

# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#285 March/April 2017

£2

ISSN - 0968 7866

ISSUE

85



770968 786001



## Nothing's safe in Tory hands

*Dr Jacky Davis*

*NHS crisis*

*Richard Burgon MP*

*Westminster View*

*Sam Tarry*

*Labour heartlands*

*Julie Ward MEP*

*Brexit*

*Ian Bullock*

*Russian Revolution*

*100th anniversary*

*Peter Kenyon*

*Corbyn/Watson*

*plus*

*Greenwatch, film*

*and book reviews*



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



# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

## Editorial Policy

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

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

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

## Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Peter Chalk, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, David Floyd, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, Tehmina Kazi, Peter Kenyon (Treasurer), Frank Lee, Dave Lister, Andy Morton (Website Editor), Mary Southcott, James Grayson, Patricia d'Ardenne, Sheila Osmanovic and Patrick Mulcahy. Production: Peter Kenyon and Andy Morton

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

## Contacts

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

Printed by People For Print Ltd, Unit 10, Riverside Park, Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield S2 4BB – Tel 0114 272 0915.  
Email: juma@btconnect.com

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

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

## Contributions and letters deadline for 6 CHARTIST #256 7 April 2017

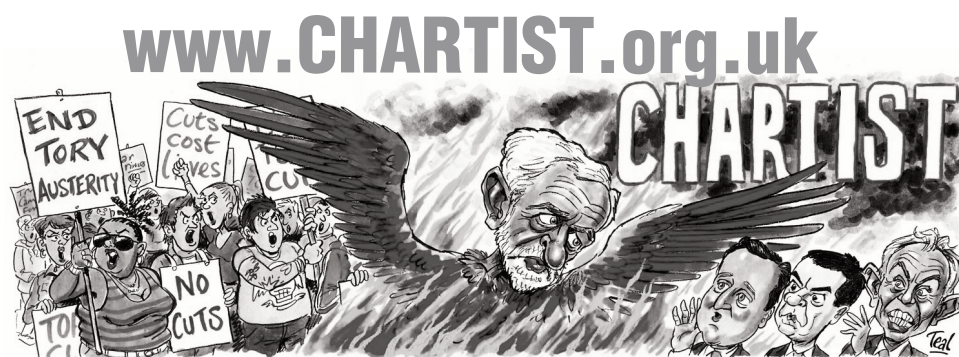
Chartist welcomes articles of 800 or 1500 words, and letters in electronic format only to: [editor@chartist.org.uk](mailto:editor@chartist.org.uk)

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

### Chartist Advert Rates:

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

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



## Read TRIBUNE every fortnight

- News, interviews, analysis, opinion, features and reviews – plus the hottest political in the labour movement

- Columnists include Kevin Maguire, Joy Johnson, Cary Gee, Cat Smith, Chris Proctor, Catherine Macleod, Chris Williamson and Stephen Pound

- Each month Bryan Rostron reports from South Africa, Ian Williams from the United States, John Coulter from Ireland and Jill Palmer writes on health

- Award-winning cartoonists including Gary Barker, Andrew Birch, Matt Buck, Andy Bunday, Lou McKeever and Martin Rowson

### Subscribe to Tribune NOW!

It's just: £19 for 3 months or £38 for 6 months or £75 for a year

Cheques should be made payable to: "London Publications (Trading) Ltd (Tribune)" and sent to: Tribune c/o Chris McLaughlin Press Gallery House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

*"The strongest pieces of leftist analysis being written at the moment are to be found in Tribune"*

*Financial Times*

Access our exclusive online archive – 75 years of Labour history:  
[archive.tribunemagazine.co.uk/](http://archive.tribunemagazine.co.uk/)



Corbyn's relaunch pages 8-9 and 16-17



US power play exposes Trump despotism pages 12 and 18



Citizen Clem - page 24

## FEATURES

8

### CORBYN RELAUNCH NEEDS WATSON

Peter Kenyon challenges Deputy Leader Tom Watson to do better

10

### DISMANTLING THE NHS

Dr Jacky Davis uncovers the reality of Tory demolition

12

### TRUMP DISCOVERS CONSTITUTION

Don Flynn on migrant blocking on both sides of the pond

14

### FAILED LENINIST LEGACY

Ian Bullock sees lessons in the Russian Revolution centenary year

16

### WINNING IN THE HEARTLANDS

Sam Tarry outlines ideas for Corbyn to reach out post-Copeland/Stoke Central

18

### RESISTANCE GROWS IN THE USA

Trump has spurred a new generation of activists says Paul Garver

19

### BREXIT BLOWS

Julie Ward MEP on the implications for UK regions

20

### FRENCH SOCIALISTS OPT FOR LEFT

Andrew Coates on the left's rival to Macron and Le Pen

21

### TORY TINKERING WITH HOUSING

Duncan Bowie dissects the White Paper and outlines an alternative

22

### PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE

Could a united front help topple the Tories ask Nigel Doggett

23

### UNITED IRELAND IN SIGHT

With a powersharing election imminent Kevin Meagher looks at the demographics

24

### CITIZEN CLEM

Roy Madron draws on childhood memories of Attlee and his legacy



Cover by Martin Rowson

# CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM  
Number 285 March/April 2017

## REGULARS

4

### OUR HISTORY - 71

Stafford Cripps - Why this Socialism? (1935)

5

### EDITORIAL

Chartist challenges Labour to unite and take on the Tory wreckers

6

### POINTS AND CROSSINGS

Paul Salveson on the northern umbrella

7

### GREENWATCH

Dave Toke on food safety and Trump

25

### FILM REVIEW

Patrick Mulcahy on *Crash*

26

### BOOK REVIEWS

Duncan Bowie on socialist utopia, free love and transatlantic revolutionaries, Stephen Marks on the Socialist Register, Nigel Watt on Afrikaners and Central Africa, Tony Manzi on Grunwick, Dot Lewis on SA working class power and Patricia d'Ardenne on Blair

32

### WESTMINSTER VIEW

Richard Burgon MP on prison crisis



## OUR HISTORY - 71

## Stafford Cripps: Why this socialism? (1935)

**S**tafford Cripps a barrister was appointed Solicitor General by Ramsay Macdonald in 1930. He was elected MP for Bristol East at a by-election in January 1931 but refused to join Macdonald's national coalition government created in response to the economic crisis. In 1932, he helped form the Socialist League and in 1936 advocated a united front with the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party (which had separated from the Labour Party in 1932). Cripps moved to a Marxist position. When the united front became widened into the anti-fascist Popular Front in 1938, Cripps was expelled from the Labour Party. In 1940 however, with Russia entering the Second World War, Cripps was appointed by Churchill as ambassador to Moscow. In 1942 he led the Cripps mission to India where he promised post-war political reform in exchange for Indian support for the war effort.

A critic of Churchill, Cripps became leader of the House of Commons before joining the cabinet as Minister of aircraft production. In 1945 he was readmitted to the Labour Party and appointed President of the Board of Trade in Attlee's government and in 1947 on the resignation of Hugh Dalton, became Chancellor of the Exchequer, where he gained a reputation as the austerity chancellor. He resigned on the grounds of ill health in 1950, to be succeeded by Hugh Gaitskell. Cripps died in 1952.

Cripps wrote a number of pamphlets for the Socialist

League and contributed a chapter on 'Can socialism come by constitutional methods?' to the Socialist League's 1935 sponsored volume of *Problems of a Socialist Government*. In 1945 he published a volume entitled *Towards Christian Democracy*. There are biographies of Cripps by Eric Estorick (1949), Chris Bryant (1997) and Peter Clarke (2004).

"If once we appreciate how completely our everyday lives are controlled and conditioned by the methods we adopt for producing and distributing those many commodities which we can win from nature, we must realise what a grave responsibility we have not to allow an outworn and inefficient system to continue, and to drag us into poverty, disease and war. It is no good railing at our circumstances if we do nothing to change them; they were man-made, and by man they can be changed.

"Our machinery of Government still allows us to exercise our own individual power through the ballot-box, unlike many other countries, where the breakdown of the system has been more complete. If once we can put out of our view our individual or class interests, and examine the situation as it affects the great majority of the workers today in this and other countries, we must, I believe come to the conclusion that it is our bounden duty to change the economic system, for by that means alone can we attain abundance, peace and freedom." **C**

## LETTER

## Promoting Co-operative Socialism

**T**hank-you for publishing the earlier Chartist article on the plan for Co-operative Socialism (*Chartist 281*): a plan that Labour Action for Peace, Occupy London and the Bromley Co-operative Party all support.

As a follow-up action, might Chartist readers care to join in an information gathering and sharing exercise among MPs, concerning the plan for Co-operative Socialism?

Below is a letter template to MPs in this regard.

I, on behalf of Labour Action for Peace, will correlate results (my contact details are also below).

Thank you, in and for co-operation.

JOHN COURTNEIDGE (DR)  
BECKENHAM, KENT

MOBILE 0795 099 6418  
E-MAIL FOR QUESTIONS AND MP  
RESPONSES:  
COURTJ@MYPHONE.COOP

## Letter template

Dear

MP for

**Re: Plan for Co-operative Socialism**

I write to you as one of your Constituents.

A number of groups (including, for example, Labour Action for Peace) now support a plan for Co-operative Socialism. Details of that plan may be found by web-searching the term 'Co-operative Socialism' and navigating, for example, to the relevant Occupy London web-page and the papers' page of The Campaign for Interest-free Money.

I write to ask if you support this plan. If yes, will you promote it to your Parliamentary colleagues? If, no you do not support this plan, could you please let me know why not?

Please note that your reply and that of Parliamentary colleagues (even non-replies) will be shared publicly.

Thank-you!

## Turning back the right

**T**hroughout Europe and the United States the new right is becoming nosier in its siren calls to blame migrants or 'the other' for the economic and social problems facing working people. Much of the campaigning for Brexit was motivated by a narrow nationalism framed by xenophobia. Across the pond, despite his gaffes, Donald Trump continues to bang the 'make America great again' drum while seeking to unconstitutionally and unsuccessfully ban people from seven predominantly Muslim countries.

**Don Flynn** exposes the racist undercurrent behind the policy while identifying the motor as a drive for capitalist restructuring away from the deregulated globalised system of the past 30 years towards a protectionist national capitalism. He also sees a similarly inhumane policy on child refugees from the UK government.

In the wake of the Brexit vote Holland and France face elections in the Spring with far right parties showing high poll ratings. Europe is likely to experience further turbulence. **Andrew Coates** reports on the emergence of a radical left candidate from the Socialist Party who could become a front runner alongside the maverick Macron and the FN's Marine Le Pen.

In Britain Theresa May secured the passage of her minimalist Brexit Bill through the Commons with greater disunity being shown amongst Labour ranks than in the Tory Party. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn imposed a three line whip on supporting the invoking of Article 50, that opens up the formal two year negotiating period for EU withdrawal. We understand the difficulties facing Corbyn. Despite seeing off the UKIP challenge in Stoke Central the loss of the Copeland byelection was a heavy blow. That two thirds of Labour MPs are in Brexit voting seats adds to the problems.

However, Corbyn cannot afford to lose allies like Clive Lewis and others who resigned their shadow portfolios. Labour also needs to stand up for the 48% remain voters, to stand up for a European and international politics and to highlight the dangers of a hard Brexit in terms of lost jobs and living standards.

As **Julie Ward MEP** reports in looking at the regional aspects of EU membership many regions of Britain enjoy a range of benefits from Regional Funds. The loss of these funds will impact heavily on these communities.

Article 50 is likely to be triggered whatever Labour did. What is vital is for Labour to be campaigning for guaranteed rights for EU nationals, for equitable trading arrangements with Europe, for scientific and technical collaboration, environmental and food standards, and protection of jobs, workplace and human rights. Labour should state unequivocally that any deal or arrangements that do not meet this benchmark will be opposed and rejected.

Blair made some good points in his pro-EU statement. But it is hypocritical and unhelpful. He needs to show some humility and acknowledge that it is the neo-liberal, de-regulationist, privatising politics he espoused and which have dominated in Europe over the last period that has alienated so many people and

fuelled the Brexit vote.

Fundamentally Labour needs to up its game in exposing the weaknesses of the May government. This means being brave in pursuing policies and values that may be unfashionable in the right wing media and political elites. Austerity policies are biting deep into local government services. Corbyn did a good job in highlighting the government's sweetheart deal with Surrey Council to avert a 15% council tax rise. We need a broad based national campaign to defend council services; particularly social care. **Duncan Bowie** reports on the new Housing white paper and shows how the government whilst backtracking on previous approaches tinkers with the problem.

Austerity is hurting the NHS. **Dr Jacky Davis** shows that the service is at breaking point with: Accident and Emergency services unable to cope, demoralised staff, especially junior doctors, insufficient beds, closures and the creeping erosion of privatisation.

We need a new socialist politics. We need a Labour government. It will be by winning in the heartlands of traditional Labour seats—the Midlands, North East, Wales, Scotland and breaking into parts of England where Labour has run the Tories close that efforts require focus. **Sam Tarry** outlines ideas for building Labour support in these areas. Boundary changes and voter suppression allied to an undercurrent of nationalist sentiment are obstacles. Unfolding a credible political narrative to explain that problems are caused by unregulated casino capitalism and austerity and consistently hammering out the alternative of: sustainable investment, job creation, strong public services, social housing and a national education service. This will enthuse Labour's army of new members and help to realise our goals.

**Peter Kenyon** identifies why Blairism and Labour infighting have inflicted much of the damage and calls for a clearer, sharper, and united campaigning from the Party. He argues that the way the party is currently organised is conducive neither to holding members nor enthusing those who remain. He calls on Deputy Leader Tom Watson to do better and work with Corbyn following his admission that Corbyn's leadership is unlikely to be challenged a second time.

**Nigel Doggett** explores the idea of a progressive alliance finding much that would help Labour in this task.

The Tories put on a show of unity yet there are deep fissures in their ranks. With business rate rises set to hit many small companies hard, with inflation likely to reach 3%, with a weaker pound making imports pricier and with growth weaker the economic waters will become much choppy. Trump and the new right can be stopped. We need to reassert the universal values of internationalism, social justice, equality and solidarity and mobilise the millions who subscribe to them, weaving in our positive democratic socialist message. **C**

We need to  
reassert the universal  
values of internationalism,  
social justice, equality and  
solidarity and mobilise the  
millions who subscribe  
to them



# Northern Umbrella power

**Paul Salveson**  
on a male  
and stale  
powerhouse  
initiative

**T**he 'Northern Powerhouse' continues to...what? Steam ahead? Despite the distinct lack of enthusiasm from Theresa May, George Osborne is carving out his own niche in the Northern firmament. Yet another conference is being organised (tickets price £450 plus VAT ) in Manchester during February. I think I'll give it a miss. A feature of the line-up of main speakers, highlighted in the press release, is the complete absence of women. Of the total line-up of nearly a hundred speakers just 13 are female. This was commented on by Wigan Council's chief executive Donna Hall who last year was named the North of England's most transformational leader at the inaugural Northern Power Women awards, set up to celebrate the region's talented women. She wasn't invited to speak.

Donna Hall told the *Guardian* it was "unbelievable" that she had not been invited to take part. It wasn't an individual gripe. "Really disappointing that the organisers have scrubbed women off the agenda. In Greater Manchester we are focussing on health and social care, skills, early years and issues of massive importance to women. Holding back women holds back everyone and the whole of the North. Wake up and get with it guys!" she said. One of the few female speakers at the conference, Kirsty Styles of Tech North, said: "The 'northern powerhouse' is still being shaped — but what we do know is that it seeks to rebalance the UK economy by ensuring the north works together and speaks with one voice — which cannot be done if local women and other groups are excluded from high-level conversations. If we keep sourcing our speakers and our local leaders from the same places, we'll keep hearing the same old ideas and coming up with the same solutions."

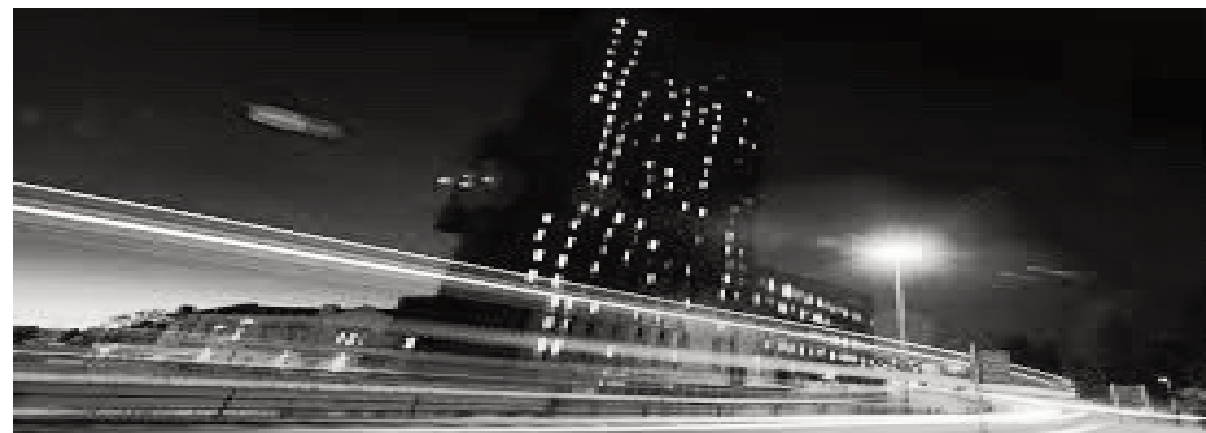
Couldn't agree more. It's about much more than a line-up of conference speakers. It's how the NORTH gets its act together and plays a full part on the UK stage along with London, Scotland, Wales and the English regions. It won't happen if it confines itself to over-priced conferences aimed at the usual suspects, hoping the Westminster government will be nice and give us a high-speed railway. This is the

problem with the Osborne Powerhouse. It's male, stale, very, very white and completely lacking in imagination. There is a vibrant, creative North out there, but it will not be represented by The Osborne Powerhouse.

Creating an alternative will take time and patience. But an alternative 'Northern Powerhouse' that celebrates the North's diversity, needs to be built. A Northern Umbrella. It isn't about running over-priced conferences mainly populated by suits, but bringing together a huge cross-section of talent, in industry, local government, arts, education, community and unions. We need to be shouting for the North, demanding the same sort of democratic devolution that Scotland and Wales already have, and tapping into the huge reservoir of talent and imagination that's out there. A start could be a weekend event that brings the makings of that alternative powerhouse together.

In the last issue of *Chartist* I outlined some embryonic ideas for the 'Northern Umbrella'. Things have moved on since then and there's interest in the idea. Its website says "The Great Big Northern Umbrella is a friendly shared space gathering together all of us who want a better North of England - making contact, learning, sharing ideas, celebrating success, creating new alliances". The starting point is to get people together across the North, putting traditional rivalries to one side. The Lancashire/Yorkshire conflict needs putting to sleep for good. It's a childish and pointless rivalry that holds us all back. The North-east needs to be part of this resurgent North, not doing its own thing in isolation.

The Great Big Northern Umbrella is at a planning stage. There is interest from several Northern institutions, including the highly-respected Big Issue North. It will be a not-for-profit event with free admission. The event needs a mixture of sponsorship, grants, support in kind (e.g. Big Issue North promotion), crowd funding — and more. Will it work? We've a few weeks to get enough momentum to make it work. Where? That depends on interest shown; certainly somewhere accessible by public transport. When? Probably early Autumn. **C**



Northern Powerhouse over exposed and not much to show for it

Paul Salveson blogs at [www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)  
Want to get involved? Go to [www.northern-umbrella.org.uk](http://www.northern-umbrella.org.uk)

**Will US  
force the  
UK to  
water  
down GM  
food rules  
in any  
trade deal  
asks Dave  
Toke?**

**N**ewspapers are already carrying stories about how the UK may be forced to accept GM food from the USA under a trade deal. How realistic is this? The answer, ultimately, is probably no, but the probability that the UK Government will start off by vacillating will re-ignite the British GM food controversies that exploded after the first US imports of GM food neared European shores in 1996.

American farmers will undoubtedly press the US Government to demand that the UK abandon EU rules about labelling of GM and to scrap rules which ban imports of milk and beef products from cows treated (in the US) with somatotropin (BST). BST is a GM growth hormone enzyme that makes cows more 'productive'.

I doubt that the US will achieve a total victory here, although they might be offered some concessions. The idea that consumers want to know if a food product is made from GM food is well entrenched in British consumer culture, and it is difficult to see how the UK Government could afford to row back from the labelling of GM foods, at least in principle. We should remember that it was the Daily Mail which campaigned vigorously against GM food in the late 1990s with tasty headlines such as 'Frankenstein Food Fiasco'.

There will be a lot of talk about how the UK will now be able to authorise growing GM crops, but the fact is that the big retailers won't stock anything that has to have a GM label. As a result there is little prospect of commercial GM farming in the UK starting anytime soon. In addition, a lot of US food cannot be sold in the UK since it contains GM food products and the US does not allow GM food to be labelled to allow supermarkets to know the difference between GM and non-GM US food.

It is perhaps even more unlikely that British politicians would be allowed to legalise imports of milk and beef from the US. There is plenty of evidence that cows treated with BST suffer adverse health effects, not least from the side-effects of

increase in milk they are induced to yield, and the animal welfare lobby in the UK is, if anything, rather stronger in the UK than even (other) EU countries generally.

Ultimately the areas of conflict are likely to be what the trade negotiators will say are 'marginal' issues. But anti-GM food campaigners won't see it that way. You can see from the coverage of the run-up to the (now abandoned) attempts at a US-EU trade agreement and also the TPP (involving anti-BST Canada) that there were arguments about standards for testing how much GM food and BST milk there is in food imports from the USA. The UK will be under great pressure to water down the 'zero-tolerance' approach to food imports that demands certification on non-GM content that currently obtains under EU rules. The EU didn't give way in its negotiations, but will the Brits have the same resolve? Maybe, eventually, after some prodding from the Daily Mail and a campaign from environmental groups.

Another major point of controversy of course will be the adjudications mechanism used to decide disputes between the US and the UK in a bilateral trade agreement. The proposed EU-US trade deal fell down ultimately precisely on this point. Campaigners in Germany and other EU states pointed out that the adjudication mechanism would allow privileged access by multinational corporations to get their way over environmental and social legislation without any recourse to democratic accountability. Now, at first sight you'd expect the UKIPers under their 'take back control' slogan to advocate rejection of such tyranny. Surely much worse than the EU which was at least subject to political pressure from democratically elected politicians? But no, because to some the 'take back control' slogan is but a cover for giving even more control over our lives to the corporations!

We can look forward to a big and long row about the UK-US trade deal. **C**

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

**He is author of  
'The Politics of  
GM Food' (2004,  
London:  
Routledge)**



Another campaigning opportunity looming in the UK's green and pleasant land?

Picture © Greenpeace



# The flipping Labour Party

**Peter Kenyon** calls on Corbyn and Watson to make peace and the Parliamentary Labour Party to stop plotting (again) and concentrate on the Tories

**W**e are doomed. That is the fate of the Labour Party, or so you might believe after the Copeland and Stoke by-election results were declared in the small hours of 24 February. The Tories are crowing about how their 'victory' in Copeland is proof positive that they, not Labour, are the workers' party – governing for everyone. Psephologists know it could equally be a blip to be overturned at the next General Election.

As *Chartist* goes to press, masochistic Labour MPs are queuing up to demand Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn's resignation. When will they learn? The electorate are not stupid. Every display of disloyalty undermines voter confidence in Labour and puts off any reasonable prospects of Labour winning elections. Remarkably, there are exceptions. Latest published remarks by Deputy Leader Tom Watson give pause for thought. Speaking to the Scottish Labour Conference in Perth on 25 February 2017, he was quoted as saying: "I've said it a lot recently. This is not the time for a leadership election. That issue was settled last year." This is a welcome development. If Watson has belatedly concluded there must not be any further attempts to dislodge Corbyn that is good news. However, as Watson continued in his speech in Perth: "But we have to do better. We cannot sustain this level of distance from the electorate, from our natural supporters." Indeed, and no one in the Parliamentary Labour Party has a greater responsibility 'to do better' than Watson himself. He cannot be half-hearted about this.

Shouldn't Corbyn himself 'do better' too? Of course. But Corbyn is not responsible for the decline in support for Labour evident (with benefit of hindsight) since shortly after the 1997 General Election. Labour's majority in Copeland has been in steady decline ever since that triumphal moment in the Party's history. Blair's contempt for local government, and growing love affair

with the private sector, was detected by party members early on in his reign. They started slipping away, failing to renew their annual subscriptions, until by 2003 membership had fallen nearly 50% compared with 1997. And voters followed suit. The biggest fall in voter support was actually between 1997 and 2001, followed with further losses in 2005 and 2010.

Any critique of Labour's current electoral standing, and the unpopularity of Corbyn himself must keep those facts in mind. Labour nationally stopped listening to the electorate 20 years ago and embarked on an enhanced neo-liberal fantasy first conceived in 1976 on former Labour Premier James Callaghan's watch. And for avid students of Labour Party membership it was also halved on Callaghan's watch from some 800,000 to 400,000 by

## Staff remain in command and control mode. That has to stop. Watson knows this

the old method of counting – symptomatic of a Labour leadership neglecting the Party's values and the voters whom it was elected to represent.

Corbyn is acutely aware of all this. But he cannot change the public perception, either of himself or the Party, alone. The other members of the 'troika' – his shadow chancellor John McDonnell and his spokesman Seumas Milne, can't either. That much has been evident ever since the much lauded relaunch trailed in *the Guardian* on 15 December 2016: "Labour strategists are planning to relaunch Jeremy Corbyn as a leftwing populist in the new year, as the party seeks to ride the anti-politics mood in Brexit Britain and narrow the gap with the Tories. While the Islington North MP's politics are very different from those of Nigel Farage or Donald Trump, senior Labour figures believe his unpolished authenticity could help the party draw on the wave of anti-establishment feeling sweeping through politics. Corbyn is

expected to appear more frequently on television, and a newly expanded team of advisers are working to formulate flagship policies that would underline his willingness to lead a revolt against vested interests."

But how anyone who follows party politics could expect anything better now or then is a mystery to me. As I have already written the public aren't stupid. Nearly three-quarters of Labour MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party voted 'no confidence' in party leader Jeremy Corbyn in the early summer 2016 and triggered another leadership contest only nine months after the last one. Amnesia is endemic in the PLP, where no one is making any serious effort to get the electorate back on side, except Leadership loyalists. Since then we have had those resignations of Labour MPs Jamie Reed and Tristram Hunt and by-elections for their replacements with predictably mixed results. Plus, Labour's internal machinations about Brexit were revealed in a strangulated performance by Corbyn being interviewed by John Humphries on the flagship BBC Today programme on 10 January 2017. Corbyn sounded like someone saying things about Brexit and immigration that he didn't fully believe. So it proved when journalists compared the transcript with their briefing by Labour Party spokespersons the night before. An acceptance of immigration controls trailed by aides was edited out on-air by Corbyn who preferred to attack exploitation of mobile labour by unscrupulous employers. Labour's leader only got into his stride flying a kite for a cap on fat cat pay, which had to be hurriedly amended after much derision by Humphries when the interview was over. Labour policy-making on the hoof redefined the Leader's call into – 'measures to restrain excessive pay deals', rather than cap them. Corbyn had to take responsibility for getting the kite lines twisted. But there was no doubt from weekend polling data collected immediately afterwards – that voters like the idea of tackling excessive



Time for Deputy and Leader to make peace and take on the Tories

executive pay.

Winning over the electorate is going to take real discipline both in the PLP and among members. Labour cannot 'do better' with Corbyn' detractors falling over themselves to mock him publicly. Sulking from a sedentary position on either the green or red benches in Parliament ill-befits self-proclaimed champions of popular causes. That has been the default position for too many Labour parliamentary representatives since Corbyn won an increased majority in the second Leadership election in September 2016.

Someone has to oblige them to stop fuelling the public's doubts. That job should fall to party deputy leader, Tom Watson. And the question arising from his intervention at the Scottish Labour Party conference in late February is 'has the penny dropped?' Are his days as plotter-in-chief, then since Corbyn's second Leadership win, sulker in-chief over?

Does the mantle of 'Willie' await him? Leading Tory MP William Whitelaw's loyalty was crucial to Margaret Thatcher following her election victory in 1979. A fact acknowledged when she famously said: "Every prime minister needs a Willie."

Watson is the only member of the PLP who can do that job. By calling off the plotters he may have started down the long road to a Labour victory. Corbyn's affections for Momentum formed by his supporters to bolster his leadership are understandable. Its place is encouraging people on the margins of organised politics to take part in the electoral pro-

cess, not as a substitute for the Labour Party. Political parties are the only institutions in democratic societies able to form governments (a fact often lost on self-proclaimed community organisers like UK Citizens, Change.Org, the Small Ax and their ilk).

One of Corbyn's early mistakes was to assure the Labour Party General Secretary, Iain McNicol, that his job was safe. The Labour Party paid-staff are reknowned for their work ethic. But they do not know how to cope with members, especially those who want a say, not just to cheer and dip into their pockets on demand. Staff remain in command and control mode. That has to stop. Watson knows this. During his deputy leadership campaign in reaction to the growth in membership following Corbyn's candidacy for Leader, Watson said: "Let's give the tens of thousands of new members who've joined since the election a real say over how the party is run by encouraging all our members to take part in online votes to determine our campaign priorities. Why not let all our members decide on some of the things we should discuss at party conference? That's not the way we've done things in the past, and it will be down to our ruling body, the NEC, to decide these things but our goal should be a leadership team much closer to our membership. Technology and a digital revolution is only one part of the reforms we have to make but they're an important part. Good governance from our NEC, well trained members organising in their communities are another. I'll talk about these

in future posts."

That was in July 2015, yes, over 18 months ago. A Digital Labour team was recruited. Targets for 'deliverables' -- online things that might be of practical use to members were set. The aim was unveiling in Liverpool at Conference 2016. Indeed they were; sort of. I went to a demonstration of an on-line membership card, but server/router capacity was insufficient for me and many others to log-on. A doorstep application was developed, but not apparently by the Digital Labour team, and how many members are even aware of its existence? By the time of the Liverpool Conference, the bulk of the Digital Labour team had according to my sources have been "bullied out" I'm not interested in a witchhunt, I, like most other activists, am interested in tools that help improve Labour membership and voter recruitment and retention, and elected representatives who have a loyalty to democratic socialism, rather than their own careers.

Knowing what I know, I would love to be a fly on the wall at a 1:1 between Corbyn and Watson post-the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Perth.

"So tell me Tom how's your Digital Labour project coming along? Mmm...I'm hearing that your Chief of Staff has been involved in progressing the project...is that right? Isn't that the General Secretary's responsibility? Slow progress? Anything to do with the Party's contractual arrangements with current suppliers? Who was responsible for negotiating those contracts way back? Nothing to do with your Chief of Staff when working for the Party, by any chance?"

Of course, I speculate. But it is that level of detail that Corbyn is going to have to get into to the lay the foundations for a Labour recovery. He and Watson need a clear and shared understanding about Labour's future. Members need educating and encouraging, as well as the need for discipline from members and the PLP. All Party staff are interested in is how many doors have been knocked to identify dwindling Labour voters. That is the road to further electoral disappointments All that has to change. The cultural framing for Labour's recovery is well set out by Corbyn's re-election campaign aide Sam Tarry in his piece in the centre-fold of this issue of *Chartist*. **C**

**Peter Kenyon is a former constituency representative on Labour's National Executive Committee, who is currently agent for the Labour Party in the City of London elections**



# Crisis? What crisis?

**Jacky Davis** calls out Tory PM Theresa May, busying herself with Brexit, for the latest NHS crisis

**T**he NHS is back in the headlines once again and for all the wrong reasons. Tabloids and broadsheets alike feature stories of patients dying on trolleys and sick children asleep on A&E floors. Normally cautious individuals and organisations speak out publicly about the problems on the front line which are now so bad that the Red Cross has labelled it a 'humanitarian crisis'. The only people who don't think there is a problem are the prime minister, busy with her red, white and blue Brexit, and Jeremy Hunt, pocketing the £17 million he has just made from the sale of his business (and yes, that would be the same Jeremy Hunt who scrapped bursaries for nursing students and tried to deny a 1% rise to NHS staff).

## Winter crisis

Is it really as bad as the Red Cross suggests? We are inured now to the annual 'winter crisis' and the corresponding excuse of 'unprecedented demand,' so is this year truly that much worse? The short answer is yes. The sad fact is that these days we have an NHS winter crisis all year round, but now superimposed on that are the results of chronic NHS underfunding, cuts in social care and the chaos following Lansley's Health and Social Care Act. The result is the perfect storm for the NHS, its staff and patients.

Firstly funding. Even the NHS CEO Simon Stevens has been driven to suggest – ever so politely – that the government has not been truthful about the money it is making available to the NHS. The Nuffield Trust, Health Foundation and the Kings Fund have also all criticised the government's claims to be giving the NHS 'more than it asked for'. The truth is that the NHS faces a £30 billion funding gap by the end of the decade, two thirds of NHS trusts are in the red and



UK Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt: now the focus of Keep Our NHS Public campaigning

there is no-one, including the Department of Health, who believes that the NHS can rescue the situation by making £22 billion 'efficiency savings'. As Helen Stokes Lampard (the new chair of the RCGP) pointed out recently, the NHS lost the fat long ago and the knife wielded by the government is now cutting into bone.

## Underfunded and understaffed

What the government won't admit and the media seem not to have noticed is that the NHS is chronically underfunded and understaffed. We have some of the lowest bed numbers per capita amongst comparable countries (Germany 8.3/1000 people, UK 2.8), lowest doctor numbers (Germany 4.1/1000 people, UK 2.8) and we spend the least per capita (Netherlands \$5,131, UK \$3,235). It is thus hardly surprising that ambulances queue outside A&E departments, patients languish (and die) on trolleys and highly skilled surgeons spend their days chasing beds for their

**Dr Jacky Davis is an NHS consultant radiologist, a member of the British Medical Association council, and is a founder member of the national campaign Keep our NHS Public (KONP)**

@DrJackyDavis

sick patients instead of operating on them. The president of the normally conservative RCS recently went public with concerns about cancer patients having their operations repeatedly cancelled, surely indefensible in any civilised country.

## Blame game

The government's response to this is firstly to deny it and then, when it is impossible to ignore the evidence, to start the blame game. Too many patients are coming to A&E for frivolous reasons (and yes, that criticism came from Jeremy Hunt who took his own children to A&E so that he needn't bother with a GP appointment). GPs are not pulling their weight and will be drafted in to help in A&E – that is when they are not being ordered by Mrs May to open their surgeries 7 days a week, despite the evidence that they are already stretched too thin and patients don't want to be seen on Sundays anyway. As someone remarked on twitter – why not stick a broom in their

hands and they can sweep up at the same time? It is grossly unfair to blame staff for the failings of government policy and May and Hunt appear deliberately antagonistic when they take on the very people upon whom the service and patients rely.

## Real money now

What can be done? In the short term the service needs more real money now, both into the NHS and into social care whose failings are leading directly to overflowing hospitals. Where is the money to come from? Firstly abolish the costly and pointless NHS market in England. The government is understandably very coy about how much this costs but estimates range between \$5 and 10 billion. Deal with the PFI contracts that are crippling our hospitals, delivering £11 billion worth of infrastructure at a cost to the tax payer of over £80 billion. Consider a hypothecated tax for the NHS, surveys show the public would support one as long as they are sure the money is indeed going to the NHS. And in the longer term? Fund the NHS to the level of other comparable countries, reverse Lansley's ill judged legislation (thus putting a stop to the fragmentation and privatisation of the service), support the staff and allow the NHS a period of calm in which to recover and take its place as one of the most cost efficient, effective and equitable health services in the world.

Meanwhile, with the service underfunded, understaffed and

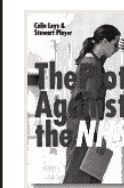


overstretched, it is only NHS staff working flat out at the front line who are keeping the NHS from complete collapse.

## Commitment and hard work

No-one could doubt their commitment and hard work, especially after watching BBC2's excellent documentary Hospital. Staff are the ones who suffer from the government's mismanagement of the NHS, and when they fail, as they inevitably must sometimes under impossible circumstances, it is patients who are paying the price. Something needs to happen and quickly, but firstly the government needs to admit that the situation is grave. By denying the NHS crisis May and Hunt not only appear arrogant and ignorant (a fatal combination) but they are putting patients in danger while making it impossible to tackle the problem. **C**

## Further reading from Keep Our NHS Public



The above titles can be ordered from the KONP website

<https://keepournhspublic.com/support-konp/books/>

## Printer ad



## TRUMP

# Trump targets US workers and immigrants

As global capitalism recedes **Don Flynn** finds immigrants are left exposed and vulnerable

**P**resident Trump's cabinet looks pretty much as many predicted at a time when it seemed unlikely that the billionaire reality host would ever make it to be the Republican Party candidate for the post, let alone the nation's chief executive.

Packed with business types rather than politicians, and with a good smattering of generals prominent on the most hawkish side of the military elite, the US executive looks like the sort of place that billionaires and their pals go to when their dreams of world domination by other means crumble into dust.

Crumble into dust is the appropriate way to talk about the economic side of capitalism as the failure to restart growth after the Great Recession of 2007/9. As *The Economist* reported in its January 28th edition, the engines of the global economy – great transnational companies (TNCs) – have been afflicted with a grievous crisis of stagnant and falling profits for most of the last decade. The retreat of the global company over this period has been marked by a staggering decline in the rates of return on equity invested in international business, with 40% of the world's biggest firms now failing to make even 10% profits on the stocks under their control – as *The Economist* puts it, a yardstick for underperformance.

## Loss of confidence

The loss of confidence and belief in the idea that the future was global on a mega scale is a big part of the reasons why the business practices of the TNCs have fallen so sharply out of favour with the wing of capitalism that Trump and his allies represent. The long-marginalised advocates of such dusty and unfashionable sectors as coal and steel manufacturing, based in 'the homeland' and vying for a place in markets that are decidedly national, are once again finding their place in the sun, and President Trump's inner-circles.



US Republican despot Donald Trump giving orders

This explains the enthusiasm for scrapping the rules and dispensations which had favoured international business, which have included complex regulatory regimes designed to track the movements of flows of capital and protect property rights across the globe, and tax regimes which are most efficient for those with the mobility to bank their profits in remote island havens. Under Trump there will be a penalty inflicted on those who move assets across frontiers – excepting of course, businesses which want to repatriate the one trillion US dollars they have accumulated outside the country during the heyday of their offshore and outsourced operations.

Trump's ultra-hard line on immigration policy, which has so scandalised liberals in recent weeks, is part of the very same process which is seeing protectionist measures being brought in across the board to replace the regime which had favoured the TNCs in the recent past. Much of the discussion – and the public protests – has concentrated on the ban on admission to the US for citizens of seven mainly Muslim countries, introduced by presidential executive order at the end of January.

Harsh as this has proved to be

it is only one aspect of a raft of immigration control measures which will have a drastic effect on the country's large population of settled foreign nationals. The extension of the categories of undocumented migrants who are to be considered priorities for deportation includes anyone who has broken the law by either entering or staying on in the country without permission. According to the independent Pew Research Centre, this lines up around 11 million people for removal.

## Major threat

Other measures will allow the federal authorities to go after the so-called 'sanctuary cities', where local government has pledged a degree of support and protection to people who seek to regularise their residence status in the US. Taken together, the travel bans and the pumped up deportation measures, not to mention the claims being made for a 'great wall' along the southern border with Mexico, represent a major threat to the USA's historical status as a major destination for migration.

Despite what is claimed by the 'America First' nationalists who are the dominant influence in

Trump's administration, immigration cannot be branded as a feature of the globalisation of the TNCs which they so revile. The success they have had in confabulating the movement of people with the flows of capital around the world in the search for profits is one of the reasons why Trump's eccentric brand of politics has made inroads into the country's working class communities.

But the United States – a country so fundamentally forged by migration over the course of its history since the days of European colonialism – cannot so

easily dismiss the movement of people as a mistaken policy pursued in recent times by a now discredited section of its ruling elite.

## US working class divided

It is far more accurate to describe the anti-immigrantism which Trump is now promoting as a determined effort to drive forward a policy that will keep the US working class divided during a period of capital restructuring; a period that will require the levels of exploitation of workers in the homeland which is current-

ly required from the people labouring in Asia and elsewhere in its outsourced business supply chains.

The world watches the brave protests which have erupted across the whole of the US in the past weeks in solidarity with the excluded citizens of the seven Muslim countries, and hopes that this is just the starting point for a militant defence of the rights of all migrants in the country, including the 11 million now threatened by their inclusion in the priority categories for deportation. **C**

## CHILD REFUGEES

# Tories betrayal

Don Flynn on a Tory disgrace

**S**omething is truly wrong when a group of former holders of the posts of **C h i l d r e n ' s** Commissioner for the constituent parts of the UK describe a government policy as a 'moral and humanitarian disgrace'.

That happened when *The Times* published a letter from Sir Al Aynsley-Green and five of his colleagues who served respectively as Children's Commissioners for England, Northern Ireland and Wales on 13th February.

Their anger arose from the decision of the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, to curtail action under the 'Dub's Scheme', which had committed the government to bring in what was expected to be around 3000 refugee children to safety in the UK.

Rudd's announcement has meant that only 350 youngsters will be allowed into the country under the provision.

The policy of aiding this group of young refugees had its origin in a concession extracted from government ministers by the Labour peer, Alf Dubs, during the passage of the Immigration Bill through the House of Lords in 2016. Dubs was himself a child refugee rescued from Czechoslovakia after the Nazi invasion by the action of the British diplomat Sir Nicolas Winterton.

The modern-day version of Winterton's kindertransport was intended to meet the needs of an



Alf Dubs (left) joins protest at the Tory betrayal

estimated 90,000 young refugees travelling on their own or in huddled groups of other young people who are currently scattered across Europe, from Greece and the Balkan region right through to Calais and the shores of the English Channel.

Voluntary groups working with the refugees have reported that these are the most vulnerable victims of the wars and conflicts that have driven the flows of people. Trafficked by ruthless criminals, accounts of brutal assault, including rape, are common.

Since Rudd's announcement the full extent of the government's dilatory response to the mandate it had been given by Parliament has become clearer. According to the *Financial Times* no real effort has been made on the part of ministers or officials to identify the children who

might qualify or help under the Dub's scheme. Apparently just one civil servant was dispatched to Greece to see what was going on in the refugee encampments there; with no mandate or criteria for deciding how a plan to meet the terms of the agreement might be met.

Meanwhile back in the UK condemnation of the decision has been widespread, running from the former government minister Nicky Morgan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Labour's spokesperson on refugee matters, Yvette Cooper. Grassroots community groups, led by Citizens UK, have made clear their sense that the government has betrayed its moral commitment to provide aid to the most vulnerable of Europe's refugees. **C**

**Don Flynn is founder & associate of Migrant Rights Network and a member of Chartist EB.**



## REVOLUTION

## 1917 – and all that

As the Russian Revolution chalks up its centenary **Ian Bullock** surveys the wreckage

It's a reasonable assumption that most of those who will become aware of the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917 will take it for granted that the Leninist enterprise was a total failure. If we take as our baseline the hopes and expectations of people on the Left at the beginning of the last century, it was even more of a disaster. Today's China or Putin's Russia is even less like what socialism seemed to promise in the early 20th century than even the not-exactly-inspiring 'developed' capitalist countries—even with Trump! Neither the 'Cultural Revolution' nor Stalin's purges remotely resembled what pre-1917 socialists had in mind when looking forward to the socialist future.

The record of socialism in Western Europe is not impressive either. The best summary I know was given by Donald Sassoon twenty years ago in *One Hundred Years of Socialism*. The West European Left in the Twentieth Century. After celebrating the socialist role in fighting for democracy and civil rights, gender equality and opposing discrimination he concludes 'Notwithstanding these successes, socialists neither abolished capitalism nor directed it through economic planning.'

#### Leninist baggage

It is right to add that in the struggles Sassoon mentions convinced Leninists often played an important role. This raises the question of how much more successful socialism would have been had the movement not been handicapped by the Leninist baggage carried by many of its most dedicated and active advocates which, in the end, probably alienated more support than it attracted.

Since the time of Karl Marx much effort has gone into debates about economics – rather less to the politics of socialism. One interpretation of Marxism went something like this. Class is the crucial factor in any society. Political parties represent particular class interests. The interest

of the working class – which is essentially identical throughout the globe – is represented by the (true) socialist party. Therefore once that party is in power and beginning to 'construct socialism,' all other political parties, movements or simply manifestations of dissent are illegitimate. Or, in more benign versions they just fade away. Politics simply becomes redundant. In the Leninist version of post-1917 Russia anyone attempting to pursue it became an enemy of the people.

Hostility to politics predates Leninism. The assumption that the 'Socialist Commonwealth' would be a harmonious, steady-state society where all the conflicts of the past would disappear and well-being, happiness – and perhaps boredom – would reign

**The ideas of the guild socialists may have involved overly complex structures; yet surely they were on the right track in trying to reconcile the claims of workers, consumers and citizens?**

supreme was widespread on the Left long before Lenin. Perhaps the best illustration of this is William Morris's celebrated *News from Nowhere* – sub-titled *An Epoch of Rest*. The chapter 'Concerning Politics' is very short. In the socialist future the time-travelling Morris asks his guide, 'How do you manage with politics?' He responds 'we are very well off as to politics, - because we have none.' Even before this we had the opening words of *L'Internationale* by the Communeard Eugène Pottier proclaiming *C'est la lutte finale* with its assumption that all struggle would come to an end with the overthrow of capitalism.

For most people no-one could be more 'political' than a socialist activist. Yet few were actually so anti-political as many of them. This had fatal results. These began when Lenin precipitated the civil war that followed the dissolution by the Bolsheviks of

the Constituent Assembly and suppressed all rival political parties. One of the first acts of the provisional government after the revolution of February/March 1917 had been to abolish the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police. In December 1917 Lenin introduced the Bolshevik version, the Cheka. Hardly an improvement.

#### However wrong-headed

Common sense suggested that if opponents of the new regime, however wrong-headed, were denied any possibility of constitutional action some would inevitably turn to violence. Fairly soon the Bolsheviks ran out of real opponents and turned on each other.

The rejection of 'politics' was not quite as simple. Many on the Left, were taken with what I have called – in *Romancing the Revolution* – 'the myth of soviet democracy.' According to this, 'bourgeois parliamentarianism,' fleetingly represented in post-revolutionary Russia by the ill-fated Constituent Assembly, had been replaced by the infinitely more genuine, more 'real,' soviet democracy. This drew on syndicalist beliefs in the superiority of workplace-based delegate democracy over rule by political representatives and the redundancy of political parties – except, in the Leninist version, the party of the working class.

Delegate democracy tends to be 'activist democracy' for some it constitutes its great attraction. It usually works reasonably well in political parties where the 'active' are a high proportion of the membership or in trade unions and other organisations where issues at stake are usually from a fairly narrow spectrum. But, as the ILP's Fred Jowett argued throughout the interwar period, as the ultimate national forum it would leave the citizen even more remote from a say in crucial decisions than even the hugely flawed parliamentary system.

Belief that soviets or something like them were essential to 'real democracy' was widespread on the Left for decades. The con-

trol of delegates by shop floor workers together with their right of recall was central to belief in the reality of soviet democracy in Russia and hopes for it in Britain. General support for Bolshevik Russia went way beyond the ranks of the small minority who joined Communist parties. The view that whilst it was not what was needed here it was more or less OK, or even better than that, in Russia was widespread on the Left.

The first real criticism of the Bolsheviks in the ILP's Labour Leader appeared early in March 1918, nearly two months after the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. The prominent pacifist, and later Labour MP, still rightly celebrated in Bermondsey, Dr Alfred Salter, contested the Bolshevik regime's legitimacy, arguing that members of the ILP should 'dissociate ourselves from its violence, its suppression of opposing criticism and its disregard for democracy.' He concluded that 'Socialism apart from true democracy,' was 'not only meaningless but valueless.'

#### Little support

He had little support at that stage. Most had invested far too much hope in the possibility of a socialist society being built in Russia to join Salter. They could attribute all criticism of Bolshevik Russia to the lies and distortions of the right-wing press. So great was the desire not to have one's dearest hopes shattered that rose-tinted beliefs in the accomplishments of 'soviet democracy' persisted on the Left not just for a few years but for decades.

Those on the Left who rejected Leninism early had little influence. Lenin, a master of invective, was able to dismiss Karl Kautsky as a 'renegade' so successfully that for many of us it is difficult to think of the man without the epithet coming unbidden into consciousness. Yet it is Kautsky rather than Lenin whose position has, I think, stood up better to the trials of the century since 1917. It was not unreasonable a hundred years ago to have confidence that 'wasteful' markets could be replaced by planning and equality successfully pursued by public ownership of all the main means of production, distribution and exchange. Now,



Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin addressing the masses

with the experience of the last hundred years such traditional socialist nostrums must be questioned. Bureaucratic nationalisation may be better, usually, than capitalist monopoly, is it an attractive alternative?

We must surely continue the difficult process of thinking what we mean by socialism in this century. We need, while maintaining our values, to be prepared to experiment, weigh evidence, consider practicality. After the 2015 General Election even Ed Miliband's 'responsible capitalism' may seem a distant hope and the late Alec Nove's 'feasible socialism' much more of dream than he would have wished to admit. If history has a lesson it is that things can and do change.

#### Indispensability of democracy

Salter was surely right about the indispensability of democracy and Kautsky was right about what our aims should be. As he put it in his much-maligned *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* of 1918:

"Socialism as such is not our goal, which is the abolition of every kind of exploitation and oppression, be it directed against a class, a party, a sex, or a race

Should it be proved to us that we are wrong and the emancipation of the proletariat and of mankind could be achieved solely on the basis of private property ...then we would throw Socialism overboard....

Socialism and democracy are

not therefore distinguished by the one being the means and the other the end. Both are means to the same end."

Today, it still seems as unlikely as it did to Kautsky that exploitation and oppression could be ended 'solely on the basis of private property.' What should 'socialisation of the means of production' mean in practice in the 21st century? It is surely good that we are now more likely to support operating on a smaller scale that people find easier to identify with than some huge bureaucracy. The ideas of the guild socialists may have involved overly complex structures; yet surely they were on the right track in trying to reconcile the claims of workers, consumers and citizens?

#### Avoid getting bogged down

It's good that we are now discussing the possibilities of a basic universal income. Should we not as a matter of urgency – given the threat to so many jobs by automation – ensure that anyone whose work is made redundant by technological advance is guaranteed both their previous income and the widest range of possibilities for retraining and education?

We must avoid getting bogged down in dogmatism. One thing we can be pretty sure of is that the 'lessons' of 20th century Leninism are predominantly negative. 1917 in Russia began very well and ended badly. **C**

**Ian Bullock's  
Romancing the  
Revolution-The  
myth of Soviet  
democracy and  
the British Left,  
is published by  
AU Press 2011**

A fuller version of this article is available on [www.independentlabour.org.uk](http://www.independentlabour.org.uk)



# Winning the heartlands

We've won the Labour party leadership, but we've got to win a general election. **Sam Tarry** suggests some guidelines to put Labour on course

**W**hat would a winning strategy look like for Labour? The EU referendum vote showed areas of Labour's traditional heartlands in the Midlands, North East and South Wales voting Brexit while in Scotland Labour has been marginalised. And this is before Labour works out how to start eroding Tory support in Southern and Eastern England.

So what's the key?

Labour faces a big challenge. There are three inter-linked areas that we need to get right. One is the practical organisation of Labour on the ground. Second, the policies we have. Thirdly, how those other two elements connect together. In many ways Labour needs to develop a left populist narrative that can win hearts and minds.

Donald Trump, UKIP and right populists make an emotional connection to people. That's what Labour has lost. Recent focus group research looking at former Labour voters in Brexit voting areas are very disheartening because voters interviewed say that Labour is not massively adrift on policy solutions (people agree with us on the NHS and re-nationalising rail for example) but they don't like the way Labour appears. Many voters feel Labour has moved away from them. They feel Labour has connection with them.

So we have got to stop using technocratic language. Evidence based arguments do not sell policy to the public. The Miliband project probably had many IPPR evidence based solutions but they were not able to connect to hearts and minds, from the south coast and to north east where UKIP vote is biting.

## Cultural war

Essentially we need to wage a culture war. We need to build a culture that restores pride and dignity to the many communities where food banks and precarious work characterise the environment. We need to be advocating for well paid, secure work not just Sports Direct type jobs or self employment. Labour has to be about campaigning and creating opportunities for higher paid work. We need to connect to the aspirations of people outside the metropolitan centres (and many inside) struggling to make ends meet; people struggling to pay the rent or mortgage, parents seeking to help their children to university, or a good apprenticeship especially where they have not got other avenues into industry.

This brings us back to policy and the question of long term industrial strategy and investment. John McDonnell and the economic advisory team are doing some good work. How do we put this in positive way? For example, Labour can put real substance to Osborne's vacuous idea of a northern powerhouse. We need to explain how we can make it a serious reality instead of a sound-bite. Labour regional investment banks, a pro-active strategy for manufacturing and job creation paying decent wages could give workers a stake and help restore a lost dignity and pride.

We also need to keep in mind the Labour reality on the ground. There has been a lot of talk about community organising. It has broadly been in the right direc-

tion. For example, the Hope Not Hate Post industrial communities campaign. This is an investment in long-term organising projects beyond a brief parachuting in and out. It means offering also to help build local Labour parities, union branches and local civic institutions.

Additionally it involves providing training in how to have difficult conversations on immigration, Brexit, approaches beyond the traditional voter ID route. (see [www.hopenothate.org.uk](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk))

Moreover they were not really conversations. We need to combine longer term, Socratic questioning on doorsteps: surveys based on 10 minute questions where we show we are really listening to problems but also what people think are solutions. Hope Not Hate is piloting this work at moment. With a couple of projects in the Midlands, one in South Wales and elsewhere.



**Labour Party victor in the Stoke Central by-election Gareth Snell saw off UKIP, albeit with a reduced majority, but Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn on his left has good reason to look worried**

Labour should use the revenue from the new membership to help run food banks, set up rights and advice centres, issue based campaigning, training and empowering communities over the long term. The question for Labour is how to take on long term community organising. Why don't we use membership money from richer metropolitan areas where we have thousands of members to provide resources in areas we need to win. Why don't we pay some keen members to work in these areas on longer term work. Short term activity is not enough to win a general election. Two things are required: long term work especially outside electoral cycles, that helps to build support over several years. Plus we also need to distil down some shorter term work. For example, if you are a

council candidate where you could see some results in six months to a year.

Set up a project to win hearts and minds for example a small business incubator to get people into work, volunteering for youth projects. Even the Labour Party could look at seed funding small grants for projects. It's not good enough to go back to leafleting and voter ID. At the last election we had four million conversations. We could have 10 million next time but all that would tell us is that not enough people want to vote for us. What's the point in finding this out?

The real danger for Labour is one party swallowing up the vote as happened in Scotland. This is the UKIP threat. Without this sustained work, this cultural shift and clarity and populism on policy we could have some close run elections. If we had an election tomorrow in say Hartlepool Labour could lose...Despite UKIP being

Helping people on councils. Corbyn had a huge rally in Redruth Cornwall recently. These communities have a different industrial history. So older thinking from the 1990s, the toehold strategy could help here. Can we get a few council seats? In London we are building huge sacks of votes for Labour. Goldsmith was roundly beaten. Labour could take more boroughs. However, this takes money and time. A shift of focus to towns and areas out of the metropolis is urgently needed. We should be twinning metropolitan boroughs and towns across the country. If we believe in redistribution, what about redistribution of our own party? In London we have 110,000 members. The London Labour Party doesn't need this number. So in places where the Labour Party is struggling on a shoestring let's give them an investment of people and money.

## Hugely outspent

At the last General Election the Labour Party was hugely outspent on digital media, especially on Facebook. Labour's digital team are beginning to catch up. Information has emerged about Trump's use of Facebook and its impact. If we couple this with evidence of Tory online campaigning in Scotland during the last election we can see the scale of the challenge.

Voter suppression is also another threat. There is strong evidence that Trump suppressed Hilary Clinton's African American support. This could also be a threat to Labour. The stay at home voters. Connecting to people's emotions as well as their heads is a way to avoid this voter suppression. The Tories are looking at a plan for voters to bring ID to the polling station, besides boundary changes which will add to this effect.

Podemos in Spain were successful in naming an enemy—'la Casta' --defining who they and the people should be against. Labour has got to think about defining its enemy and what is a more economically nationalist message. The idea of Britishness is waning. We will need to couch our appeal in a more inclusive, non-racial patriotic way. So for example the National Investment Bank. We should be saying, this is your industry, this is your bank to create new jobs for you. We need to link the idea of pride and dignity with defence and growth of public services like the NHS, comprehensive schools, social housing. This would have a strong appeal in places like Dagenham, Stoke and the north east.

## New sense of common destiny

The role of Labour now as Brexit begins to unfold is to show how an alternative Britain can benefit ordinary people rather than the elites who want low investment and low wages, diminished rights and poorer working conditions. We need to find a new sense of common destiny between city and town, a perspective that can sustain support and enthusiasm in cosmopolitan centres while ensuring the people in left behind communities and towns feel their interests are being put centre-stage. **C**

a joke of a party. The scale of the challenge is huge.

So a twin track strategy is needed. Labour should be the organisation on the ground running the soup kitchen or food bank, but also the organisation that people come to for rights and advice. We have loads of lawyers who could give advice pro bono. We have people with business expertise who can give practical advice on local start ups. We need to be much more practical in what we can do. It's not just about turning up, having meetings, debating motions or designing our own internal democracy and policy.

In almost every CLP we've got to have unions organising in the way a church or mosque or a charity is working. It's got to be seen as a ten year process not a get-rich-quick scheme with immediate results.

**Sam Tarry helped lead Jeremy Corbyn's leadership re-election campaign and is political adviser for TSSA**



# An American Spring in 2017?

Paul Garver reports on the first weeks of Trump's presidency

The usual February snows are blanketing New England, it doesn't feel like spring outside. On successive sunny Saturdays in January thousands of demonstrators filled the streets to oppose the racist and nationalist agenda of Trump and his minions.

On the day after Trump's inauguration, somewhere between three and five million Americans answered the call of women's organizations to march against Trump in Washington and other cities. Even at the lowest estimate, this represented the largest coordinated demonstration in U.S. history. Feminist causes were the major theme, but the handmade signs and chants of those marching linked up every good cause.

## Demonstrators

A week later, the Muslim ban was announced, thousands of demonstrators spontaneously raced to protest at every major airport in the USA. The next day in Boston, answering an emergency call from a Muslim civil rights organization, 20,000 persons of all ages, religions and races converged on a public square to demand entry for refugees and Muslims and an end to the deportation of undocumented immigrants. Three days later, 1,200 demonstrators packed the city hall in the small city of Worcester MA to block its City Council from enacting an ordinance declaring Worcester would NOT be a sanctuary city. As in Boston, local Worcester politicians scrambled to speak in support of local open doors for refugees and immigrants. Nearly half the State Senators and Representatives in Massachusetts have already co-sponsored a bill to carve out a "safe community" in Massachusetts by declaring that no public money could be expended nor any public authority cooperate with Federal agents in creating a Muslim registry or in deporting undocumented immigrants.

The intent of Trump and his advisers like Steve Bannon is

clearly to create a series of shock and awe events to pave the way for a racist authoritarian state by dividing and intimidating the opposition. Instead of being intimidated, Americans are not dividing but uniting. Black Lives Matter and their white supporters in Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) are calling more demonstrations in support of refugees and immigrants. The spineless Democratic Party regulars are facing massive demands from their constituents to stiffen their backbones against Trump appointments. Within a couple of weeks of creating a website and putting out a simple action guide some 4500 'Indivisible' groups of all sizes throughout the country have already formed to put pressure on Congress to resist the Trump agenda. I randomly checked on two of these groups in two small Massachusetts towns in my area. One with a population of 5000 had an initial membership of 100, and the other with a population under 9000 had 170 members.

Federal Congresspersons are scrambling to face these constituents at hastily organized town meetings. We should recall that in 2009-2010 it was mobs of Tea Partiers mobilized by the right-wing corporate Koch brothers who were packing public meetings to intimidate Democrats from voting for the Affordable Care Act.

OK, I live in Massachusetts, a relatively liberal state. Am I living in a bubble? I do not think so. I cannot follow all of the national actions, but as a retired leader of the Democratic Socialists of America, I have access to a national perspective. It is true that small DSA locals in New York and Boston or in West Coastal cities which had a dozen members a year ago now have hundreds of new members packing their meetings and public events and joining boisterous DSA contingents at demonstrations. What is more surprising is that throughout the country, including in states that voted heavily for Trump, like Texas, Ohio and Nebraska, newly organized DSA committees are experiencing the same upsurge.



An illustration of multiple linked causes post-Trump's inauguration

National membership in DSA is growing exponentially.

Some of these new DSA members are politically experienced activists, but many more are "working class" Millennials, often working in high-tech as casual employees without job security or benefits, and scrambling to pay back crushing student debts. When interviewed, many say they are joining DSA because they want to equip themselves to be politically active for the long haul.

## Membership growth

Almost every progressive organization is reporting similar membership growth. For now it seems that whoever on the broad Left calls a meeting, a rally or a demonstration, more people come than they dreamt possible two months ago. The immediate impetus for involvement may be to oppose Trump's agenda, but the desire expressed in face-to-face meetings and in the social media for active support of multiple linked causes may outlast this initial surge.

If so, our American Spring may well become a more lasting part of U.S. history than the temper tantrums of Trump and the Radical Right. There is an American tradition of Great Awakenings that shatter previous limited expectations. Following the lead of our Native American sisters and brothers at Standing Rock, we are moving beyond protest and even resistance to become "Protectors" of the best of our heritage as Americans. **C**

Paul Garver is a retired leader of the Democratic Socialists of America

# Brexit is both global and local

The recent vote on the British government's Article 50 Bill has paved the way for a dangerous hard Tory Brexit. Julie Ward MEP highlights the regional impact

We are now undoubtedly at an historic turning-point and future generations will look back at us, and judge what we have done and how. If Winston Churchill, one of the founding fathers of the European project, spoke of "their finest hour", we risk our hour looking rather shambolic and with devastating consequences that will hit the poorest the hardest.

## Future generations

We who wish to defend European values have a clear responsibility towards future generations to speak truth to power and take a moral stand. Contrary to Theresa May's dangerous and dogmatic spin, Brexit cannot be a success because we are not in the driving seat when it comes to negotiating power; we are one small country hoping to do a deal with 27 others and already they are telling us we must suffer the consequences of going it alone, as voiced by the Austrian Chancellor on February 13. You are either in the club with all the membership benefits that accrue from common agreement or you are in another league altogether. Despite the chaos that has beset our country since last June we could, however, still work to mitigate a disaster. Making choices that will do permanent damage is not sound electoral strategy, it is short-sightedness and grossly unfair to future generations who will have to live with the consequences of our failed diplomacy.

The impacts of Brexit will be profound and far-reaching, affecting both our global geo-political position, as well as every local community. On a global level we are seeing the advent of a new anti-Democratic wave, led by Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Recep Erdogan, Marine le Pen and Nigel Farage. Brexit Britain is being dragged into an alignment with these nationalist anti-democratic forces against its own interests - witness the public distaste at seeing Theresa May holding hands with Trump.

These new dynamics play out

in the abstract ether, flickering across our screens, and will most certainly be debated at length by historians in decades to come. Meanwhile, the consequences of these seismic shifts will profoundly affect local communities, in cities, towns and villages across the country.

Much has been said about the risk to jobs that our trade with Europe provides, the economic damage posed by potential trade barriers, the dangers of new trade deals that we will scramble to negotiate while we are most vulnerable, and which the Tories will doubtlessly use to privatise our public services. These effects, which Brexiteers often dismiss as "Project Fear", are likely to come to pass gradually over the next several years as Brexit unfolds.

As a member of the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee, I have

**We must continue to expose the myths and lies behind Brexit. Now that the unamended Article 50 bill has been voted in the House of Commons with just a flimsy White Paper on Brexit to hang it on the dangers of a hard Tory Brexit inch closer**

been working to highlight the positive impact of EU funding directly on our local communities. The UK has long been a centralised state, run from Westminster, bowing to London's priorities. That has meant serious under-funding for the regions, especially under years of Tory austerity. And when the government refused to invest the EU stepped in, as it did so famously for Liverpool after Thatcher's policy of 'managed decline'.

EU regional development funds have paid for much of the infrastructure across my North West England constituency, paying for train stations, tramways, theatres and conference halls. EU funds have supported social enterprises and start-up businesses, academic research, work-

ers' training and life-long-learning programmes.

Recently I visited Calderwood House hostel for the homeless in West Cumbria and met men and women, including former military personnel, whose lives are being transformed thanks in part to European funding which kick-started a social enterprise. An ERDF business development grant of £1000 has resulted in entrepreneur Rachel Holliday raising more than half a million pounds to renovate a disused building and establish a coffee retail service run by the hostel residents. This is NOT charity but the homeless helping themselves and in doing so, lessening the burden on the state.

Now the residents are dreaming up their own micro-enterprises and getting tailored support through further EU funding to write and implement business plans.

## Cut off

Once grass-roots initiatives like these are cut off from EU funding post-Brexit, what might replace them? Will this Tory government invest in the most vulnerable groups in the most peripheral parts of the country, such as the Calderwood House residents who currently benefit from EU structural and social funds? Sadly, I doubt it.

I have been saying since the referendum that we must continue to expose the myths and lies behind Brexit. Now that the unamended Article 50 bill has been voted in the House of Commons with just a flimsy White Paper on Brexit to hang it on the dangers of a hard Tory Brexit inch closer. Progressive politicians on the left must therefore go from community to community, and from sector to sector, working to secure funding, jobs, and investment that will help us hold together through what will most certainly be very challenging times. And in doing so we must also keep on fighting for a more inclusive and more social Britain which holds on to its European values and can stand in solidarity with its neighbours. **C**



# Socialists : a new voice?

Andrew Coates reviews the candidates of the left

**B**enoît Hamon's victory in the Socialist organised 'belle alliance' Primary (including several centre left 'micro-parties) has shaken up the morose French left. With 58.71% of the vote, from just over two million participants; the vote, open to all who support left wing values, the candidate for the April/May Presidential elections, enjoys a strong legitimacy. His support included 69% of the 18-34 participants, 69% of manual workers and 62% of employees. Hamon has made a name for himself as one of the 'frondeurs' who've challenged the Socialist-led government over budgets and the labour reforms, the loi El Khomri. As a mark of the change in direction, 51% of those who'd opted for François Hollande endorsed Hamon.

Only a month ago commentators were predicting a Socialist score close to the historic low point of Gaston Defferre's 5.01% in 1969. Hamon now rates at between 15-18% in opinion polls. The champion of radical green socialism is tailing the centrist Emmanuel Macron, at just over 20%. A more immediate effect has been to reduce backing for his rival on the left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of la France insoumise from 15% to below 10% (*Le Monde* 4.2.17).

Given the 'Pennygate' scandal and uncertainty around the Right's candidate, François Fillon, not to mention the (at present) leading position of the far-right Marine Le Pen, no survey of French voters' intentions can be secure. More interesting are the ideas for the 'future' (one of his favourite words) Hamon offers. His rival, and, until the end of last year Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, is the standard bearer of the 'realist' left. He affirmed the need for 'continuity' with existing policies. Hamon, by contrast, proposed a strategy of 'ecological transition' (such as, renewable energy), an end to France's 'state of emergency' (a target of civil liberties campaigners), an open approach to secularism, and repeal of the El Khomri laws. His European stand resembles that of 'Another Europe is Possible', calls

to loosen fiscal policy and for structural change.

The Presidential candidate's proposed Revenu universel d'existence, a basic income of #600 per month, and the goal of a 32-hour week have drawn the most attention. For Hamon, thinking in a direction pioneered by writers such as André Gorz, the world of work is changing. Information technology and robots are, regardless of economic performance, replacing human labour. An universal safety net would help cope with the fall out from these changes. It would offer the security for people to try new types of employment, experimental enterprises, without the fear of destitution. The idea has stirred up a wide-ranging debate. It has been criticised as costly, a sticking plaster over France's long-term joblessness problem, utopian and (by some trade unions) as an attack on work as a 'form of citizenship'. By contrast, others consider it a 'safe home' radically reforming France's complicated and discriminatory welfare system Philippe van Parijs talks of how Basic Income would help people cope with the increasing 'fluidity' of employment, the rise in part-time, short-term, jobs.

There is little doubt that a major factor in the left's success has been a rejection of the Prime Minister Valls' labour reforms (which met strikes and mass protests) and social record and not least, his imperious manner. The new candidate not only received the backing of fellow left-winger, Arnaud Montebourg, but from the leading social democratic Mayor of Lille, Martine Aubry. Hamon has reached out to the Green party, Europe Ecologie/les Verts (EELV) and suggested that their candidate Yannick Jadot might reach an agreement with him. Discussions are underway.

Less enthusiastic has been the response of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. He has seen his efforts to present himself, and his 'movement', as the only left wing campaign for the Presidency, and the following general election, undermined. Presented as a Podemos style 'left populist' campaign (with hun-



Benoît Hamon: getting the scent

dreds of local committees formed to support him), this claims to herald a 'new era' of the People. Their proposals include similar ideas on 'ecological transition', but a rise in the minimum wage not a basic income, and an approach to renegotiating European treaties that starts from a position strongly hostile to the Euro, if not to all EU institutions. It is said that amongst the People in la France insoumise it is Jean-Luc Mélenchon who 'decides'. His response to Hamon has been to demand that he turns against the right-wing Socialist Party representatives.

Hamon is not Jeremy Corbyn. He is a professional politician who has held office (the latest, Minister of Education, 2014) and was spokesperson for the Party from 2008 to 2012. The left 'currents' he has been involved with are accepted (if not always listened to) within the Party, which was founded on this pluralist principle. The Socialists' membership hovers at around 50,000 (which helps explain the need for the 'primary'). He is not about to turn this largely electoral machine into a 'social movement'. That Hamon talks about the future, is brimming with ideas that are not just new but deeply thought through, has given a fillip to the French left. Hamon is welcome news. European democratic socialists should listen and follow his campaign closely. **C**

# Tinkering won't sort housing crisis

Duncan Bowie finds a mixed response to the Government's Housing White Paper and outlines alternatives

**T**he shift in the Government's rhetoric is to be welcomed. Housing Minister Gavin Barwell has abandoned the obsession with promoting home ownership which has been the driver of housing policy under successive governments since 1979. He has recognised that not all households can afford to buy and that the supply of affordable rented homes needs to be increased and that councils have a role in providing such homes.

Barwell has proposed to ban letting agents charging fees to tenants. He also proposes longer term tenancies, but reading the small print makes it clear that this is about encouraging the provision of new build to rent on tenancies of three years or longer, rather than setting minimum tenancy levels for tenants in the existing stock.

## Well intentioned

The White Paper includes proposals for planning reform and speeding up delivery, but most, while well intentioned, and not very specific, will be subject to consultation. The White Paper also proposes to re-establish some form of local needs based housing targets and to require local authorities to collaborate, which will correct some of the deficiencies of the 'localist' system introduced in 2011. On the Green Belt the Government is facing two ways – seeking to reassure the protectionist lobby that the Green Belt will continue to be protected, while at the same time setting out criteria for release of Green Belt sites for housing for those Councils which are sufficiently heroic to consider it.

The national Labour Party response has not been constructive. John Healey, shadow housing minister, called the Government's document - a 'White Elephant not a White Paper'. In contrast, the deputy Mayor of London for housing, James Murray, welcomed the Government's collaborative approach and considered that the

Government had responded to some of the concerns raised by the Mayor.

Though at long last heading in the right direction, the Government has not gone nearly far enough and the measures they propose really do not deal with the fundamental challenges we face.

## Inequality

There is a systemic housing problem which cannot be corrected by short term measures. More radical solutions are necessary if the housing market is to be stabilised and the delivery of new homes increased. We also need to

**There is a systemic housing problem which cannot be corrected by short term measures. More radical solutions are necessary if the housing market is to be stabilised and the delivery of new homes increased**

recognise that if we are to tackle inequity in wealth and opportunities, we need to tackle inequity in housing which is now the central component in inequity between households both within and between geographical areas. It is also central to the growth in inter-generational inequality.

The first priority must be to repeal the 2016 Housing and Planning Act, which will do nothing to increase housing supply, and if fully implemented, would reduce both social housing supply and the security of new social housing tenants.

The second priority is to redirect current Government housing investment and increase the overall level. This means stopping all forms on subsidy, whether direct or indirect to owner occupied properties and new development for individual or corporate private ownership. Discounted sale of council and housing association housing constitutes a subsidy to home ownership, by which the

purchaser makes the capital gain, and should be terminated. The Government should reinstate a programme of capital grant to social rented provision through councils and housing associations on the basis of secure tenancies and controlled rents.

The third priority should be a systematic reform of policy on planning and land. The Government should draw up a national spatial plan which identified general locations for residential and employment growth supported by planned transport, social and utilities infrastructure. Local planning authorities should also have the power to compulsorily acquire any housing site allocated in an approved plan at Existing Use Value (EUV). This is essential if the cost of development in higher value areas is to be reduced significantly.

## Tax on the capital gain

The fourth priority should be to reform the regime of land and property tax so it supports housing policy objectives rather than obstructs them. Stamp duty on purchase of residential property should be replaced by a tax on the capital gain on land and property on disposal. Inheritance tax should be revised to increase the tax on the transfer of land and residential property through inheritance.

Higher rates of taxes should be introduced for higher value property. Rates of tax on individual property should take into account the level of occupation of properties – properties which are under-occupied to be subject to a multiplier relating to the level of under occupation, with penal rates for vacant property.

The core components of reform to the housing market and housing supply are land, ownership, money and power. These are fundamental issues, and any proposition, whether from Government, political parties, academics or practitioners, which fails to operate within these parameters will be inadequate. **C**

**Duncan Bowie is senior lecturer in spatial planning at the University of Westminster and the author of 'Radical solutions to the housing supply crisis' (Policy Press, January 2017). See review on [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)**



# Swallowing pride

**Nigel Doggett** argues that moving beyond tribal politics has to happen

**T**revor Fisher has covered the arguments for a Progressive Alliance (PA) as well as its weaknesses in the last two issues of *Chartist*. He ignores the electoral reform, which would render an alliance obsolete. The case for this is clearly a key motivator for Lib-Dems and Greens, but increasingly for Labour supporters. More generally it relates to the lack of effective democracy and control, a theme hijacked by the Brexit campaign, but with radical potential throughout society, a theme increasingly promoted by Compass.

The roots of the latest PA initiative lie in grassroots co-operation in the EU Referendum Remain campaign, which established goodwill and common ground between activists from diverse origins, leading to a groundswell of public meetings and media publicity. By now even those more sceptical about the EU can see the huge gulf between the progressive parties and the Tory/UKIP 'regressive alliance'. Yet party leaders still bang the old tribal drums as the only option, as heard from Corbyn, Farron and even sometimes the Lucas/Bartley Green leadership.

Nationally, there is much agreement on defence of public services, housing, education, progressive taxation, civil liberties, balanced regional and industrial policies, energy and the environment. The differences on emotive issues such as nuclear power, Syria and Trident, exist both within and across parties; and for

good or ill decisions have been taken for now. On Brexit and trade we should all be opposing the Tory rush to make deals with some of the world's nastiest leaders.

In East Sussex, where County Council elections are due in May, the three progressive parties largely agree on County policies. Nevertheless, proposals for co-operation have been diluted in the face of tribal opposition in both the Lib-Dems and Labour. In nearby Brighton & Hove the bitter divisions between Greens and Labour are incomprehensible to most outsiders and even green-minded Labour members. Electoral rivalries have sometimes left a legacy that will be hard to disperse, but for many of us this looks like fiddling while Britain burns.

Imagine an optimistic, if now unlikely, scenario. In the face of economic crisis and collapse in public services, grassroots campaigning causes a sea change in public opinion and a revival of Labour support. Yet the electoral arithmetic is still heavily loaded against Labour: many readers will recall the 1980s when the SDP breakaway split the progressive vote to the Tories' benefit, blunting the movement for change and fuelling the rightward lurch under New Labour.

As things stand, a formal alliance could be portrayed as a squalid electoral deal of 'losers'. Any co-operation would depend on mutual confidence-building and detoxification of both the Liberal 'orange book' tendency

and the misleading Labour 'hard left' image. All three parties increasingly draw support from the same social groups - green, socially liberal, public sector, many of them professionals. Trevor's 'working together across issues' makes sense, but the promotion of broader common principles is crucial for attracting support from both members and the wider electorate. We also have to attract many others who are not attached to any party. This could open the way for widespread tactical cross-voting at all levels for anti-Tory candidates, repeating the informal and successful tactics in the 1997 Labour landslide. This would require a lot of pride to be swallowed and the temptation for mutual mud-slinging resisted by all parties.

Would this detract from Labour's own recruitment? Much criticism, either on class grounds or objection to 'non-socialist' parties, amounts to the same thing. But many new members are refreshingly free of Labour tribalism. There is always tension between short term tactics and long term aims. Corbyn and McDonnell are pursuing a social democratic reform agenda that should appeal to most Greens and Lib-Dems.

The Greens have little to lose. They are not well placed to threaten Tory seats, and are unlikely to dislodge Labour in areas like Norwich or Bristol; under current boundary proposals Caroline Lucas's Brighton seat looks vulnerable.

None of this in itself solves the post-Brexit cultural/political divide. "Straight talking, Honest politics" has to entail a process, not limited to one organisation or destination, looking beyond social democracy and Marxism to libertarian, liberal and environmental traditions. If we cannot craft a narrative to appeal to all those let down by the last ten years we may as well retire with Jeremy to our allotments.

Unlikely? After a year of Corbyn, Trump, Brexit, the demise of Cameron/Osborne and the growth in all opposition parties' memberships, what can be ruled out, apart from Jeremy Corbyn leading a majority Labour government? **C**



**Nigel Doggett is a member of Wealden Labour Party working with Wealden Progressives**

**Last October 200 people in Wealden, East Sussex heard speakers from three parties make a case for progressive cooperation**

# Irish unity on the horizon

Once more, Northern Ireland's future hangs in the balance reports **Kevin Meagher**

**T**he collapse of Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive, requiring a fresh set of assembly elections, was an inauspicious start to 2017 - but entirely predictable.

The crisis ostensibly centres on the mismanagement of a renewable energy subsidy by Arlene Foster, now Northern Ireland's First Minister (but back in 2012 when it was launched, its enterprise minister).

The now infamous 'burn to earn' scheme she introduced, which encouraged farms and businesses to switch to wood pellet-burning boilers, had no cost controls and has lumbered Northern Ireland's Executive with a colossal £500 million liability.

As examples of garden variety ministerial incompetence go, it's a howler.

If this had been Westminster, Foster would have been out on her ear. Instead, she has dug her nails into her ministerial doorframe and refused to go.

Sinn Féin, the DUP's partner in government, initially soft-pedalled, urging her to step aside and allow an independent investigation, rather than force the issue. But Foster's sheer pig-headedness won out.

Over the Christmas period, it was becoming clear things were hurtling towards crisis.

Unfortunately, James Brokenshire, the Northern Ireland Secretary, proved unequal to the challenge of stopping the rot. He was nowhere to be seen, although a timely intervention might have persuaded Foster's colleagues that the game was up.

And so we have a fresh set of assembly elections on March 2.

They are unlikely to see a dramatically different outcome, with the DUP and Sinn Féin remaining the two largest parties and compelled, under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, to share power once again.

But this crisis is about something else too.

There is a begrudging quality to unionist politicians who, in their marrow, do not want to share power with nationalists and republicans. A series of

clashes on cultural issues had already soured the atmosphere at Stormont.

The rescinding of a grant to an Irish language charity by DUP communities minister, Paul Givan, became emblematic of wider unionist arrogance towards Irish culture.

Having so egregiously run Northern Ireland from partition in 1921 until Stormont was prorogued in 1972, one might have hoped today's unionist politicians had learnt to reflect on the sins of their fathers who ran the place as an apartheid state, with discrimination against Catholics woven into the very fabric of the place.

Indeed, it should not be forgotten that Northern Ireland was so appallingly governed that many poorer Catholics were unable to even vote in local elections, given the electoral franchise was tied to property and business ownership.

This piece of context is vital to understanding the current malaise.

**A combination of hard economics, the disintegration of the UK and gradual population shifts are making Irish reunification all but inevitable**

Unionists are simply not entitled to the benefit of the doubt when it comes to equality, respect and parity of esteem. They have proven themselves time after time unwilling to observe even the pretence that they believe in it.

So Sinn Féin is entirely justified in demanding an attitudinal shift from the DUP as a precondition for reviving the executive.

The party's new 'leader in the North' is Michelle O'Neill, the executive's former health minister and successor to Martin McGuinness who has been struck down by a genetic illness, amyloidosis, (which is particularly prevalent in people from Co Donegal) and has effectively retired from frontline politics.

In the short-term, there will be tough-talking as both O'Neill and Foster will be loath to be seen giving ground in post-election talks, but it is the longer-term that is now more interesting.

Bluntly, the numbers are on



**Michelle O'Neill: Sinn Féin's new leader in Northern Ireland taking over from former Deputy First minister Martin McGuinness - the beginning of reunification?**

O'Neill's side, with the next census in 2021 likely to show Protestants are in the minority for the first time ever. Catholics now already outnumber them at every level of Northern Ireland's education system.

Given Northern Ireland was built as a Protestant Unionist fief, it will be telling moment and further proof that 'the province's' days are numbered.

A combination of factors will force a constitutional reappraisal in the next few years, including the strong possibility that Scotland votes for independence in 2018 or 2019.

Then there's the issue of how Northern Ireland copes outside the EU.

A report last March for the devolved assembly's enterprise committee found that a vote to leave would cost Northern Ireland £1 billion a year - equivalent to a three per cent fall in economic output.

Quitting the EU would also cut-off vital funding which has done so much to copper-fasten peace in recent years and Northern Ireland is still receiving around £600 million a year in grants.

Of course, this funding would still be available if Northern Ireland was part of a single Irish state.

So a combination of hard economics, the disintegration of the UK and gradual population shifts are making Irish reunification all but inevitable.

Although power-sharing will be restored, with the DUP back in government, their bigger problems are only just beginning. **C**

**Kevin Meagher is a former special adviser to Labour's last Northern Ireland Secretary, Shaun Woodward and author of 'A United Ireland: Why unification is inevitable and how it will come about' published by Biteback**



# Clem Attlee and me

Many consider Clem Attlee Labour's most successful prime minister. **Roy Madron** is inspired to review his legacy by a new biography\*

**C**lem Attlee became Prime Minister in 1945 when I was thirteen. Like everybody else I knew in my small market town, I was astonished. How could he take over from the mighty warrior Winston Churchill while we were still at war with Japan?

We'd all seen his Election Speeches in the cinema and thought him a joke. He had no screen presence, a small bald head, silly moustache and a flat reedy voice. In many ways he reminded us of the uninspiring headmaster of our grammar school. Moreover, by some fluke, our new Labour MP was a total stranger called Dr. Mont Follick: a crank who wanted to reform spelling of all things.

So, as a Churchillian patriot, whose Dad bought the Daily Express every day, I naturally despised Attlee, the Labour Party, the Labour Government, and all they did and stood for. Specially, I despised trade unions: coal miners, railwaymen and dockers; always going on strike and bringing the country to its knees.

Life was hard in those post-war years. Food, coal, and clothing were still rationed. A bread and flour ration was introduced.

When we visited our relatives in London, the buses took us on routes where the German air raids had destroyed street after street of houses, shops and factories. We didn't understand that repairing and building new houses and creating new public services was a very expensive business: nor that our steel, transport, coal and building industries needed huge investments in new equipment. Nor had we any sense of the huge economic penalties that the USA was exacting from us for the loans that paid for the ships, aircraft, petrol, food and armaments we had needed to fight the war. Now those wartime debts had to be repaid at a swingeing rate of interest.

What we could see, and were constantly reminded of by the Express and Movietone News, was that Attlee, Bevin, Stafford Cripps, Hugh Dalton, Manny

Shinwell and co, were nationalising everything: railways, docks, banks, buses, coal mines and at the same time increasing welfare payments to those out of work or sick, and the old. Which of course led to higher taxes and bitter discontent among many of those whose were employed, fit and under sixty five.

By my mid-twenties I had seen the Tories for what they were and was a firm Labour supporter for the next thirty years. Until I read John Bew's biography, however, I had no idea of the huge contribution that Attlee had made to the emergence of the safe and egalitarian society that I, and tens of millions like me, had taken for granted from the end of World War Two to the 1990s.

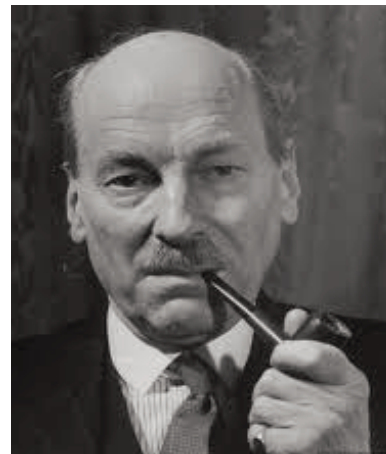
In creating such a society, Attlee believed 'Labour was the most genuinely patriotic of the three main parties.' By patriotism he meant 'intense loyalty to one's immediate surroundings' while also being loyal to 'the larger conceptions and interests of the human race'.

I was rivetted by John Bew's new biography, and I kept asking myself why Attlee had never been the subject of a TV series that would do justice to him and his achievements.

Unlike Churchill, and many of his Cabinet, Attlee was repelled by self-promotion and puffery. A TV series could start with an account of how he was wounded three times in action, in Gallipoli, in 1916, Syria, in 1917 and the Western front in 1918. Until this year, I had no concept of Attlee's dicing with death as an infantry officer in World War One. The lessons he learnt as a front-line soldier were many but above all, he said, "It was not until the Great War that I fully understood the strength of the ties that bind men to the land of their birth".

The story could then flash back a dozen years and follow his transformation from a junior bar-rister in a shiny top-hat and morning coat, to a street-corner political agitator and Labour organiser in Limehouse, the most poverty-stricken area of London's East End.

From the early 1900s, Attlee



made his political, and in many ways, spiritual, home among the people who struggled for the barest necessities of life in Limehouse. It was here that he developed a lifelong affection and respect for the people who had been exploited and betrayed and belittled for so long by the greatest empire in the world,

His political mission was shaped by the sense of fellowship, solidarity and generosity he found within working class communities where families rallied in support of others in times of hardship or unemployment.

We won't get a TV series about Attlee's extraordinary life. However, the Labour Party, the TUC or Momentum could produce a series of Youtube documentaries and seminars based on Bew's book. We might then understand what it took to lead the Labour Party to success while it struggled to debate strategy, tactics, ideas and economic theory and settle upon a shared program after the appalling betrayal of the movement's basic principles by the previous leadership and the consequent electoral melt-down in 1931.

Bew's excellent biography will give potential film-makers much to think about and lift their spirits. In particular, they may make their watchword Attlee's counsel to would-be defectors. 'There is only one occasion when it is justified to disobey orders. That is when your officers go over to the enemy'. **C**

\**Citizen Clem* by John Bew is published by River (2016)

# Inside the pressure cooker

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a deeply  
pessimistic  
view of  
Egypt

**C**lash (Eshtebak), directed and co-written by Mohamed Diab, is a single-location movie with a difference. The action takes place entirely within the confines of an eight square metre police truck into which American born Associated Press journalist Adam (Hany Adal) and his photographer Zein (Mohamed El Sebaey) are dumped. The year is 2013. The location is an unnamed Egyptian city. The government of the Muslim Brotherhood, led by President Mohamed Morsi, has been ousted by the Egyptian military led by General Abdel Fatah El-Sisi, Egypt's Defence Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Protesters on both sides fill the streets and before long fill the truck. The jails, we are told, are full, so the truck is driven away. Then it is suddenly halted. The scale of dissent, of violence, is immense – this is no low budget movie. We see huge numbers of protestors outside, attacking the military. We see another truck. Inside the detainees are sweltering. A family is separated. The military refuses to show compassion.

Egypt's recent political turmoil would make a compelling film of itself. Although Morsi was democratically elected in 2012, his government lurched towards autocracy. On 22 November that year, he awarded himself total executive control, only to withdraw it ten days later. His Presidency lasted from 30 June 2012 to 3 July 2013. He received the death sentence in 2015 after being convicted of colluding with Hamas and Hezbollah to organise a mass prison break during the 2011 uprising. In November 2016, the Egyptian Court of Cassation ordered a retrial.

The question you ask yourself as you watch *Clash* is 'what is the filmmaker trying to tell us?' It is that, in the back of a police truck in an authoritarian state, there is no distinction between foreigners and Egyptian nationals, men and women, young and old, pro-Army and Muslim Brotherhood supporters. The occupants of the truck are a microcosm of society forced to accommodate each other at a point of suspension of their rights. They literally live in each other's stench, from sweat to urine. The detainees are united in a need to escape and they have some shared values – an acknowledgement that women should excrete in private, that water should be

shared. The key divide is not between pro-coup and Muslim Brotherhood supporter, but between citizen and journalist.

Adam and Zein are treated with a contempt that the other detainees do not show to one another. The media takes photographs. It misrepresents Egypt to the outside world. When one of the journalists asks for water, one of the detainees swigs from a bottle and sprays it into the journalist's face. Adam believes that reporting is important, that the international community can help. This is the last thing that the other detainees want. They don't mention the military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, but you sense they trust their own understanding rather than those of outsiders. There will

be memories of US aid to Mubarak's regime - \$1.5 billion in economic aid was given in 2011, a huge part of which was in military equipment, an estimated one-third of Egypt's military budget according to one Cornell University economist. You might wonder whether the truck in which the characters are trapped was procured with American cash?

The dynamic of the film is simple: will the characters escape? Dramatic developments include the truck being pinned down by protestors, soldiers opening the door to allow them some air, a soldier ending up inside the truck after being appalled by the treatment of the prisoners and the truck being commandeered. The way the truck is taken over is a metaphor for the way power changes hands – suddenly, violently and with an uncertain destination.

In the absence of sharply defined historical context, *Clash* plays more like a B movie. The characters are caricatures. Two young men fight over a girl. A singer is derided for his lack of talent. As individuals, it is hard to care about any of them. Yet, as the film progresses, it increases in tension and emotional impact. Finally, we are on the edge of our seats, though it takes a while for Diab to achieve this effect.

Don't go to *Clash* expecting to understand Egypt. It offers something else: a nightmare scenario for fractious regime change. In the end, the people are the losers. It is a deeply pessimistic film, designed to address polarising divisions in Egypt and asking those in the west to think about the nature of interventions. **C**



*Clash* opens in UK cinemas on 21 April 2017



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Chartists in Kansas

**Duncan  
Bowie** on  
a socialist  
utopia

**LLEWELLYN CASTLE**  
Gary Entz (University of Nebraska,  
\$50)

When researching my book on the radical and socialist tradition in British planning, I came across an entry by a British radical historian in volume 12 of the *Dictionary of Labour History* on a follower of Bronterre O'Brien, John Radford. Radford was involved in an attempt by the London based O'Brienites to set up a socialist colony in Kansas. The entry was co-authored by a Kansas historian Gary Entz.

There is considerable literature on Chartists in America (for example Ray Boston's 1971 study). My own research had identified a number of American settlements founded by the followers of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Etienne Cabet and even the Rugby colony in Tennessee founded by the Christian socialist, Thomas Hughes. However, this was the first reference I had found to a colony sponsored by a Chartist organisation – O'Brien's National Reform League.

O'Brien had not been a supporter of emigration and in fact one of his followers, Martin James Boon, prominent in the First International and the Land and Labour League, was a vigorous proponent of home colonisation. He wrote a pamphlet in 1869 arguing against the 'emigrationists'. Entz has now published a full study of the O'Brienite colony.

The first chapters of Entz's book provide a detailed study of the O'Brienites in London. This group has been studied by Andrew Whitehead, Royden Harrison and by Stan Shipley, but Entz's research provides a fuller narrative, which certainly supplements the material in my book. In 1854 the National Reform League sent two of their members, John Days and George Murray to look for suitable locations for a colony in the Rocky Mountains. George Murray died

just after arriving in New Orleans, while Days sought unsuccessfully to establish a colony in California. He however became a member of the California state legislature advocating an O'Brienite agenda.

Returning to London in 1868, Days spoke at an NRL meeting, and succeeded in persuading a group of O'Brienites including Murray's brother, Charles and John Radford to make a further attempt to establish a settlement in the US. An NRL member, Edward Grainger Smith then

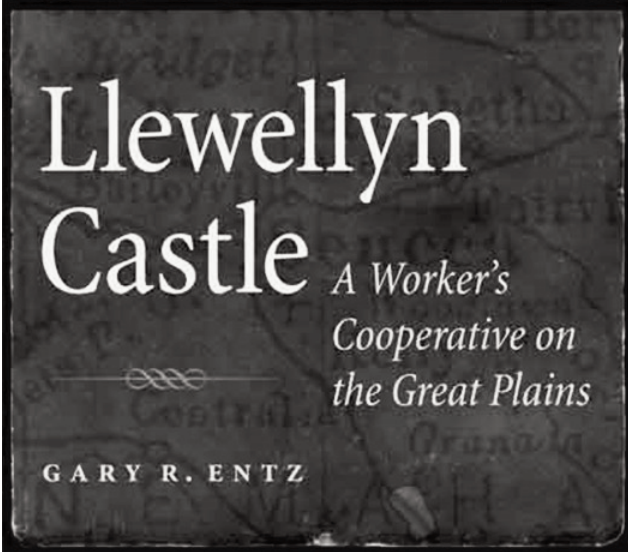
Like other settlements, the O'Brienite colony could not be self-sufficient and many colonists had to seek employment in nearby towns. There were fires and even a plague of grasshoppers (the biblical locusts). By 1874 many of the leading colonists including Radford had moved away from the colony.

Entz traces the activities of the O'Brienites after the dispersal of the colony. Charles Murray remained active in London politics to become a founding member of the Democratic Federation/

Social Democratic Federation. Radford became a member of the Knights of Labour and active in the Kansas populist party, which won control of the State administration. He was also a critic of the American land reformer Henry George who he viewed as an opponent of working class socialism and O'Brienite land nationalisation. The colonist Charles Macarthy became a drugster and seller of illegal alcohol, while his fellow colonist, John Stowell became a temperance campaigner and won elected office in the nearby town of Westmore.

The title of Entz's book is misleading. The Workingmen's Co-operative Colony was never actually known as Llewellyn Castle when it existed, and the name seems to have been applied no doubt ironically, to the colony's group of wood-

en huts, by a contemporary Kansas man, John Bristow. Entz's book deserves a wider readership beyond the rather limited circles of Kansas historians. It is an original and well researched study of an episode in the history of transnational socialism but also a narrative of emigration and hardship by the one group of London working class socialists who sought to escape domestic oppression and poverty to establish a democratic co-operative and self-sufficient utopia in the New World.



made contact with the governor of Nebraska who responded positively. A group of O'Brienites led by Radford established the Mutual Land, Emigration and Co-operative Colonization Company. In 1869 shareholders in the company elected the first group of colonists, who with Smith as the resident Superintendent, established a small settlement in Nemaha county, Kansas on the border with Nebraska in July 1869.

Entz recounts the narrative of the colony's struggle for survival.

**Duncan  
Bowie** on  
another  
socialist  
history  
classic

**REBEL CROSSINGS**  
Sheila Rowbotham (Verso, £25)

Rowbotham is our finest socialist historian. In my view her 2009 biography of Edward Carpenter was the best socialist biography I have read. This new collective biography of a group of English and Scots socialists who emigrated to the US in the 1880's is an outstanding collective biography. As a study of transnational socialism it is unprecedented and probably unsurpassable. The research is a huge achievement as Rowbotham has traced relatively obscure figures across two continents.

The first section of the book focuses on a group of radicals and socialists in Bristol, mainly based among a liberal middle class milieu in the Clifton area. The central characters are Miriam Daniell, Helena Born and Gertrude Dix.

Bristol is a centre of early socialist activity and more famous figures such as Dan Irving and Enid Stacy play a significant role in the Bristol Socialist Society. Rowbotham provides a detailed study of early socialism in Bristol, which has not been studied in any detail since Samson Bryher's short 1929 work, long out of print, though acknowledgement should be given to the work of the Bristol Radical History society in publishing a series of short pamphlets.

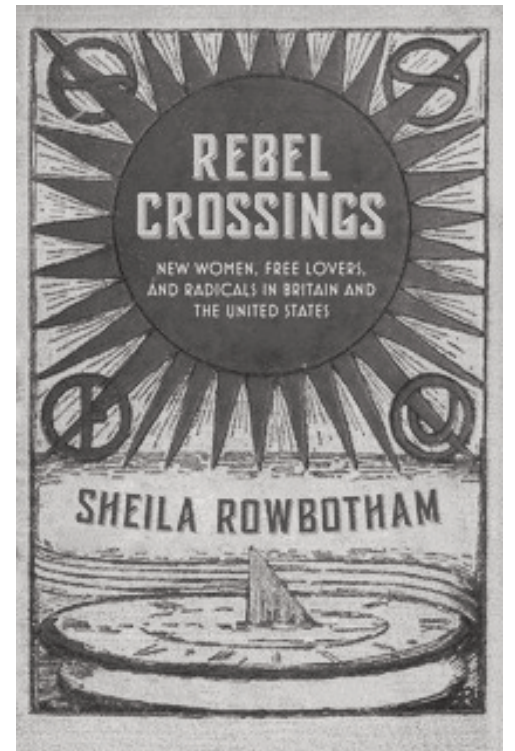
Rowbotham provides a fascinating study of the intellectual development of her three central characters as well as presenting the narrative of their personal lives, as their feminism developed and impacted on their personal relationships. Daniell and Born emigrated to Boston in the US. Daniell was joined by the Scottish socialist Robert Nicol. Born is joined in Boston by William Bailey, a married Irish Mancunian basket maker, member of the Social Democratic Federation and then of the Manchester branch of the Socialist League run by the architect planner Raymond Unwin.

Bailey then becomes active in the Boston anarchist club, of which Born is already a member – William Bailey was to write a biography of the American individual anarchist Josiah Warren. The Bristol socialist seems to

have been drawn to Boston by the writings of the American democratic poet, Walt Whitman, and became enthusiastic members of the Walt Whitman Fellowship. Born wrote a collection of articles on Whitman, published posthumously by her closest friend, the Boston feminist Helen Tufts. Tufts then married Bailey. Meanwhile, Nicol, having moved to ranch in California was joined by the Bristol based socialist novelist and feminist Fabian Gertrude Dix.

To follow this complex narrative, you need to read Rowbotham's book. It is a study of the changing politics and lives of a series of complex but fascinating characters. It is also a study of local politics – in Bristol, Manchester, Boston and on the Californian frontier. Bailey moves from individual anarchism and trying to develop anarchist economic theory into municipal reform politics, campaigning to purify the water supply. Dix continues to publish short stories in US magazines and in Alfred Orage's *New Era* in England from her Californian ranch, a life which does not necessarily deliver her Whitmanite utopian dream. Robert is active in anti fascist and pro-soviet campaigns. Helen becomes a leading member of the Conference of Free Socialists and writes articles for *The Conservator*, edited by the Whitmanite, Horace Traubel, and for the anarchist *Free Society*, before in the late 1920s running a campaign against the patriotic and anti-communist Daughters of the American Revolution, a precursor to post-war MacCarthyism.

In the final chapter, Rowbotham follows the lives of the descendants of her cohort, many of whom she has interviewed and many of whom themselves led Bohemian lives – artists, novelists and dancers, with names such as Sunrise, Tamara, Amaryllis and Margot. This book was a pleasure to read. Rowbotham is to be congratulated on producing another marvelous study. This is how socialist history should be written.



Advertisement

**LABOUR**  
**Briefing**

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

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

Welcome back to Labour

Briefing. (beware of  
dodgy imitations)

FOR AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION  
(10 ISSUES) SEND YOUR NAME AND  
ADDRESS AND A CHEQUE FOR £20  
(PAYABLE TO LABOUR BRIEFING  
CO-OPERATIVE LTD) TO:  
LABOUR BRIEFING, 7 MALAM  
GARDENS, LONDON E14 0TR.  
SEE OUR LATEST SUBSCRIPTION  
OFFERS ON:  
[WWW.LABOURBRIEFING.CO.UK](http://WWW.LABOURBRIEFING.CO.UK)



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Back to the grassroots?

**Stephen Marks** on the annual socialist roundup

**RETHINKING REVOLUTION SOCIALIST REGISTER 2017**  
edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo  
(Merlin Press, £17.95)

For decades now, the annual appearance of the latest Socialist Register has offered a menu of worthy but predictable fare. Readers have come to expect the latest contributions to the already interminable bibliography of studies of dead Russians and their legacy, combined with roundups of the state of left and far-left politics around the world.

There is a decent amount of both this year, not bad examples of their type, but much more that is relevant to the dire prospects of Trumpery and Brexit. As Panitch and Gindin point out in their scene-setting contribution, the crisis of neoliberalism which began in 2008 has yet to lead to a break with the old model to rival the break with the gold standard in 1931 or the abandonment of Bretton Woods in 1971.

Instead there has been a loss of legitimacy which affects all governing institutions from established political parties to the EU. The resulting protest movements have fed a new turn to left politics, expressed in forms as diverse as Podemos, Syriza and Corbynism.

But these new movements though they may be class-oriented and class-focussed, are not 'class-rooted' to use the authors' terminology. The reasons are

rooted in changes in the composition of the workforce and in the labour process, with the old collectivism superseded or abandoned. This poses issues of renewal and reconstitution of the working class as a collective which are organisational, not merely matters of ideology or policy.

The answer, or answers, may pass through re-energising the roles of a range of grass-roots organisations from trade unions



and co-ops to consumer and credit organisations. Despite the shipwreck of Syriza the challenge is still to combine entry into government with advancing the transformation of state institutions from below - a theme echoed by a number of other contributors.

Hilary Wainwright, as is her wont, develops the theme of the relations between parties and movements, with particular refer-

ence to Britain. She contrasts the initial promise of Syriza to break the claims of parties to a monopoly of representation of social movements, with a significant statement of Jon Lansman after Corbyn's election. Asked how the Corbyn leadership would relate to the new membership, he replied 'We will mobilise them'. Instead of this implicitly top-down approach, she suggests, the real question is how to use their experience rather than just use them as foot-soldiers.

The most radical and challenging contribution is from Andreas Malm on 'Revolution in a warming world'. For once, the Russian revolution is invoked as directly relevant to today's crisis of global warming - as an earlier example of crisis provoked by disaster in food supply. In that case the disaster was provoked by war - in Syria, by the combination of neoliberalism with the impact of climate change.

If these issues are not addressed with the urgent and radical agenda outlined, for example, by Naomi Klein, then we face the danger of 'the politics of the armed lifeboat', or what has been called 'ecological fascism'. A particularly pertinent contribution from Patrick Bond illustrates in the South African context how impending ecological disaster can and must be brought in to the whole spectrum of social and political struggles.

Where is the British left on this? And if not now, when?

## Rise and fall of the Afrikaners

**BRIDGE OVER BLOOD RIVER: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AFRIKANERS**  
Kajsa Norman (Hurst, £17.99)

My initial disappointment with this book was due to the sub-title. I expected a historical study of the Afrikaner folk - for this you should read the book by Hermann Giliomee. Kajsa Norman is a Swedish journalist who has tried to look at the position of the Afrikaner tribe in modern South Africa and relate it to major events on Boer history such as the victory against the Zulus at Blood River in 1838; the 'Boer War' and the British concentration camps; the political supremacy of the Afrikaners from

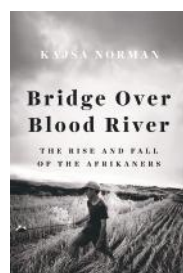
1912 to 1994.

The result is a good introduction to the basics of South African history with particular reference to the Afrikaners' role in it and a report on the current state of Afrikaans culture and on the determination of this tribe, which likes to compare itself to the Israelites of the Old Testament, to survive. Especially interesting were the author's visits to Orania, the whites-only enclave, created by Afrikaners in the semi-desert. Even the most menial work is done by fellow whites; some 'poor white' dropouts from the mainstream have managed to salvage themselves here. Whether Orania will grow or wither away and what its

relations with the rest of country will be (not bad so far) are questions to be answered in the future.

Survival may be difficult. With 6% of the country's population, even Afrikaner kids often grow up with English as their first language, with the media, the internet and the decline of the institutions that bound Afrikaners together (the Broederbond, the church, the very disciplined family) there is concern about the future. They may become totally absorbed into an English-speaking community. Despite efforts at reconciliation they were the authors of apartheid and this cross they still have to bear.

**Nigel Watt** on the authors of apartheid



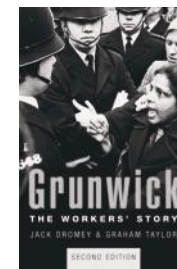
## Reviewing Grunwick

**Tony Manzi** on a historic struggle

**GRUNWICK: THE WORKERS' STORY**  
Jack Dromey and Graham Taylor  
(Lawrence and Wishart, £12)

How did a dispute involving a firm of fewer than 200 people, comprising mainly Gujarati women in suburban North London become one of the most contentious industrial disputes of a decade noted for Trade Union struggle? This book (first published in the 1970s) harks back to a fascinating period in UK politics - when secondary action was (just about) lawful, when mass action was commonplace, when Government Ministers attended picket lines (including of all people, Shirley Williams) and when Government Inquiries were conducted into industrial disputes.

The answer to the question why the dispute escalated so dramatically (and violently) can be found in this fascinating book, involving a combination of factors: an intransigent employer; a resolute set of workers; a supportive Trade Union movement (at least initially) and (crucially)

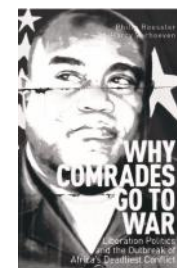


**Nigel Watt** on the Central African Wars

**WHY COMRADES GO TO WAR**  
Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven  
(Hurst, £35)

This is the story of the Pan African project to remove President Mobutu, the symbol of neo-colonialism in Africa and how the states involved ended up at war with each other. The story is told in all its complexity and the reader needs to grasp the geographical detail as well as the many political movements and personalities involved. It's readable but not light reading!

The authors' interest is in 'liberation regimes' (Tanzania, Eritrea, post-Derg Ethiopia, Museveni's Uganda, Kagame's Rwanda and most of southern Africa) and to show how Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was crucial in providing ideological - and sometimes practical - backing to the whole movement. The spark was the genocide in Rwanda where Mobutu (as well as the French) backed President Habyarimana, whose government had prepared the genocide of



highly organised mobilisation by a determined (and well-resourced) right-wing coalition. The book tells a familiar tale of betrayal by Trade Union leaders and centre-left politicians, ending in defeat for a demoralised workforce. In hindsight the dispute was notable for the participation of minority ethnic women, a group not previously noted for their militancy and for the solidarity of a wider Trade Union movement. The determining factor in the final outcome was also the way that the employer (Grunwick Film Processing Ltd.) was supported by a militant National Association for Freedom and by Conservative politicians; an experience which laid the foundations for the later assault on the legitimacy of collective bargaining and trade unionism.

The book contains a fascinating cast of characters: the heroine of the story is Jayaben Desai, who began the strike when she walked out following an altercation with her managers. Given the subsequent arguments about the dispute it is interesting to note that

the strikers emphasised that the main purpose of the action was a determination to gain respect, rather than trade union recognition per se. Encouraged by his radical right supports, the owner of the company (George Ward) rejected all attempts at compromise, by his refusal to deal with the Arbitration and Conciliation Service (ACAS), ensuring that the strike would be bitter and long-lasting.

The book is necessarily (and understandably) partisan in tone, given the polarised nature of the dispute. The anger is palpable, the analysis would have been stronger had this later edition removed some of the archaic and anachronistic language of the 1970s. References to 'blackening' or 'blacklegs', strike an uncomfortable note for contemporary readers - especially when discussing a dispute led by minority ethnic workers. The book provides a valuable understanding of this fascinating dispute and generates nostalgia for an age when unions at least attempted to resist uncompromising employers.

## Liberation politics and Pan African wars

1994. The newly victorious Rwanda Popular Front got together with Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Eritrea to try to remove Mobutu.

To make the project credible they needed a Congolese element, so they dug out from his retirement cottage to be the leader Laurent-Désiré (Mzee) Kabila, an elderly revolutionary who had fought against Mobutu for most of his life - not very effectively as Che Guevara noted in his diaries. The relations between the different groups and individuals were never easy and the authors make it clear that their 'comradeship' was already threadbare when victory was supposedly achieved. It was a surprise to the media but not those closely involved when Kabila suddenly expelled the Rwandans later in 1998. Mzee Kabila's erratic behaviour, which included giving support to the génocidaires who were trying to re-enter Rwanda, was the last straw and the Rwandans decided to attack again to set up a new regime. They boldly flew Kabarebe and his troops right

across the Congo and to an old airbase west of Kinshasa and they advanced on the capital.

They nearly made it, but Zimbabwe and, at the last minute, crucially Angola stepped in. Thus the 'comrades' thus entered Africa's Great War with Kabila supported by Angola and Zimbabwe controlling the west, Rwanda, Uganda and their local supporters the east and a new rebel movement backed by Uganda in the north.

The story of how the 'comrades' put together and carried out the invasion that ousted Mobutu is fascinating stuff and the authors have had access to private discussions and correspondence that has not been available to earlier writers, but I have to say that to enjoy the book you need to be interested in this detail. The analysis of the different approaches to Pan Africanism and liberation of the different countries is refreshing. It is not an approach taken by most other historians.



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Insurgency

**Dot Lewis**  
on South  
African  
Trade  
Unionism

**THE SPIRIT OF MARIKANA**  
Luke Sitwell & Siphiwe Mbatha (Pluto Press, £17)

**T**he spirit of Marikana is defined by independent working-class power' write Sitwell and Mbatha in this study of struggles on the South African platinum belt. Briefly sketching conflicts from the mid-1980s, they focus on the events leading to the massacre in Marikana on 16 August 2012, the determination to continue fighting for workers' rights, decent wages and living conditions and the spread of these struggles across the belt.

Stressing the importance of 'organic intellectuals', the authors argue that strikes are never spontaneous, they need leaders. Drawing on interviews, particularly of leaders of informal worker committees, they portray the 'unsung heroes' who mobilised their comrades through changing-room chats, small groups and mass meetings, organising 'unprotected' strikes (strikers risk the sack, as well as violence) and overcoming opposition from employers, government and the National Union of Mineworkers.

Perceptions of the NUM are exemplified by 'Desmond', who was an NUM member employed by Amplats to fill holes with explosives. Becoming dissatisfied with the union for doing nothing, in 2011 he became a shop steward because: "If I feel like we need change let me be the change..." Some months later Desmond resigned, having found that "the relationship between NUM and management is too close...at the expense of the majority of the workers".

As previously non-unionised miners and dissatisfied NUM members joined the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, AMCU became the largest, and recognised, union in the platinum belt, in 2014 winning a 20% pay rise across all three companies after a five month strike, the longest in SA history. In October 2016 a 7% increase was agreed over three years in Amplats and Impala. Does this show the continuing 'rise of insurgent trade unionism in South Africa' of the book's subtitle? Sitwell and Mbatha conclude that the spirit of Marikana, the 'challenge to capitalist hege-

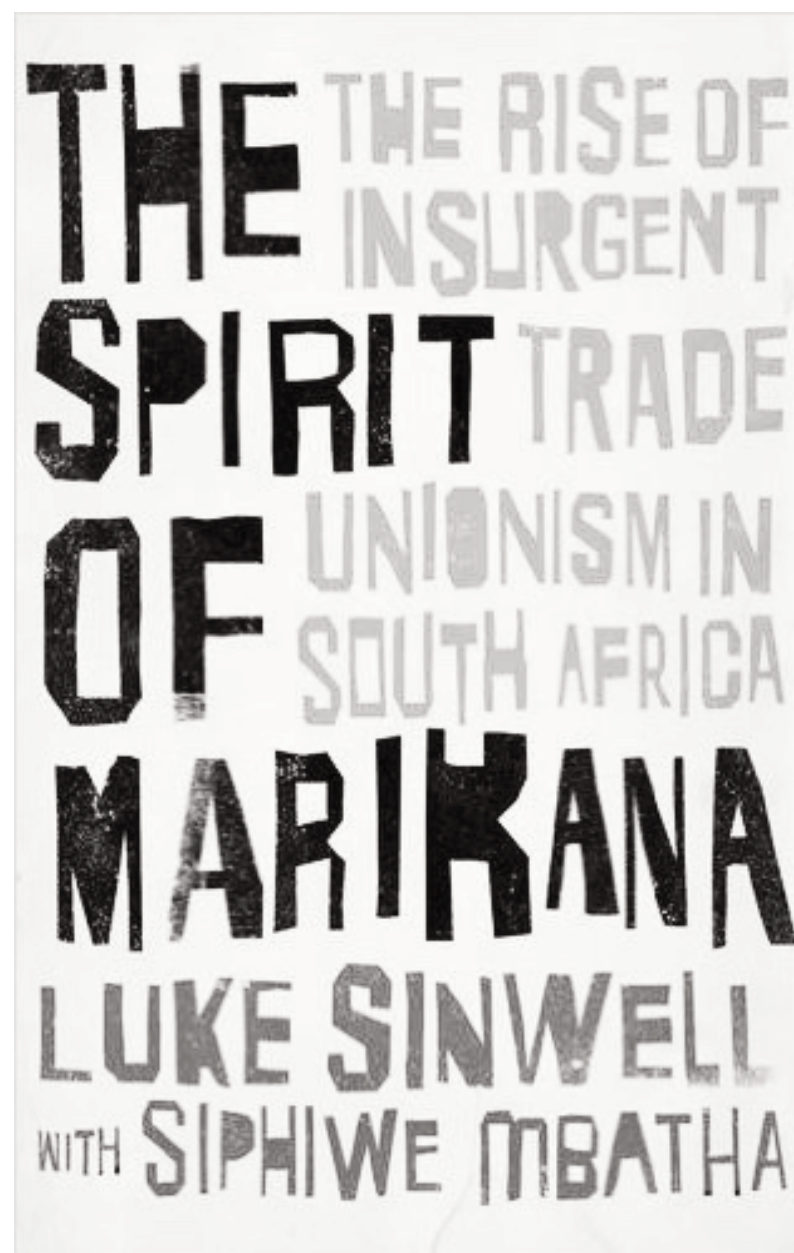
mony' will continue to 'reverberate' far beyond Rustenburg.

Informal worker committees declined as AMCU achieved recognition. Added to this the authors show splits and spats in the union before the 2014 strike, including whether the strike should be called, the loyalty of some members, and the 'autocratic' behaviour of Joseph Mathungwa, AMCU President since 2002. Despite this, the strike took place, successfully, in October 2016 and another AMCU strike won 7% - R1,000 per month over three years in Anplats and Impala.

AMCU is non-political, affiliated to the non-political National Council of Trade Unions.

NACTU was formed in competition with Cosatu and influenced by black consciousness: it rules that its leaders must be black. Spirit of Marikana outlines attempts by political bodies to support the struggles in the mines: the Democratic Left Front, Democratic Socialist Movement (which formed the Workers and Socialist Party in 2013) and Economic Freedom Fighters. Whether any of these or new political ventures will transform struggles on the platinum belt or elsewhere remains to be seen.

Of the three, the EFF makes the most noise, receives by far the most publicity and the largest electoral support; about 8%.

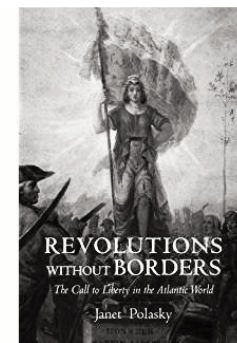


**Duncan Bowie** on  
revolutionary cosmo-  
politanism

**REVOLUTIONS WITHOUT BORDERS**  
Janet Polansky (Yale University Press \$25)

**T**his is a study of links between American and European revolutionaries in the late 18th century. Other writers tend to focus on Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. Polansky's study takes a much broader if somewhat episodic approach. Her sources include the memoirs and correspondence of revolutionary travellers and diplomats. Perhaps unusual about the study is the attention to the revolutions in Brabant (later Belgium), the Netherlands and Switzerland which are largely ignored in the academic literature on the period. Polansky has written a book on the revolution in Brussels as well as a comparative study of British and Belgian labour movements and a study of the Belgian socialist Emile Vandervelde.

The book starts by discussing a number of European pamphleteers who sympathised with the American independence struggle, including the Welsh radical



philosopher, Richard Price. Diplomats including Jefferson's secretary, William Short, who had a relationship with a French Duchess, his American colleague Joel Barlow and his wife Ruth, have significant roles in the narrative. Mary Wollstonecraft makes an appearance, so do less familiar characters such as the American Nancy Shippen, the Dutch born novelist Isabelle de Charrere, the Polish revolutionary Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Swiss republican Peter Ochs, the German born French diplomat Louis Otto and the Brabant lawyer Henri van der Noot.

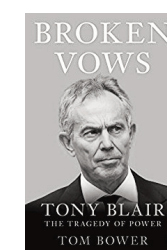
There is extensive coverage of

the independence struggle in Haiti including the period before the revolt led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, studied in CLR James's famous volume on The Black Jacobins and a chapter on the settlement of Freetown in Sierra Leone as a refuge for freed slaves. It was the last chapter on 'armed cosmopolitans' that I found most intriguing; it follows the story of the Jacobin export of their revolution to Ireland (sponsoring Wolfe Tone's unsuccessful rebellion), Geneva, the Brabant, the Rhineland and northern Italy, where initial support for local republicans soon became imposed occupation and governance by French military force, which in the case of northern Italy, became the dictatorship of the young Napoleon. Throughout the study, Polansky focuses on the personal relationships of her characters, involving transnational relationships and often transatlantic separations. The book also presents an interesting study of the interaction of nationalism and transnational cosmopolitanism. A path-breaking and fascinating book.

## A reminder of Blair's record

**BROKEN VOWS: TONY BLAIR - THE TRAGEDY OF POWER**  
Tom Bower (Faber and Faber, £20)

**Patricia d'Ardenne**  
on power  
and  
corruption



**T**here are few books that acknowledge thanks to an author's libel lawyer but after 20 pages of Tom Bower's latest portrait of Blair - it becomes clear that he needed the protection of David Hooper throughout the production of this damning account of Blair, in power and in decline. In forty nine chapters, he attempts to describe a political life that was entirely consistent with the character and abilities of the man.

He reveals from 1997 onwards that Blair was good at winning elections, promising much, a New Labour which could modernise Britain, achieve social justice and equal opportunity for all, it would rebuild schools, hospitals and welfare services. Those heady post election days are evocatively described. We all had hope.

Bower reveals immediately why the fairy godmother could never have granted so many wishes. Blair had not and could not develop policies, he had a poor

head for detail, he found decision making very difficult, he ignored much of the help offered by civil servants, he simply ignored bad news and relied from the start on his spin doctors to change reality to suit his purposes. He made a series of inappropriate cabinet appointments (Dobson and Prescott do not emerge well from this text) and abused power to evade those more critical of his style and content. He showed an uncritical adulation for wealth and courted those who could be corrupted. He famously became the poodle of the US, all this before and during the lead up to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

How is it that the same man who risked his government to destroy Saddam Hussein, and Slobodan Milosevic could end up

working for and with dictators like Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, the President of Kazakhstan or Colonel Gaddafi?

Bower's basic thesis is that Blair not only sought power, he was already corrupted by it and that the young idealist of 1997 was not a different creature from the man who left office, desperate to secure his legacy in May 2007. Bower has researched hundreds of cabinet papers and interviewed Whitehall officials, politicians and the military. The facts speak for themselves, although Bower has an unfortunate habit of making unnecessary personal comments when history has already judged his subject. We could have seen more about the man who now has to face the implications of the Chilcot Inquiry and who continues to charge eye-watering fees for public speaking and consultancy. Perhaps the truly unexplained mystery is why Blair has still not been brought to justice and why he continues to cajole, charm and con some of the people for some of the time?



## WESTMINSTER VIEW



# Tories broken prison service

**Richard Burgon MP** says it doesn't have to be this way

**I**n February the Government published a Prison and Courts Reform Bill. The legislation is potentially the most significant set of reforms for our prison service since the Prison Act of 1952. It comes at a time of severe crisis for our prisons.

Now more than 25 years since the Strangeways prison riot and the Woolf Report, our prisons are increasingly overcrowded, with the Birmingham prison riot of December last year the starkest warning.

But the prison crisis is a crisis of the Conservatives' own creation. Our prisons have been purposefully run down by four consecutive Conservative Justice Secretaries since 2010 and are failing to deliver the effective rehabilitation we need to reduce reoffending and keep society safe.

The Conservatives inherited a prison service that wasn't perfect but was functioning effectively. Today our prisons are overcrowded, with over 60% of prisons exceeding their normal accommodation rate. My own local prison - Armley Jail in Leeds - has 1150 prisoners for an official capacity of just 669.

Cuts of nearly 30% in the Ministry of Justice budget since 2010 have hit our prison service hard.

These cuts have meant a significant reduction in the number of prison officers staffing prison landings. In 2010 there were over 24,000. Now, there's only 18,000. And only 18 prisons operate a full complement of frontline officers, according to benchmarking standards.

There is a crisis in staff retention - prison officers are leaving more quickly than the Justice Secretary can recruit them.

In the year to September 2016, despite a recruitment programme, Liz Truss lost 400

officers more than she recruited.

This has meant staff

and inmates feeling there has been a 'loss of control' and feeling increasingly unsafe.

Our prisons are increasingly violent, with self-harm, assaults and deaths at record levels. There were 113 suicides in prison in 2016 (an average of a suicide every three days) and self-harm was up by 26%, assaults up by 34% and assaults on staff up by 43%. Our prisons are failing to deliver rehabilitation and alongside a privatised probation service are failing to reduce reoffending. Probation officers are increasingly overstretched following post-privatisation staff cuts, while probation companies are struggling financially. Amidst all this, the Government has published a White Paper ahead of the Prison and Courts Reform Bill being introduced.

The White Paper makes one commendable commitment - to



**Prison Officers' Association - in dispute**

put on a statutory footing the role of the prison service. Labour believes that prisons need to reform and rehabilitate.

The White Paper made one significant confession to critics - accepting that damage has been caused by staff cuts. However, the proposal is only an attempt to introduce 2,500 new staff following the 6,000 cut.

Unfortunately, elsewhere the White Paper is big on headlines but weak on detail. Too much seems to be mere attempts at headline grabbing. Proposals on governor autonomy, expectations on staff, league tables and warm words on education, training and improving mental health provision are lacking in any real detail. There is a real lack of substance when it comes to changes to the prison estate itself and provisions for women and the ageing prison

population.

Penal reformers are demanding that the Ministry of Justice addresses overcrowding and considers sentencing policy. Lord Chief Justice Thomas has said greater use of tough community orders is needed. Former Home Secretaries Ken Clarke and Jacqui Smith have demanded a major reduction in the prison population. In recent weeks, Labour's Shadow Justice Team have met former Director Generals of the Prison Service and National Offender Management Service, including Richard Tilt and Phil Wheatley. Both have condemned Conservative cuts to the prison service and have questioned the wisdom of short sentences.

It is clear that in under-resourcing prisons, prisoners serving short sentences are not being rehabilitated. In 2014, 45.5% of adults released from prison had reoffended within a year. Of those released from a sentence of less than 12 months, 60% went on to reoffend.

Labour's challenge therefore is to address a number of key issues. The Government is failing prison staff, failing prison inmates and their families and failing the public. Serious alternatives are needed to the lack of action on reducing overcrowding, improving staffing numbers, increasing access to education and training and achieving new minimum standards on mental health provision. Labour supports the Chief Inspector and local Independent Monitoring Boards challenging the Secretary of State to take action to improve prisons.

We will be meeting staff and governor unions and representative bodies such as the Prison Officers Association and Prison Governors Association. We will be meeting service providers such as Clinks and penal reformers like the Howard League and Prison Reform Trust. Prison reform too will be addressed by Labour's National Policy Forum in the coming months and Labour members should make sure they contribute to that discussion. The prisons crisis is a reminder that prisons and probation policy is too important to left 'out of sight, out of mind'. **C**

**Richard Burgon MP** is shadow Justice Secretary

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

