

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#306 September/October 2020**

**£2**

## **Crony Capitalism**

**Prem Sikka**

**TORY BAD DEALS**

**Ann Pettifor**

**GREEN NEW DEAL**

**Dexter Whitfield**

**MAKING IT PUBLIC**

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**LABOUR FACTIONALISM**

**Glyn Ford**

**CHINA WAR?**

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

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

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

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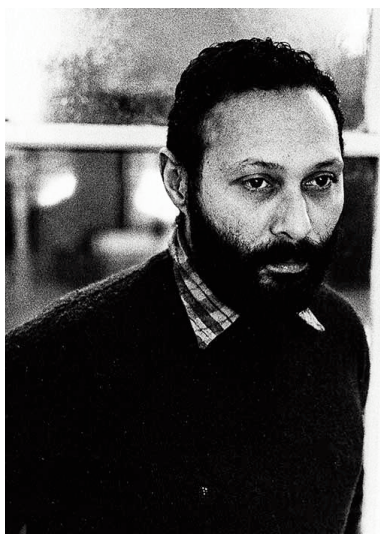
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Cover by Martin Rowson

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## OUR HISTORY

## OUR HISTORY 92

## Michael Rustin - For a Pluralist Socialism (1985)

**A**t the time this book was written, Rustin was a sociology lecturer at the Polytechnic of North London. He was a contributor to *New Left Review* and a founder member of the Socialist Society.

The Socialist Society was founded in 1981 by a group of British socialists, including Raymond Williams and Ralph Miliband, who founded it as an organisation devoted to socialist education and research, linking the left of the Labour Party with socialists outside it. The Society grew out of the *New Left Review* and many of its active members including Robin Blackburn and Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group, the Marxist feminist sociologist, Michele Barrett, and Hilary Wainwright as well as Rustin. Other active and prominent members of the Society included Richard Kuper of Pluto Press, John Palmer, the *Guardian* foreign editor and the environmentalist Barney Dickson. The Society published a magazine (*Interlink*, later relaunched under the name of *Catalyst*) and a series of pamphlets.

One of the Society's key goals was overcoming the division on the British Left between socialists inside and outside the Labour Party. To this end, the Society was jointly responsible, with the Conference of Socialist Economists, Tony Benn and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, for the initiation of a series of conferences between 1987 and 1992 which were held in Chesterfield (Tony Benn's constituency), Sheffield or Manchester. The Society was opposed to Euroscepticism and open to green politics, all of which were fairly controversial on the left at the time. Several prominent figures involved in the society, including Miliband and Wainwright, were signatories to Charter 88. Another organisational achievement of note was the founding of the Red-Green Network. The Society was wound up in 1993.

Rustin is now a professor at the University of East London. He is a regular contributor to the *Soundings* journal. He has written books on psychoanalysis, higher and further education

policy and the regeneration of East London. In 1997, Rustin contributed to *The Next Ten Years: Key Issues for Blair's Britain* and the *Kilburn Manifesto* in 2015.

"Socialists have today to be pluralist, and to acknowledge the diversity of interests and lifestyles which political programmes must reconcile. It is a difficult paradox that radical programmes must now be universalist, in seeking a common definition of social rights and obligations, and pluralist in recognizing unavoidable and indeed desirable differences in social values.... Socialists have to take account of the diversification of the social structure, as well as of the grosser phenomena of class subordination and class conflict more familiar to them from the main socialist and Marxist traditions. There is no possible return in democratic societies to simple prescriptive communities of 'mechanical solidarity', except as one available choice (e.g. a self-sufficient commune) among many. An important dimension of this pluralism is in the moral and cultural domains. The overcoming of scarcity creates the preconditions for an increasing diversity of life activities, whether expressed in the proliferation of specialized fields of knowledge, the practices of new kinds of participatory sport or expressive art, or the development of distinctive kinds of social community."

"Such a pluralism need not be merely an anodyne resignation in the face of gross inequities of wealth and power.... Freedom is not only defined in individual terms...choices are

socially constructed, and particular ways of life and spheres of value need to be defended from invasion. The one-dimensional values which typically threaten invasion in modern societies are those of capital and monolithic political or religious ideologies....The equation of socialism with monochromatic and coercive uniformity bears little relation to what most people in a modern society now want.... A pluralist approach is necessary in terms of the 'broad alliance' strategy required by socialists, as well as for more basic reasons of principle."



# Building the Labour alternative

**I**n some ways the Covid-19 pandemic has masked the realities of the challenge facing the left; in other ways it has exposed it. For almost four years Brexit tore apart the UK: whether it was geographical, social or political, where you stood on the European Union was a fundamental issue.

Whilst it was the Tory Party that seemed most at odds over Leave or Remain, Labour's 'too little, too late' position on a second referendum and failure to campaign sufficiently vigorously in its heartland 'red wall' seats for the benefits of a transformed EU membership cost it dear.

There was always going to be an entrenched right wing seeking to undermine Corbyn at every turn. The 2017 election result helped subdue but not silence those critics. Some may well have preferred to see a Corbyn-led party lose. The party inquiry needs to report on this rapidly.

Despite the talk of building a real Labour base in the 'left behind' communities the teams of community organisers did not succeed in strengthening party organisation or make the cultural transformations needed. When it came to the 2019 General election the base crumbled.

Many also argue that factionalism on both right and left that has damaged the party. **Peter Kenyon** argues that we need to get beyond this internecine conflict and acknowledge the reality that Starmer is the best hope for a Labour government.

**Tom Miller** and **Paul Teasdale** echo and expand this view in different ways. Corbyn and McDonnell do have a positive legacy. The party rediscovered its democratic socialist politics and values: internationalism, trade union action, social ownership, a humane welfare system. The voice of party members was again being heard. Conference meant something beyond a stage-managed media circus. However, democratic reforms begun were stalled, policies on immigration, defence of migrants and free movement were works in progress as were workplace democracy and transforming the world of work.

Meanwhile under cover of English nationalism and a populist rhetoric the Tories regrouped and spun a narrative that connected to a sufficient number of disenchanted voters. However, as **Sandy Martin** explains, 43% of the vote is hardly a ringing democratic mandate. Electoral reform and transformation of our antiquated institutions and constitution is urgently needed.

Covid-19 has also obscured two other epochal challenges facing our societies and the left in particular: climate crisis and the searing inequalities scarring Britain and the world. **Ann Pettifor** explains why a Green New Deal is essential for the future of working people, Britain and the planet. It is not only an environmental crisis but at root an economic catastrophe: inequality and privatised, market-led economics are a disaster for everyone. She sets out a persuasive case for change.

Coronavirus has also illustrated the malign effect of outsourcing on our health and social care systems. **Dexter Whitfield** unfolds an argument for a new deal covering integrated health and care and a socially-led environment

and industrial plan. **Prem Sikka** unmask the grubby face of crony capitalism where failed contracts for PPE are but the tip of an iceberg of corrupt diversion of billions to Tory corporate mates without proper tendering or scrutiny.

The incompetence of this government has been highlighted over the summer in the school exams results fiasco. **Dave Lister** unpicks the rolling disaster that is Tory education policy, whether its algorithms on exams, lack of support for school safety measures on reopening, callousness on food vouchers—the road is littered with U-turns. Instead of taking responsibility Johnson's ministers blame Ofqual, Public Health England, the scientists...anyone but themselves.

Education and health have not been the only areas of failure. Johnson's wrecking ball is now at work in planning and housing. **Duncan Bowie** reports on the Jenrick plan to tear up the Labour 1947 Act town planning framework removing local authority and people's rights to scrutinise development proposals, giving the green light to profiteering property developers. Little social housing will result. **Becky Ross** explains

that while homeless people were given a short respite with LAs part funded to provide hotel and other accommodation, and a short extension for renters; we will see escalation of evictions and homelessness.

Preston council with its Community Wealth Fund provides a ray of light in the darkening realm of local Councils' ability to meet local needs in the face of continuing resource cuts.

Inequality and racism have also featured during the Covid-19 pandemic with BAME communities being hard hit. Poverty and racism

explain much of this. **Don Flynn** in celebrating the work of Stuart Hall demon-

strates how this pioneer of cultural politics helped lay the groundwork for Black Lives Matter.

While **Paul Garver** analyses the prospects for unseating Trump and **Glyn Ford** looks at the growing US-China conflict, it is clear that the world desperately needs leaders with vision, humanity and a willingness to work cooperatively.

Labour's new leadership has had but a few months in the most difficult circumstances to continue the fight for a new Britain and safer world. Starmer has made mistakes, but the ten election pledges provide a radical campaign platform. They include common ownership of rail, mail, energy and water, abolition of universal credit; increasing income tax on the top 5%; reversing Tory cuts in corporation tax and clamping down on tax avoidance; abolition of tuition fees; an end to illegal wars; strengthening workplace rights; defending free movement when we leave the EU and closing detention centres like Yarl's Wood; ending NHS outsourcing; a Clean Air Act and a Green New Deal.

With a tsunami of unemployment (two million by year end), Brexit (with a probable no deal trade implosion), the climate crisis and a possible second wave of Covid-19, Labour needs to be quick-footed and smart, holding the Tories' feet to the fire while unfolding a radical alternative and strengthening the Labour coalition. Democratic socialists should be working for that aim.

**Starmer has made mistakes, but the ten election pledges provide a radical campaign platform**

# Railways: new directions required

**Paul Salvesson** on defacto state ownership and its problems

**T**he rail privatisation experiment – brave or foolhardy depending on your view – is over. The railway infrastructure, comprising land, track, signalling and stations, is already state-owned, run by Network Rail. Some franchised train operations are now run by the state-owned ‘Directly Operated Railways’ and the rest are state-controlled, with the private operators running under an ‘Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA)’ to cover catastrophic drops in ridership and revenue since the pandemic. Of course many of the ‘private’ operators are state-owned already, but it’s the German, Dutch, Chinese or French state, not ours. The only remaining ‘private’ operations are a handful of ‘open access’ services such as Hull Trains and Grand Central, and freight. In addition, there are a large number of private suppliers the most significant being the rolling stock leasing companies, owned by banks.

So does that all mean that ‘rail nationalisation’ is a done deal? Not quite, but nearly. The EMAs expire on September 20th and there is an assumption that these will be renewed to 2022. Essentially, the agreements provide for continued funding of train services operated by the private operators, with an allowance for ‘profit’, currently set at 2%. This is likely to reduce further in the new agreements, possibly leading to some of the owning groups (which include First, Go-ahead, Stagecoach, Arriva and Abellio) saying ‘thanks, but no thanks’ and returning to the less complicated job of running buses.

So what happens then? The picture across the UK reflects growing devolution. The ScotRail franchise is managed by Transport Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, which has already given notice to Dutch-owned Abellio that the franchise will end early and ScotRail will return to the public sector. The Welsh Government, through Transport for Wales, controls the franchise contracted to French-owned Keolis. Merseyrail is managed by local-government owned Merseytravel and London Overground Railways is a con-

tract let by Transport for London. What remains is managed by the Department for Transport (DfT) which is accountable to the secretary of state, Grant Shapps.

The Government knows that rail privatisation is unpopular and is in the position of being able to take a few risks that won’t upset its own supporters. Last year it commissioned ‘The Williams Review’ on the future of rail, following the shambles of the 2018 timetable change. The review, chaired by Keith Williams, has been much-delayed and there are suggestions that some of its recommendations will be quietly shelved. What is emerging as an increasingly likely prospect is for Network Rail to take control of pretty much everything – which could include a future, reformed, franchising system.

It would mean returning to a centralised operation controlled from London, at least as far as England goes. There are arguments for it – railways form a strong national network and some projects need strong central planning. However, there are downsides. The old BR, whilst permitting regional ‘devolution’ was in essence a central bureaucracy. Going back to something like that (as proposed by the Labour Party ‘Rail Policy’ paper reviewed here a few months ago) would risk throwing out a lot of babies from their bathwater.

The franchises that have worked well – and some have – share certain common features, such as Merseyrail and Chiltern. The key element is long-termism. Most rail franchises have been set for 7-10 years; railways don’t work to those sort of timescales and it’s a rotten way to retain staff and consumer loyalty. Secondly, they are quite small. Big, rambling franchises covering vast areas have proved difficult to manage. Northern is a case in point but other factors led to its demise and return to state ownership. Compare that with Merseyrail which covers a clear geographical area and is directly accountable to the regional public body, Merseytravel. London Overground Railways, covering local services across Greater London, has also developed a



**Transport for Wales service to Carmarthen**

good record and is accountable, ultimately to Sadiq Khan through Transport for London.

So the solution is? Keep the size of future rail companies quite small, though not too small; and have them there for the long-term, with a degree of commercial freedom. Regional railway companies have worked very well in Germany, with a single inter-city operator. It’s not a bad model. Ownership is less important than size and objectives but an unorthodox Tory Government might see attractions in not-for-profit companies running railways, learning from models such as Welsh Water. It makes sense for Network Rail to continue as the infrastructure owner but to cede day-to-day responsibility for track and other upgrades to the railway companies. Leave freight alone, it’s doing OK and just needs greater incentives which recognise its green credentials. The rolling stock leasing companies are a bigger problem and the best pragmatic solution is for the railway companies to buy their own trains, unless an opportunity arises to buy out the leasing companies, which would be costly. There is a need for a single ‘guiding mind’ that can safeguard network benefits – but not a ‘controlling mind’.

Now is the time to think differently and not see a return to either failed franchising or an equally discredited system of centralised state ownership. **C**

**Paul Salvesson is co-ordinator of the Rail Reform Group see [www.railreformgroup.org.uk](http://www.railreformgroup.org.uk)**

# Going green

**Dave Toke** explains how Scottish independence will boost green energy

If, as now seems likely, Scotland becomes independent in the next five years, green energy should get a major boost. A Scottish Government will have the unconstrained ability to offer contracts to supply low cost renewable energy which could be sold not only to England but also to a European continent eager for renewable energy. Meanwhile Scottish electricity consumer prices could be reduced by avoiding the extra costs of building nuclear power stations in England and Wales.

Opinion polls are showing more consistent support for independence these days, and the UK Government consistently talks to an English audience rather than a Scottish one as it negotiates the fall-out from Brexit. The story from London that surely the Scottish people prefer being run from Westminster than being run from Brussels indicates just how little they understand Scottish nationalism. Many nationalists would say that they would prefer to be run over by a bus than run by Westminster!

It is uncertain as to what level of integration with the EU would transpire, but there would certainly be a lot of interest in building more interconnectors to trade with the European continent, perhaps via Norway. The Germans in particular may well be interested in boosting their renewable energy by buying in wind power from Scotland. Although there are still substantial potentials from onshore wind and also lots of potential for solar power, even this is dwarfed by the massive amounts that could come from Scottish offshore waters, especially using the developing floating wind technologies. If, on top of sufficient renewables to power Scotland's own energy consumption, say 40GWe of offshore wind was installed, Scotland could earn a billion pounds a year if the Government charged £5 per MWh export levy. This would be a very useful sum, although only around a tenth of the income that used to come from oil and gas revenues in good years.

It seems most likely that Scotland would continue to be part of the British Electricity Transmission and Trading Arrangement (BETTA) - tearing up lots of expensive transmission



**Off-shore wind turbines in Scotland**

arrangements does not seem to make much sense to either England or Scotland. OFGEM would be responsible for electricity trading throughout Britain while control over dishing out electricity generation contracts in Scotland would revert to the Scottish Government (SG). At the moment under the terms of Electricity Legislation regulations covering electricity generation are the preserve of the Westminster Government.

The SG would have the ability to issue its own long term contracts for electricity supply (and also set up trading in demand side management). Importantly Scottish electricity consumers would not have to pay surcharges to fund new nuclear power. Hinkley C will not be online anyway by the time of independence, and certainly nothing else in the way of new nuclear. Westminster could still threaten to stop the payments of renewable energy obligation certificates for Scottish windfarms (it did in 2014), but by 2024 all of the windfarms will have paid off the bulk if not all of their bank loans anyway.

Meanwhile the Scottish Government could issue many contracts for large amounts of renewable energy for wholesale power prices that are no higher than what would be paid anyway. Currently the power to issue such contracts - called contracts for difference (CfDs) is held by the Westminster Government. But in the case of

Scottish independence this power would be held by the SG.

In the extreme event that Westminster demands that Scottish people pay for English new nuclear power stations as a condition for continued participation in BETTA (the ending of which would disrupt English electricity markets), then, at least in the medium term, Scotland could have its own independent electricity supply system.

Scotland could balance the off-shore wind variability with various methods, including bigger use of batteries to even out daily renewable fluctuations, but it could easily be 100 per cent renewable using ammonia or some other substance as a means to store renewable energy in the longer term. The renewable energy would be stored at times when electricity prices, and therefore the costs of the renewable energy, were low. Then the stored energy would be generated using what are very cheap gas turbines or gas engines when there was not enough renewable energy, battery or interconnector based etc supplies to meet demand. An ammonia based long term storage system is not just fantasy. It is coming soon. A facility to convert renewable energy into ammonia as a means of storing hydrogen is actually going to be deployed in Saudi Arabia. See also coverage of this by the new campaign 100percentrenewableuk (see website of that name). **C**

**David Toke is Reader in Energy Politics at the University of Aberdeen. He is also Director of 100percentrenewableuk.**

## LABOUR FACTIONALISM

# Labour Party factionalism – drop it or lose the next election

**Peter Kenyon** surveys the shitstorms breaking out within the party

**D**o we want to depose the Tories, or not? That is the simple question every single one of us – the half million or so registered members have got to answer. My politics are not easily labelled. While in Brownswood Ward in Hackney North CLP in the 1970s and 1980s, I was dubbed right-wing. In 2008, I was elected to the National Executive Committee (NEC) on the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CGLA) slate. I was elbowed off the CLGA in 2010, by the notoriously undemocratic Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. I voted for Jeremy Corbyn as Leader in 2015, and again in 2016. That second vote was a dogged determination not to give an inch to the Parliamentary Labour Party, which took leave of its senses when Corbyn got his personal prejudices about the European Union jumbled up with the best interests of the country. And so it goes on. Each of us has personal axes to grind.....none of it is of much relevance to whether Keir Starmer can return the Labour Party to electoral success in 2024 or whenever.

At risk of getting myself suspended or expelled, I'd venture to suggest that we all need to take a deep breath. The absence of delegate voting facilities at this year's virtual conference from the standpoint of a democratic socialist is an outrage. Am I going to campaign about it? No. The idea of party delegates squabbling in the ether over issues that detract from Labour's electability is daft. The NEC were right to take a step back and engage in some naked revenue protection ideas aka Connected.

Starmer has clearly been persuaded to win over the voters. Latest polling suggests he is succeeding. Labour is still behind the curve on economic credibility. But we are a long way from a probable election. The economic consequences of Boris Johnson have yet to be felt in any significant measure. So, if you are part of the Labour faction screaming 'but we should be 20 points ahead in the polls', count me out.

Of course, trying to make up for the £2 million annual profit from a



normal party conference wasn't the only reason for denying delegates votes. There are a number of internal difficulties arising from the perceived inability of the party administration under Corbyn to deal with allegations of antisemitism.

On 12 August 2020, the new general secretary, David Evans, issued guidance to CLP secretaries and chairs. It has not been received with universal acclaim by the membership. It is unfortunate that Evans did not take the opportunity to demonstrate his communication and governance skills by addressing each member personally. It might have been smarter to remind us all (those of us that are paid up Labour Party card carriers) that this great party of ours in law is an unincorporated voluntary association. That is, we are each individually and severally responsible for the party's finances. In practice, it is unlikely that any court action to oblige us to pay up would succeed. But, in the advice from Evans to close down internal discussion about decisions taken by Starmer and the new management he is undoubtedly alluding to it.

Those decisions are worth citing. Evans lists three areas of 'concern': the Panorama settlement, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report and the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

On the Panorama settlement he writes: "The Labour Party recently agreed a settlement with seven former members of staff who appeared on an edition of the BBC's Panorama programme, as well as with the journalist who hosted that programme. Those settlements included an unreserved apology and a withdrawal of the allegations previously made by the Party about those individuals. The withdrawal and apology are binding on the party and any motions which seek to undermine or contradict them will create a risk of further legal proceedings for both the national party and local parties. As such, motions relating to these settlements and the circumstances behind them are not competent business for discussion by local parties. CLP officers have an important responsibility to ensure that they and other members conduct themselves in a respectful and comradely manner. We therefore take this opportunity to reiterate to local Labour Parties and officers that they should be aware of the potential liabilities to them should the allegations that have now been withdrawn by the national party be repeated."

Having been engaged in libel litigation myself against Associated Newspapers while I was Chief Whip of Hackney Council, I think I understand some of the thinking that

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

might have led to that decision to settle.

In financial terms, what would it have cost the Labour Party in terms of members' contributions to continue and risk losing when compared with settling? In political terms, there was also a choice – continue with the existing policy alienating one section of society, or drawing a line and seeking to rebuild relations and win back votes, even if it upset another section of society whose votes are arguably not at risk. I have tweeted support for the settlement and am willing to support my CLP/Branch chair in reminding members that any further discussion should be ruled 'out of order'.

The second of the Pandora's boxes is the EHRC report, again I think Evans is right when he said in his missive: "On Monday 13 July 2020 the party announced that it had received the EHRC's draft report into allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party."

This draft report has been provided to the party by the EHRC on a confidential basis as part of its

investigation. When we are able to provide more information about the EHRC's report we will do so. Until that time speculation as to the contents of the report is not helpful. It is therefore not competent business for CLPs to discuss."

Thirdly, he reminds CLP chairs and secretaries about the IHRA definition of antisemitism saying: "We

**Come next Easter or hopefully earlier, we might be wondering what was the fuss about**

are aware that some CLPs and branches have had motions tabled to "repudiate" the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition of antisemitism and its examples was properly adopted by the Labour Party in

September 2018. CLPs and branches have no powers to overturn this decision. Furthermore, such motions undermine the Labour Party's ability to tackle racism. Any such motions are therefore not competent business for CLPs or branches" In this regard, he is winging it. He could have just said: let's await the EHRC report.

Beyond those issues are the allegations of sabotage of the 2017 General Election campaign by party staff, demonizing Corbyn and systematic undermining of party democracy by Starmer's new management. Come next Easter or hopefully earlier, we might be wondering what was the fuss about when Labour is 20 points ahead in the polls and the One Nation Tory revivalists are calling openly for Johnson's resignation. In the meantime, comrades, let's all take that deep breath and remember that Napoleon quote: "Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake". To date Johnson has presided over eight major policy U-turns and his premiership is just one year old. **C**

# Carry on cycling-but don't ignore those who can't

**Wendy Davis** on the pitfalls of push bikes

**I** read with interest Paul Salvesson's article in the July/August Chartist. Of course it is wonderful for those who are able to cycle to do so, and safe, segregated cycle routes should be constructed to facilitate this. However this is not the whole story.

I live in the London Borough of Waltham Forest whose Mini-Holland scheme is being promoted as a great model. The £30 million council commissioned works have caused great problems to some of the most vulnerable residents.

This is what Mini Holland has delivered:

1. The programme of 70 road closures makes for longer journeys, more pollution and congestion on main roads (where poorer people live) problems for small businesses and deliveries, dangerous reversing of large vehicles such as refuse lorries and delays to emergency vehicles. There seem to be NO benefits and certainly no way these road closures help people walking or people cycling.

ple cycling.

2. Copenhagen crossings. Another element of this ideology is the creation of "blended crossings." This is where all distinction is erased between the pavement and the road. Again what is the benefit? There appears to be none and government bodies and disability organisations have found against them.

3. Shared space. There appears to be a completely mistaken conflation of walking and cycling. Across the borough pedestrian space, much of it designed to standards set when I was Access Officer in LBWF, is being taken away to create cycle lanes, or shared paths. This leaves very narrow space for people walking, which is especially problematic in times of social distance requirements.

4. The removal of bus lanes in order to create cycle paths has caused a lot of distress to many residents. Where buses still run they are frequently delayed by the extra traffic created by narrowed roads and closed side-

streets. Many local buses have reduced their timetables. In normal times far more people depend on buses than use bicycles.

5. Floating bus-stops. Cyclists are never required to stop, so when cycle paths go past bus stops this poses real dangers for alighting passengers.

Cycling infrastructure must not be constructed in total disregard of other transport modes. Cycling can never be a majority method of travel, although of course there is scope for more cyclists than we have at present. Some people may cycle some of the time, but not when the weather is unsuitable, when they have heavy objects /shopping to carry or when they are transporting other people. Many people will never cycle at all, because of age, disability, distances involved or need to arrive in groomed state at one's destination. We must continue to cater for pedestrians, public-transport users including taxis, and those who need or want to use vehicles, preferably electric or hydrogen fuelled. **C**

# Technocracy is the enemy

Tom Miller says Labour's leader needs to find a new way to unity

**S**uperficially, the election of Keir Starmer as leader of the Labour Party represented a defeat for Momentum and the bloc that surrounds it - by and large, this tendency in Labour's membership and the trade union movement supported Rebecca Long-Bailey as a continuity pitch.

But the full truth is more complicated.

The real defeat of the post-Bennite portion of the left occurred on the night of the general election, for reasons both external and internal to the left. A healthy portion of those who backed Jeremy Corbyn in 2015 and 2016 voted for Starmer as leader, and only their participation allowed him to gain the ultimately crushing majority that he achieved - a fact with which most of the left has yet to come to terms, and that the right too conveniently forget. Starmer could not be said to have run against the left in terms of policies or attitudes, and had served as a key member of Corbyn's team.

His own origins in the party lie in a Trotskyist-adjacent position as a young activist, and his '10 pledges' made up what, in usual circumstances, we would think of as a fairly left wing platform. In his election there was consolation; faithful Corbynites had lost the membership and the subsequent election, but had strongly influenced its terms and framing. What's more, the broader left had achieved this with Starmer's enthusiastic consent, and did not have to rely much on leverage against him in order to get a pretty progressive platform.

Starmer's 'unity' messaging had focussed on bringing together trends which have been strongly at odds, recognising division itself as a threat. The initial reaction of many of his left opponents on his election was open minded and good spirited, with a general tendency towards a position of critical support and measured loyalty.

Much of this grudging goodwill now seems to have completely soured, and it is difficult to draw a clear line between where this has been valid or perhaps in bad faith. The sacking of Long-Bailey was a gut punch for Momentum-aligned members, but there is



Starmer's sacking of Long-Bailey may have soured any goodwill from Labour Left

also a good argument that whilst harsh, it was also very difficult for Starmer to do anything else. But further incidents such as a seemingly casual attitude towards BLM or existing policy have gone further to engineer a fast breakdown of trust. On the other hand, it is undeniable that Starmer is subject to strong criticism from the left over issues which his predecessor was able to float above, for example on immigration or pro-police rhetoric.

We can dismiss this latter point as opportunism, or we can try to understand what underpins it - a breakdown of trust. Where it became clear in January that the traditional left had lost touch with the majority of members, it is now also clear that Starmer risks doing the same with a substantial portion. For someone who ran on a unity platform, this has all been very quick.

Starmer is ultimately responsible for preventing and fixing it. To avoid disunity continuing as a key threat to Labour, he must permanently adapt. The alternative is to repeat what often went wrong for Ed Miliband - that context, policy and plurality all cease to matter to party members as relationship management comprehensively stalls. The measured and technocratic style of both men may have occasional

advantages in defending against mainstream hostility, but they represent mere passivity when it comes to uniting the party or sparking enthusiasm.

Parliament and mainstream press are only part of Labour's long story. Though over the years Jeremy Corbyn should have been more careful with events and allies, his involved and emotional style is one of the things we can be certain he got right as a leader. There are few regular activists who have not met him or heard him speak at an event. There are few from marginalised communities or campaigns for justice who doubt his instincts. From the left, this built loyalty and earned him innumerable passes when the going got tough.

Starmer started in the socialist left but now lacks the organic link or regular dialogue necessary to trust. Visibility, grassroots solidarity and emotional relatability are key to unlocking the unity Starmer wants to embody. Without it, he will end up mired forever in hostile Twitter discourse with a disgruntled, vocal and distracting left.

Abandoning technocracy will do more to rebuild relations with leftists than staying quiet, awarding token positions, or concentrating on Parliament ever could. If unity matters, then technocracy is the enemy. **c**

**Tom Miller is a Brent Labour councillor and co-editor of Open Labour**

# The Job of the Opposition

A good start says **Paul Teasdale** but Starmer's Labour needs to up its game against this new populist Toryism

One of the more satisfying developments of recent months has been seeing the Labour Party acting like an Opposition, doing its job, something that it has not done for some years. And that gives me some hope that although the Labour Party may be a long way from office it may nonetheless be able to help shape the path out of the crisis. This administration is unusually directionless on economic and social policy, so the potential for an effective Opposition to influence debates and give a steer to the policies of the government is greater than it has been for a long time.

The role of an Opposition is more than criticising and exposing the failings of the government; it has to try to improve public policy – whether that is amending legislation or holding ministers to account. Some people dissent from this. The Opposition lost and should let the Government get on with the policies for which it has a mandate; wait your turn. From individuals on the left I have heard that the Labour Party should let the Conservatives do their worst so voters can see them for what they are; or that by modifying policies we are tainted and implicated. Individuals may choose to opt out but the Labour Party exists to achieve the best outcomes whatever the circumstances, whether it is in office or not.

Corbyn never understood the role of the Opposition in Parliament. Opposition is a lot more than saying what you dream of doing if you were ever to be in government. That may belong to manifestos. It is not part of the day-to-day work. A more adroit Opposition leader should have been able to unseat Johnson when he split the Conservatives in September 2019.

In the current situation the Labour Party has no prospect of winning a vote in Parliament and the prospect of electoral success is a long way off – so nobody is really interested in what a Labour government would do. But the opportunities for the Opposition to shape debate and policy are greater than for a long time. We have a Government lacking the economic ideology of its predecessors, and searching for economic policies. Many on the left, writers in this magazine included, have not



**Starmer- Should combine criticism of the government's directionless policies with proposals for action**

acknowledged that the changing Conservative leadership has now abandoned most of the key tenets of Thatcherism. The Covid crisis has opened up new territory, but this Government's course towards higher spending was clear before the crisis.

Johnson does not have beliefs, just pick and mix policies. Most people who enter politics want to improve society – they have views with which you may agree or disagree. But Johnson's sole purpose is his own elevation. He is an opportunist. He wants office, but without purpose. His objective is to stay in office. There is a strong anti-democratic strain not previously seen in the UK, but already on the rise in parts of eastern Europe. Johnson and Cummings are already reducing the role of checks and balances within the state – judicial review, select committees, parliamentary debates, neutral civil servants.

But in policy areas there is no clarity of purpose beyond the slogan of "get Brexit done". It is a nationalist, populist leadership and like all such it is attracted to spending, not balanced budgets. Johnson likes grand projects and when criticised, we have already seen a readiness to spend (e.g. school meal vouchers). Populist/ authoritarian governments usually end up with high inflation due to profligate spending.

Dealing with the virus, the Government's response has been chaotic and always late. However, on the economy it has, mostly, done the right things. But it has not always done them well. There are gaps: some because civil servants were starting from scratch

because of the lack of planning for an emergency (for which past governments can be blamed). But there have been problems caused by a lack of consultation – just announcing targets.

In the months ahead Labour needs to combine criticism of the government's approach with proposals for actions.

The main criticism must be the failure to consult. This is not because of a need for urgent decisions; it is a pattern and ties in with their authoritarian, centralising tendencies. Second, social solidarity has been much stronger than the Government understands and has been undermined by the government's failure to consult (and Cummings). Third, the easiest way to help industry would be to extend the transition period before leaving the single market.

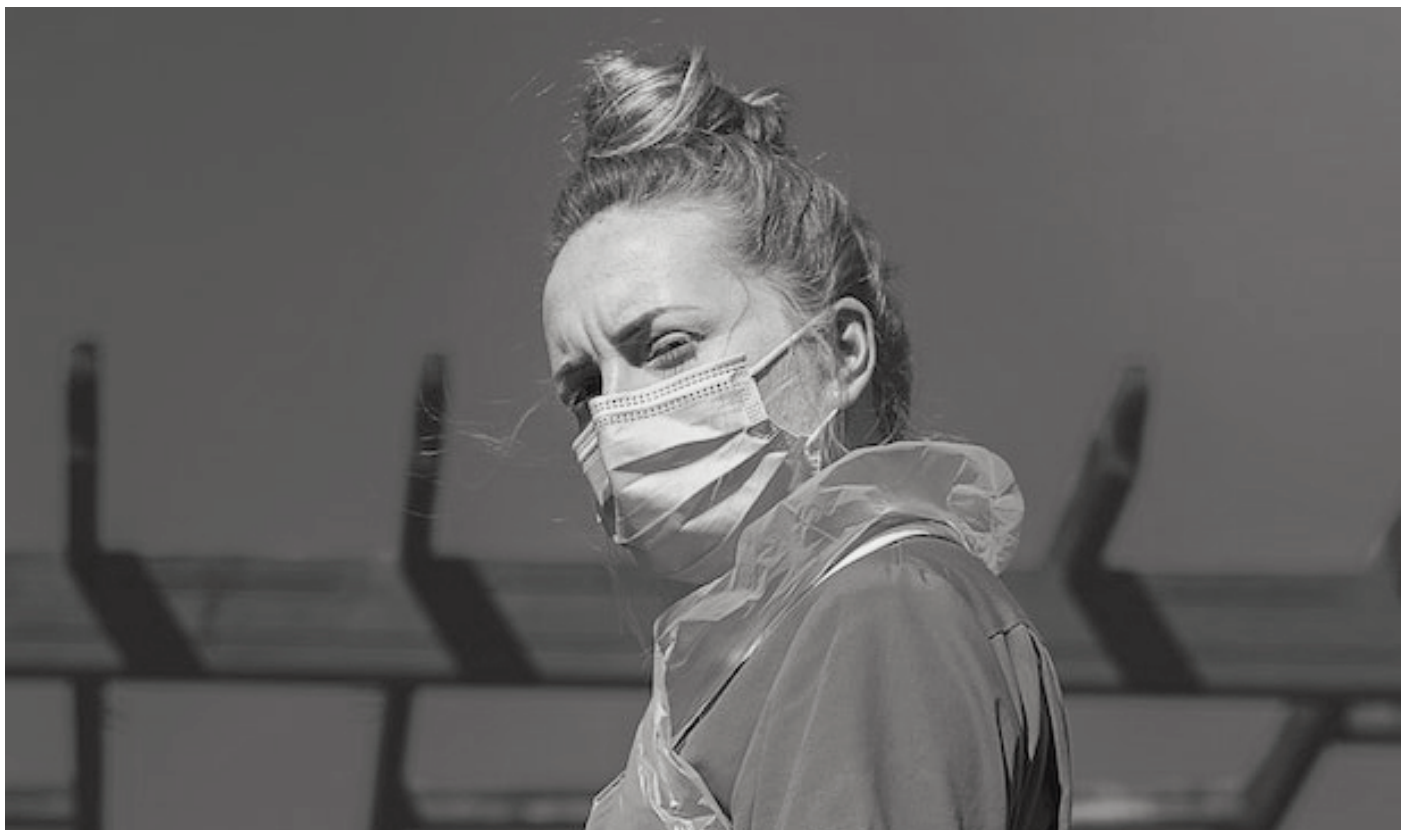
Trying to be specific with proposals, we can begin with areas where the Government has already indicated it might act but has no plan: public sector wages, an all-party approach to social care, the northern powerhouse rail schemes, increase NHS capacity. And with so many more people claiming Universal Credit there should be support for reforms.

The Government has been pushed into accepting the need for a more sectoral approach. In some sectors it will be necessary to intervene to preserve the infrastructure. Yet the Government does not consult with industry. The Labour Party should aim to lead the consultation and fill the gap. **C**

**Paul Teasdale is a member of Exeter CLP**

# Alarm bells

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed government incompetence and crony capitalism says  
**Prem Sikka**



**T**he UK's Conservative government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic has been poor. The lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) at hospitals and care homes, delayed lockdowns, delayed quarantining of foreign arrivals, the lack of an effective test-and-trace facility, and many other failures have contributed to one of the highest death rates in the world.

Avoidable deaths are not the only thing that the government is responsible for. Within the first year in office, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has squandered over £57bn on contracts that have delivered little value and pose serious questions. A comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this article, but here are some extracts which should get some alarm bells ringing.

## Fattening Corporate Coffers

After a decade of cuts, the National Health Service was in poor shape to deal with the coronavirus crisis. The obsession with outsourcing, part-privatisation

and competing health trusts made it difficult to develop a co-ordinated response to the crisis. Faced with high infection rates, negative press coverage and plummeting popularity ratings, the government hurriedly commissioned seven temporary hospital facilities (known as the Nightingale

## After a decade of cuts, the NHS was in poor shape to deal with the coronavirus crisis

Hospitals) at a cost of £346m. Only 54 patients were treated before the hospitals were closed. The government gave an impression of being in control and selected contractors made large profits.

The government claims to have spent £15bn on PPE, but the contracts did not necessarily go to companies with a track record of manufacturing or delivering PPE

to keep hospital and other front-line workers safe.

A £18.48m contract to supply PPE was given to Aventis Solutions Ltd, a small company which files rudimentary information at Companies House. Its accounts for the year to 30 June 2019 show that the company had a share capital of £12, tangible assets of £1,718 and three employees. It was awarded the contract without inviting any other competitive bid.

A £93.24m contract for PPE was handed out to Clandeboyne Agencies Ltd, a small company incorporated in 2013 and its main trade is "Wholesale of sugar and chocolate and sugar confectionery". The rudimentary information filed at Companies House shows that its issued share capital at 31 March 2019 was £4 and on 14 January 2020, another £96 was injected to bring the issued share capital total to £100. It had 14 employees, net assets of £291,026 and most recently made a loss. It was awarded the contract without any competitive bid.

Two contracts worth £108.6m

and £32.436m were awarded to Crisp Websites Limited trading as PestFix, a supplier and distributor of pest control products. Its rudimentary accounts for the year to November 2019 show that the company had issued share capital of £901, net assets of £18,047 and 16 employees. It was the only bidder for the contract. Despite the public evidence, the government subsequently claimed that there was only one contract worth £32million. However, it acknowledges that there were also a number of other contracts whose value and details are not released.

The government awarded a £252m contract for PPE to Ayanda Capital Limited. The information filed at Companies House shows that the company was incorporated in October 2017. The firm qualifies as a small company and therefore files rudimentary unaudited accounts. The financial statements at 31 December 2019 show that the company had five employees, £510,000 share capital and £44,509 of tangible assets. Former investment banker Timothy Horlick is on the company's board and its main shareholder. The entity is ultimately controlled by Milo Investments registered in Mauritius, a tax haven. The £252m PPE contract was brokered by Andrew Mills, an adviser to Ayanda's board, who is also an adviser to Liz Truss, the Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade. The company appears to have no prior experience of delivering PPE and the contract was handed out without securing any competitive bid. Ayanda seems to have acted as an intermediary to secure PPE from China. In early August 2020, it was reported that around 50 million face masks were not suitable for use in the NHS. Any action taken by the government to penalise Ayanda is not known.

Faculty, a data intelligence gathering firm, received a £400,000 contract to collect and analyse the tweets as part of a coronavirus-related contract. The company was previously hired by Dominic Cummings, chief adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, during his campaign to secure Brexit.

So what are we to make of the above? The revelations could be dismissed as examples of the usual pattern of government incompetence and negligence in managing the pandemic. However, there is more to it. The

long held government policy of securing competitive tenders has been abandoned without any prior announcement. Numerous companies with expertise in delivering were unsuccessful in securing government contracts. Instead, the contracts went to companies with little/no experience of manufacturing or procuring PPE, and some uncomfortably close to the Conservative administration. Some of the PPE supplied has been found to be unusable though full details are not known. There is plenty for parliamentary committees and the National Audit Office to get their teeth into though the government is likely to frustrate inquiries by hiding behind the cloak of commercial confidentiality.

## The neoliberal response to crony capitalism is to call for abolition of regulations

The use of untested companies to supply crucial PPE shows that the government is using the pandemic to further privatise NHS procurement. Apparently, any company will do. The evidence also shows that neoliberals have restructured the state to guarantee corporate profits even when corporations fail to deliver value.

### Crony Capitalism

Some commentators have attached the term 'crony capitalism' to the above and related revelations as ministers have awarded contracts to friendly organisations without seeking competitive tenders. However, crony capitalism is not a new phenomenon. It is in the very nature of capitalism as corporate elites enrol the state to advance their business interests. Remember how early capitalists like the East India Company were sponsored by the state (Royal Charter) to loot, murder and plunder around the globe. The loot was shared by wealthy elites and the state. The form may have changed but the symbiotic relationship between the UK state and corporations remains. Here are two examples.

In 2012, HSBC, headquartered in London, paid a fine of \$1.9bn to US authorities for facilitating money laundering by drug traffickers and governments on sanc-

tions lists. The US Department of Justice stated that the bank "accepted responsibility for its criminal conduct and that of its employees". It faced a possible prosecution and withdrawal of its licence to operate in the US, which would effectively ended its global operations. The UK did not follow-up with its own investigation, but the then Chancellor George Osborne secretly wrote to the US urging them not to prosecute the bank.

The fraud-ridden Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was forcibly closed-down by the Bank of England in July 1991. It was the biggest banking fraud of the twentieth-century. However, to this day there has been no independent investigation. A five and half year litigation brought one hitherto secret document to public attention and it shows that the UK state was far more interested in shielding wrongdoers than reforming banking regulation or protecting citizens from malpractices. The government went to enormous lengths to protect the identity of prominent Middle-East families, in case the revelations jeopardised the sale of weapons.

The neoliberal response to crony capitalism is to call for abolition of regulations and a minimal state. However, none of that would help to make capitalism ethical as markets and capitalists pay little attention to social consequences. Indeed, regulations emerged in response to the failures of markets and capitalists to have some regard to the interests of broader society.

Capitalism is incapable of being ethical as by hook-or-crook corporations seek to increase their sales, profits, executive rewards and become masters of the universe. The only long-term cure is to get rid of capitalism. However, that is not on the agenda of any major political party. Therefore, the pragmatic approach is to check predatory practices through systems of regulation and public accountability. The way forward would be to make all government contracts and related documents publicly available so that it can't hide behind the veil of 'confidentiality'. National Audit Office should be empowered to follow the money to private companies. Last year, a report submitted to the Labour leadership called for a system of regulation which is independent of government departments, so that ministers cannot stymie investigations. **C**

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# After a decade of cuts, the National Health Service was in poor shape to deal with the coronavirus crisis

**Dexter Whitfield** exposes the perils of privatisation underlined by the Covid-19 pandemic

**E**quitable Recovery Strategies addresses five political and economic objectives to achieve sustainable climate change and post-Covid-19 living and working conditions.

Firstly, new economic strategies combining Green and Integrated Public Healthcare System Deals. Decarbonisation of energy must run parallel with the decommodification of public services and the de-commercialisation of nature and biodiversity. They must be aligned with democratisation and participation and political, economic, social and environmental equality and justice (Whitfield, 2020a).

Secondly, to provide evidence of how the renewable energy sector is increasingly owned and operated by private equity funds, fossil fuel energy and oil companies and smaller renewable energy companies. Further rapid expansion of the sector and achievement of 100% decarbonisation could create a private sector monolith, largely reflecting the fossil fuel industry's corporate ownership. Thus public ownership of renewable energy generation and distribution is critical.

Thirdly, to stress the importance of achieving a fundamental change in the security, terms and conditions, training and quality of employment and in local participation in supply chains.

Fourthly, to emphasise how equality, social and environmental justice, and the elimination of discrimination, must be at the core of all policies. This must transcend all sections of the economy and be a core element of radical public management.

Finally, to identify some key organising and action strategies that trade unions, community and civil society organisations must develop to achieve effective and sustainable Green and Integrated Public Healthcare System deals.

## Political economy framework

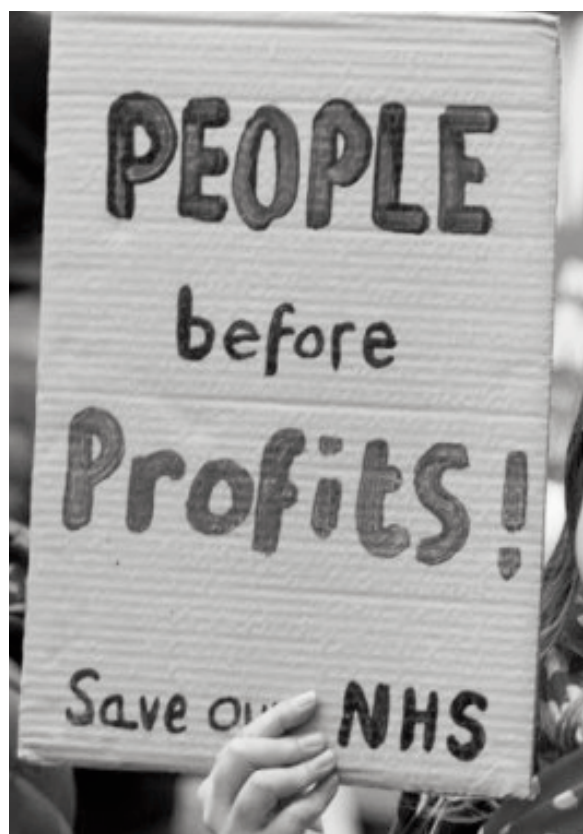
The political economy of privatisation framework developed in

Whitfield (2020) is built on the dual concepts of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003) and the primary and secondary circuits of capital (Lefebvre, 2003) within which the financialisation, marketisation and individualisation processes create the opportunities, framework and political legitimacy for privatisation. Equally important to understand is the presence and viability of national and global companies and various types of investment funds that participate in privatisation. They demand public subsidies, guarantees, grants, tax concessions and favourable regulatory frameworks as a condition of their participation in the marketisation and privatisation process.

Neoliberal ideology has had a major influence in extending privatisation beyond the sale of state-owned corporations and outsourcing of support services to encompass core services, PPPs and 'choice' mechanisms for patients and pupils. It created the conditions for the deepening of financialisation, marketisation and individualisation. Instead of the 40-year era of neoliberal ideology becoming less dominant, the post-Covid-19 pandemic recession could have the reverse impact by further embedding it in economies with devastating consequences.

Hence the importance of developing new political economy strategies combined with the Green and Integrated Public Healthcare System Deals. But we must insist there must be no austerity measures, no tax increases for employees on or below the average industrial wage, no privatisation and no reinvention of public private partnerships.

Globally, renewable energy projects are primarily owned and operated by private companies and private equity funds. Public finance is mainly used to attract private investment in renewable energy projects in both industrialised and developing economies. It is little more than corporate welfare. Direct public investment varied between



12% and 16% of the total between 2013 and 2015, averaging US\$40bn, falling to 8% (US\$21bn) in 2016 (Climate Policy Initiative and International Renewable Energy Agency, 2018). The focus is specifically on investment in renewable energy and not climate finance, which includes expenditure on transport, energy efficiency and adaption.

Renewable energy is green, but is rarely publicly owned and operated. A global secondary market operates with merger and acquisition deals that include renewable energy manufacturers, project developers, project owners and renewable energy funds which seek to increase market share. The renewable energy sector could ultimately mirror the private ownership and control of the fossil fuel sector but it will not be under democratic control and its equality, employment and social policies are likely to be 'business as



**Dexter Whitfield**

usual'.

Government and public authorities should develop a Conversion Strategy. It should consist of a national organisation or agency to develop alternative use proposals. It would identify international, national and regional demand for green products and services; provide technical support or grants to trade union and community organisations; develop national training and reskilling programmes for workers; and economic development programmes for areas affected by fossil fuel closures.

A 16-part Code of Practice for Quality Employment is for a 'just transition' and must apply to all jobs in the economy. In addition to terms and conditions, pensions, security of employment, health and safety, flexible working, training and equal pay and conditions, the Code must include redeployment, relocation assistance, changes in working practices and the application of new technology, and participation in the planning and delivery of functions and services. A commitment to in-house provision and delivery and full implementation of trade union rights and representation are also essential.

### The case for an Integrated Public Healthcare System Deal

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need to integrate public health, primary care, medical care and social care to create an Integrated Public Healthcare System. This system must integrate the core services but also the key objectives of research, disease prevention and identifying causes. Inequalities and discrimination should be eliminated alongside strategic planning, innovation, monitoring and review of the economic output and impact. Quality of jobs, skills and training, the supply chain of medical equipment, drugs, medicines and protective wear and the design and construction of facilities must also be an integral part of the public healthcare system.

Protecting and restoring nature and biodiversity have a key role in preventing the emergence and spread of future diseases and safeguarding food security. Green Deals must revert the commercialisation of nature and biodiversity, which should be treated as public goods with public protection and strong regulatory frameworks.

### Recovery strategies

Local, regional and national manufacturing production strategies must include large scale battery storage, a national high quality sus-

tainable and low cost broadband, electrified public transport and electric car charging networks. The manufacture of electric cars, vans, trucks and buses and rail (light and mainline) and electrification of remaining rail lines would have major local and national economic benefits. A National Conversion Agency should have the power to acquire, convert and adapt factories and to demolish and reclaim land and property for new economic and social use such as the manufacture of electric vehicles, heat pumps, solar panels and components for renewable energy systems.

Retrofitting public and private housing is very important because heating and hot water for UK homes accounted for 25% of total energy use and 15.3% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018. It is vital to draw on the lessons of earlier failed 'green' schemes and to recognise the complexity and high cost of retrofitting 27m public and private homes and the estimated £911bn cost. Equally important, the infrastructure programme must include a new public housing programme to meet housing needs, rising homelessness and be built to quality standards with access to public transport, schools, children's centres and public open spaces. The programme will require significant resources for flood prevention, sea wall and river basin protection works.

Public ownership and provision is essential for rail and bus transport (free in towns and cities), health, education, water services, utilities and criminal justice to include a local Public Construction Organisation to undertake housing and public facility retrofitting and repair and improvement work. Public service principles and values should replace the narrow neoliberal ideological obsession with profit, competition, markets, outcomes and entrepreneurialism.

Public provision and delivery of a universal health care system must eliminate all forms of privatisation. A programme of digitalisation and automation must be focused on meeting social and economic needs and usefulness to maximise benefits and to avoid technology-driven applications, such as those based on 'we will because we can' and aimed to 'disrupt' existing provision simply to extract profit.

The decarbonisation target will hopefully be achieved, but unless the decommodification of public services and adoption of radical public management is undertaken at the same time, a new surge of privatisation would be preceded by further

financialisation and marketisation with profound consequences for services and jobs.

### Resource needs

The economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are still unfolding with an already steep fall in GDP, a soaring rate of unemployment, rising levels of public and private debt and increasing budget deficits. However, the ending of fossil fuel subsidies, limiting tax relief and pension tax reliefs to the basic rate, increasing corporation tax by 2% per annum, a wealth tax of 1% on assets over £500,000, a reduction in offshoring and other similar measures could increase public resources by £82bn per annum – a start to more fundamental changes. Interest rates are historically low, which makes further government borrowing a viable approach.

The OECD forecast that general government gross debt as a percentage of GDP will increase from 119.9% in 2017 to 136.2% in 2021 if Covid-19 remains a single virus outbreak. It would rise to 148.6% in 2021 if there is a second outbreak. The debt/deficit hawks and the money printing advocates of Modern Monetary Theory and the high-cost Universal Basic Income model must be challenged as simplistic unsustainable solutions.

These key strategic issues also emphasize the need for organising and building alliances between civil society, community, trade union organisations and Labour. Alternative plans are essential when confronted by closures, new developments or policies that threaten living conditions, jobs and local economies. **C**

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## STUART HALL

# Stuart Hall – a theorist for Black Lives Matter

As anti-racist struggles mount world wide **Don Flynn** considers the legacy of a pioneer



Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall's life intersected with the emerging Black Lives Matter movement for just a few months before his death in February 2014. The mass protests triggered by the jury acquittal of the murderer of the black teenager, Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida, came at a moment when the death of one 17 year old African-American male could reach out from its particular context and become representative of numerous acts of racism across the Western world.

Hall didn't have time to make this enigmatic fact of representation – how one injustice could stand for many injustices – the subject of specific analysis, but anyone wishing to do so would find all the clues of what he would have said in the two volumes of his *Essential Essays*\*. At a moment when BLM has been renewed and further internationalised in significance by the police murder of George Floyd, activists within the anti-racist movement will be amply rewarded by turning to its

pages.

The foundations for the Cultural Studies analysis in which Hall's work was grounded were mapped out in the separate works of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams in the 1950 and 60s. The key to the approach was seeing culture, not as the product of intellectual processes emanating from the privileged elite, but as something which actively involved 'the masses'. It included the ways in which working class people expressed their feelings about the world, the language and the values they shared within their communities, and the moral categories used to judge themselves and others. It was active and constantly renewing itself as it was forced to grapple with the changing exigencies of life and times.

As a realm of social activity so centrally concerned with the production of meaning, Hall and his associates pitted the idea of culture against the notion of false consciousness which was wielded by supposedly orthodox Marxist currents. But because subaltern social groups had

to be seen as active in the creation of the social order in which they lived this did not mean that they were acquiescing to a capitalist world order in any simple sense. Lines of resistance to the dominance of capital stood out markedly in the stands taken against exploitation and the cultural values which raised individualist above communal solidarity.

## Base and superstructure

The Cultural Studies insistence that class interests were embodied within sets of cultural values made this a site of conflict at least as important as the more traditional Marxian concern with economic struggle in the realm of work. Though it seemed a reversal of the proposition that the economic base of society determined the character of the social infrastructure, Hall claimed a legacy in the canon of Marx's own work for the view that culture had to be accorded a degree of autonomy in the way it acted with and on the capitalist mode of production.

Hall's response to the charge of

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such a fundamental revisionism is argued in his 1977 essay, *Rethinking the Base and Superstructure Metaphor*, republished in volume one. He sets out his own, extensive reading of Marx and points to the evidence that the author of *Capital* and the *Grundrisse* had worked with a more complex understanding of the structuring of power relations within capitalism in which the 'relative autonomy' of the different segments produced an 'over-determination' of social phenomena, which gave distinct places to the forces of politics, culture and economics in forging a particular moment in time.

A constant dialogue with the respective contributions on these issues dealing with the contributions of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and the structuralists who stood with Louis Althusser, as well as others less well-known to non-academic readers, is a feature of Hall's most theoretical work and is present in many of these essays. Though sometimes daunting it helps to understand that his purpose was the eminently practical one of forging the intellectual tools that might help us to understand the contemporary problems which activists on the Left are having to face up to. At this point the analysis of race and racism becomes a central feature of Hall's work.

His background, to use his own description, as an immigrant from Jamaica following the route of the Windrush generation, is sufficiently well-known not to require any detailed comment in this short article. It is sufficient to say that it bestowed on his intellectual work the privileged position of the 'outsider' – a close observer operating with a splendid degree of detachment from the thing under observation.

### **The specificity of racism**

At this point we see that in looking at an issue like racism he insisted that generalities that grounded the problem in essentialist binaries of the 'white versus black' kind be avoided. The essay *Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance* (volume one) links his theoretical approach to what develops into an incisive deconstruction of the beast. His commitment to concrete analysis of concrete problems produces a resistance to sweeping generalisations of the kind that link contemporary racism to historical precedents like the transatlantic slave trade or colonialism. "Britain's imperial hegemony", he argues, "... alone cannot explain either the form and

function which racism assumed, in the period of popular imperialism at the height of imperialist rivalry towards the end of the nineteenth century, or the very different forms of indigenous racism [...] which has been an emergent feature of the contact between black and white workers in the conditions of post-war migration."

The second volume of essays contains more that goes deep into the heart of this approach. To explain why the labour of black people is so strongly associated with the most rigorous forms of exploitation he asks us to move away from simplistic notions of a racist form of capital that is more vindictive to people of colour and to consider instead the way in which specific forms of labour are over-determined by (among other things) cultural factors which belong to (for example) pre-capitalist formations. In these instances, "... capital can preserve, adapt to its fundamental trajectory,

## **Hall's work has helped mark out the terrain on which newer struggles will have to be fought**

and harness and exploit these particularistic qualities of labour power, building them into its regimes."

How much of this is relevant to the formation of new anti-racist struggles of the Black Lives Matter type? In this short space it has not been possible to say enough about the ways in which Hall implicates the State as an active, configuring element in the politics and culture of society. The Leninist aphorism of the State as the executive committee of the ruling class, making politics a tool for the subjugation of subaltern classes scarcely indistinguishable from police repression, is displaced in Hall's analysis by a conception which sees it as another field of struggle between opposing class interests.

The iconic work of the Cultural Studies current spelt out some of what this meant in its consideration of policing strategies directed against black youth in Britain. The study, *Policing the Crisis*, first published in 1978, looked at a moment when the first generation of British-born young blacks was reaching adulthood, with this coming at a time when the fact of

Britain's decline in the world was becoming patently obvious. A scapegoat was sought and this was provided by the mainstream media. It set about structuring perceptions of street crime, perceived to be on the upswing, and nurtured a moral panic around the figure of the 'mugger'. Little could be comprehended as to how this could acquire so much political salience without understanding how the working class was so centrally implicated in this development, actively participating as it contributed its own 'social knowledge of what was going on in its neighbourhoods to a discourse that demonised black youth.

The presentation of the elements in British society that entrenched the image of feral black youth in the popular imagination was rooted in a rigorous approach to analysis that is available to us today. Its insistence on concrete analysis, wariness of abstract generalisations, openness to finding multiple causes of events – bringing culture, politics, and economics into alignment with one another – is with us today and available to use.

High among the phenomena which require the sort of scrutiny that Hall provided is that of structural racism. With black and minority ethnic people being assaulted on the streets by police officers, over-represented in prison populations, excluded from schools and disadvantaged in labour markets, and the perennial victims of immigration policies which produced scandals arising from the hostile environment, we need to know from whence came this evil and what are the social forces that sustain it in political institutions which are supposed to guarantee our rights and liberties. Knowing this would equip us better with the political and cultural resources that will allow each and every incident of racism to be countered and dismantled.

Hall's intellectual work, and his participation in many of the projects which anti-racism generated during his lifetime, has helped mark out the terrain on which newer struggles will have to be fought. Activists in the Black Lives Matter movement will do well to consider his legacy and take it forward. **C**

*\*Essential Essays Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies*  
*Essential Essays Volume 2: Identity and Diaspora*  
 Stuart Hall  
 Duke University: Vol. 1 £23.99  
 Vol. 2 £21.99

## GREEN NEW DEAL

# The Green New Deal summarised

**P**lans and proposals for New Deals, green or otherwise, are popping up everywhere, from the US Democrats (prefigured by Barack Obama's 2008 election platform), the European Union, the British government and of course the British Green New Deal group formed back in 2007 before the last economic crisis. It is sometimes unclear what these comprise beyond the headlines and soundbites. Chartist has included some coverage, especially in issue 303 (Mar/Apr 2020).

With growing attention being paid to greening the Post-Covid crisis reconstruction, Mike Davis and Nigel Doggett talked to Ann Pettifor, economist and author of a new book 'The Case for the Green New Deal', written before the 2019 General Election. This explains the GND's origins and essentials as well as exploring the economic issues and related controversies.

Where many accounts lack depth, this one provides welcome detail behind the slogans about system



change not climate change. It explains the economic measures inspired by President Roosevelt's 1930s New Deal that are now necessary to finance a major programme to tackle the looming environmental emergency.

A welcome section deals with the circular and steady state economy alternatives to the primacy of economic growth. It also sees the term 'de-growth' as unhelpful when we should be focussing on other criteria such as employment and prosperity for all. Yet we still see changes in GDP treated as the key indicator of the health of the economy, not least

during the Covid crisis, and some economists still favour the concept of 'green growth'.

The book's back cover says "We have to Change Everything". Many people would welcome some major changes, but the forces of inertia are still strong, with a Tory government that has another four years before it has to face the electorate. After the last economic crisis the Tories succeeded in taking control of the agenda with their narrative on its causes and their disastrous austerity programme. This guide provides some pointers to help the left succeed this time. **ND**

## For an economic and a green revolution

**Nigel Doggett and Mike Davis spoke to Ann Pettifor on the Green New Deal**

### How do you see the GND playing out against the Covid crisis?

There are two roads to travel. One is the progressive one in which our leaders wake up to the scale of the climate threat and decide they are going to prepare. There are signs of that happening: little things like the French deciding to abolish burners in Paris streets.

But there are signs of a nationalist, autocratic and reactionary response too. This in some senses is the gravest threat and perhaps more likely. I hate to be pessimistic but if you watch Trump, Bolsonaro, Poland and Hungary but also the new bellicose American approach to China there is a lot for us to worry about. There is the weakness, and in some cases the collapse of European social democracy and also the Labour party's 2019 defeat. Here in Britain we have

many on the left in denial about the scale of the defeat in 2019 and, in some cases refusing to take responsibility for the defeat, while many on the right are effectively celebrating that defeat. The result is civil war inside the Labour Party, and that is not a reason for hope.

### How do you see the GND's prospects after the election loss and Brexit?

It's clear that we are cutting ourselves off from our main trading partner and that is going to have a really serious impact on the economy. We don't understand quite how bad it's going to be and the government is clearly going to blame the pandemic. Britain is in a very weak position. We are clearly aligning ourselves with the US and with the Trumpian Republican party, which is disturbing.

Our economy is largely services-based and we can't afford to

lose trading partners. I don't think people are prepared for the scale of unemployment we're facing because of Brexit and the deflationary period ahead. We don't fully understand deflation, that it increases the cost of debt and debt servicing. Many of us have very high levels of personal debt. But there is also the government's debt so deflation is a worrying development, a symptom of slump, of an economy operating well below its capacity. Some prices will rise after lockdown, but inflation only occurs when an economy operates beyond its capacity and that's not the case in Britain at the moment. The next year or so looks grim.

However there are good outcomes the pandemic has alerted us to: namely the awareness that we live in, and rely on the cooperation of communities. I live in a very conservative area in Suffolk

**Mike Davis is  
Editor of  
Chartist.  
Nigel Doggett is  
a member of  
Chartist EB**

and it was extraordinary the way people rallied round to support each other and so on. Perhaps the most inspiring fact to emerge from this pandemic is that the economy is made by us, the people. We make the economy. With the exception maybe of Jeff Bezos' Amazon, the big oligarchs, billionaires, rich footballers were largely irrelevant to the functioning of the economy. The people who mattered were the shelf stackers, truck drivers, nurses, carers: without them we would have died of disease and starvation.

Ordinary working people make the economy. Once we understand that we can work together to remake it much better than before. So let's transform the economy to prepare for the next big climate-related shock - whether pandemic, flood or fire? Another storm wrecking a major Western city would have a profound impact. Not long ago Cape Town nearly ran out of water: what if a major city runs out? We know a shock's coming because this summer the Arctic heated up well beyond the normal range and that's got to have consequences, especially for populations living below the Arctic and on an island, with seas rising.

**With the aviation industry in a deep nosedive will people be thinking about alternative forms of transport? Should we set conditions on recovery?**

The aviation industry is no longer the triumphant sector it was, and thousands of workers depend on it so, because the private sector cannot do so, government has to offer an alternative. One reason why the GND hasn't gone down well in much of the labour movement is because trade unions have long memories and remember the closure of the coal industry. The Tories under Thatcher determinedly refused to offer alternatives to miners and left them abandoned. Labour has to care about aviation workers but to do so we should care even more about creating and building alternative industries. There is no doubt that there is a huge variety of other work required, some needing the soft skills of for example, airline hostesses.

The other exciting thing, though it isn't going to have an amazing impact in the short term is the cycling revolution. Highways departments are increasingly providing for bikes and making streets more open and accessible for people. So that



is hopeful and has been driven from below.

The third thing I am positive about is that the pandemic awakened us to nature and our dependence on nature. It hasn't stopped HS2 crushing large swathes of nature but public awareness is there, and we will see more demands made of politicians than in the past.

**So what are the essential features of the GND?**

The phrase is based on what Roosevelt achieved in 1933. There was a lot wrong with the 1930s New Deal: it was racist and segregationist, not just guilty of colour but also gender segregation. Yet Roosevelt set up large conservation corps that employed millions of white men to tackle the dustbowl, the environmental crisis they faced then. Together they planted 3-4 billion trees.

Roosevelt made an extraordinary inauguration speech about the money-changers taking over the temple of our democracy and how they had to be chased out. The only alternative they offered to the financial crisis, he said, was more credit, more debt. That night he told his staff 'we're dismantling the gold standard'. That system was today's equivalent of globalisation with control of the economy effectively by Wall Street and the City of London. Roosevelt wanted to take Wall Street out of the driving seat of the economy. He wanted government to manage the key levers of

the economy: first the exchange rate. Second, the rate of interest on credit - because that is so vital to investment and therefore the economy. Also banks can create too much credit, or debt. Because credit is a social construct, a promise to pay, it can, if deregulated, be too easy to create. Bankers setting the price of credit, is like a purveyor of tomatoes setting their price. Banks can raise the 'price' of credit (the interest rate) and make huge gains effortlessly.

Third, Roosevelt understood that governments should manage the flow of money across borders, that capital mobility is important. He wanted the government to manage (I prefer this rather than 'control') these key levers of the economy.

Bankers, in other words, should not be dominant. The levers of the economy that result in employment or unemployment, poverty and inequality: those decisions deserve to be taken democratically by elected governments. So Roosevelt's administration took over these key levers - to raise affordable finance, create jobs and end unemployment. Money was found for big state investment projects but also for health, social care, social security and so on. Prosperity reigned.

We must learn from that. The economic system has to change before we can transform the ecological system That is at the heart of the GND.

## GREEN NEW DEAL

The GND group of economists and environmentalists came together in 2007 and struggled to understand each other and to integrate our ideas and policies.

Integrating the economy with the ecosystem matters because today the financial system finances the expansion of fossil fuel extraction which in turn generates greenhouse gas emissions. Also, with liberalisation and deregulation during the 1960s, '70s and '80s it became easier for almost anyone to get a credit card and go shopping, to consume beyond our means and beyond the means of the ecosystem. If we forget that we won't solve the emissions problem.

The US version of the GND does not address the issues of Wall St and the economy. It concentrates primarily on projects and employment and not Wall St – no doubt for political reasons. Biden may adopt some of the GND ideas. In Britain Corbyn and McDonnell promoted the Green Industrial Revolution which I thought was a misnomer because more industrial expansion is not sustainable.

The European Commission and its President Ursula Von der Leyen have actively promoted a Green Deal and promised to integrate it into law. This too doesn't tackle the financial sector, and the sums proposed for the EU Green Deal are too small. Some on the left denounce it but I think we need to grasp every straw. That this is an official commitment in Europe, not just a campaign commitment as in Britain and the US, is hopeful. Of course, there are powerful lobbying forces in Brussels. The fossil fuel industry is powerful and will do everything possible to undermine it, but now they have to deal with official institutions, not just activists.

I am quite excited that my book has been translated into Italian, German, and Swedish. I am spending time talking to European NGOs and the German Federal government is engaged. So am looking towards Europe with huge optimism.

The Progressive Economic Forum wrote a paper for Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell proposing radical changes to the Bank of England. We argued that the Bank of England should demand only 'green' collateral, not 'brown' collateral from institutions, like pensions funds, in exchange for liquidity. Central banks are beginning to listen to

these ideas. The big challenge is defining the taxonomy of collateral – whether collateral is green or brown. There are lobbyists in Brussels arguing that fossil fuels are green! Central banks have in the past accepted collateral that is dodgy, putting the central bank at risk. Mark Carney, no socialist, has long argued that banks, pension funds and insurance companies should be very careful about taking on collateral that may become 'distressed assets' and in future be worthless. When a pension fund can't raise central

## We must retrofit 30 million British houses by 2030 to save energy from fossil fuels and lower energy costs

bank cash because it owns 'brown' assets, it will change its tune and invest sustainably, is the argument.

This is where the Labour Movement could be far more active. Pension funds sweep up our savings, but how are they invested?

Pension funds, to deliver a pension in 30 years time needs to earn enough interest to pay pensions in the future. The safest investment is in OECD government bonds. Yet at the moment there is a shortage of government debt, because Germany, the US & Britain aren't borrowing and spending enough. We need to understand the dependence of the private finance sector on the public asset that is government debt.

**So how do you reconcile this with government debt currently at a 300 year high?**

Borrowing and debt has suddenly exploded – but that is only relative. Think of public debt as a slice of the whole economic cake. If the cake shrinks then the government share automatically gets bigger. Right now the British private economic 'cake' is shrinking – thanks to a virus. It is only the expansion of public borrowing and spending that is keeping the economy going.

Because the private sector has been so badly weakened by the pandemic, we are being sustained by government borrowing and spending on jobs. Unfortunately, unless the government reverses



policy in the Autumn, unemployment will rise, tax revenues will fall, and government debt will grow.

Unfortunately most orthodox, neoliberal economists don't care a damn. If they really cared about the government deficit and wanted to reduce debt, the best policy is for government to create jobs – because public and private jobs generate tax revenues (both income and sales tax revenues) to be used to 'balance the government's books'.

But this is where the Green New Deal comes in. It is a full employment strategy and plan.

The most vital work now is the need to retrofit 30 million British houses by 2030 to save energy from fossil fuels and lower energy costs. That is labour intensive work. It requires plasterers, bricklayers, architects, engineers, all kinds of labour. The GND is about creating jobs. The experts on technology can describe the kinds of green jobs there are: I just want to establish the economic principle of job creation as essential to future sustainability. **What are the key points we need the Labour front bench and green activists to put forward?**

I am very encouraged that Anneliese Dodds has got the job of Shadow Chancellor. Central to our economic strategy we need a Green New Deal that requires a job intensive recovery and a cared recovery. It was cleaners, nurses and carers who ensured our survival though this pandemic and that kind of work doesn't on the whole generate emissions. Labour should develop these ideas well which will be popular over time. I respect the fact the Keir is taking time to get it right because it's so important – but the climate crisis is upon us. **C**

**Ann Pettifor wrote *The Case for The Green New Deal* and recently published *The Production of Money* (Verso). She is also a Council Member, Progressive Economy Forum (PEF) and Director of Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME)**

# Unclear and chaotic

**Becky Ross** on the grim reality of the government's homelessness response

**T**he homelessness sector is at crunch point. In March 2020 at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, the Government scheme called for 'everybody in' and the media rushed to commend them for "ending homelessness". However, six months on, the media rush has stilled and councils and charities are fighting to keep rough sleepers inside as 145,000 people placed in hotels due to COVID-19 are at risk of eviction.

In some boroughs across England these evictions have already happened. In Worthing Belgravis hotel has closed with 14 people placed in 'alternative accommodation', whilst a question mark is left over what has happened to the other 36. Westminster closed hotels on the 3rd July, giving one offer of 'alternative accommodation' with one hotel remaining open for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). In Manchester the council is supporting 178 people still in hotels, stating the others have been "moved on".

The picture is chaotic. Councils across England scramble in varied responses with no direct or co-ordinated advice from central government and ambiguous references to funding. There is even less clarity for people with NRPF status. As the Independent reports; the 'Home Office [is] breaking the law by leaving destitute asylum seekers homeless'.

In the first weeks of the pandemic I supported people in hotels over the phone. The environment they described was hectic. They spoke of a high risk of infection, living around abuse and crime, isolated with little support. The temporary nature of these environments was all too evident as I listened to people's fear, not knowing when and where they would be moved.

This fear was encapsulated when a man in one hotel died in hospital for "unknown causes". As I spoke to others in the hotel to offer emotional support, there were mixed reactions. Friends grateful that this man's last minutes were not spent on the street but horrified to realise their own vulnerability exaggerated by the pandemic.

The sad truth of the 'alternative accommodation' that councils offer is that it is short-term and unsafe. It re-traumatises and dehumanises those experiencing homelessness by constantly moving them. This accommodation is not the long-term housing that people need.

Government policy and funding endlessly underestimates the scale and complexity of the homelessness issue. Like many schemes announced during the pandemic, 'everybody in' was a step we thought we would never see the current right-wing government take, but it still refuses to acknowledge that homelessness is a political choice, a consequence of decisions to cut social welfare budgets. The government fail to understand the brutal reality that people experiencing homelessness face and fail to include them in the discourse on how to solve it.

There is immense pressure on front line workers to re-accommodate people but the housing market makes it near impossible. All councils are fighting for the extremely limited amount of private rented accommodation that does not discriminate against people claiming benefits. Social housing is almost non-existent with London council waiting lists as long as six years. Migrants without access to public funds are the most destitute. With no hope of being housed long-term and with good reason feeling paranoid that they will be reported to the Home Office and deported.

Crisis reports that it would cost roughly £282 million to place people in emergency hostels for the next 12 months.

10 years of austerity has left the public sector in disarray. Social services are inundated and take months to respond. Mental health facilities at full capacity refuse to help people who have been sectioned. Workers are being asked to perform miracles in pressurised environments, with low pay, no breaks, lack of resources and no guarantee of a job in the future.

A further half a million people are at risk of becoming homeless due to job cuts and rent arrears caused by the pandemic. As winter nears charities warn of the



**Homelessness respite about to end**

risk of an all time high of rough sleeping.

Campaign groups and unions are organising. Streets Kitchen, London Renters Union, Homes for All, Labour Homelessness Campaign, UNITE housing workers and IWGB have been fighting to fill the gaps that the government has left. These groups continue to push for the systemic change this crisis calls for including a widespread demand that NRPF legislation be scrapped and councils utilise the 216,000 empty homes in England to house those in need.

To enable people with NRPF status to be securely accommodated local authorities need funding backed by clear policy and legislation. They need government support to build social homes, repurpose empty buildings and provide wrap around support for people experiencing homelessness. Local authorities must be radical and fight alongside campaigners who urge them to adopt 'no cuts budgets' and directly challenge the unclear and chaotic response of the central government. Labour councillors and members must also join the fight. It cannot be left to campaign groups alone. The 'everyone in' strategy was a step forward. While people are urged to go back to work as usual the homelessness sector must not go back to usual. Local government must keep #EveryoneIn and end deaths on our streets once and for all. **C**

**Becky Ross is a member of Labour Homelessness Campaign**

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

# The end of town planning as we know it

White Paper rejects social housing and democratic accountability says **Duncan Bowie**



**Robert Jenrick - embroiled in Westferry fiasco**

**T**he stated objective of the White Paper, Planning for the Future, published by Housing Minister Robert Jenrick, is to introduce the most fundamental reform of the planning system since the Second World War, in effect to replace the 1947 Act based regime, which is not just considered by the current government to be unfit for the 21st century, but to be responsible for the undersupply of housing and for constraining economic and business growth. No evidence is provided for these assertions.

The White Paper seeks to deliver two distinct objectives:

- to increase housing output and economic growth through deregulatory measures and
- to achieve more 'beautiful' developments.

There is no recognition that there may be some incompatibility between the two objectives. The government has been assisted by an advisory group, none of whom is either a qualified planner or represents a planning authority. It is understood that Dominic Cummings had some role in working up the policy proposals, and no doubt in drafting the appalling rhetoric in the Prime Minister's preface to the document. The document gives little thought to potential implications of the proposals or

to transitional arrangements.

The White Paper proposes to repeal existing planning legislation and to replace the current planning framework with a simplified local plan system and a severe curtailment of the process for determining applications for individual developments by a planning authority. There are no proposals for strategic planning at an inter-authority level and the current requirements in relation to the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities will be abolished. The fundamental basis of the post 1947 system that local authorities should control land use appears to be abandoned and replaced with a simplified zoning approach – the Local Plan should comprise three zones – a growth zone, a renewal zone and a protected zone.

Development proposals within growth and renewal zones would normally receive automatic 'in principle' development consent without any assessment by local authority members or planning officers and without public consultation. There would be no ability for a local authority to negotiate with a developer to improve a proposed scheme.

The urban design-based approach set out in the second section of the white paper is a parallel approach to the statutory planning approach set out in the first section.

It is important that quality and sustainability are incorporated in a planning system, but these factors must be based on objective criteria not subjective factors. Moreover, neither 'quality' or 'sustainability' are equivalent to 'beauty', for which there is no objective and measurable criteria. There is no recognition that some of the design requirements set, so far as they are specific, may have an impact on access to development in terms of affordability. Georgian mansions in Belgravia may be an ideal design, but few can afford to live in them. Aesthetics is replacing the historic notion of planning as a mechanism for achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability and for reducing social and spatial segregation and inequality.

Over the last decade or so. The Labour Party has failed to grapple with the planning system and recognise both the positive and negative consequences of planning. A more substantive critique of government policy by some of my academic colleagues has just been published by the TCPA: The Wrong Answers to the Wrong Question : <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/the-wrong-answers-to-the-wrong-questions>. Planning is an important tool for achieving a socialist society. We should give it much more attention **C**

**Duncan Bowie, as well as being Chartist reviews editor, has been strategic planner for the London Mayor, a university planning lecturer and published a number of books on housing and planning policy. A longer version of this article can be found on [www.chartist.org.uk](http://www.chartist.org.uk)**

# The Preston model – a rebirth of municipal socialism?

**Gordon Benson** looks at an innovative community wealth creation scheme

**C**ommunity Wealth (CW) building has become a buzz concept. John McDonnell set up a dedicated unit. *The Guardian*, the economic press and even the Jeremy Vine Show have publicised the 'Preston model' of CW. CW aims to improve local wellbeing by improving wages and employment conditions of local workers. This is achieved by a number of policies, the main one being local procurement of public services by 'Anchor Institutions', including the University of Lancashire (UCLAN), Preston City Council (PCC), Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, Community Gateway Housing Associations, Preston College and Cardinal Newman College. The model also promotes worker co-operatives, local ethical investment from public pension schemes and community banking.

The Preston Model is based on the work the Democratic Collaborative (DC) has done with the Anchor Institution in the 'rust belt' city of Cleveland, USA, in championing local procurement and developing the Evergreen work co-operative based on the Mondragon model. The work of DC was promoted in the UK by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), an 'independent think and do tank realising progressive economics for people and place'. Since 2012 the new Labour administration in Preston City Council, CLES and DC worked together in developing a model that fits Preston's circumstances.

The Preston model's impact on Labour has resonated with McDonnell setting up a CWB unit within the Party to promote it. The model has also had an impact in Europe. Preston has run two EU funded projects to develop best practice in socially responsible procurement. In 2018 CLES set up the Community Wealth Building Centre of Excellence.

Municipal Government promoting local procurement is not new, there have been a number of initiatives over the years, many focusing on enabling local firms to deal with the tendering process. Recent changes to both EU and UK legisla-

tion affecting procurement has enabled local authorities to include measures to improve social conditions within the tendering process. In 2008 CLES worked with Manchester City to develop an ethical procurement policy to increase the local spend of the council and improve employment conditions. Unlike Manchester Preston has included all the anchor institutions in the procurement project which has significantly increased its impact.

Since 2012 the approach has had a measurable effect on the Preston economy. By 2018 procurement from institutions rooted in Preston retained within the city was £112.3m - a rise of £74m from 2012/13. "Within the wider Lancashire economy (including Preston) £488.7m of spend had been retained, a rise of £200m from the baseline analysis". Since the inception of the project, 4000 extra employees in Preston are now receiving the Real Living Wage and Preston was named 'Most Improved City in the United Kingdom' in 'Good Growth for Cities 2018'.

Another difference to other procurement initiatives such as Manchester is the development of worker co-operatives to fill gaps in local provision of services. The form of co-operative being promoted is the Mondragon model where the members build up capital in the enterprise. In Cleveland this has enabled many African American employees of the Evergreen Co-operatives to build up a capital reserve for the first time.

The problem is that co-operative development is not an easy proposition particularly in enterprises that may employ a significant number of people. The Mondragon co-operatives based in the Basque Country have been particularly successful but they grew in unique circumstances in Francoist Spain. Their growth has slowed over recent years particularly since the beginning of the 2008 economic recession with their flagship enterprise Fagor, the white goods manufacturer, being wound up in 2011, unable to weather the financial storm.

In Cleveland Mondragon has helped the Democratic Collaborative to develop co-opera-



tives to fill gaps in supply provision to the Anchor institutions. The original plan was to develop a co-operative a year with a target of ten. Difficulties have meant four have been created so far. They are now looking to purchase existing businesses and turn them into co-operatives.

Co-operative development started in the UK in the 1980's supported by local Labour Councils. Lancashire County Council set up the Lancashire Co-operative Development Agency in 1984 which supported co-operatives into the 2000s, registering nearly 200 co-operatives businesses. None of those still exist. However, of the three worker co-operative already around in 1984 two still exist, Single Step wholefood co-operative and Ludas Dance both in Lancaster. The problem was that CDA's were under political pressure to create co-operatives and ended up registering businesses where there was little co-operative ethos.

In 2019 a package of £764,680 was announced by Preston City Council to develop ten co-operatives based on the Mondragon model provided from a mix of sources including the Open Society Foundation and the City Council. Business Advice will be provided by Mondragon, Co-operatives UK and UCLan. It sounds like a substantial sum of money but judging from past experience it's a tough target.

The Preston Model of ethical procurement and maximising the use of local assets such as public sector pension funds brings results. However, the development of co-operatives needs greater caution. It's a work in progress. **C**

## CHINA

# Back to the future?

**Glyn Ford** follows the unfolding US/UK conflict with China and examines prospects for a future war

**B**eijing rightly stands condemned for its massive over-reaction to problems in Xinjiang of Uyghur separatism and associated terrorism. Equally its reneging on the deal with the UK that in accordance with the 'one country, two systems' principle Hong Kong's existing system and way of life would be unchanged for 50 years until 2047 is shocking and disconcerting. Yet while condemning both, we need to be all too careful of fellow travellers intent on whisking us to war.

Donald Trump, all of whose decisions are calculated to promote his re-election, after first fawning over China's President Xi - even endorsing Uyghur internment - has reversed course now initiating a trade war with Beijing. He attempts the military encirclement of China with a new nest of military alliances and put an embargo on Chinese trade. Johnson took the shilling and signed up to this new 'coalition of the willing'.

He jumped to avoid being pushed, by rebel backbenchers in the China Research Group (CRG) colluding with a Labour Front Bench mating ethics with expediency. Johnson concluded that with the US now denying sales of key components to China's telecom giant Huawei his decision in January to let the company supply up to 35% of Britain's 5G network must be reversed at a cost of a cool £7 Billion. Simultaneously the armed wing of the CRG floated the UK's new aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth off to the South China Sea to help enforce America's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'. A foreign policy priority missing from December's Tory Manifesto.

Here, according to Washington, a new maritime front line is necessary with Beijing making impossible territorial claims - contrary to the Law of the Sea Convention - to the Parcel and Spratly islands that stretch in a long tongue past Vietnam and the Philippines to Malaysia. True China did sign the Convention, while the US still hasn't. In 1945, after the victory over Japan,

Washington ordered the return of both sets of islands, occupied by Tokyo during the war, to the Republic of China. It was only with Mao's victory that the islands' ownership became problematic.

Britain is not alone in being sucked into this swamp. Japan's Shinzo Abe and Australia's Scott Morrison have recently signed a bilateral military co-operation agreement, while talks are underway with Modi's India to pull them into the package. After all China has been provoking clashes in the last months in the Galwan Valley. The first mover is less clear. Back in 1962 the two sides were briefly at war with Beijing blamed. It was only in 1970 that Neville Maxwell (India's China War), a scholar leaning in the direction of Delhi, concluded that in fact they were responsible.

While in South Korea the Pentagon is threatening 'your money and your life', simultaneously demanding Seoul pays cost plus 50% for the US troops on the Peninsula and pushing for the development of a 'blue water' navy to join the flotilla helping to ensure a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'.

It's only par for the course to see that Donald Trump's deeply unloved G7 Group busily being re-purposed in Washington, transmuting this intergovernmental economic organisation into a security driven Democratic 10 (D10) in opposition to Beijing. Surprise, surprise Trump unilaterally decided the new members - to join Japan - will be Australia, India and South Korea. One wonders quite why Australia gets the nod. Its population is smaller than Madagascar and right in the centre of the action is Indonesia the world's fourth largest country and largest muslim state.

As for trade the pandemic woke up the UK - and EU - to its criminal over-dependence on China and India for PPE. That was neither the fault of Beijing or Delhi, but London and Brussels. Diversification of supply and strategic stockpiling makes as much sense now as it did a decade ago, but then Tory austerity was shouting too loud for it to



CCP Congress

be heard. The idea that Huawei should have a 100% ban on security grounds is frankly laughable. It is certainly not inconceivable that Huawei's technologies might have backdoors, although despite all their looking no intelligence agency in the US has found one as yet. Yet it was only a decade ago we all discovered that the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Agency with the help of GCHQ in Cheltenham via their Echelon system were routinely intercepting the world's telephone calls and emails. You can't swing a stick in Cheltenham without hitting a fluent mandarin speaker! Certainly at EU level you'd want to ban Huawei and the US competition and rely on indigenous technology. If you're going to pay over the odds for an inferior product at least make it domestic.

Back in 1940 the US embargoed all oil exports to Japan which ushered Japan's military planners to Pearl Harbour. The attempt by Washington to interdict Beijing's high tech sales around the world, if even partially successful, will have us back to the future with a new over-arching cold war around which proxy wars kill millions. It's in the EU and UK interest to leave well alone. Labour's Front bench should protest, not pander. **C**

**Glyn Ford was a Labour MEP**

# Uproar in schools

**Dave Lister** looks at the rolling disaster that is the government's schools and exams policy

**A**s we approach September, the Government's plan for all pupils in England to return to school is coming closer. On the one hand this is a positive development because most pupils have missed a lot of schooling and it will help to relieve the burden on parents who work. On the other hand, there are clear risks of further spreading the pandemic, particularly to staff and children's families. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine, was quoted in *The Observer* (2 August) as saying that "our studies show that, across Europe, closing schools is the single factor most strongly associated with drops in infection rates". The Government has however indicated that in areas of local lockdown schools could be closed.

In previous articles we have highlighted the confused performance of our Tory Government in this area with its U-turns and abandoned promises. The record of the devolved education administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland has been significantly better. Perhaps this is not surprising considering that the secretary of state for education is Gavin Williamson, who has a somewhat chequered record, including the time when, as defence secretary, he thought he was Lord Palmerston and sent a warship to Ukraine, helping to ramp up tensions with Russia. He was then booted out of the cabinet by Theresa May, accused of leaking information from a National Security Council meeting, which he of course denied. This would surely have been considered a strange appointment if we had a normal government.

At the time of writing we have had a further fiasco over A Level results in England. Marina Hyde pointed out in *The Guardian* that Williamson only had five months to come up with an effective method for calculating grades! Instead he relied on Ofqual's algorithm, which downgraded 40% of the marks. This unfairly advantaged private school students and hit students in disadvantaged areas disproportionately. Following an outcry from students, schools, parents and even some Tory MPs we have had another Government U-turn and teachers' predicted grades will now be used. Similar decisions have been made



**Schools are also facing financial pressures despite additional funding from the Government**

in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, this has created problems for universities who will either have to create excess places or disappoint some students. Williamson meanwhile has given no indication as yet that he intends to resign.

Arguably it would be better to continue in September with the "bubbles" system of maybe half a class/group attending on a rota basis. Some issues worth considering are

- Can you enforce social distancing on children travelling to and from school?
- Does it make sense for children from age 11 to have to wear masks in shops but not in school?
- The Government wants schools to consider using sanctions including fines against parents if their children do not return to school. Is this justifiable? Will schools agree to do this in any case?
- The guidance allows for "extremely clinically vulnerable" teachers to return to school. Could this be a potential death sentence?
- Where is the Government's Plan B to deal with the situation in the event of a spike in infection generally?

Schools will have to deal with children who are anxious after not being in school for many months, children attending a new school without the normal induction process having taken place, children who have lost family members, including parents and grandparents. There are also children whose families have been badly impacted by the financial effects of the crisis coming into school hungry and with ill-fitting clothes and shoes tied together by tape

according to reports from teachers. The Government has put the emphasis on catching up on the work that has been missed, but many experts and practitioners believe that schools should devote a significant amount of time to pastoral work in the early stages of the return to school.

The Government is insisting on a return to normality in abnormal times in other ways. Thus the Early Years Foundation Stage, key stage SATs tests and GCSE and A level exams will all await students in the summer term 2021 and performance tables will make a welcome return. The National Education Union (NEU) maintains that the Sats tests should not take place, and this position is supported by a petition with thousands of signatures, and that the examinations for secondary students should be slimmed down and modified.

Schools are also facing further financial pressures despite additional funding being made available by the Government. Thus one school is spending an additional £1,150 a week on cleaning. There is also the cost of PPE equipment and some schools have had to take on additional staff whilst at the same time losing income from areas such as lettings.

Any Government would face a dilemma over how far they should open up schools in September but it is difficult to have any confidence in the ability of this low calibre Tory Government, given their previous record since March on education and the pandemic generally, to manage the education system in England effectively over the coming period. Hopefully children in the other countries that make up the UK will fare better. **C**

**Dave Lister is a member of Brent Central CLP & Chartist EB**

## US ELECTIONS

# Building on Black Lives movement

With Joe Biden choosing Kamala Harris as the first Black American female running mate **Paul Garver** looks at the prospects for Democrats and DSA in the November elections

**T**he coronavirus pandemic followed by the Black Lives Matter protests has been reshaping the political terrain. The ongoing pandemic is damaging Trump. His bumbling ineptitude and narcissistic callousness are on full display every day. The societal consequences of the economic crisis triggered by attempts to control the pandemic are devastating with no end in sight. Trump's chief argument for reelection had been the relatively strong economy, and Trump is now promoting over-hasty measures to revive the economy by relaxing safety precautions. The pandemic is therefore raging out of control in those rural and small-town areas controlled by Republican politicians too much in thrall to Trump's willful ignorance and denial of science.

The widespread and persistent Black Lives demonstrations throughout the country, led by young people of all races, are showing the power of the streets to shift popular attitudes on race and force politicians at all levels to promise reforms in policing. Progressive insurgents have been defeating middle-of-the-road Democratic incumbents in recent Congressional primaries. In a New York district, African-American educator Jamaal Bowman decisively defeated Eliot Engel, a darling of the Democratic establishment, who was endorsed by Hilary Clinton and heavily funded by pro-Israel and both Democratic and Republican political action committees. Another African-American progressive insurgent Mondaire Jones won a primary election for an open seat in a predominantly White New York suburban district, while Black Lives Matter insurgent Cori Bush defeated an entrenched Democratic incumbent in Missouri.

'Squad Members' and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib easily won their reelection primaries. It is now likely that the current Squad of four in the House of Representatives will be expanded to at least ten members after the 2020 elections. Despite the panicked negative responses from the institutional Democratic Party, the balance of power is clearly



**Jamaal Bowman- a progressive who defeated an establishment endorsed opponent in the recent New York 16th District Primary**

ly shifting towards the Left in the U.S. House, which is likely to have an expanded Democratic majority.

The fundamental tenet of Sanders' campaign was that millions of new, marginalized and younger voters would be drawn into the electoral process, which did not happen. However, it now appears that the massive and sustained Black Lives Matter protests are being accompanied by a strong Left electoral surge, at least in major metropolitan areas. It remains unclear whether Biden can harness that surge.

Sanders may have withdrawn prematurely from the Presidential race. The pandemic is dramatically demonstrating the defects of employer-based insurance by threatening tens of millions of newly unemployed with loss of their health coverage. The costs of Medicare for All and a Green New Deal jobs program pale in comparison with the huge sums of money now being poured into financial and fossil fuel corporations as temporary bailouts. By withdrawing from the Presidential race, Sanders failed to accumulate enough committed Democratic delegates to ensure that the positions of his supporters would have direct influence on the Democratic Party 2020 platform.

Sanders quid pro quo was to enter into negotiations with Joe Biden to create "unity" task forces to shape the Democratic Party's platform. The six task forces were Climate Crisis/Environmental Justice, Criminal Justice, Education, Economy, Health Care

and Immigration. The Sanders and Biden campaigns each appointed a co-chair plus four additional members (Biden) and two (Sanders) for each task force. The recommendations of those unity task forces were made public in early July. In general, they would provide a comprehensive domestic framework for a decent social democratic party, although compromised short of more ambitious progressive goals like Medicare for All, Green New Deal or free higher education.

However, the Democratic Party policy committee is already watering down these task force recommendations. In any event few people actually read long form party platforms. What the electorate will be made aware of is how the candidate and the campaign present their proposals. Left to his own advisors and devices, Joe Biden is likely to follow the Hilary Clinton model by lying low and stressing the defects of Trump rather than propose any sweeping or comprehensive alternatives.

Most leaders of progressive movements and unions, following Sanders, are endorsing Biden. Less from enthusiasm but as the only available alternative to Trump's reelection. However, we cannot know yet whether sufficient numbers of their members and followers can be motivated to overcome the twin difficulties of the pandemic and voter suppression hurdles to actually register and vote in November.

Most of the voting is likely to be through absentee mail-in ballots because of the pandemic. Physical

**Paul Garver is a member of Democratic Socialists of America**

polling places, particularly in African-American neighborhoods, have been closed down, forcing long lines at those still open. We do not know the full impact of a shift to mail-in voting. Trump is opposed to its widespread use even though he and most of his advisers vote absentee themselves. But in general, poorer people still face more difficulties in voting by mail as well as in person.

Defeating Trump electorally is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for preserving democracy and advancing democratic socialist ideas. It is even possible that Trump will not willingly vacate the White House following a narrow defeat. He has dozens of ways to discredit and contest the vote, by claiming fraud and by plying upon the slow process of counting challenged and absentee ballots. Trump also has a Supreme Court majority that could award him a dubious electoral victory in a close election as it did for George Bush in 2000.

Even if Joe Biden wins the Presidential race, Republicans will continue to block any serious progressive legislation if they continue to control the U.S. Senate. A Democratic majority in the Senate is needed to block Trump if he is reelected and to pass any vitally needed legislation if he is not.

There are only marginal indica-

tions that Trump's core support bases are crumbling. He is still supported by a plurality of White male voters, by most Evangelical voters and by virtually all Republicans. The Trump administration is doubling down on those repressive and regressive measures designed to fire up that base – anti-immigrant and refugee, militarization of police forces, restricting reproductive freedom, encouragement of religious-based bigotry, destruction of environmental protections, etc.

Trump's re-election remains possible. The arcane rules of the U.S. electoral system permit an electoral victory by a popular minority, like Trump won in 2016. Republican legislatures and politicians at the state level are enacting targeted measures to discourage and deny voter participation, particularly by persons of color and younger persons.

The defeat of Sanders in the primaries, countered in part by a growing number of state and local electoral victories by the Left, suggests that, while the democratic socialist movement is increasingly relevant to U.S. politics, it is relatively strong only among younger people [of all races], those with some higher education, and concentrated in larger cities and university towns. To become a major force in national politics the democratic

socialist left has to become convincing and credible to other broader constituencies as well.

This poses a major challenge to the democratic socialist movement in the USA, and in particular to the DSA, its largest and fastest growing organization. As a 'big tent' organization that every month takes in hundreds of young people from all socialist backgrounds and none, DSA can do little more than provide a political education framework for local DSA groupings that vary widely from place to place.

I became politically active in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. We never managed to align our immediate demands with a long-term strategy for achieving political power. Part of our problem was that we felt isolated and alienated from most existing authorities, including the Communist and Socialist parties.

We are working to avoid this tragic failure to connect between Left generations happening today. The wonderfully sustained and widespread multi-racial Black Lives Matter demonstrations build on the achievements of the civil rights movement, and give us hope we can build a sustainable Left electoral and organized political movement capable of contesting for power. **C**

# Apartheid- From fact to thriller

'London Recruit' **Bob Newland** reviews 50 years of Peter Hain's anti-Apartheid activism

**I**t's 50 years since the successful Anti Apartheid Movement Stop the Seventy (South African cricket) Tour, while London Recruits 2020 marks 30 years since Nelson Mandela's release from prison.

Apartheid was defeated by a combination of mass defiance within South Africa, armed struggle by uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) the ANC's armed wing and an international campaign led by the Anti Apartheid Movement (AAM) building widespread opposition to Apartheid and an effective consumer boycott.

Escalating repression after the Sharpeville massacre (1960), the banning of the ANC, Communist Party and African Trades Unions forced the ANC to abandon mass resistance and resort to armed struggle. Following the Rivonia Trial (1963) the ANC's leaders

were in prison or exile. MK's underground organisation was largely dismantled.

As part of their efforts to keep their name alive while they regrouped, the ANC devised a plan for white youths from London (London Recruits) to travel clandestinely to South Africa to let off leaflet bombs. Thousands of leaflets declared 'The ANC lives', 'Long Live the SACP', 'The ANC will take our country back'.

'Recruits' also provided reception parties for guerrillas returning by boat after military training overseas, managed safe houses in neighbouring countries, others smuggled arms into South Africa in a safari truck.

The struggle against Apartheid took many years. In 1976 black students opposing being taught in Afrikaans led an uprising in Soweto. On June 16th police killed 170 school students and

hundreds more over the following weeks. This major turning point in the struggle led to the townships becoming ungovernable.

Military defeats in Namibia and Angola finally forced the Apartheid Regime to the negotiating table in 1990. In 1994 the first free and democratic elections led to an ANC victory.

While Apartheid is gone, much still needs to be done to overcome its terrible legacy of inequality and poverty.

**The Rhino Conspiracy. Peter Hain. Published by Muswell Press £14.99**

Peter Hain is well known by many for his campaigning role against Apartheid, while in exile from his homeland of South Africa, in particular as Chair of the Stop the Seventy Tour Committee aimed at preventing the South African rugby and cricket tours to the UK. Some

**Bob Newland was a ANC London Recruit and member of Poplar and Limehouse CLP**

## ANTI-APARTHEID

will recall his involvement in the Anti Nazi League. Others will remember him as the Northern Ireland Minister who brought about the Good Friday Agreement.

He is also a prolific author including his autobiography and books about Nelson Mandela. This is his first\* and hopefully not last venture into the world of thrillers.

'The Rhino Conspiracy' is set in the present, post Apartheid South Africa. Peter Hain's detailed knowledge of South Africa, its land, its people and its culture along with a deep understanding of the liberation struggle bring the book to life.

It combines the fight against the horrors of rhino poaching with stories from the long fight against Apartheid and the challenges of overcoming the legacy of Apartheid. It identifies the impact of corruption and 'State Capture' at the highest levels of government.

Well known characters are introduced to us, sometimes anonymously (The Veteran), as the story unfolds. Many will be recognised by those of us who know them or their role. All are described in a way that shares their experience and emotions with every reader.

As one of the London Recruits selected by 'The Veteran' to go underground in South Africa in the 1960s and 70s to assist the ANC, it was gratifying to see how well Peter Hain captured his humour, commitment, integrity and determination.

No spoilers here. The book deserves to be widely read but Hain has succeeded in combining an excellent thriller with a history lesson. Sharpeville, the armed struggle, the 1976 student uprising, the release of Nelson Mandela and the massacre at Marikana all find their place in his narrative. Central to the developing drama is the impact of the conflict facing veterans of struggle and their loyalty to their comrades and organisations when reality does not stand up to the high values demanded of them.

Activists from different generations come together to challenge the multi-million dollar business of rhino horn poaching. Hain does not hide the reality of this terrible trade. One's emotions are dragged from one place to another as the drama unfolds.

A new alliance emerges crossing old political and ethnic divides. Their enemy; a different



**Peter Hain at the Stop the Seventy Tour protests**

corrupt conglomeration of Government Ministers, their acolytes, former Apartheid assassins and foreign gangsters. We are drawn rapidly into the world of illegal rhino horn and ivory trading.

Without pausing for breath, the author who is also a key player in the story, spells out the extent of State Capture and the significant role played by western companies, accountants and banks in assisting the grand larceny being carried out at the expense of the people of South Africa. Russia, China and Vietnam also face serious questions as to their role.

Running through the narrative is the detail of the distortion of the democratic process and the misuse of the security services in a desperate attempt by President Zuma to get his chosen favourite selected as the ANC candidate for his successor in a vain attempt to continue his pillage of the resources of the country and protect himself from prosecution.

While the book exposes many of the ills of present day South Africa, it doesn't for a moment lose sight of the enormous potential existing in the very best of the Veterans of the Anti Apartheid struggle along with the rainbow generation of born frees (post 1994).

The book is an excellent read for those who know much about the struggle against Apartheid and those who don't. All will be better informed when they have finished reading it.

**Apartheid is not a game.**  
**Geoff Brown and Christian Hogsberg.**  
**Redwords £4.**

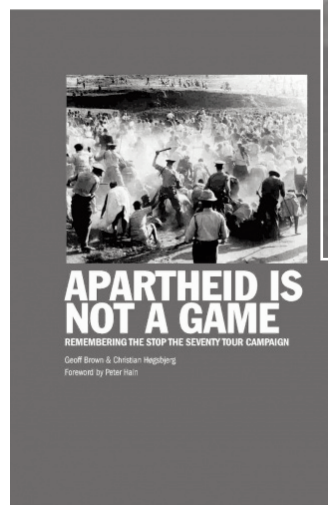
This booklet has been written to coincide with the 50th

Anniversary of the Stop the Seventy Tour (STST) campaign.

In his Foreword, Peter Hain recalls 'When around 100,000 British anti-apartheid activists mobilised to disrupt and wreck a planned all-white South African cricket tour due in May 1970, they achieved a rare outcome for a protest movement: complete success.'

The authors draw on the history of the international efforts to isolate South Africa through a ban on their white only national sports teams. The aim was to hit them in this most sensitive area for white South Africans - sport.

The booklet shows the development of the mass campaign against the Rugby tour through recollections of many of those involved. A real labour of love providing an important record of this extraordinary campaign. **C**



# Hugo's There?

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a 21st  
Century  
Les  
Misérables

Here is something you learn from the Montfermeil-set urban drama, *Les Misérables*. When the temperature is 35 degrees Celsius, as it is near the start of the film, no one wants to go out, so there is little trouble. When it is thirty degrees Celsius, you get nervous. We have seen pavement-clearing, skin-blanching days in London too this past summer. Tens of thousands have protested in support of Black Lives Matter and to denounce the recent A-Level grade debacle – assessment by algorithm. Smaller gatherings have taken place too, defending statues (one protestor asking, ‘where can I buy alcohol?’) and challenging the science behind the wearing of face-masks. ‘3.5%’ has been chalked into pavements in the street where I live – the percentage of the population required to perform non-violent direct action in unison in order to affect change. Something is fomenting, but we do not yet know what.

Co-writer-director Ladj Ly, French-born, but whose parents are from Mali, has made a film about police and immigrant tensions in Montfermeil, just outside Paris, that borrows its title from Victor Hugo’s 1863 novel. Its protagonists are three members of the SCU or Anti-Crime Unit, working the dayshift. Openly racist cop Chris (Alexis Manenti) aka ‘Pink Pig’ insists on calling his new colleague, Stéphane (Damien Bonnard) ‘greaser’, after wondering whether he put ‘engine oil in his hair’. ‘Don’t,’ Stéphane replies, tersely. Gwada (Djebril Zonga) gives credibility to the team: he can engage with the immigrant population as one of their own.

Over the course of one day, they will search for a missing lion cub, Johnny, stolen from a circus by ‘a black boy in a grey tee shirt’. Young Issa (Issa Perica) posts a picture on Instagram, identifying himself all too easily to the police. However, in the course of being apprehended, Issa is blasted in the face with a flash ball, a device ordinarily used at long range. The incident is videoed by a drone operated by Buzz (Al-Hassan Ly, the director’s son), who then goes

on the run. The team has a dilemma: take the child to hospital or stop the footage being aired.

The result is a tense and absorbing thriller that gives an insider view to life in Les Bosquets, the housing estate where much of the action is set. The SCU team negotiate the Muslim Brotherhood led by Saleh (Almamy Kanouté), who tries to get the African immigrant population to adopt Islamic values – obey their parents, avoid mischief – as well as a self-styled Mayor (Steve Tientchieu) who arranges for gilet-jaune helpers to use harnesses to deliver food in buildings where the elevator no longer

film is going, but Ly surprises us. There is a terrifying scene at the circus itself. There is also a coda, when the events of the day catch up with our trio. Ly filmed it in the building where he lived to keep costs down.

Victor Hugo set his novel in Montfermeil over 150 years ago. Ly makes the point that basic grievances remain. The population can be French cheering for ‘les Bleus’ during the 2018 World Cup Final – a set piece that opens the film – but are otherwise treated with contempt. Ly quotes from the novel: ‘there are no bad plants or bad people, but only bad cultivators’, suggesting that the systems are wrong. In an interview, Ly described the population of Les Bosquets as ‘the original gilet jaunes’ – the anti-government protestors who took to French streets from October 2018 and brought much of Paris to a standstill. Only the demands of the immigrant population are less heard, they are more like a parallel ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement.

Although Ly uses many of the conventions of the ticking-bomb police thriller, he does not aestheticize life on the street. He is not selling a soundtrack or make his cast urban style icons. We remember their faces more than their clothes. Ly gives everyone their due.

*Les Misérables* compares favourably with director Mathieu Kassovitz’s 1995 film, *La Haine*, coincidentally being re-released to mark its 25th anniversary. *La Haine* was exciting to watch and spoke directly

to its audience; but Kassovitz subsequently recoiled from heightened social-realism and retreated into genre films and acting gigs. The 43-year-old Ly, who cut his teeth in documentaries, some of them directly aired on the internet to keep their integrity, is more social commentator than visual stylist. We can expect that he will stay true to the cause.

**Les Misérables is released in UK cinemas on 4 September; La Haine is re-released on 11 September.**



works.

There are numerous stand-offs, but the best scene has Stéphane left alone by his colleagues to ask for Saleh. He tells Saleh about the missing cub. ‘A lion should not be put in cage,’ explains Saleh. ‘A lion doesn’t need to be fed; it can hunt.’ The conversation is less a critique of the practices of gypsy circus folk and more of France’s treatment of immigrants, put in under-resourced housing stock and given limited employment opportunities.

We think we know where the

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Working Class Hero

**Gill Bennett**  
on a  
towering  
figure

**Ernest Bevin: Labour's Churchill**  
**Andrew Adonis**  
**Biteback Publishing £20**

Although the 1945-51 Labour government was transformative in its achievements both domestic and foreign, laying the foundation for the domestic and international architecture of the world we live in today, the lives of its leading ministers are under-represented in scholarship. Though biographies do exist, few are recent, with the exception of John Bew's *Citizen Clem: A Biography of Attlee* (2016).

The life and career of Ernest Bevin, towering figure of the trades union movement, Cabinet minister in wartime coalition and in the first majority Labour government, was the subject of a magisterial study by Alan Bullock originally published in 1960, but has received little detailed attention since. Andrew Adonis, himself a former Labour minister, seeks to address that omission in *Ernest Bevin: Labour's Churchill*.

At 330 pages, this cannot be a comprehensive study of Bevin, who as Adonis notes spent the last 34 years of his life in 'big jobs'—leader of the Transport & General Workers Union that he founded, Minister of Labour and Foreign Secretary. What it does do is to communicate the spirit of this extraordinary man, who famously described himself as a 'turn up in a million'.

The title of the book is misleading, as Bevin is not 'Labour's Churchill': in some respects—toughness, determination to acquire and retain personal authority, sheer staying power—some compared him more tellingly to Stalin. But apart from the fact that publishers like titles with Churchill in them, Bevin and Churchill do have some characteristics in common. Both were the product of a late Victorian/Edwardian upbringing (Churchill born 1874, Bevin 1881), when the British Empire was at its height. They shared the ability to absorb information and use it to telling effect in electrifying speeches, suffered little self-doubt and were inclined to play the prima donna. But while

Churchill was more interested in power than ideology, and was willing to change parties in pursuit of it, Bevin was Labour through and through, despite attacks by those who felt his socialism to be insufficiently pure.

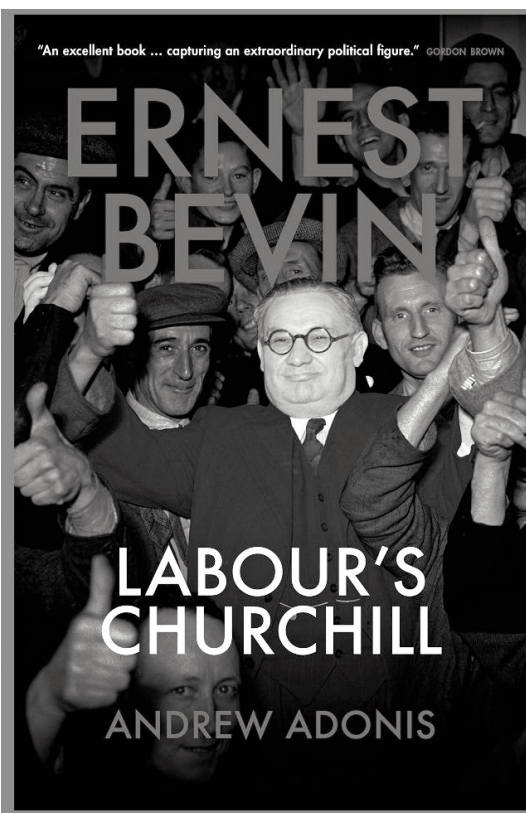
Bevin never knew his father and was orphaned at eight; by 11 he was earning his living. Still, he had learned to read and write, and later took every opportunity to improve his education at evening classes, as well as teaching Sunday School—and discussing politics—with other

He engineered the amalgamation that produced the TGWU in 1922, keeping a tight grip on that organisation until 1945. By the time he entered Parliament in 1940, he had travelled widely in the US and Europe on union business, acquiring valuable experience for the future.

For both Bevin and Attlee, service in Churchill's wartime coalition was an essential preliminary to the Labour government elected in July 1945. Bevin, as Minister of Labour, focussed on industrial issues (as well as the creation of

ENSA—he had a weakness for show business). But he also watched and learned, and when unexpectedly appointed to the Foreign Office (Attlee intended to appoint Hugh Dalton, but thought twice), he had no doubt he could do the job. During the next six years, as wartime alliance with the Soviet Union evolved into Cold War, he managed a staggering workload with poor health but complete self-belief, inspiring great loyalty in his officials and, crucially, in his Prime Minister, Bevin's closest friend. It is no exaggeration to say that without Bevin's leadership, determination and skill the foundations of Western security, including NATO, would not have been laid.

As a historian of the period, I take issue with some of Adonis's judgements. He is rather too inclined to think that certain foreign policy outcomes which now seem desirable should have been pursued by Bevin at the time, which oversimplifies complex issues. The chapter on 'Failures', which includes Bevin's resistance to decolonisation and early European integration initiatives, and determination to maintain a British presence in the Middle East, owes too much to hindsight. On Palestine/Israel, the constraints on British policy, not least from capricious counsels in Washington, were much greater than acknowledged here. But Adonis makes Bevin's indomitable spirit shine through, in a lively and interesting account that reminds us what a great man he was.



young men. This background was similar to that of others who would serve in Cabinet with him: half the ministers in the Attlee government were working class men of scant schooling who got their education through the cooperative or trades union movements.

Ernie, however, was special: quick, tough, steadfast in his belief that the road to a fairer society lay through the empowerment of the working classes. Hostile in principle to the ruling classes, he was nevertheless a pragmatist who could rub along with anyone if it got the job done.

When he first joined a union in 1910, he found his natural home.

# Improvising politics on the European stage

**Glyn Ford**  
on the  
future of  
the EU

**Alarums & Excursions**  
**Luuk van Middelaar**  
**Agenda £20**

There are those in Brussels who take the view that Britain leaving the European Union (EU) is rather like being unchained from a mad dog. The United Kingdom has consistently strangled, soiled and sabotaged all attempts to develop the Union beyond a glorified 'cash and carry'. Any progress on economic and monetary integration was to be frustrated, on common foreign and security policy subverted and on social policy thwarted. Labour was barely better than the Tories.

Blair did in 1997 tear up John Major's expensively bought opt-out on the social chapter, yet even for him Europe was foreign not domestic. He supported it much as those who don't go to football support Manchester United. Gordon Brown was worse - he didn't like 'football' at all. As Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry he crafted a thirty-page policy paper that failed to mention the EU once and never even saw the cracks.

Luuk van Middelaar is at the opposite end of the stick. For him the future is Union. There is no alternative, if the countries of Europe are not to drift to the periphery of world affairs, to the continued construction of the EU. The Union was the maths of 1945 and 1989. The short half-century between the two was just the long tail of World War 2.

The EU either lives teetering forward on the political tightrope of events or dies. There is no standing still, nor is there an iron law of history that guarantees Europe - let alone its component parts - any seat at the top table. The EU's widening and deepening happened almost despite itself. Middelaar applauds a punctuated evolution fired by crises and improvisation. That was serendipity, not a programme. As a

process its sell-by date is long gone.

Europe for too long had been haunted by the politics of Gaitskell's ghost. Its 'desiccated calculating-machine' turned and newly minted rules spouted forth. Civil society watched from afar. Lifeless bureaucracy worked when times were good. Yet threatened to fall apart in 2008 when arithmetic finally caught up with the bankers,

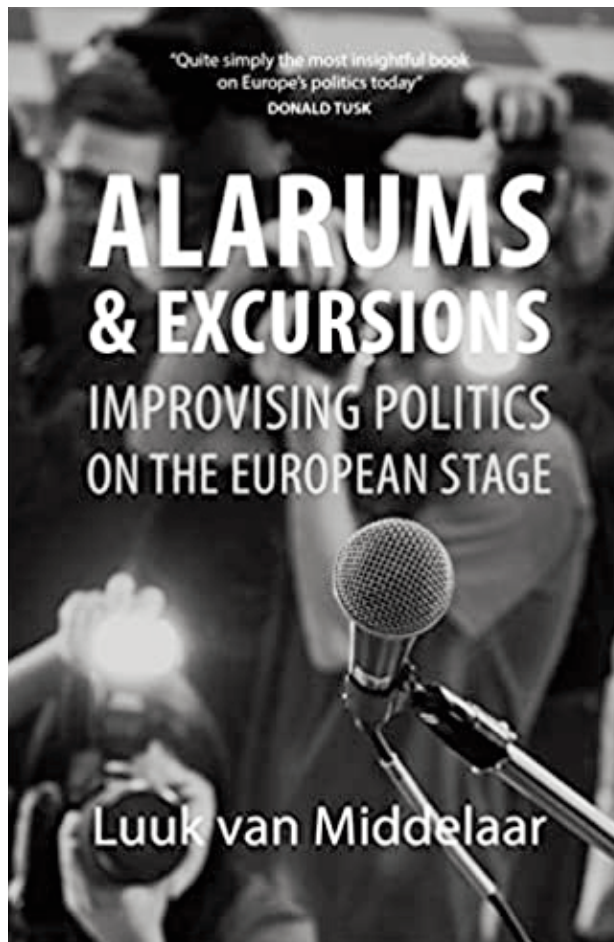
and eating it' was never an option. Cheap transactional arguments that politics can't trump prosperity don't work for German Industry, French Unions or the EU's public.

Middelaar is a conservative of choice. As a speechwriter for Herman Van Rompuy, the first President of the European Council, some of the EU's Institutions are more equal than others. It's

Council, Commission and below the line the European Parliament (EP). If the only tool you have is a hammer you treat everything as if it was a nail. Thus process innovation is the prerogative of the Council of Ministers, spinning off as they did the European Council of Heads of State, a Eurogroup of Finance Ministers and the Foreign Affairs Council.

Not unwelcome, but this is to escape only from cell to a larger prison. If Europe is to seize its citizens it must breakout and embrace full throated politics. The Lisbon Treaty made the EP the de facto Electoral College for the President of the Commission. The EP's Socialists in the run up to the 2014 European Elections- dragging the Christian Democrats and other political groups behind them - seized the day and selected their Spitzenkandidaten (lead candidate) for Commission President.

Then the Socialist Group conspired in a deal with the Christian Democrats. Whichever Group has most MEPs after the Election takes the Presidency. The deal held despite the rage of Heads of State. Jean-Claude Juncker's election by the EP delivered the Union's first political Presidency. Now in the present EP, despite Council subversion, there is 'Government' and 'Opposition' and the embryo of a Common Programme. The future battle-grounds are prepared. Even outside of the Union its in the interests of us all that democracy betters authority. Middelaar may not be coming our way, but he maps the route.



upended Robin Hoods stealing from the poor and giving to the rich, and doing it badly. It was Lisbon that offered an escape. The question was to where?

Alarums & Excursions traces the processes and decisions that incorporated, enlarged and created fresh competences for the EU to deal with errant banks, fleeing migrants Somali pirates and - even now - raging pandemics. Plus the vital issue of enhanced Common Foreign and Security Policy as the EU metamorphoses from 'soft' peace project to 'hard' power. As a book it would have explained to Britain's Brexiteers why 'having your cake

## BOOK REVIEWS

# British Socialists and the outbreak of WW1

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on  
diverging  
Socialists

**The Drums of Armageddon**  
**Ian Bullock**  
**Bonchur Press £7.99**

**B**ullock has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the content of three British socialist journals in the six month period July to December 1914. The SDF/BSP's Justice, Robert Blatchford's Clarion and the ILP's Labour Leader. The journals have recently been made available on-line through the British Library's newspaper archive, though Bullock had to work from microfilm, doubtless a hard slog.

The book presents the most detailed study yet of attitudes to the war within the various sections of the British socialist movement. As is generally known, the Clarion supported British intervention in the war and was at times jingoistic. The ILP was largely pacifist and opposed British participation, while Justice, edited first by Harry Quelch and then by H W Lee, both members of Hyndman's 'old guard' was largely supportive while the SDF/BSP was to split with an internationalist group establishing their own journal,

The Call, in 1916.

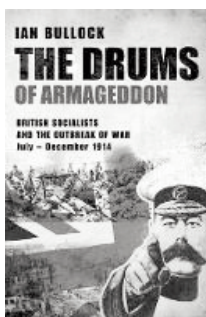
Bullock does not just follow the editorial line of the three journals and the contributions of the big names but also examines the letters written to the journals by socialists across the country. This demonstrates the diversity of opinions and the extent to which editorial positions were challenged within the journals. For example, the Old Guard SDF/BSP leadership were increasingly challenged by internationalist members who countered the leadership's support for British participation in the war.

The quality of contributions and the arguments presented within them are generally high and show a good knowledge of international affairs, including the diplomatic manoeuvres of the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey. Bullock also provides useful biographical footnotes on some of the lesser known contributors and on the political context of some of the contributions.

While many writers have stressed the divergence between the ILP/Labour Leader on the one hand and Clarion and Justice on the other, Bullock also demonstrates the extent

of agreement – for example the opposition to the campaign for conscription (which was not actually introduced until January 1916), and the collaboration in defence of wartime working conditions. All the journals and socialist parties supported working class representation in the Workers War Emergency National Committee initiated by the Labour party with Labour's Jim Middleton as secretary.

Bullock also tracks the attitude of the different journals to new organisations such as the Union of Democratic Control (of foreign policy) and the No-Conscription Fellowship, both of which were largely led by the ILP cooperating with radical liberals and pacifists. This is an excellent study and certainly adds to our knowledge of the response of British socialists to the outbreak of the First World War. It's a subject as important as their response to the two Russian revolutions of 1917, which has been the subject of a much more extensive literature, including Bullock's previous book – *Romancing the Revolution*.



## From Attlee to Brexit

**Peter  
Kenyon**  
on a pivotal  
moment in  
UK history

**Europe and the decline of social  
democracy in Britain**  
**Adrian Williamson**  
**The Bodley Press, £25**

**F**orget 1984, think 1988. We have all had plenty of time to reflect on how the British electorate voted to leave the European Union. Adrian Williamson has probed deeply. He examines what has helped bind our society together – what he describes as social democracy. Then how it has been stripped away. That is just the first chapter. But it sets the scene for more detailed accounts of the intervening periods in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 describes 'A European Love Affair 1960-73'. Chapter 3 recalls the 'Voices of Dissent' in that same period. Not forgetting that the 2016 EU Referendum was not the first, Chapter 4 examines 'The Referendum and its aftermath, 1975 to 1983'. Chapter 5 is entitled 'The Tories Turn Against Europe, 1983 – 2005'.

For this reader, that Chapter is key. Chapter 6 highlights 'Labour Changes Position' during the same period. The book culminates with

Chapter 7 examining the 'Crisis, Renegotiation and Referendum, 2005 to 2016. Williamson's thesis is underpinned by the ideological threads of British political economy since World War II. In his Introduction he explains: "for all its untidiness and incoherence, 'social democratic' remains an apt description of the loose bundle of policies adopted by UK governments before the advent of neo-liberalism."

As Williamson painstakingly chronicles, in the wake of Labour's defeat in 1979 (after bending its knee to neo-liberalism under Prime Minister James Callaghan), there was no attempt to re-establish that post-war social democratic consensus even during 13 uninterrupted years of so-called Labour governments from 1997 to 2010. The tipping point for Britain is embedded in a speech made by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Bruges, 20 September 1988: "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels."

Her Damascene moment was the

appearance less than two weeks earlier by EEC Commission President Jacques Delors at the annual 1988 TUC Conference. Hitherto, she had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Single Market and promoted the Single European Act. She may have been deposed two years later, but that insight provided the dissenters, nay bastards, as her successor John Major described them, with the intellectual succour they craved and fed off right through until that fateful day of the second EU referendum – 23 June 2016. Labour prime ministers, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown never understood the importance of social democracy to Britain's engagement in what became the European Union.

Williamson in his conclusion doesn't attempt to suggest remedies. Instead he quotes Thomas Piketty: '...without a strong-egalitarian-internationalist platform, it is difficult to unite low-education, low income voters from all origins within the same coalition and to deliver a reduction in inequality'.

I just hope Keir Starmer has read this excellent book, if not that he can be persuaded to.



# How should we live now?

**David Dalton**  
on small  
socialism

**Is Socialism Feasible? Towards an Alternative Future**

**Geoffrey M. Hodgson**  
**Edward Elgar £24.95**

It's not that surprising, with many major Western economies in mothballs and the Bank of England warning of Britain's deepest recession in 300 years, that lockdown has begun to encourage a rethink of how we live. In this context, Geoffrey Hodgson's new book is timely. The author makes a renewed case for the mixed economy and for liberal (or social) democracy, as well as for cautious, experimental reform. Against the small state, laissez-faire liberalism resurgent from the 1970s, he develops a more socially conscious strand of liberal politics. He also musters a strong case against 'big' socialism, or systems in which state ownership and central planning are extensive.

The discussion of the book is split into two. The first half offers an overview of socialist-style experiments, large and small, and of key lessons to be drawn from them. The second half examines the question of individual choice, concluding that informed choice is needed to ensure that individual preferences are not overly swayed by special interests. He argues that property rights, far from arising spontaneously, are constituted by the state. This feeds into a broader claim that, in the most successful modern economies, the state and the market work together. The author singles out the Nordic countries as worth learning from, owing to their

high levels of income, welfare and well-being.

Many of the charges that Professor Hodgson levels against 'big' socialism are not new. When lined up side by side, however, their force is hard to deny.

Politically, the main argument against large-scale state ownership is that, in the absence of economic pluralism, the fusion of political and economic power undermines democratic practices and bodies. The point is fleshed out using the examples of the Soviet Union and Hugo Chávez's

Venezuela.

Economically, the first argument focuses on the tacit nature of much knowledge in a modern economy. Among the author's examples of tacit knowledge are riding a bike or learning a foreign language. Picked up by imitation and habituation, these can be hard to articulate fully. In the economy, this means that a lot of useful information exists only at the local level, remaining inaccessible to central planners. Markets, by contrast, can Hoover up local information continuously, repackaging it as price move-

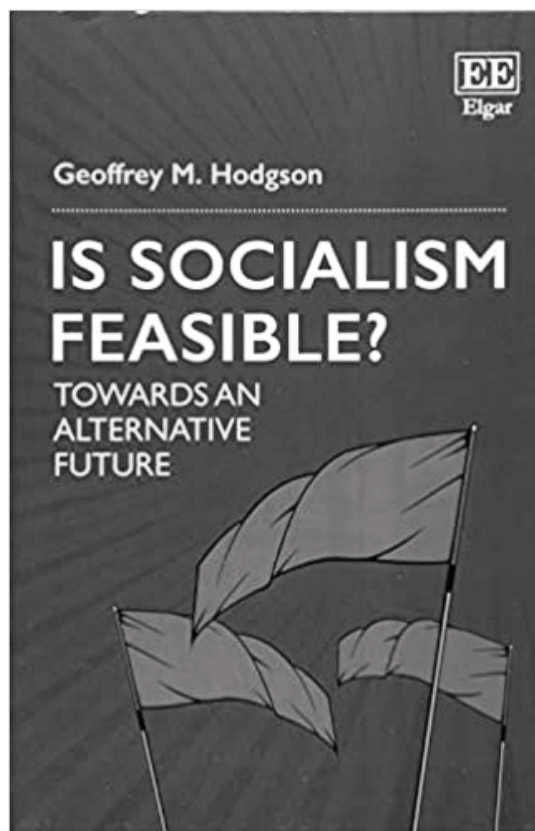
behaviour as it alters. A second key economic argument against 'big' socialism is the problem of material incentives, which for each individual are diluted as the scale of an operation rises, affecting effort and innovation.

Democratic civic control of economic life has sometimes been proposed as a way to prevent the overconcentration of power. However, as Hodgson points out, other than at a broad, guiding level, routine mass voting on every economic decision would be impractical.

Much of the above is convincing and ties in with more detailed studies of Soviet-type economies. However, some of the author's arrows seem off-target. Today, the resurrection of comprehensive economic planning is not a serious proposal for many socialists. More typical is the call for public provision of essentials, especially in areas in which the effects of market failure are most severe. Rather than wholesale workers' control, many would think an extension of workplace participation a good starting point. Rather than direct, detailed participation in economic decision-making, a more typical contemporary proposal might be for local budgetary participation, in which communities, informed by specialists, have a say in the broad direction of spending priorities. These ideas overlap with some of Hodgson's own policy suggestions.

In this review, I have only scratched the surface of this book, which addresses some important questions of how we should run our political and economic lives. It is a substantial piece of scholarship with which socialists and social democrats should be willing to engage, even if they do not agree with the author at every turn.

It is not hard to admit that post-war, West European social democratic capitalism has been a historical high point for working people; or that any worthwhile version of socialism would have to at least incorporate some of its best ideals. However, it would be unnecessarily bleak to conclude that this was as far as humanity was going to get.



ments, which indicate where production should be expanded or cut.

This case is associated with Ludwig Mises and Friedrich Hayek. However, Hodgson is keen to stress the contribution of Albert Schäffle, who in the 1870s warned that, in the absence of markets, administrative coercion takes the place of material incentives; and of Michael Polanyi, who elaborated on the superiority of markets over hierarchical organisations in adapting to change, because of their greater flexibility in handling information flows. This allows decentralised economic actors to react to each other's

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Millennials as the new working class?

**Don Flynn**  
on the  
politics of  
the new  
generation

**Generation Left**  
**Keir Milburn**  
**Polity £9.99**

The entry of people of the millennial generation into political life can be dated to the protests waves which took place in 2011. In the UK these took the form of a mobilisation against student debt involving marches and occupations and, at one point, an invasion of the Tory party headquarters in central London.

Right wing cynics spout the theory of a 'snowflake' generation which was rejecting the call to start behaving like responsible adults. Outside this country, actions like the occupation of Zuccotti Park in New York and the 'Indignados' who took control of Puerto del Sol in Madrid, appeared as a delayed reaction to the financial crisis of 2008 and its long aftermath.

The young in the prosperous, developed nations of the world seemed to be declaring a generational war on their parents, blaming them for bringing the promise of comfortable, middle class lives to a crashing end.

## Less generational

But is generational war the right way to characterise the conflict? In this stimulating extended essay on what he calls Generation Left, Keir Milburn offers a sophisticated alternative interpretation. Hinging on the concept of 'class composition', he sets out an analysis presenting capitalism as a system which periodically has to review and change the social processes that bring the working class it needs into existence.

The system's move to financialised forms of accumulation in the late 20th century made the extraction of value in the form of rent more central, requiring a working class willing to shoulder a greater burden of personal indebtedness to sustain its standard of living. Wage growth had been checked back in the 1980s by the state's successful assault on trade unions; but for a few decades at least the income flows that made it possible to service credit card bills and overdrafts came from the increased value of the homes which working class people were now acquiring through the right-to-buy scheme.

By the turn of the millennium this mechanism was no longer performing. The dearth of new home building severely restricted access for millennials to the asset which their parents had depended on to support their comparatively affluent lifestyles. Young people coming into adulthood faced the prospect of being racked not just by the debts loaded onto their credit cards, but also exorbitant property rents and the lifetime of repayment needed to service loans taken out as students.

Milburn argues that debt had been one of the most important means to maintain order among the subjects of capital during the post-Thatcher decades, requiring the values of the neoliberal world order to be internalised by each individual citizen.

This might have gone on indefinitely but for the stupendous effects of the credit crisis that hit the world in 2007-8. The austerity that followed allowed a rupture with the 'common-sense' that sustained the 'realism' of the capitalist system.

## Political forms

The essay traces the evolution of the new awareness of exploitation that established itself in the minds of millennials. The protest movements started to look for ways in which this emerging class consciousness could engage with politics, evolving through the forms of 'Occupy' and the personal testimony offered by the general assemblies being promoted as alternatives to conventional representative democracy.

These were all processes to be worked through before the idea took hold that a long-established, though minority current already in the political mainstream could be seized and made into the means for expressing power. This was the Corbyn current that came to have its unexpected day at the helm of the Labour Party. The energies of Occupy and general assembly politics poured into initiatives like Momentum and The World Transformed.

This is an exhilarating account of the new forces in contemporary politics. It does not stop at recounting history but points to the challenges of the current moment, when Generation Left will have to find the way to mend the breaches with older supporters of versions of left-wing politics. These failed to renew the commitment to the change they had once advocated. A continued engagement on the part of Generation Left with the mainstream, probing its obvious weaknesses and coming up with strategies for the alliances that will be needed for the revitalisation of democratic socialism is looked forward to as the conclusion of this important essay.



**Printer ad**

# Honouring the Dead

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on  
communist  
anti-Nazis

**Anti-Nazi Germans**  
**Merilyn Moos and Steve Cushion**  
**Community Languages/Socialist History**  
**Society £10**

**T**his book is in two parts. Merilyn Moos provides a comprehensive study of Communists who fought (and mostly died) against Nazism in Germany. Cushion's shorter piece provides a catalogue of Germans, and soldiers of other nationalities within the German army – Yugoslavs, Italians, Russians, Poles and Ukrainians, who deserted and joined the French resistance.

Moos has previously written a biography of her father Siegfried, who was one of the Communist resisters, who escaped to England to take a leading role in the German Communist Party in exile. This new study is the result of exhausting research which supplements Allan Merson's 1985 study *Communist Resistance in Nazi Germany*. While Moos acknowledges that the communist leadership failed to challenge Hitler, she

demonstrates the heroism of hundreds of communist members in challenging the Nazis both before and during the Second World War.

The early chapters provide a useful analysis of the failings of the Communist party leadership and the role of the dissidents who argued for a united front with Socialists rather than attacking them as 'social fascists' and an equivalent or greater threat to communism than the Nazis. But the strength of the book is the detailed record of the contributions of individual communists, the groups they formed and the interactions between communist groups and other resisters. With the attention given to church, military and business resistance groups in other studies, Moos quite rightly concentrates on the working class resisters. It is noticeable that the trade union movement plays a marginal role, mainly because the communist and socialist trade unions were dissolved by the Nazi government.

Moos pays special attention to the role of youth groups, many of which

were based on sporting clubs – not only do we have anti-fascists ramblers but anti-fascists canoeists.

Cushion's contribution is more anecdotal, but also depends on a wide range of sources. It is a reminder of the wide range of nationalities recruited or forced into the German army. And the number of deserters, some individually, others in groups, sometimes disposing of their German officers in the process.

Both sections of the book are enlivened by photos, some clearly taken from contemporary records but some taken more recently of survivors, many of whom produced memoirs. The book also includes short boxed biographies of some of the key individuals. The surprising number of images traced serve to make what might have otherwise been a rather dry record of successive heroics and martyrdom, much more readable. This book is not just an important addition to the historiography of Nazi Germany and the war, but also honours the memories of both the dead and the survivors.



# Red Europe

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on Stalin  
and Europe

**Stalin and the Fate of Europe**  
**Norman Naimark**  
**Harvard UP \$29.95**

**N**aimark is an American academic who has written books on the Russian zone in post-war Germany and on Stalin's genocides and ethnic cleansing in 20th century Europe. The new book presents a novel approach to post-war European politics by presenting a series of case studies of countries which tend to get less attention. There is a chapter on the Berlin blockade of 1948-9 which was a key episode in Cold War politics, covered by numerous other studies, but the other case studies include much new material. The opening chapter presents a case study of the Russian occupation of the Danish island of Bornholm. The other case studies are Albania, Finland, Italy, Poland and Austria. In each case, Naimark provides both a clear narrative and a sound analysis. His main argument is that Stalin's policy was perhaps not always as aggressive as portrayed in many Cold War studies. Stalin certainly did not want military conflict with the US or with Britain. He was seeking to increase Soviet influence and the role of com-

munist parties in both Western and Central European countries, but argued that local communist parties should work through broad fronts. Stalin accepted that Finland would not be communist dominated and his main interest was annexing the area of Karelia close to Leningrad. He sought to limit the influence of Tito's Yugoslavia in Albania. Although the incorporation of Albania into Yugoslavia was avoided, he had to accept that Hoxha's government was to develop independently of Soviet control and could not stop Hoxha supporting China in the Sino-Soviet split. Stalin's abandonment of the communists in the Greek civil war, having accepted in 1944 in the famous Moscow 'percentages' agreement that Greece would be in the Western sphere of influence, is not covered. Stalin sought to suppress the ultra-leftists in Italy and argued that they should stick to parliamentary methods for achieving power – as in France, the Netherlands and Belgium. The Italian communists participated in post-war coalition governments, with Togliatti at one time serving as deputy Prime Minister, though they remained in opposition after a poor performance in the 1948 election. In

relation to Poland, Stalin was forced to accept that a Soviet imposed leadership (which had succeeded in the cases of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria and the Russian zone of Germany) was not viable and had to accept the local leadership of Gomulka. Perhaps most interesting, is the post-war history of Austria, subject to four power occupation until 1955, but where the local communist party failed to win electoral support despite the Russian occupation of the eastern half of the country. Stalin accepted that the whole country would in effect become part of Western Europe rather than be divided between West and East as was the case for Germany.

Naimark demonstrates that behind the ideological Cold War rhetoric of Stalin and his henchmen such as Andrei Zhdanov, there was a pragmatic approach to local political contexts and a desire to avoid military conflict. This meant often taking a tough line (sometimes a terminal one) in dealing with those national communists who were enthusiasts for coups and insurrections. Naimark's excellent study is far more informative and readable than many other studies of post-war communism.



## VIEW ON WESTMINSTER



# Democracy – it's what Labour is about

**Sandy Martin is Chair, Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform and was Labour MP for Ipswich 2017- 2019**

**Sandy Martin says electoral reform is at the heart of the democratic revolution**

**T**he Labour Party grew out of several strands. The old cliché that our Party is more Methodist than Marxist is not altogether true. But, certainly, many of the founding principles of the Labour Party, and the campaigns that gave them voice and forced them onto the political landscape, have beginnings that pre-date Marx. None more so than the Chartist movement, after which this magazine is of course named.

While the trade union movement was very much focussed on securing for working people the fruits of their labour, the Chartists recognised that to achieve their aims they needed a society which was controlled by the majority, not one where concessions were dribbled out to them by patronising aristocrats in order to keep them sweet. The demand for meaningful democracy was at the heart of the Chartists' campaigns. It was the combination of the industrial organising strand – the trade unions – and the democratic justice strand, which gave Labour its powerful voice and enabled it to supplant the Liberal Party so rapidly. At the time of Labour's foundation, universal adult franchise was still being fought for. Despite the inbuilt bias of the system, the left in Britain did not repudiate Parliament, but won the power to change society by wholly constitutional means. And change it they did, between 1945 and 1951, though much of that change is now being whittled away by the Conservatives.

The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. That means something. It is not meaningful to talk about democracy when all the levers of power lie outside the remit of elected bodies. Such bodies act as a front for the exercise of corporate greed and the accumulation of private wealth, as is largely the case now in the USA and UK.

Genuine democracy requires



enough public control to effect the will of the people rather than just bleating about it. I would argue that in many cases that entails public ownership – after all, what is ownership other than the power to make decisions about something.

But equally, you can't have socialism without democracy. Without the legitimacy and accountability that come from democratic systems, any so-called socialism rapidly deteriorates into a self-serving oligarchy, as it did in the USSR.

Keir Hardie fully recognised the imperative for Labour to create a meaningful democracy alongside its mission to produce a more equal society. Keir Starmer has asked our Party to look again at the constitutional issues which are hampering our ability to transform society. Various changes are needed – the House of Lords of course, the power and one-sided bias of the mainstream media, the lack of any constitutional rights for our local government. But without control of the House of Commons, none of these can be either brought about or defended from reversal by the Tories.

Our democracy, and the social contract developed between 1945 and 1950, are being destroyed by Conservative governments elected on less than half the vote – in the current case 43.6%. That is why Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform, Open Labour, Compass, Make Votes Matter and others have come together to

make the case to our Party for a change to the way the House of Commons is elected. We know we are pushing on an open door – polls in December showed 76% of Labour Party members support Proportional Representation, and 60% of the submissions to the Justice and Home Affairs Commission in last month's National Policy Forum consultation called on our Party to adopt PR for Westminster elections. We are working towards a motion to the Labour Conference in 2021, which will commit Labour to reform of the voting system for the House of Commons. Please do look at our website - [www.labourcampaignforelectoralreform.org.uk](http://www.labourcampaignforelectoralreform.org.uk) and join us.

As Clive Lewis said, responding to the hundreds of submissions to the National Policy Forum mentioning proportional representation: "PR is not a silver bullet. But it is a stepping stone on the path to building a better, more inclusive, and more accountable political system – one fit for the myriad of 21st Century challenges before us."

We will need to win power under the current rules, of course. But once we have that power, either alone or as senior partners in the government, reform of the voting system is a necessary condition for delivering the continuity of progressive Labour-led governments which we will need if we are to set our country once more on the democratic socialist path initiated 75 years ago. **C**

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