westminster support has fallen even further from 1,283,350 in 1997 to 511,838 in 2019 – a collapse of 60.1%.

Labour MSP Neil Finlay says: 'I am clear taking a hard unionist approach will be a disaster. We cannot fail on this for one second longer, we need to develop a credible and workable devo max position based on the principle that all powers should be devolved to the lowest possible level.'

The trade unions are key movers in the labour movement. Dave

Moxham, Deputy General Secretary of the STUC commented: 'Trade union members were very evenly split over independence in 2014. For the SNP to effect a decisive shift in the support for independence... they will need an offer which speaks to the potential for a fundamental shift in poverty and inequality and for a Just Transition to tackle climate change.'

Too many Scottish Labour politicians – Richard Leonard being a good example – pepper their speeches with Labour totems from the past such as Keir Hardie, Mary Barbour and Red Clydeside. It comes from a romanticised, sentimental view of Scotland and the working class, with little relevance for the present and future.

The irony is that Labour was once a party of the future – at its peak appeal in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Over this period, which probably ended in the mid-1960s, Labour projected a vision of Scotland that was forward looking, dynamic and ambitious and did big, bold things such as massive house building, slum clearance, public health programmes and the hydro-electric schemes in the Highlands.

That Labour Scotland is a long time ago, and for decades now the party has been one harking back to the past, seeming to promise a better yesterday. It has to change and do so dramatically if it is speak to the future, help shape it, and have a future itself. **c**

Gerry Hassan is co-author of 'The People's Flag and the Union Jack: An Alternative History of Britain and the Labour Party' (Biteback) and 'The Strange Death of Labour Scotland' (Edinburgh University Press).

Irish Election marks seismic shift

Jerry Fitzpatrick on the historic victory for Sinn Fein and what it means for Irish unity

On a Saturday a hundred years ago the Irish went to polls and elected Sinn Fein MPs with a massive majority thus heralding the end of British rule in Ireland. On a Saturday in February 2020 the Irish electorate propelled Sinn Fein into winning the top spot in terms of the popular vote and securing equal top ranking of TDs elected.

For the last hundred years the two centre right parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, have dominated Government as alternating twee-dee and tweedledum administrations. Conservative social and economic policies prevailed with the Catholic Church exercising a dominant influence.

Ireland has changed utterly. In a 2015 Referendum 62% voted to legalise same sex marriage and in a 2018 Referendum 66% voted to legalise abortion. The combined votes for Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have been falling from a high of 81% in 1977, down to 69% in 2007 but now down dramatically to 44% of the electorate in 2020. Twenty years ago Sinn Fein polled 2% with one TD elected. In 2020 the Sinn Fein vote surged to 25% with 37 TDs elected.

The 2020 result is seismic and transformative for the Left and Irish Republicanism. No one foresaw the scale of this political tsunami. Sinn Fein did not stand enough candidates to maximise seat gains. One woman candidate went on a family holiday and another woman candidate put up 20 posters. Both these Sinn Fein candidates ended up as poll toppers. Under the Irish PR system the re-distributed Sinn Fein vote surpluses secured the election of candidates from other left wing parties' and Green candidates.

Time for Change

The time for change and hope message from Sinn Fein and Left candidates resonated with the electorate. The critical issues of housing, homelessness, health services and working class families disenchantment with living standards that were prioritised by Sinn Fein surged to the top of the agenda. The miserable records of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail were exposed. The Sinn Fein manifesto for socialist change echoed the British Labour Party's 2019 manifesto with its redistribu-



Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald

tive economic and social commitments. Brexit did not feature as either a vote gainer or a vote loser. The National Party, an explicitly anti immigration party akin to UKIP polled at 0.2% of first preference votes.

The political youthquake was also apparent with a record of young voters flocking to Sinn Fein. The IRA's armed struggle campaign is increasingly being regarded as part of Irish history. The ceasefires of 1994 are now over 25 years ago. To many young voters the 'Troubles' are not that different from the war of independence which featured the forerunners of today's Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. And, following Gerry Adam's retirement, Mary Lou McDonald has presented a new appealing image and leadership for Sinn Fein. It was striking that Sinn Fein voters led all age groups except those over 65 years of age.

Despite the euphoria of this transformative election, a word of caution is required. The Left parties do not have a parliamentary majority. 80 TDs are required to form a majority Government with a non-voting Speaker. The Left parties including the Greens plus 8 sympathetic Independents equals 74 TDs. The combined total of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael equal 72 TDs. The remaining 13 Independents are wary of supporting either bloc. Fianna Fail has ruled out any coalition arrangement with Sinn Fein. After weeks of wrangling the outcome is likely to be a Fianna Fail/Fine Gael coalition supported by Independents or the Greens. Whilst this frustrates the will of the electorate with its appetite for change, it will also be unstable and

a new election will happen within a couple of years. Clearly the danger of Sinn Fein or Left parties acting to prop up the conservative parties should be avoided.

Prospects for Irish Unity

The combination of Brexit and this election result have boosted and advanced the prospects for achieving a united Ireland. There is an appetite both north and south for progressing towards unity particularly with regard to the negative economic impacts of Brexit at the end of 2020. The Westminster Government will continue to refuse a Border Poll. However, learning from the Brexit debacle, a Forum will be created to devise a new constitution for an agreed united Ireland and all the necessary transitional steps that would be required. External events will determine the timeline. The next UK election is likely in 2024. Eventually the Scots will be enabled to hold Indyref2 with a real possibility of achieving Scottish independence. An Irish border poll will follow with an agreed united Ireland emerging and thus ending the British imposed partition of Ireland.

The seismic electoral shift towards Sinn Fein and the Left is now unstoppable. The incoming unstable conservative coalition will collapse within two years. And then a broad left socialist Government beckons delivering transformative economic and social changes. This Government will be led by Mary Lou, the first ever woman Taoiseach. An agreed united Ireland is achievable within the next ten years. The times they are a'changing. **C**

Jerry Fitzpatrick is a Dublin-based journalist and was a founding member of the British Labour Party Irish Society

DEVOLUTION

Power to the people?

Duncan Bowie asks what power and what people in a discussion of devolution, spatial equity and socialism

Many political activists including local elected politicians are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about devolution. The failures of central government have generated an understandable perspective that surely we locally could do governance much better than the bureaucrats in Whitehall or for that matter the politicians in the 'Westminster bubble'. Both the London Mayor and the city Mayors of the northern cities and conglomeration are arguing for more Westminster powers to be devolved. This goes beyond the Northern Power house lobby led by Andy Burnham and Dan Jarvis, both former MPs who are now city Mayors of Greater Manchester and the Sheffield city region respectively, or other prominent local leaders such as the impressive Judith Blake of Leeds, Nick Forbes of Newcastle and Marvin Rees of Bristol.

The UK2070 Commission on Rebalancing the UK economy led by Lord Kerslake is also pushing further devolution. This article is prompted partly by a questionnaire circulated on behalf of the Commission by Devo Connect, a devolution consultancy set up by Gill Morris, who previously worked with Nick Raynsford (the former Labour housing and planning minister), which appeared to presume that all devolution was good and the main question was how quick we devolve rather than what powers are devolved and to whom. Further, Paul Salvesson's regular Chartist Points & Crossings column promotes regionalism and advocates regional political parties, outside the existing party political structure.

The case for devolution goes down well after a decade of central government imposed austerity and the diversion of three years wasted arguing about BREXIT. The Tories also managed to gain some limited popularity with their advocacy of bringing planning nearer to the people through the introduction of a neighbourhood planning system in the 2011 Localism Act. However, as socialists, surely we need to discuss who benefits from different forms of devolution and



what powers should be devolved to what level of governance – the old issue of subsidiarity. In this context I am focusing on devolution within England and not whether there should be further devolution to the nations on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Much of the debate over devolution in England is confused, with little distinction between devolving powers from central government to regional bodies (elected or otherwise), to new sub-regional groupings, such as city region Mayors or combined authorities; to reinvigorated County Councils (so far as they still exist), to local districts or to parish councils, neighbourhood councils or even smaller area organisations which have been established through the neighbourhood planning process. There are also countervailing pressures - for larger local councils (with some authorities already running combined services) or for powers to be transferred from local district to county councils or to regional bodies such as the Mayor of London.

Where access to services varies between different areas, we often hear the term 'postcode lottery'. It is of course not a lottery at all but a result of varying access to resources to provide services in different areas and varying priorities, often as a result of local political decisions. Where we have national standards, whether it be waiting

times for operations or sizes of primary school classes, these are not enforced consistently. Often the failure to meet a target results in financial penalties rather than the provision of resources needed to deliver the target.

The more local areas have to rely on local resources and local political decisions, the greater the geographical variation between service standards. This is what is meant by 'spatial inequity'. The concepts of local self-sufficiency and local autonomy have consequences.

There is a separate question as to the appropriate level for decision making for different services. Clearly decisions about major infrastructure projects such as HS2 or a new airport need to be taken at a national government level, whereas a decision about where to site a new park bench could be taken at a very local level.

However other services may require decisions at a range of levels – take flood mitigation for example. This requires national policy and standards, which can identify areas of potential flood risk and provide the resources for flood prevention and mitigation from a national budget. While neighbourhoods can have flood wardens and district councils, county councils and emergency services can have resources for emergency intervention which can be accessed quickly and need to be based within easy reach of the flood-

Duncan Bowie is Chartist reviews editor and author of several books on housing and planning

ed area. Local councils also need plans to ensure that residential and other development within a flood risk area is only constructed with full mitigation measures built into the development (if we are to build in the flood plain at all).

So, either neighbourhood government or central government working on its own will fail. To take another issue – affordable housing. Central government needs a policy and investment framework with a plan that identifies which areas of the country have the most acute shortfall of affordable housing and which of these areas cannot fund the meeting of these needs from local resources. District councils need to allocate sites (often over-riding local objections), but an inter-authority agreement through a sub-regional plan is required where a local authority does not have developable land within its area to meet the outstanding housing need.

So the issue of devolving powers is not a simple one. Central governments have been quite enthusiastic about devolving responsibilities without devolving resources, or increasing the ability of local authorities or other sub-national bodies to raise additional resources. Central government can then blame local councils and local politicians for service failures. Meanwhile local politicians will blame central government for not providing sufficient resources (even where they could raise more resources locally but have chosen not to). As the blame game continues, residents blame all politicians, local, national, or as in recent years, the ‘unelected bureaucrats of the EU’, even though of all levels of government, it is generally the EU that has least to do with service failures in the UK.

National government have some responsibility for ensuring that all residents of the UK have access to a good quality of essential services, irrespective of where they live in the UK. This means that we need to use the resources of better off areas to help those in the poorer areas. This is not just an issue of London and the South East against the North, as it is often presented, but also an issue of inequities within a city like London – or Birmingham or Manchester or Glasgow. This should be an important issue for socialists. It is after all why we campaign for a socialist administration not just at local council level but at national level. So when we hear of the devolution case and bringing power to the people, we need to think ‘what power?’, ‘what people?’ and ask who will actually benefit and who will lose out. **C**

The path to power

Jon Lansman says Rebecca Long-Bailey can unite the party and win back lost seats

Our mass membership – almost 600,000 of them – are overwhelmingly committed to transformative politics. The parliamentary party, though well to the left of where it was in 2015, is far more equivocal. But the membership are not a fan club, their willingness to turn the Labour Party into a campaigning force in our communities and workplaces is vital to our victory and they are not willing to just take whatever line is handed down. That means the party can only be led from the left, by a leader willing to democratise policy making and the choice of candidates, and Rebecca Long-Bailey is uniquely qualified for that task. Unity requires a leader who is committed to transform the party, to democratise it so that it can democratise the country.

And when it comes to winning back our lost voters, on this occasion, I agree with a Tory MP – Richard Holden who won NW Durham off Laura Pidcock – who suggests Rebecca Long-Bailey is Labour's best hope to win back former Labour voters. “Some people argue that Labour's best hope of winning the next general election is to ditch Corbynism and move back to the centre,” he says but argues that Labour's problem may not be that it is too socialist, but rather that it failed to accept the majority vote for Brexit – and Sir Keir was one of the most vocal figures within the Labour Party arguing for a second referendum.

Here is how Rebecca Long-Bailey put her case for the leadership:

I know if you desperately wanted a Labour government, the general election was devastating. I wouldn't blame you for looking for an easy option to win next time. Give up on something here, be less forthright there and we can win, you might hope.

But believe me, the path of despair is also the path to defeat. To give people hope that change is possible, we have to forge a path to power.

The first step is to empower our movement. We aren't just a different team of politicians in Westminster, alternating power with the Tories. Our party was born in communities like mine and many of those we lost in the election.



To win again, we need to look and sound like it. It's our members and trade unions, on the front line in workplaces and communities, who will make that a reality.

Then we can stir up a democratic revolution. We need to break the hold of Westminster and the City over our politics, and show people that they can have the power to achieve what they want to achieve.

People want a better life for their children – that's aspiration – but we can only secure that together – that's socialism.

That's something powerful to say to all of our heartlands, from Blyth to Brixton. A credible story of how we will help people improve their lives.

Our Green Industrial Revolution can bring people together. It unites young people, who want to fight for our planet's survival, with workers in every community, who will see new green jobs and lower bills, and the whole country proud to be world leaders in combating the climate crisis.

The Green Industrial Revolution can be for us what the NHS was to the 1945 Labour government. Our huge, era defining project to combat the climate crisis and transform the lives of people across this country.

My plan – based on aspirational socialism, a Green Industrial Revolution, empowering our movement and a democratic revolution – is our path back to power.

When we win the next general election, I want you to be able to say that you stared defeat in the face last time. You felt the pain. But you picked yourself up and were part of a new path to power.

So, let's empower our movement to show that big change is possible through a democratic revolution that delivers aspirational socialism and a Green Industrial Revolution.

That's our path to power. Let's take it together.' **C**

Jon Lansman is a member of Labour's NEC and founder of Momentum

Resonating with the membership

Andrew Coates looks at the main leadership candidates and finds Keir Starmer best placed to take the party forward



The December General Election was a disaster for Labour with 33% of the vote to the Conservatives 45%. With a call to ‘Getting Brexit done’ Boris Johnson has a majority of 80. Labour did not coherently confront this issue during the election. It dangled the possibility of a better Brexit while offering the possibility of a Second Referendum to make the final choice. This failed to counter an image of Labour’s leader as “unfit to hold high office”. The Party’s stream of ambitious policy announcements did not convince electors otherwise.

Hopes for a Corbyn-led left populism may be at an end, but is a transformative socialist project still possible? As the campaign for a new Labour leader, and deputy leader, reaches the final stage, front-runners have made their pitch.

Lisa Nandy has opposed austerity, defended European freedom of movement, opposed racism and “divisive nationalism”. Nandy’s call to win back those who voted Brexit in seats lost to the Conservatives has seen her gain support from the traditional, pre-Blair, Labour right.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, seen as

the “continuity Corbyn” candidate, has criticised Labour’s election campaign but defended its policies, including plans for public ownership. She floated the idea of “progressive patriotism”. Making a ‘Green New Deal’ the centrepiece of her platform she follows other European left parties. Momentum and smaller left-Labour groups have instructed the left to support her.

Keir Starmer has a background on the radical left, including, during the 1980s, editorship of the magazine *Socialist Alternatives*. He was active in the Socialist Society, the forerunner of the magazine *Red Pepper*. During the 1990s Starmer was a respected human rights barrister, involved in cases such as the *McLibel* trial. Appointed under the last Labour government as Director of Public Prosecutions (2008 – 2013) his record is open to the controversies this position entails.

Starmer has not been a supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. As Shadow Home Secretary in 2016 he resigned in protest at the leadership. Appointed Shadow Brexit Secretary in the same year he expressed the view, shared by a majority of Labour members, that there should be a public vote on any Brexit deal. Many of the

Corbyn inner-circle were strongly against this policy.

In the leadership election Starmer has called for party unity. Reflecting a consensus he opposes austerity, and has taken over a key Corbyn and McDonnell policy on redistributive taxation. Starmer now argues for reintroducing European freedom of movement. He has strongly criticised the Trump Peace Plan for Israel and Palestine.

Starmer resonates with the Labour membership because he is seen as competent and open-minded. There is no ‘cult’. Paul Mason has described him as on the left, with solid values, seen in his record on human rights. A moral socialism could help to bring the party together, as would the removal of factionalists from positions of power. He looks the best placed to undertake the strategic review Labour needs. The space for coherent policies, some building on the work on the teams around John McDonnell and not a leadership clique, would be welcome. As somebody who first met Keir Starmer in Paris in 1985, and as part of the pro-European radical left, somebody not that far from our politics is somebody to support. The wider public seem to agree: Keir Starmer would make a good Labour leader. **C**

Andrew Coates is a member of Ipswich CLP and Chartist EB

Patients Not Passports: The fight for the future of our NHS

While the coronavirus dominates the health headlines **James Skinner** and **Aedin O’Cuill** explain how the hostile environment has infected the NHS

In June 2019, just a few days prior to his 30th birthday, Simba Mujakachi developed the worst headache of his life. He woke up two weeks later in intensive care, surrounded by machines, nurses, and his concerned family. Simba had suffered a life-changing stroke which paralysed the left side of his body and affected his ability to speak. During the surgery needed to save his life, the doctors said he only had a 30% chance of survival.

Eventually he moved from intensive care to a rehabilitation ward, and it was here that he was presented with a £93,000 bill for his life-saving operation and stay in the ICU. Why did someone Simba’s age suffer such a significant stroke? And how is it possible that our NHS is charging people for life-saving treatment?

The NHS is a service founded on the principle that healthcare is a human right and should be free to all, regardless of ability to pay. Over the last few years successive Governments have introduced policies designed to undermine these principles and fundamentally alter the NHS for the worse. The NHS is now forced to charge people upfront, before treatment, if they are unable to produce the correct documentation. This means that NHS staff are increasingly pressured to act as border guards, having to carry out immigration checks on the patients they are supposed to be treating. Behind the ID checks and upfront charging is a complex web of data sharing arrangements through which NHS Trusts share patient information with the Home Office which is then used to identify and deport people.

Simba has a blood clotting condition that puts him at a much higher risk of stroke than the general population. Despite knowing this he was unable to access regular care via the NHS because he could not afford it. Prior to having the stroke, he had not seen his specialist team for months. Simba has lived in the UK since he was 14 but the Home Office has repeatedly refused his application for asylum. As a ‘refused



asylum seeker’, Simba is not allowed to work or to access vital public services like the NHS. As a direct result of these restrictions, Simba now is living with the devastating impacts of his stroke as well as a debt to the NHS of over £100,000 that he will never be able to pay.

Simba’s story is devastating, but he is not alone. He is one of a growing number of people who have been denied the healthcare they need, made destitute by huge hospital bills, or, in the worst cases, died as a result of not being able to afford treatment. This includes Nasar Khan, Elfreda Spencer, Albert Thompson, Kelemua Mulat, Esayas Welday, Pauline Pennant, Beatrice, Saloum, Bhavani Espathi, and countless others whose names we do not know.

Every day, in hospital wards up and down the country, doctors, nurses and administrative staff are asked to make impossible decisions about whether or not to treat ill patients. Given the harm to patients and the threat to the NHS’ values they represent, it is no wonder that these policies have been met with outrage and mass resistance. Campaigns opposing charging are emerging in cities and towns across the country in: Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Hastings, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford, and Sheffield. Medact, Migrants Organise, and Docs Not Cops are working to support these campaigns and, alongside groups like Keep Our NHS Public, are building a nationwide movement of NHS staff,

patients, and healthcare institutions opposed to NHS charging.

These campaigns are growing rapidly, now supported by the Patients Not Passports toolkit that contains the basic principles for how to advocate for patients, and how to get started campaigning wherever you are. The toolkit is accompanied by Medact’s briefing on charging – Patients Not Passports: Challenging healthcare charging in the NHS. It explains where NHS charging came from, deconstructs the racialised myths the Government have used to justify it, and provides a comprehensive evidence base to support opposition to the policy.

You can start taking action to support the campaign right now:

1. Join us in calling for NHS charging to be scrapped and use our tool to write to the Department of Health – act.PatientsNotPassports.co.uk
2. Support the Justice for Simba campaign, sign the petition and donate to his fundraiser
3. Organise - people across the country are organising locally to call on Trusts to resist the charges. We can support you step by step to start a campaign where you are. For more information email JamesSkinner@medact.org or DocsNotCops@gmail.com. There might already be a campaign where you are

The campaign is open to all, and all will be needed in order to succeed. Here are some ways you can get involved.

Follow @MigrantsOrg @Medact & @DocsNotCops on Twitter to stay in touch.

James Skinner, is a Nurse and Access to Healthcare Campaigner at Medact.

Aedin O’Cuill, is a junior doctor and member of Docs Not Cops

Johnson gets tougher on child refugees

Alice Arkwright says the new 'compliant environment' both abuses and rejects asylum seekers

On the 6th February this year, 90 migrants were intercepted by UK authorities attempting to cross the English Channel – the highest number to be intercepted on a single day ever.

The numbers of people crossing the Channel has risen sharply in 2019, compared to 2018, but as we move from the 'hostile environment' to the 'compliant environment', what can migrants expect when they arrive in 2020?

The rhetoric of the government has not appeared to change. When being asked about migrants making the journey, Boris Johnson recently said "We will send you back. The UK should not be regarded as a place where you could automatically come and break the law by seeking to arrive illegally. If you come illegally, you are an illegal migrant, and I'm afraid the law will treat you as such."

Charities and lawyers have rightly called for the government to recognise that everyone has the right to claim asylum and using the term illegal to describe those seeking asylum is wrong.

The government has also recently scrapped a commitment from the Brexit withdrawal agreement that allows unaccompanied child refugees to reunite with families in Britain.

Policies of the Home Office

Since the announcement of the compliant environment, there has been virtually no change to the policies that push people into destitution.

Asylum seekers in the UK are not permitted to work and must survive on asylum support, amounting to £5.39 a day. A condition of receiving this is that asylum seekers must not receive support from other sources. Many experience delays in receiving their asylum support and the Home Office has recently scrapped its target of processing most asylum cases within six months, with some people waiting up to 10 years for a decision. Due to these com-

pounding factors, most are unable to accrue any savings whilst in the UK.

If refugee status is granted, people then have 28 days before their asylum support is cut. Given that it is virtually impossible for most to find a job within this time and many have no savings to fall back on, the advice is to apply for Universal Credit as soon as possible. However, the minimum amount of time between application and receipt of funds from Universal Credit is five weeks meaning most will have at least a week where there is no support, pushing many into homelessness.

If the asylum claim is refused, support is cut after 21 days and is only continued if people meet clear criteria, for example if they have a pending Judicial Review claim. In reality it is incredibly difficult to continue receiving asylum support after a claim is refused without high quality legal advice, which due to cuts in legal aid, many can't access.

These policies are actively designed to deter people from seeking asylum, but research by Women for Women Refugees done this year demonstrates they are ineffective. They spoke to 106 asylum seeking and refugee women about their experiences of destitution and almost all said that despite the hardship they had faced, they would not return to their home countries as they did not feel safe.

These policies are enacted in an environment of disbelief and suspicion from the Home Office, but also wider society. Public service providers and private individuals such as landlords are now forced to carry out immigration checks.

Sexual violence

The research by Women for Women Refugees also found extremely high levels of sexual violence amongst this group.

Their results demonstrated that:

- Almost one-third of the women who had experienced rape or sexual violence in their home country also experienced it in the

UK.

- Over a third of destitute women were forced into unwanted relationships, in many cases leading to sexual and physical violence.

- As a result of being homeless, a quarter of women were raped or sexually abused when sleeping outside or in other people's homes.

- Fears of deportation and detention stopped the majority of those affected from reporting abuse to the police.

Home Office policies are actively resulting in experiences of sexual violence and fear which prevents people from reporting and seeking help.

Our system also expects women to talk openly, clearly and frankly to a stranger about the sexual violence and trauma they have experienced without counselling. This is often impossible for people who have experienced it and are therefore at risk of not being believed.

What needs to change

The violence and poverty that asylum seekers experience in the UK is a consequence of the way our system is designed. Instead of providing an empathetic, human rights centred response, our system requires asylum seekers not only relive their trauma but creates new forms of suffering through experiences of sexual violence, detention and the torment of not being able to find safety in a country where they have sought refuge.

There are clear policy changes that could end this, including:

- Asylum seekers being granted the right to work in the UK.
- Extending the period people who have been granted refugee status receive asylum support.
- Ensuring support continues for those who have been refused asylum until they have confirmed immigration status in the UK or have returned to their country of origin.
- Ending the requirement for specialised services to share immigration data so asylum seekers can seek help from the NHS and Police. **C**



Alice Arkwright
works for the
TUC

The unavoidable first battle of Trump Toryism

Trevor Fisher warns the Johnson threat to our constitution is the battle of 2020

Flying under the radar of the 2019 election was the agreement of Labour and the Conservatives that the constitution is bust. The approaches to solve the problem were of course very different, but it is clear this is going to become a priority for this government – as they have said in the Queens Speech. Changing the rules is the key to the Trump Tory political programme for reshaping Britain making this the challenge for 2020. This is a challenge that cannot be ignored.

Alas few Party members seem to know what Labour said in the manifesto. Starmer and Long Bailey both make constitutional reform commitments, which cannot be operated as Labour lost the election. So let us revisit what was said behind the dull heading CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. The manifesto had a key statement to wit “For many people, politics doesn’t work. The Westminster bubble is a world away from their daily lives” and a limited but important commitment that “the renewal of our parliament will be subject to recommendations made by a UK wide Constitutional Convention, led by a citizens assembly”.

This commitment seems close to what the Tories promised in their manifesto. The ill named PROTECT OUR DEMOCRACY section (p47-48) stated “In our first year we will set up a Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission that will ... come up with proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy works”. But the agenda behind what appears to be an open discussion of the constitution is massively different to Labour’s tentative proposal and is hinged on removing democratic rights –making the power of the executive overwhelming.

The Johnson administration is after all the one which prorogued parliament and resented being told by the judiciary this was unconstitutional. At the opening of this Manifesto section it states “The failure of parliament to deliver Brexit – the way so many



MPs have devoted themselves to thwarting the democratic decision of the British people in the 2016 referendum – has opened up a ... rift between politicians and people... It is only by getting Brexit done that we can start the necessary task of restoring public trust in government and politics.”

No short review can summarise the anti-democratic thrust of the Tory approach, which is anti parliamentary and anti the freedom of the judiciary – the latter being given lip service at the start but so clearly not the case in practice. The lawyers, virtually alone in the political class – have protested.

More than protests are needed. The constitution is indeed broken as both major parties have realized, confusing ordinary people as the 2016 referendum showed. The Tories intend to resolve the confusion by changes which will institutionalize elected dictatorship. There will be no written constitution, which is a bridge too far, meaning ad hoc changes which Labour cannot stop. Johnson has an obedient 80 strong majority pledged to implement the Tory commission.

Yet there is a weakness in Johnson’s position. No party has

the right to determine constitutional changes alone, as Labour’s gesture to a Citizens Convention led by a Citizens Assembly recognized. The way forward is to use something which is already established – the mechanism of a Royal Commission.

Given that the Tories will act this year, the only existing way to put a spoke in the Trump Tory wheel is to produce a Royal Commission. Parliament will make the final decision on what the terms of reference should be. But prior to that a process of discussion defining the issues should be a national priority. The main reason is to stop a right wing Tory clique deciding what constitutional changes shall happen. But this rests on a fundamental principle – no one party has the right to decide the rules.

The two manifestoes pointed up the constitutional problem. The Tory proposal would undermine our rights not enhance them. It is urgently necessary to produce a wider debate than Number 10 is currently planning – and given that Labour cannot implement its manifesto commitment, a wider campaign will be needed. The Tory Challenge has to be met head on. **C**

Trevor Fisher is a member of Stafford CLP

FILM REVIEW

The struggle to overthrow patriarchy is ongoing

Patrick Mulcahy
on the birth
of modern
Women's
Lib

The film *Misbehaviour* focuses on the disruption to the 1970 Miss World contest, when members of the Women's Liberation Movement caused the live BBC broadcast to go off air. Yet the mostly female ensemble headed by Keira Knightley and including Jessie Buckley, Keeley Hawes, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Lesley Manville are all but eclipsed by Rhys Ifans (almost unrecognisable) and Greg Kinnear as Eric Morley, who started the Miss World contest for the 1951 Festival of Britain, and comedian Bob Hope respectively. The villains really do have the best parts.

Knightley plays divorced single mother Sally Alexander, who at the start of the film, attends an interview for a place to study history at University College London and is rated by two members of the male panel. She attends the first ever conference of the Women's Liberation Movement in Oxford where she meets Jo (Buckley, reprising her *Wild Rose* sassiness) who with her friends is putting a banana skin on a male bust. 'Don't do that. Think of the person who has to clean up after you,' remarks Sally, a hint of the campaign for the rights of night workers the real Sally pursued. In London, Sally runs into Jo again as she defaces a poster with the message 'Keep the woman in your life happy – learn to cook'. She warns her that a policeman is approaching, allowing her to avoid arrest. Jo Ann invites Sally to a Women's group meeting in Islington and soon Sally is writing posters and advocating engagement with the media to get her point across. She excites ire when the Islington group issues posters that condemn the Miss World competition. Sally is nominated to speak in a television panel, where she makes her points well but is disregarded by the male host and the other guests.

In parallel, we see the preparations for the 1970 contest, including co-show runner Julia Morley (Hawes) calling Bob Hope. Hope's

new personal secretary agrees on the star's behalf, without being aware that Bob's wife Dolores (Manville) disapproves. In 1961, Hope hosted the show and brought the Welsh winner, Rosemarie Frankland back to Hollywood in a futile attempt to make her a star – the two had an affair. Rosemarie eventually married another man but became a drug addict and died of an overdose in 2000. Eric is visited by the

as a springboard to a future career. Pearl also explains how she is limited in who she can meet and what she can say; disobedience means never seeing her mother again.

Humour comes from Eric demonstrating how the contestants should behave in their moment of victory – he puts on the crown and cape and moves with solemn slowness. When the broadcast begins, the sexist BBC commentary needs no embellishment to draw derision.

The script by Rebecca Frayn and Gaby Chiappe is nuanced. The protestors do have a difficulty: they need to denounce the contest without disrespecting the contestants. Sally also has ambitions to sit at the top table. 'My seat was a high-chair,' she later complains. There are numerous scenes of Sally being ignored in her tutorials. When she says she wants to write about women's role in history, her tutor complains, 'isn't that a bit niche?' Such dismissive comments exist in universities today; my son received a similar comment when he proposed making a film about a character with autism. (Stand up, University of Gloucestershire Film Production department.)

The film's most contentious element is the portrayal of Bob Hope. Kinnear plays the man as an apologist for sexism, making a joke at the expense of the protestors outside the theatre. Nevertheless, he is still an entertainment icon who, having died in 2003 aged 103, cannot answer back. Younger audiences may be tempted to dismiss Hope's contribution to American comedy as a result. The film depicts all its characters in broad strokes, save for Jennifer and Pearl. In the end, you learn something about the period, laugh a little, but don't have a transformative experience. The film's best line appears in the end credits – and is the title of this review. It also sums up the quiet rage that exists still.

Misbehaviour is released in UK cinemas on Friday 13 March



anti-Apartheid campaigner Peter Hain, who insists that he does not have South Africa represented by a white Afrikaaner. Eric responds by saying the country will be represented by both black and white women – he gets his staff to find someone quickly.

When director Philippa Lowthorpe introduces the contestants arriving in London for the first time, the film comes to life. Air hostess Miss Grenada, Jennifer Posten (Mbatha-Raw) makes friends with Miss Africa South, Pearl Jansen (Loreece Harrison) whilst being introduced to their chaperones. They illustrate the opportunities that the beauty contest afforded – foreign travel, representing their country abroad and using the experience

On guard in the East End

Glyn Ford
on fighting
fascists

We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain
Daniel Sonabend
Verso £20

Here is a history of 'The 43 Group' who fought re-emerging fascism in London and the provinces between 1946-50. The core of the Group were Jewish ex-service-men steeped in the - often immediate - horrors of the holocaust. The Fascist leadership had had its slate kept clean by the wartime Coalition. Interned under Defence Regulation 18B for much of the war the fascists tried to re-install themselves back on the streets of London's East End. It was far from self-evident that they could be brushed aside and driven back into the margins.

Their support came from three sources, intrinsic, contingent and collateral, apart from the remnants of Oswald Mosley's thirties British Union of Fascists (BUF). There was a residual anti-semitism and those that blamed the war and/or Attlee's Government for their current misery. Bread rationing came after, not during, the war and conscripts were now being sent to the mines. The 'Jewish Chronicle' reported a 1948 survey revealing that there had been a significant increase of anti-Jewish feeling in sections of the Labour Party. And finally, there was Palestine. Here British forces were fighting Jewish paramilitaries. When the 'Irgun' kidnapped and murdered Clifford Martin and Mervyn Price, two British soldiers, leaving the bodies swinging from trees in July 1947 anti-Jewish riots followed in Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester.

This external backdrop was rivalled by internal dissent. The Board of Deputies wanted nothing to do with them, nor did the staid Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (AJEX). Yet they had their supporters, Marks & Spencer, Bud Flanagan and boxing promoter Jack Solomons. They also had celebrity, paper and a martyr. Vidal Sassoon was

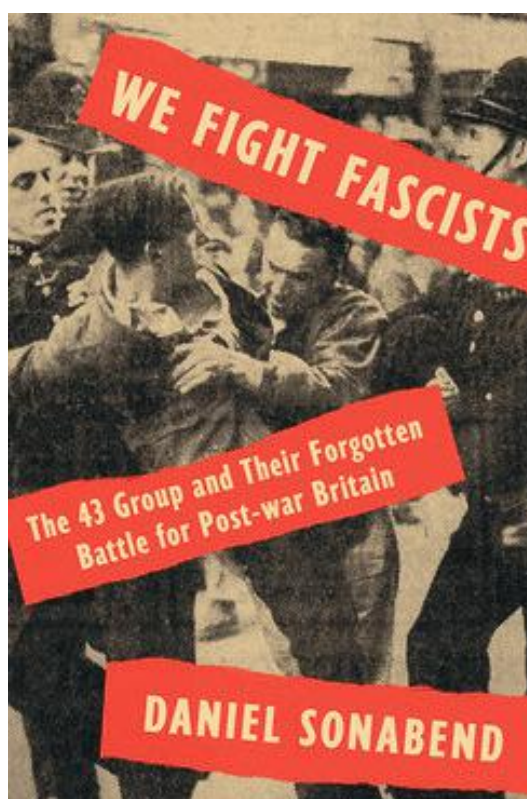
an active member and the Group published and pugnaciously sold 'On Guard' from 1947-49. The 'martyr' was a 'deep entryist' into Mosley's Union Movement, Wendy Turner, who ended a victim of 'friendly fire'. Set on by four women members of the Group after a chance encounter she was 'beaten to a pulp'. She disappeared, then went to a sanatorium eventually committing suicide.

The Group voluntarily disbanded in 1950 with 'job done' as Oswald Mosley, the Union

- if in the days when we were small and weak, our opponents had understood our aims and intentions, and smashed with the utmost determination the nucleus of our new movement'. It was rough trade. Both sides fought dirty. 'Light bulbs, razors, a piece of iron encased in rubber, a radio valve, and even a horseshoe' formed the inventory after seven Group members were arrested in 1948. The ultimate deterrents were their 'home visits' to unfriendly fascists. At one point, although there was a communist cell at the core of the Group, the CPGB anxious to shed its disreputable image dissociated itself from the violent clashes on the East End streets.

There is a certain tedium and monotony to the 'Bash the Fash' genre. Whether it is the tales of the Squadristi born out of the SWP and ANL and ultimately disowned by both, told with pride in *No Retreat* by Dave Hann and Steve Tilzey (Milo Books, 2003) and prejudice with *When We Touched The Sky* by Dave Renton (New Clarion Press, 2006) or the next iteration account of *Anti-Fascist Action* and the hard-core cadre *Red Action Beating the Fascists* by Sean Birchall (Freedom Press, 2010) it is the same catalogue of fights - mainly - won and lost, of heroes and villains until eternal vigilance triggers a regeneration.

Sonabend has partly avoided the trap of inventory that snared the first chronicler, Morris Beckham, in his *The 43 Group* (1992) and the rest of the class above. All these authors were adherents - or in the case of Renton an apostate - at the heart of the struggle. Instead of itemized mayhem, it's clunky politics. The CPGB would never have described Willie Gallagher as a 'Scottish Communist Labour MP', nor - outside the pages of the *Daily Mail* - would the Common Wealth Party have been designated 'communist'. That's the only quibble. That Sonabend rescues the '43 Group' from the obscurity of Beckham's partial and impugned account can be considered a victory.



Movement and their fellow travellers disappeared back into the dark political margins of British politics. They certainly played their part, but so too did Mosley himself when he rebuilt his fascism on the foundations of 'history and culture' rather than 'language and nation'. For him the future was the clash of civilizations, not nations. Far too erudite then and now for followers of fascism preferring the narrow xenophobia and hatreds of UKIP and the Brexit Party.

They - like all physical force anti-fascist groups - driven by Hitler's view 'Only one thing could have stopped our movement

BOOK REVIEWS

An uprising or a massacre?

Duncan Bowie
on a seminal study of a seminal event

Peterloo
Robert Poole
Oxford University Press £25

Last year's bicentenary saw numerous publications and commemorations of this major event in working class history. Whether or not you saw Mike Leigh's film, you should read this book, for this is the comprehensive study both of Peterloo and of its pre-history. Poole is a Greater Manchester based historian who has edited previous studies of Peterloo and Manchester history as well as having been historical adviser on the film, which explains why the film was so accurate, if a bit long-winded. But this book is local history at its best – it puts Manchester at the centre of the story, but within a national context. It provides a comprehensive account of the events of 16th August 1819, but sets the back-story by providing a detailed account of the pre-history of the reform movements in Manchester and the wider cotton-spinning and weaving area. The research is thorough and demonstrates an impressive knowledge of a wide range of sources as well as decades of archival study. The detailed study of Manchester reformers is important, receiving little coverage in past studies which (E P Thomson excepted) have been largely centred on the London radical movement. Poole shows that the August 1819

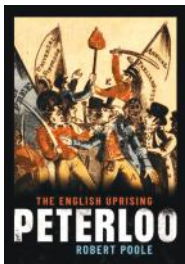
demonstration was just one of a series of mass demonstrations in the Manchester area. The reformers' resolutions, which they were unable to present before the attack of the yeomanry and hussars, were the standard demands for parliamentary reform as promoted over the previous decade by the London based radical, Major John Cartwright (often not given his rightful role by historians, but given a key place in this study), before being taken up by orators such as Henry Hunt (the star turn on the Manchester platform and later MP for Preston). Such resolutions were later advocated by the Chartist movement, contrasting with the more insurrectionary rhetoric of the London Spenceans, who were the following year to attempt to assassinate the cabinet.

One major concern is with the book's subtitle – *The English Uprising*.

Given the entire narrative of the book demonstrates that the Manchester reformers were essentially peaceful, and made strenuous efforts to ensure that the demonstration on St Peter's Field was non-threatening and consequently that the massacre in which at least 18 people died and hundreds injured was unprovoked and therefore without justification, to use the term 'uprising' implies that the demonstration was an attempt to bring down the elected government through the

use of force. This clearly was not the case. The section on the final chapter 'The Reckoning' entitled 'An English uprising' makes reference to subsequent events such as the Queen Caroline demonstrations and Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820 and the Bristol Reform riots of 1831 (in which over 100 people were killed) as well as referring to disturbances in Scotland and Ireland, but does not attempt to demonstrate that the Manchester demonstrations represented an 'uprising'.

For those who are interested in Manchester reform politics after Peterloo, I would recommend reading Joanna Hayward's 2017 volume on Abel Heywood, Manchester's Radical Mayor and Rob Hargreaves and Alan Hampson's 2018 study; *Beyond Peterloo*; Elijah Dickson and Manchester's *Forgotten Reformers*. There is also Paul Pickering's 1995 study of Manchester Chartism and Michael Turner's 1995 study of middle class liberalism in early 19thC Manchester: *Reform and Respectability*, as well as a number of studies by Manchester historian, Alan Kidd, all demonstrating there is a radical history beyond the capital. Readers for whom Poole's 450 page study is a bit heavy, are directed to the graphic version for which Poole wrote the text: *Peterloo: Witnesses to a Massacre*, published by the New Internationalist last year.



Fighting back

Duncan Bowie
on sacrifice and betrayal

The Armenian Legionnaires
Susan Pattie
I B Tauris £25

There have been many books on the Armenian genocide, some prompted by the centenary, including Ronald Suny's comprehensive *History of the Genocide*, previously reviewed for Chartist by Pattie. Susan Pattie, who is Director of the Armenian Institute in London but has also been Director of the Armenian Museum of America in Massachusetts has now published a study of the Armenian survivors of the genocide who together with others from the Armenian diaspora, joined French and British soldiers to fight the Ottomans in the

Middle East.

The book is based primarily on a collection of memoirs of legionnaires, most of which were written in Armenian and many never previously published. The legionnaires fought partly seeking revenge for the death of their relatives and friends and destruction of their towns and villages, but also with the objective of re-establishing an Armenian community and ideally an independent or at least autonomous state in the formerly Armenian provinces of eastern Turkey, specifically in coastal Cilicia, where the genocide had been most complete.

The Armenian legion was established as a component of the French Foreign Legion, with

French senior officers and was assembled and trained in Cyprus, which had been captured by the British from the Ottomans in 1878 and incorporated into the British empire in 1914. The Armenian brigades then fought with General Allenby's British army in Palestine, participating in the victory over Ottoman and German forces at the battle of Arara, near Nablus in September 1918. They then moved to Cilicia, where they were part of the French-led occupying force. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Armenian National Delegation, led by Boghos Nubar, argued that the six eastern provinces of Turkey should become part of an independent Armenian state. An indepen-

dent Armenian state had already been established in the Caucasus under the leadership of the Armenian nationalist Dashnak party, though this was to be incorporated in Soviet Russia after a Soviet occupation in 1920.

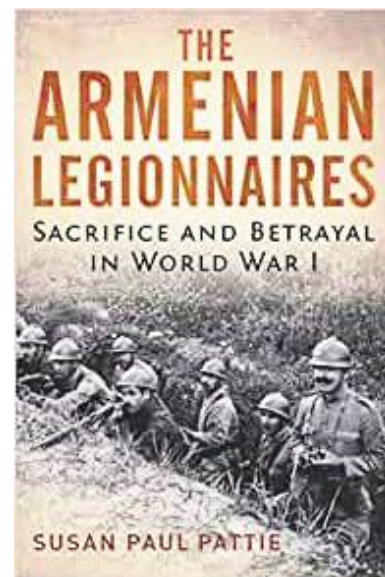
The American president, Woodrow Wilson, had proposed an autonomous Armenian state in Cilicia and in fact this provision was included in the treaty of Sevres of 1920. The French then demobilised the Armenian legion. However, the government of the new Turkish republic refused to endorse the Treaty and with the withdrawal of first British and then French forces, Cilicia together with the other 'Armenian' provinces of eastern Turkey were incorporated into the Turkish republic.

Neither the US, the French or the British were interested in taking on a League of Nations mandate for Cilicia, the French taking the mandates for Syria and Lebanon, the British taking the mandates for Palestine and

Transjordan. The US, who rejected Wilson's League of Nations, returned to their pre-war isolationism. This explains why the Armenian legionnaires felt betrayed.

From the Turkish nationalist perspective, the Armenians had supported their enemies, and consequently it is perhaps not surprising that many were obliged to flee their homeland, in some cases for the second time. The Armenian diaspora, whether in America, Cyprus, Syria or the Lebanon, has however maintained a healthy diasporic culture and memory, and Pattie, who has done much to contribute to the diaspora, has in this book, compiled not just a chronicle of the Armenian legion, but has produced a fascinating compendium of images – some 158 in total.

The book is in effect a portable exhibition – most welcomed no doubt by the diaspora but also of great value to anyone interested in Armenian history or of the aftermath of the First World War.



From independence to civil war

Sarah Hughes
on the UN
in South
Sudan

South Sudan: The Untold Story
Hilde F Johnson
I.B. Tauris £15.99

Hilde Johnson was Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in South Sudan and Head of UNMISS (the UN Mission) from July 2011 to July 2014. She already had close relationships with senior figures inside and outside the Government of South Sudan and a deep knowledge of the country and its people from her prior position as the Minister for International Development of Norway. This is a frank and personal account in which she attempts to put on record the events which took the country from independence to civil war in three tragic years, and in particular, the UN's role in them.

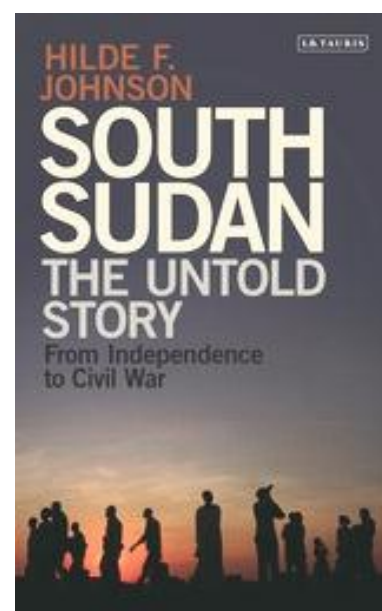
The book is largely a blow by blow account of events from late 2012, culminating in the pivotal attacks of 15th December 2013 and their aftermath. But she puts these into the historical perspective of the 1991 Bor massacre and the 2004 crisis in order to situate her argument of three transitions: from war to peace, from liberation struggle to governance, and from independence to democracy. All of these had failed, she concludes,

because of structural factors: namely weak institutions, high expectations and the diseases of corruption, rule of the gun, and a self-serving elite. While Johnson doesn't set out to give us an in-depth treatment of root causes her insider account does avoid simplistic 'tribal' or other analyses.

Johnson makes no excuses for the UN and UNMISS. According to her there was not enough political focus, which when combined with a poor planning process resulted in wrong decisions and actions. However she insists that the humanitarian action taken on December 16th 2004 to open the Mission compound gates to thousands of civilians fleeing the fighting avoided what was potentially a genocide. Likewise sending in the blue berets was justified. These actions, she claims, caused the UN to become the major scapegoat of the crisis.

More than five years on from the events described, what has the UN learnt, and more importantly what have the government and people of South Sudan learnt? The book doesn't really help us answer these questions, but it succeeds in putting things on record which is important enough in a country where memo-

ries are long and justice and reconciliation processes have barely begun. Taking ownership, following the example of Johnson in this account of the UN's actions from 2011 – 2014, is a basic lesson for many still to learn.



BOOK REVIEWS

To the cliff edge

Bryn Jones
on financial
globalisation

Finance Capital Today. Corporations and Banks in the Lasting Global Slump
Francois Chesnais
Haymarket Books £24.99

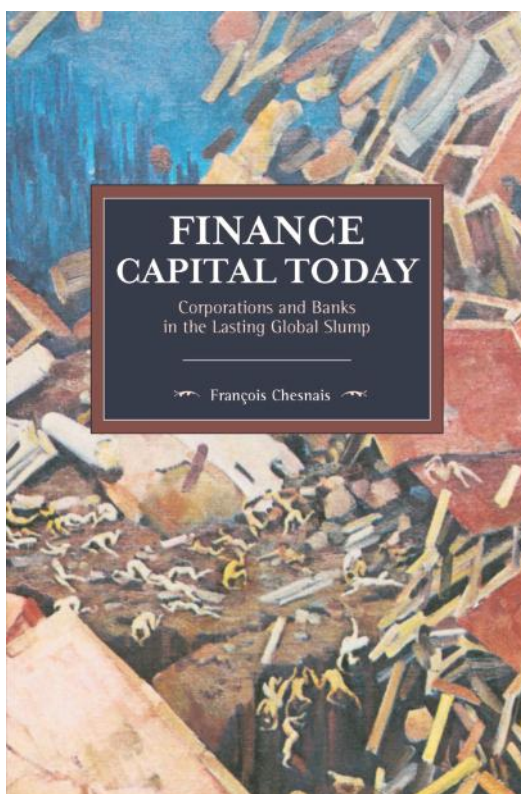
The main dynamics of today's financial globalisation are fairly well known. The deregulation of financial business from the 1980s, plus the reduction of tariffs through transformation and expansion of the World Trade Organisation, particularly China's inclusion, induced a transfer of manufacturing capacity from western countries to developing, especially Far Eastern, societies. More crucially, these changes facilitated a vast expansion in the diversity and reach of financial capital. A proliferation of old and new financial business, debts and assets created a financial jungle beyond the effective control of financial authorities. Industrial and financial investments competed with each other to secure the highest rates of profit across the world.

In western manufacturing sectors, deregulated labour markets and diminished trade union power underpinned this trend. All of which assisted an ideology which privileged 'shareholder value': maximising rates of return to investors and, not coincidentally, the corporate executive class. As the be-all and end-all of corporate strategy, shareholder value, led many big businesses to cut research and development, training and innovation, with wage cutting and redundancies, to boost profits for shareholders.

In the financial sectors, a proliferation of financial institutions, such as hedge funds, wealth funds and speculative, diversified banks pursued the same incessant search for better and just marginally higher profits. Trading and competing with each other these bodies engineered and expanded a range of new financial commodities, such as credit derivatives for new investment opportunities and profits. We know where this Alice-in-Wonderland saga led. With potentially unrecoverable debts traded as assets, the whole house of cards nearly collapsed as US 'sub-prime' mortgage lending became worthless in 2008.

The authorities who had hubristically refused to regulate this

morass managed to stave off doomsday and introduced emergency reforms, which banks and others have since been trying to evade to get back on the same lucrative, but perilous track. By 2018 their lending had raised the debt-to-GDP ratio of 'developing economies' (including China) to a staggering 168%. In 1970 the ratio was at 114%. Along the way banks' pressured public sector debtors in Europe for bad debt repayments;



precipitating the euro crisis of 2010/12, pushing countries like Greece into near bankruptcy and popular penury.

So, analyses such as that of Chesnais are of potentially huge economic and political importance. However, he is often more concerned to use these development to illustrate the value of Marxist concepts: 'fictitious capital' (the money banks create simply through issuing new loans), the inevitability of a 'falling rate of profit', and the mismatch between the extraction of surplus value from workers' productive inputs and the over-accumulation of production - in which insufficient workers can afford to buy industrial capital's products.

One of Chesnais's main and commendable aims is to account for the exact divergence between, on the one hand, the obvious rise in the

exploitation of labour - that ought either to produce cheaper products or higher profits - and the increasingly rapid rise of financial asset accumulation. Part of this over-production/under-accumulation contradiction Chesnais attributes to the increasing institutional separation of financial from productive capital, reflected in the above mentioned market anarchy. The other factors are: 1) the effects of austerity which, together with the downward pressure on wages have cut

employment and social incomes; and, 2) workers' increasing resort to debt (consumer credit, mortgages etc) to finance commodity purchases. But despite this historically informative account of finance capital as the biggest cog in the global financial-industrial machine, Chesnais does not convincingly resolve the dichotomy he sets out between the hegemony of finance capital in profit-making and the hyper-exploitation of labour for surplus value made possible by neoliberal governance. Perhaps because the latter concept on which a major academic and political discourse has developed, is alien to the Marxist economic canon.

Somewhat predictably his conclusions lead into familiar Marxist prognoses of inevitable, but dystopian limits to global capitalism.

As the system cannot, allegedly, reform itself and proletarian revolution is conspicuously absent, Chesnais ends up pondering a race to the environmental cliff edge from the uncontrollable forces of capitalism versus social movements' attempts to halt climate change through system change. The reader can, however, offset Chesnais' perturbing lack of confidence in the latter forces by recognising that capitalism has, in the past, been tamed and channelled into more humane forms by institutional and political reforms that his Marxist framework barely acknowledges. Arguably the search for such new forms of 'agency' is what the politics of a Green Industrial Revolution is all about. We can only hope that such missions can take on, pension off, or refashion the finance capital behemoth that Chesnais so graphically portrays.

More than a cultist

Andrew Coates
on the
Fourth
International

Memoirs of a Critical Communist. Towards a History of the Fourth International
Livio Maitan
Resistance Books/Merlin Press
£20

Livio Maitan (1923–2004) was a leading figure in the international Trotskyist Movement who won respect and had an influence, on the wider left. *Memoirs of a Critical Communist*, published in Italian in 2006, his last book, is a 'contribution' to the history of the Fourth International. The Italian was, with Pierre Frank, (France) and the influential economist Ernest Mandel (Belgium), a leading figure in the main branch of Trotskyism. Maitan had, the late French Marxist philosopher Daniel Bensaïd, writes in the Preface, 'a sense of humour and self-irony', a warmth and intellectual breadth, which is far from the general picture of a Trotskyist leader.

Maitan's book on China, *Party, Army and Masses* (published in Italian in 1969), appeared in English in 1976. Written with an audience sympathetic to the Cultural Revolution in mind it was critical of the Chinese bureaucracy but falls far short of the robust demolition of Mao's 'sterilising totalitarianism', by Simon Leys. The present volume ranges much wider. It is a 'history of the activities of the international leadership' of his current until his passing. Pages cover the disputes within Trotskyism during the Cold War, the anti-colonial revolutions, the '68 upheavals, the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974, up to what Franco Turigliatto has called 'the congress of "disillusionment" of 1995. This tried to come to terms with the fall of Communism and world-wide setbacks for the whole the left (International Viewpoint). This saw an end of hopes for democratic left-wing developments in what Trotskyists consid-

ered to be "bureaucratized transitional societies".

Memoirs recounts Maitan's extensive involvement with the Latin American left. The faction run by Posadas, best known today for its belief in flying saucers, but in the 'sixties for asserting that the world revolution was now led from Latin America and Africa, was one of many to stress the importance of these countries. The guerrilla strategy of Che

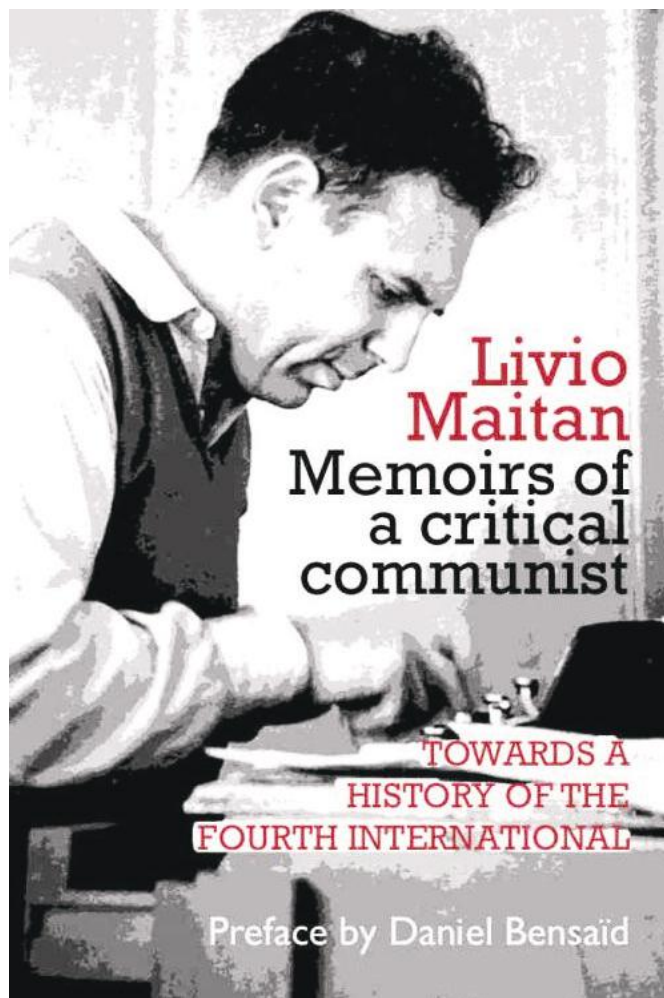
ers Chile and Mexico, including the row with the 'Moreno' tendency that continued till the 1980s, will interest specialists.

Maitan has an eye for detail. He describes the Militant leader Ted Grant carting around Marxist relics in his briefcase to quote Trotsky 'chapter and verse'. Talented rally speaker Tariq Ali is cited as returning from a visit to North Korea in 1971 with 'fairly positive opinion' about its economic development.

The American Socialist Workers Party (no relation to the UK SWP), the oldest Trotskyist party in the world, and an influence on the celebrated list of 1930s New York Intellectuals, under the impact of Jack Barnes today subordinates its politics to the Cuban state. Maitan charges them with their leader's 'authoritarian behaviour' and purging their group by accusations of 'disloyalty'. He does not explore allegations of 'cultism' and 'Trotskyist missionaries' common to those who have had contact with them in Europe.

Memoirs of a Critical Communist is far from the work of a cultist. If not always an easy read, even for those familiar with the personalities involved and the movements. From

optimism in 1968 'during the heat of the action', to criticism of one of Trotskyism most abiding traits, leaders 'wedded to centralising tendencies and charismatic methods', Maitan emerges as a keen observer. The willingness to engage with other radical movements, to rethink ideas in the light of experience, to try to build 'a global anti-capitalist movement' on a socialist basis, has been helped by activists of his calibre. For those prepared to plunge into the difficulties the left faces, this book is an important reference.



Guevara, who had 'read, and liked Mandel's Marxist Economic Theory', attracted support in Bolivia, where Trotskyism had influence in the workers' movement. The practice of armed struggle led to intense debates across the continent, and the creation of 'political-military' groups committed to armed struggle. Disputes in Argentina, where Trotskyism, continues to have an influence, took place against the background of extreme state repression, and calls for militaristic responses. The niceties of Maitan's account, which also cov-

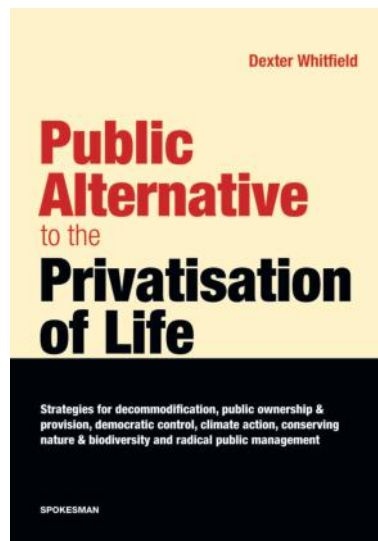
BOOK REVIEWS

The guide we were waiting for

Duncan Bowie
on fighting
privatisation

Public Alternative to the Privatisation of Life
Dexter Whitfield
Spokesman £25

Whitfield has authored a number of volumes on privatisation of public services across the world and is director of The European Services Strategy Unit. This is his magnum opus – a 560 page text reflecting a lifetime of research – a comprehensive guide to what is wrong with privatisation and what to do about it. The bibliography covers 60 pages; the list of acronyms fills 8 pages. But this is a very readable book rather than a dreary academic tome. It includes useful tables – for example a typology of privatisation, financialisation, marketisation, and individualisation policies and objectives; an analysis of tuition fees in higher education in selected countries – UK is highest with the US in second place, and a comparison of administrative



spending as a proportion of health service expenditure in OECD countries (UK is 2% compared with 8% in the US – so much for the criticism of excessive expenditure on NHS bureaucrats).

If we were ever short of evi-

dence to support the case for public ownership of welfare services and the regulation of the private sector, we are not any more. It is only regrettable that Labour did not focus sufficiently on the economic as well as the moral case for public ownership in the recent election.

The book's final chapter on Strategic Action sets out the key challenges, summarises the case against privatisation, provides a guide to challenging corporate interests, a list of actions which trade unions and community organisations should take and examples of campaigns both in the UK and internationally, and a guide to writing alternative plans for community managed public services – all very useful. So, don't be put off by the thickness of the book – the last few pages tell you what to do, while the rest provides supporting evidence. At the reasonable price of £25 it is certainly better value for money than privatised services.

Don Flynn
on
speaking
up for
immigration

Thanks for the migration

What do we know and what should we do about immigration?
Jonathan Portes
Sage, £9.99

Jonathan Portes is probably best known outside the circles of professional economists as the chap who speaks up for immigration on radio and television interviews. He does so from the standpoint of a man who looks out at the world with the viewpoint of an orthodox proponent of the dismal science. This means seeing in the movement of people a welcome opportunity to ensure that a valuable resource – namely labour – is shifted to the places where it can be used most effectively.

He approaches migration in this short book from a perspective fully aware of the fact that so many don't like it because of the perception that it is conflict with the interests of 'ordinary' people. Unemployment, pressure on wages, housing shortages, congested cities and longer waits of NHS and other public services are seen as a consequence of mass migration.

With statistics on all of these issues being very much his bag, Portes is at his best when he picks

apart the arguments that blame immigrants for each of these things. The 'lump of labour' fallacy, which holds that a given economy has a ceiling on the number of people it can provide with jobs and decent wages, in particular is given short shrift.

The weakness in his argument lies in his presumption that the world in which immigration can do its beneficial work will remain roughly the same as the one we now have. He hopes that the experience of multicultural community life will make people less racist and more inclined to vote for liberal political parties but has to concede that the increase in migration into the UK in the 2000s was a key reason why people voted for Brexit.

The problem here is that liberals so often assume that tensions over immigration will reduce when the portion of the population that sees itself as being working class is reduced and replaced by the sort of cosmopolitan citizens who are found in the large, still prosperous, conurbations. This both overstates the extent to which people in the old working-class heartlands can be considered fundamentally xenophobic and understates the racism of

the supposedly educated urbanites.

An alternative needs to be considered if we are to hope for a time in the future when the mass of the population feels at home with the reality of migration. That hinges around the possibility that class consciousness, rather than be encouraged to decline, actually needs to expand to the point where it acknowledges the working-class identity of all of groups reduced to a subaltern status by capitalism. This would embrace both the people so often referred to as 'traditional' wage workers, and those who have recently crossed borders with the much-maligned status of being 'migrants.'



The unity of theory and practice

**Steve
Cushion**
on a
Peruvian
Marxist

**In the Red Corner: The Marxism of
José Carlos Mariátegui**
Mike Gonzalez
Haymarket Books \$13.30

We have long needed an English language political biography of José Carlos Mariátegui, the Peruvian Marxist. One of the most innovative theoreticians to have come from Latin America, he is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. Mariátegui worked as a journalist in Lima before and during the First World War, but his ever increasing public support for the struggles of the Peruvian workers brought the repressive weight of the government down on him and he was exiled to Europe in 1919. He arrived in Italy in time to attend the founding congress of the Italian Communist Party as well as to witness first hand the Turin factory occupations.

He spent two years in Italy, gaining Marxist ideas from his Italian comrades, but also seeing the rise of Fascism, which he said “represents an offensive by the bourgeois classes against the rise of the working class”. He returned to Peru in 1923, a committed Marxist, but one who never uncritically accepted the Comintern line. In particular, he was a fierce advocate of the workers’ united front, an attitude that brought him into conflict with the Communist International during the so-called “Third Period” when communists were expected to take a sectarian attitude to social democrats.

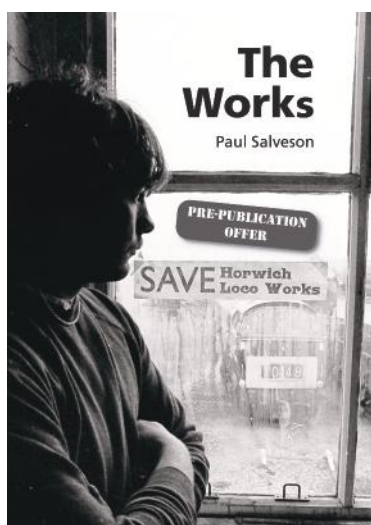
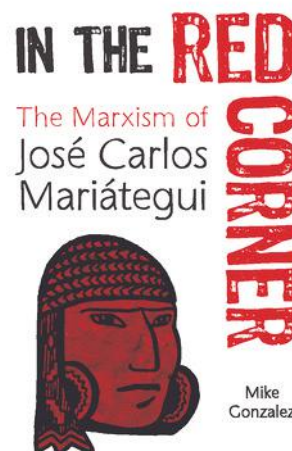
Whatever the international movement thought of him, Mariátegui was extremely well respected in Peru, where he founded both the Socialist Party in 1928 and the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) in 1929. The statutes of the CGTP called for industrial unionism and factory committees, a clear reflection of Mariátegui’s Italian experience. At this time, the Peruvian industrial working class was relatively small and based in the Lima textile industry, with little or no contact with the indigenous miners in the Central Valley. Mariátegui saw “the Indian as central to the possibility of building a united proletarian front”, in distinct contrast to the Comintern which dismissed the Indigenous as “pre-capitalist”. Never in good health, he was unable to attend the conferences organised by the Comintern in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1929 where he was vigorously denounced by Victorio Coravilla, Stalin’s chief hatchetman in Latin America, despite a determined defence by the Peruvian delegations. He died the following year.

Perhaps the most important lesson we can gain from Mariátegui is his unity of theory and practice. While organising workers in the day to day struggle, he used his journal, *Amauta*, to advance theoretical understanding. Gonzalez argues that Mariátegui’s “Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality”, was the first time Latin America had been subjected to an historical

materialist analysis.

Mariátegui’s belief in the importance of the Indigenous workers and peasants has been more than justified by subsequent events, the Bolivian revolution of 1952, the Presidency of Evo Morales and the 2008 Peruvian miners’ strike, to name but a few.

Mike Gonzalez has long championed José Carlos Mariátegui. His 2007 article in *International Socialism* is still one of the best introductions to Mariátegui, and if this book can bring this fascinating Latin American revolutionary to a wider English-speaking audience, so much the better.



Paul Salveson's new novel 'The Works' is now available at a special price of £10 (plus £2.50) postage to Chartist readers. It is set in the former Horwich Loco Works, which closed in 1983. The novel is about shopfloor life, love and politics, including conflicts within Labour in a Northern town facing major structural change. Details email Paul paul.salveson@myphone.coop or go to www.lancashireloominary.co.uk

VIEW FROM WESTMINSTER



Not on track

Cat Smith is MP for Lancaster & Fleetwood & shadow minister for voter engagement and youth

Cat Smith on Tory rail promises and reality

Following the passing of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 and the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union the Government has been keen to move onto its domestic policy agenda. We have seen legislation on the NHS, speeches on climate change and in late January two announcements in two days on our railways, not to mention the go ahead for HS2.

Firstly, we had the announcement that the Government would be restoring some rail lines lost under the Beeching cuts of the 1960s. Once I'd stopped groaning over the irony that a butchering of our railways authorised by a Conservative government obsessed with roads and motorways was being slammed by this current Conservative government, I was keen to make the case for my local lines. This is an issue of interest to me as I have been campaigning for some time to re-open the rail line between Poulton-le-Fylde and Fleetwood, the latter of which is in my constituency.

I was surprised to learn from the media and Department for Transport that this announcement was being made in Fleetwood as I had not been notified in advance of this by the Secretary of State, as would be the usual practice. Having tried to contact the Department to no avail I was eventually informed by local campaigners that the announcement was not in fact being made in Fleetwood but in Poulton-le-Fylde at the other end of the line. Sadly, once the details of the announcement became clear, the

Secretary of State not knowing where he was in the North West would turn out to be the least of my concerns.

Despite how it was portrayed by Grant Shapps and some



in the media, what has been announced is not the investment needed to re-open the lines closed under Beeching. Rather it is £500 million to fund feasibility studies, £100 million of which would be used for a study into the Poulton to Fleetwood line. Anyone who knows anything about the railways will know £500m isn't going to get you very far, it might get you a dozen miles if you're lucky. Not much of an impact in re-opening thousands of miles of route lost since Beeching's fateful report.

More concerning the Secretary of State seemed to indicate that the Poulton to Fleetwood line is at the top of the queue when it comes to re-opening because the existing pre-Beeching stations remain in place. This simply isn't true. There is no longer a station at Fleetwood and creating a new one at the old site would involve the demolition of homes and businesses. When I pressed Ministers on this point in the House of Commons, they had no answers. It is clear therefore that while this announcement does represent a step towards the re-opening of lost railways we will need to overcome the Government's continuing commitment to austerity as well as their general incompetence if we are to make the reversal of the Beeching cuts a reality.

A day later we had the announcement that Northern Rail was to be brought into public control. A cynical reader might think the previous

announcement was to distract from this forced acknowledgement of the failure of rail franchising. This is another issue of importance to my constituents who have suffered sub-standard commuter services for far too long. Delays and overcrowding are a routine occurrence. Again, while the decision to terminate the existing franchise is a welcome development, it has been done in such a way that has bailed out Arriva after already significantly increasing subsidies to the company in recent years.

The problems on Northern, while unique in their severity, are not dissimilar to the problems faced elsewhere on the rail network, aging stock, poor infrastructure and the separation of track and train resulting in a lack of joined up decisions. Having already had to take control of the East Coast Main Line and with rumours of other train operating companies in difficulties it is hard to conclude anything other than that the franchising model has completely failed. Only an ideological commitment to privatisation can explain Ministers stubborn refusal to acknowledge this and take the entire network back into public hands.

So, two days, two announcements, one lost Minister, a poor grasp of details, continuing commitment to austerity and a bailout for a failed train operating company. It almost makes you long for the competence of the Grayling era! **C**

Subscribe to CHARTIST at
www.chartist.org.uk

