

# CHARTIST

**For democratic socialism**

**#307 November/December 2020**

**£2**

## A burnt out case

**Richard Murphy**

**Dennis Leech**

**Hana Abid**

**ECONOMIC CRASH**

**Nick Dearden**

**TRADE DEALS**

**Paul Nowak**

**TRADE UNIONS & JOBS**

**Simon Tait**

**ARTS OBLIVION**

**Jo Grahl**

**GREEK FASCISTS**

**Olivia Bridge**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

**Plus**

**Book reviews and  
regulars**



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## Editorial Policy

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

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

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

## Contributions and letters deadline for **CHARTIST #308** **10 December 2020**

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## CHARTIST AGM 2020

As the pandemic precludes physical gatherings Chartist will hold a virtual AGM on the afternoon of **Saturday 28th** November. Following our conference theme of New Economy, New Democracy we will be reviewing the year, outlining challenges for Labour and the left and setting out political aims and ambitions for the print publication and website.

The AGM is open to Chartist supporters. For more information & joining details check the website or subscribe to our newsletter.

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Cover by Martin Rowson

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## OUR HISTORY

## OUR HISTORY 93

## Anthony Wright: Socialisms: Theories and Practices 1986

**A**t the time Wright wrote this book, he was a lecturer in political studies at Birmingham University. In 1979, he had written *G D H Cole and Socialist Democracy* and in 1983 *British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880's to the 1960's*. Wright was elected Labour

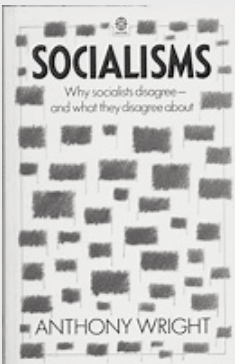
MP for Kidderminster in 1992 to 2010, retiring on the grounds of ill health. He was chair of the Select Committee on Public Administration from 1999 to 2010 and chair of the House of Commons Reform committee, popularly known as the 'Wright' committee in 2008-9. On retirement, he took academic posts at University College London and Birkbeck College. He was chair of the Fabian Society in 1999-2000. His 31 books include a biography of R H Tawney and *Values, Visions and Voices*, an 'anthology of the socialist tradition' edited with Gordon Brown in 1995. Wright is joint editor of *Political Quarterly*.

"It is not enough for socialists to argue that Western societies need socialism. They also have to offer a kind of socialism that the citizens of these societies might be persuaded democratically to want. A socialism of this kind would need to be both attractive in principle and credible in practice. This would seem to imply a number of ingredients: firstly, that socialism is primarily (though not only) a moral theory, capable of generating a set of socialist values that can be articulated and applied in terms of a coherent public philosophy. In particular, this would involve a convincing account of a socialist conception of equality

that genuinely enlarges freedom and autonomy, while also promoting community and fraternity. A socialism which takes its stand on this basis could not regard itself solely as the movement of a single class, or define itself simply in terms of the interests of a class, or define individuals only in terms of class categories, since

this would be inconsistent with its general humanism."

"However, a credible and attractive socialism would need to have some further ingredients. Above all, perhaps, it would need to demonstrate its possession of a theory of political and economic organisation that avoided mere statism. It would need to show that it knew how to abolish the capitalist forms of the concentration of power and prosperity without thereby inaugurating a new form of socialist concentration. In terms of the economy, this would clearly involve an accommodation between plan and market, in the interests of both efficiency and consumer choice, and with a range of forms of enterprise and social ownership but with a preference for the small scale and the self-managing. In terms of the political system, it would involve the democratic diffusion of power in a system of socialist pluralism rooted in forms of territorial and functional devolution, in addition to effective general mechanisms to guarantee political accountability and civic freedom. Whenever and wherever possible, consistent with general social and economic objectives, it would be an 'enabling' state, redistributing power and property in ways designed to strengthen and extend individual and group autonomy."



# Government stonewalls on justice for families

**Jo Goodman** on growing urgency for government inquiry into Covid-19 deaths

**I**t's been over three months since I last wrote for *Chartist* on our campaign for the Government to call an immediate statutory inquiry with a rapid review phase such as the Taylor report just after Hillsborough.

Unfortunately, just like the families at Hillsborough, many of those bereaved through Covid-19 are feeling forgotten about by a Government who won't even meet with us to learn the lessons from our tragedies and help save as many lives as possible.

We've written to the Prime Minister six times now and whilst he said publicly he would meet the group he then backtracked a week later citing legal action (we haven't started legal proceedings, we want to meet to avoid doing so) and now keeps saying he is meeting the bereaved. All the while the almost 2,000 bereaved in our group feel

more and more like the wrong sort of bereaved for him, simply because we have questions to ask.

What the Prime Minister seems to have failed to understand is that we aren't going away and our campaign is getting bigger and louder.

When I last wrote we had pro bono legal support and they've now been joined by other specialists giving their time for free, numerous journalists are helping highlight our stories and more and more people are offering their support, donating to our campaign and signing our petition.

I know many of those will be reading this and I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. In our moments of darkness and grief it is the kindness and decency of others that can help lift us.

We will continue to make sure that bereaved families and their needs are high on the agenda and



**Jo Goodman is co-founder of Covid Bereaved Families for Justice**

**Covid victim Stuart Goodman**

will keep doing so until the Government finally does the right thing and listens. **C**



# Deepening divisions and levelling down

**A**s widely predicted Covid-19 is now unfolding a second deadly wave. Once again Johnson's government has been caught asleep at the wheel, as with the first outbreak where we suffered poor planning, inadequate PPE, pathetic testing and tracing, delayed lockdown and vulnerable elderly people sent from hospitals to care homes with little protection.

We now face a repeat manifested as farce. The evidence: a refusal to heed scientific and medical advice from SAGE for a national 'circuit breaker' lockdown, failure to devolve an ineffective, essentially privatised test and trace system to local authorities with local expertise, a much reduced furlough job and business support scheme, Westminster government stand-offs with largely northern local leaders and so on.

Again the pandemic is hitting the poor, the disadvantaged and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities disproportionately hard. The homeless are abandoned, while child poverty rises. The government rejected Labour proposals backing Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school meals during holidays and a wider package of family support.

Capping this, we now face the prospect of mass unemployment, excess deaths running at over 60,000 on last year, U-turns on schools and listening to the science and medical advice, and top civil servants driven out. This is compounded by the prospect of a no-deal or thin deal Brexit. The inmates have well and truly taken over the asylum as the Dominic Cummings' populist ideologues take a wrecking ball to the post war social settlement.

A crash out of the EU as the transition period ends in December underlines where dogma and 'shock capitalism' ideology leads: to law breaking and a reckless disregard for people's needs. This government has torn up the international treaty negotiated and signed by Boris Johnson and campaigned for in the Tory manifesto. The supposed party of 'law and order' trashes its own laws just as it prorogued Parliament and bulldozed through the draconian legislation on Covid-19.

**Julie Ward** and **Nick Dearden** look at different aspects of Brexit. Nationalist intransigence on one hand and a refusal to enshrine agreed food and environmental standards in law on the other betray a race to the bottom mentality. Trade deals are complex and the implications of failure to agree terms with the UK's biggest trading partner (the EU has over 40% of our trade) spells chlorinated US chicken, unsafe workplaces and worse.

So Tory incompetence threatens both lives and livelihoods. The irony is that the small state, low tax, deregulated capitalism government zealots espouse has been replaced by massive state intervention more akin to social democratic governments. The scale of the spending package from chancellor Sunak at around £230 billion has seen a huge rise in national debt, while illustrating the necessity for state support and the failure of the private sector in a crisis.

**Dennis Leech** argues Labour must ditch the idea of balanced budgets and put the needs of people first in making a full break with neoliberalism. **Richard Murphy** makes a similar case for using debt and borrowing as a way to reboot the economy.

In the face of 1980s-scale mass unemployment, **Paul Nowak** reminds us that trade unions have been in the front line of protecting workers and advocating a sustainable recovery plan. Drawing on his *Chartist* virtual Labour Party conference talk, he stresses that Sunak's second job protection plan will not succeed for millions of self employed and precarious workers. He calls for Labour to champion a decarbonised investment programme that brings workers onto boards in democratised workplaces. **Hana Abid** highlights the central role women have played in the pandemic, highlighting the Women's Budget Group report advocating a new deal for social carers, health workers and women whose unpaid or low paid work is under-recognised.

**Simon Tait** warns on the plight of the creative industries, a bigger sector than finance, which, despite limited grants in October, still faces oblivion in many places, particularly theatre and live music venues. While schools have returned, teachers have been in the front line badly let down by government says **Dave Lister**. He paints a picture of compound failure from broken promises on laptops to free school meals and lack of financial support for safety measures.

The charade of 'all in it together' is over. While SAGE, Keir Starmer, Welsh Labour leader Mark Drakeford and Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland advocate or implement a limited 'circuit breaker' to slow the virus and protect the NHS, Johnson rejects scientific advice and engages in divisive attacks on northern 'red wall' city leaders like Manchester metro mayor Andy Burnham, who make a stand for evidence and adequate financial support.

While stoking divisions with Europe and UK regions and nations the government deepens the hostile environment policies. **Olivia Bridge** and **Robbie Scott** remind us that action on Black Lives Matter is as necessary in the UK as the US. They highlight systemic discrimination and racism in our institutions from private and public sectors to immigration and criminal justice, and advocate a rounded history of black experience embedded in the school curriculum.

We will hear more divisive nationalist rhetoric as the year-end deadline for an EU deal approaches. Depending on the US election outcome, Tory populism could become shriller. In contrast Labour needs to up its game by voicing the case for ethical international agreements, the needs of all parts of the UK, respect for the rule of law and human rights, rejection of the 'spy cops' and Overseas Operations bills, as advocated by **Apsana Begum** MP, and turning the heat on government pandemic failures from test and trace to inadequate job support.

**While stoking  
divisions with Europe  
and UK regions and nations  
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environment**

# Rural reflections

Paul Salveson on pandemic peregrinations

The coronavirus pandemic hasn't had many upsides, but there are some. In a previous *Chartist* I pointed out the resurgence of cycling. Predictably, the surge has lessened as car traffic reverts to near pre-pandemic levels and the weather gets worse. But there have been signs that, overall, cycling has grown in popularity. A less quantifiable but equally important result of Covid-19 has been the increase in local walking. During the lockdown, a lot of people started to explore their surrounding countryside for the first time. Even in many densely-populated areas you're often within easy reach of countryside, or if not, municipal parks. I met lots of people venturing out onto very local footpaths, asking for directions and almost apologetically explaining "I've lived here for years but this is the first time I've ever been on this path..." For many urban socialists, access to the countryside has always been important. It was a temporary escape from mill, mine and factory. Most of us will have heard of the 'Kinder Scout Mass Trespass' of 1932, led mostly by communists such as Benny Rothman of the Workers' Sports Federation. Before then, Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* newspaper inspired a hugely popular cycling club as well as walking groups, field naturalists and botanists. The ILP Clarion House at Roughlee, beneath Pendle Hill, is the last surviving example of the network of 'club houses' which sprung up across the North of England in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A less well known event was the Winter Hill rights of way battle of 1896. I first came across it reading Allen Clarke's *Moorlands and Memories*, published in 1920. Clarke's book was based on his articles, for a very local readership, which were published in *The Bolton Journal* and *Guardian*

in the years during and just after the First World War. He wrote that "on Sunday September 1896, ten thousand Boltonians marched up Bran Hey to pull down a gate and protest against a footpath to Winter Hill being claimed and closed by the landlord." I delved further into the story and it emerged that huge demonstrations, organised by the local socialists, continued over two more weekends. The landlord, a notorious arch-Tory called Colonel Richard Ainsworth, issued writs against the leaders and he won his case, with costs. Local people rallied round and the fines were paid off, but the road remained officially closed until a hundred years later when the path was registered as a right of way. It was the biggest-ever rights of way battle in British history. What is particularly interesting is that – unlike Kinder Scout – the participants were local people. The marches gained in number as they tramped through working class areas of Bolton and out onto the moors. If the law was on the side of Ainsworth, the people of Bolton were on the side of the campaigners. Allen Clarke, himself a former mill worker, continued to write about the countryside and how so much of it had been robbed from the people by unscrupulous landlords. His *Moorlands and Memories*, political in a subtle and entertaining way, encouraged readers to value their moorland paths and tracks. He wrote a popular song, in local dialect, called 'Will Yo Come O' Sunday Mornin'?' which beckoned people to claim their rights:

*"Will yo' come o' Sunday mornin'  
For a walk o'er Winter Hill?  
Ten thousand went last Sunday  
But there's room for thousand  
still!"*

*Oh there moors are rare and bonny  
And the heather's sweet and fine  
And the roads across the hilltops  
– Are the people's – yours and mine!"*



Ramblers

Clarke was an active member of the non-sectarian Bolton Labour Church which organised family walks over the moors on Sunday afternoons. The walks were 'educational' with children taught to recognise plants, trees and birds. The main 'tutor' was John Fletcher, whose day job was working down a coal mine in Westhoughton. They were not shy about discussing politics. Clarke writes of one moorland walk on a summer's day in 1904 where "we argued socialism, Tolstoyanism, and many other 'isms' before standing to sing Edward Carpenter's hymn:

*England arise! The long, long  
night is over*

*Faint in the east, before the dawn  
appear..."*

The First World War literally killed off much of that popular working class culture, though the Clarion Cycling Club enjoyed a temporary revival. The rise of the car and other forms of entertainment killed it off in the 1950s though Bolton Clarion Cycling Club, and many more - as far south as Brighton - continue to flourish. Hopefully, events of 2020 will further encourage people's re-discovery of their own, very local, countryside. A group of local socialists and trades unionists have started to look at ideas for how to celebrate 'Winter Hill 125' and *Chartist* readers are invited to like our Facebook page, 'Winter Hill 125'. **C**



Paul has just published a book celebrating Allen Clarke's classic, called *Moorlands, Memories and Reflections*. It is available to Chartist readers for £20 post-free (normally £25 inc. Post and packing). Details on [www.lancashireloominary.co.uk](http://www.lancashireloominary.co.uk) or email [infor@lancashireloominary.co.uk](mailto:infor@lancashireloominary.co.uk)

# Johnson's big u-turn on wind power – is it for real?

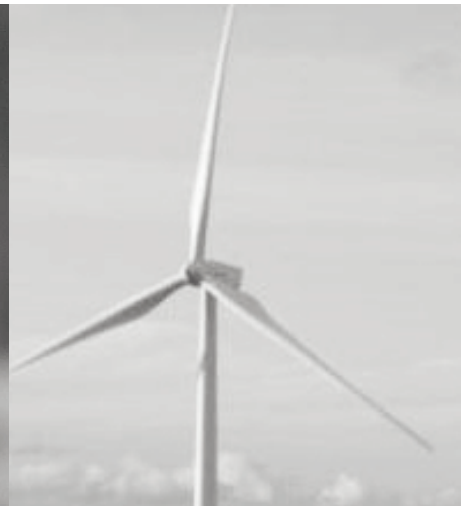
**Dave Toke** isn't convinced

**J**ohnson has now proclaimed that half the UK's energy future lies in wind power, thus performing another one of his fabulous about turns, having previously declared that wind power couldn't blow the skin off a rice pudding. But how seriously should we take this latest Johnson u turn, and what do the Government's energy plans amount to?

A cynic might argue that issuing a few contracts to build a few (admittedly rather large) offshore windfarms is practically all that UK new energy policy amounts to. Well, that and dispensing a few billion here and there to satisfy a bag of establishment interest groups claiming to be able to herald the Government's march towards the 'net zero' greenhouse gas target for the UK in 2050.

The merit of the offshore windfarms is that they will cost the energy consumer nothing, although when it comes to issuing the actual contracts there are big questions about whether there will be anything like enough to meet the Government commitments on reducing carbon emissions. The problem is that the Government is still committed to building a lot more nuclear power. The problem here is that they require very large subsidies demanded by EDF, including a commitment to pay the cost overruns that always occur when nuclear power plant are built in the UK (or most other places). The only place where (some) nuclear power plant get built on time is China where health and safety regulations are, well, let us say, not quite as rigorous as in the West.

So essentially it looks like by far the biggest item on the Treasury's finance sheet for low carbon energy is nuclear power costing at least £25 billion (the likely cost of the power station assuming modest cost overruns), the rest pales by comparison. The argument given for this is that nuclear power is essential, even though it clashes with wind and solar power because nuclear power will not turn down to accommodate the times when there is a lot of wind or solar power, thus wasting loads of energy. But nucle-



**Johnson- U turn into the wind**

ar power will not be expected to pay for that, only the renewable energy generators. There are of course lots of techniques available for balancing and storing renewable energy that are much more effective than this, but they do not have EDF lobbying for them.

The Treasury is not keen on the terms wanted by EDF, but, under the weight of pressure by EDF and also a bevy of big construction interests, it seems all but inevitable that we shall be financing another nuclear construction that will not be completed until long after there is a consensus that it was not necessary after all.

The Treasury has announced a £3 billion programme for energy efficiency, although implementation seems slow to get off the ground. It has also thrown a few million variously to promote small nuclear reactors (a very old idea before it was realised nuclear power plant were less uneconomic if they were big) and hydrogen. Hydrogen is another big theme that has recently been floated by Johnson himself. Of course, this raises the question of where the hydrogen comes from. Here again the subject is being captured by various elements of the gas industry. At the moment most hydrogen comes, from, you've guessed it, the gas industry, and they want to make sure it carries on that way.

At the moment the carbon dioxide from the gas is not captured

when hydrogen is made. In future the gas industry says that it will be producing what is called 'blue hydrogen' whereby the carbon is captured and stored. It is then pumped around the gas network and into our houses. Sounds almost business as usual, an almost magic solution. Except it is not. It would require simultaneous changing of all gas appliances in the UK, major refurbishment of the gas pipe infrastructure to switch from it carrying natural gas to hydrogen, and lots of pipes to carry away the carbon dioxide from the plant where the gas industry changes the gas into hydrogen. This will cost a lot of money, and we shall end up with the situation where the industry that is producing the carbon pollution is being given billions of pounds to produce a product that will not be completely decarbonised anyway.

Of course there are much more efficient ways of providing low carbon energy using heat pumps installed in new buildings and good old storage heaters in old buildings. These will be powered by electricity from windfarms and other renewable energy sources. This can be done incrementally and require no transformations of the gas infrastructure. However, again these solutions do not have major incumbent multinational corporations to lobby for them. So is Johnson's u turn real? Well, only as far as the energy establishment lets him! **C**

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



## TRADE DEALS

# As Brexit promises fade- no good options on the trade deal table

**Nick Dearden** on Johnson's embrace of the 'shock doctrine'



**Zapatistas inspire WTO protests**

**B**oris Johnson is warning again of an 'Australian' relationship with the EU. To you and me that's a disastrous no-deal Brexit. Even if he comes to a deal, and this is all more Johnson bluff, that deal will be far more distant a relationship than anything envisioned at the time of the EU referendum. For anyone who cares about protecting food standards, public services, or our rights online, there is no good option left on the table in these talks.

For Johnson's cabinet, this all makes sense. Although there will be a period of intense crisis, compounded by coronavirus, they presumably see this as a price worth paying, even helpful, in accelerating big businesses control over ever more aspects of our lives. It's what author Naomi Klein would surely deem a 'shock doctrine'. Indeed even free market mantra has been jettisoned, in favour of Johnson embracing a type of industrial strategy which is really about US levels of 'corporate wel-

fare'.

But all is not lost, for the coalition beginning to coalesce against Johnson's plans is growing. Farmers have been protesting Johnson's plans for 18 months, scaring the hell out of Tory MPs in the shires, some of whom rebelled against Johnson repeatedly in the Agriculture Bill. Neither does Johnson's 'big business knows best' approach go down any better among leave voters in the former 'red wall', who saw Brexit as an opportunity to increase their security and protection from the workings of the global economy.

In other words, as difficult as the situation looks, the US trade deal potentially provides us with a much better opportunity to throw a spanner in the works of Johnson's post Brexit plans than anything we've campaigned on in the last five years. It could help us break down the Brexit alliance which placed Johnson in Number 10, opening up a real debate about the future of Britain.

When Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn held up pages of blacked

out trade documents on ITV's general election debate last November, it was the culmination of years of work. My organisation first submitted freedom of information requests for those documents, which contain crucial details of what the UK government was preparing to negotiate with the United States, in 2017. Despite numerous appeals and a legal challenge, this essential record of the likely consequences of a US trade deal had remained entirely hidden. Now, finally, they were centre stage.

When the uncensored documents were subsequently leaked, it was easy to see why the government wanted to keep them secret – they confirmed many of our fears about their willingness to capitulate to the US corporate lobby. While much mud has subsequently been slung about the identity and motivations behind the leak (though with little actual evidence), the authenticity of the documents, and what they reveal, has never been disputed.

They showed that the US trade

**Nick Dearden is  
Director of Global  
Justice Now**



deal does indeed pose a fundamental threat to our food standards, public services, workers' rights and consumer protections. For once, Donald Trump put it best when he stood next to a mortified Theresa May in June 2019 and said: "Look, I think everything with a trade deal is on the table. When you're dealing in trade everything is on the table. So NHS or anything else, a lot more than that, but everything will be on the table, absolutely."

Modern trade deals affect what sort of society we live in, promoting a model of free market economics, together with tools to discipline governments that step away from that model. A US trade deal is less about importing more American products than it is about importing the American economic and regulatory model. It is not about whether we trade with the US, but whether we capitulate to a set of policies that enshrine the power of the market and big business. A US trade deal is at the heart of what sort of country we become after Brexit.

While Boris Johnson is often referred to as a pragmatist, he has chosen to surround himself with a group of politicians devoted to the free market, deregulation and privatisation. Trade Secretary Liz Truss and Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab are firmly in this group.

Like many on the right of the British establishment, they look to the United States for leadership, seeing the US as a model economy in which the market rules, big business can behave as it sees fit, and rich individuals are free from irritating 'burdens' like public healthcare and redistributive taxes. For such people, the referendum to leave the EU presented an opportunity to unleash a long-cherished dream. A US trade deal provides one of the most important mechanisms for getting us there.

Under a US trade deal, food made to different standards would almost certainly be allowed onto British supermarket shelves. This means more genetically modified foods. It means chlorine-washed chicken (washing poultry in treatments such as chlorine dioxide to remove bacteria which has accumulated over the lifetime of these battery farmed birds). It means serious overuse of antibiotics in food production, and the use of horrific chemicals in pig farming like ractopamine, banned in 160 countries, including Russia and China.

### The NHS

The NHS is most certainly 'on the table' in a US trade deal. But, as former shadow secretary of state for trade Barry Gardiner MP pointed out during the 2019 election, "the NHS is not a building you can simply sell". The NHS will be threatened first because modern trade deals aim to liberalise services, for instance stripping away government attempts to treat foreign investors in those services 'unfairly'. This means locking things like the internal market into place in perpetuity.

It will also be threatened through intellectual property rules which give big pharmaceutical corporations monopoly powers over medicines, allowing them to dictate prices of vital treatments.

### Corporate courts

The icing on the cake in many modern trade deals is the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system, the formal name for 'corporate courts', which allows foreign investors to sue governments in special tribunals when they believe their 'rights' have been infringed. They were invented

## With climate change posing a threat to our whole world, radical reform is the only way forward

back in the 1950s reflecting western countries' suspicion of how their corporations would be treated in newly independent countries in the global south. But it's really the last 20 years that they have become a major problem.

The basis for cases has been expanded to an almost ludicrous degree by City law firms. A foreign investor today might claim pretty much any government action that damages their future profits is 'unfair' or 'expropriation', even though the rest of us might regard the measure as a reasonable response to the harm a corporation is causing.

### How we can beat it

The Zapatistas rising in Chiapas inspired perhaps the most diverse and international

movement we've ever seen, dubbed the anti- (or alter-) globalisation movement.

This movement secured its first major victory on the streets of Seattle, at a summit of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the international body set up to develop global trade rules. During a festival style series of teach ins, protests and non violent direct actions, a broad coalition brought together environmentalists and animal rights campaigners with industrial workers. On the streets of Seattle, and in combination with obstruction from developing world delegates, the summit was brought to a standstill. It wouldn't hold a successful meeting again for over a decade.

There were many other trade victories which we can also learn, like the defeat of US-EU trade deal TTIP 5 years ago. A wide coalition has already been formed. On the day he was made secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, George Eustice was booed by farmers when he mentioned the US trade deal. Even the right wing *Mail on Sunday* are running regular columns on the problems of a US trade deal.

There is every reason to hope that the US deal can be defeated if we build a sufficiently large and diverse movement. This defeat would be another setback for a global trade regime which urgently needs to be transformed. But what might that alternative economy look like?

### The future of trade

Trade rules do not have to be a problem. After the second world war, many countries came together to secure a more open trading regime, and while they did want to bring tariff levels down, their aim was to achieve full employment and economic development. Trade rules were more flexible, leaving large areas free for countries to design the best policies for their own development.

With climate change posing a threat to our whole world, radical reform is the only way forward. Liberalising deals like the US-UK one must be rejected out of hand. We build the foundations of a very different economy if we are to avoid a retreat into xenophobia, the politics of bullying, and a collapse of any sort of international coordination. A return to 1990s-style globalisation is not an option. Only by constraining the power of capital can we turn things around. **C**

**The latter part of this article is taken from Nick Dearden's book, 'Trade Secrets: the truth about the US trade deal and how we stop it', which also includes full referencing and is available for free**

# Government deepens divisions

**Paul Nowak** outlines a green trade union response to the threat of mass unemployment

**T**he Chartist fringe meeting at Labour Party conference gave us an opportunity to consider how we integrate our aspirations to both decarbonise and democratise our economy.

This is a vital debate at any time, but none more so than when the threat of mass unemployment – driven by the government's mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic – is a very real prospect.

As someone who grew up on Merseyside throughout the 1980's and 1990's I need little reminder of the harm that mass unemployment does – particularly to the young workers. In Merseyside, and in communities across the country, the scars from that experience have barely healed decades later.

Covid-19 has highlighted and exacerbated the inequalities that exist in society, having a disproportionate impact on our black and minority ethnic communities, those in low paid and insecure employment, and those communities already struggling with poor housing and devastated public services, left vulnerable after a decade of cuts.

Our social care system – held together by the efforts of mainly low paid, part-time women, working for a myriad of private providers and outsourcers – has exposed these unfair and unequal impacts of the pandemic, and the government's response, most sharply. And it has highlighted what many of us knew before lockdown started, that for far too many people in this country, work does not pay: with 2.5m women key workers earning less than £10 an hour and 1 in 9 workers precariously employed.

Unions can be proud of the efforts they have made to secure lives and livelihoods over the last eight months. Without our efforts, there is little chance a Conservative Chancellor would have delivered the job retention scheme, and its equivalent for the self-employed, which helped secure the jobs and livelihoods of 12 million workers at the height of the lock-down. Nor would we have seen the comprehensive safe working guidance developed by government with the support of

unions and employers which has allowed millions more to work safely. In sectors as diverse as retail and arts and heritage, unions have worked to support jobs and to secure extra funding from government.

But despite these efforts, we still face the prospect of huge economic upheaval which could see many hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs without smarter, strategic intervention from government – words very few people would associate with the current occupant of Number 10.

His next-door neighbour, the Chancellor, has delivered the job support scheme – effectively providing support for short-time working as is commonplace across many parts in Europe. Welcome though this was, it won't be enough in and of itself to stave off mass unemployment.

The TUC pushed for the scheme to be more generous to avoid triggering more lay-offs, to provide more support for the self-employed, and for protections to be put in place if we see more local lockdowns, and for people who can't go to work because they're caring or shielding.

The scheme will do nothing on its own to help meet the twin challenges of democratising and decarbonising our economy.

So, alongside the job support scheme and a new programme of additional support for those working in sectors closed because of government public health guidance, we need government to commit to a massive programme of green infrastructure – £85bn over the next two years – supporting investment in everything from green public transport to retrofitting homes, high speed broadband to low carbon electricity. The TUC believes this could create £1.24m new green jobs – jobs desperately needed for those leaving school, college and university as well as those under threat of losing their job.

We also need smart sectoral intervention – in sectors including aviation, retail and hospitality. A real industrial strategy would focus on creating and supporting good quality employment and driving up standards where low pay and insecure work are all too



**TUC proposes plans to stop job losses**

often the norm.

We need government to make a genuine and long-lasting commitment to investing in people's skills. A real job guarantee for every young person; funded individual learning accounts; and a new and improved financial settlement for our colleges which will need to do the heavy lifting in providing support to their local communities. Instead the government appears to want to take an axe to the union learning fund, which helps unions support nearly a quarter of a million workers a year into new learning opportunities.

All of this will need to be supported by working people having a say in the big strategic decisions that impact on their working lives. Labour needs to put the case for workers on boards, for extending and supporting trade union membership and for supporting collective bargaining across every sector of the economy.

The experience of the last eight months has shown us the vital role unions can play in individual workplace – keeping people safe, securing their jobs, protecting their livelihoods. It's also shown the wider contribution unions can make to our economy and society.

That's why we have made calls for a national recovery council – bringing together unions, employers and government – to plot our way out of the pandemic, a central part of our demands on government over the last few months.

Now is the time to reset the UK economy. To make sure we build back from the pandemic, in a way that provides real opportunities for working people, their families and communities. **C**



**Paul Nowak is  
TUC Deputy  
General  
Secretary**



# Schooling in a time of Covid

**Dave Lister** on a litany of broken promises, planning failures and continuing safety anxieties

**T**here is a continuing need to balance the urgent requirement to provide education in classrooms for all pupils with the equally urgent requirement to keep staff, pupils and their families safe. Nobody wants children to be out of school any longer than necessary. Many of them have endured six months of lockdown with varied take-up of online learning. They want to be in school, to see their friends again and most parents want this too, as often it enables them to work more easily. Back to the office may have become stay at home but supervision of online learning and general childcare are hardly conducive to effective home working.

England, where the government has direct control is the focus here, but some points are also relevant to the other countries that make up the UK.

We have reported that any government would have found the balance between back to school and keeping everyone safe difficult to achieve. This government has been sadly lacking on failure to provide an effective Track and Trace system, failure to provide adequate funding for schools in these exceptional times and failure to plan adequately for a possible range of future outcomes. Even Conservative supporters get this. In a recent survey by Conservative Home the hapless Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson was rated as 24th out of 24 cabinet members for competence, even worse than Boris Johnson at 23rd.

The ineffectiveness of Track and Trace has led to considerable numbers of school staff (and pupils) remaining at home, waiting to be tested or waiting for the results of tests. The result of this is that schools are facing difficulties in covering lessons. One school even has contingency plans for classes of 60 in the event of absence worsening in the winter months and this may be the shape of things to come. A northern secondary head reported on the Today programme on 7 October that 500 out of 1200 pupils at his school were currently absent. All this has led Keir Starmer to call

on the Government to put children at the front of the queue for testing, adding that as a result of the Government's failure to do this "we are seeing a flood of school closures".

There is also concern about vulnerable teachers who have been told they must return to their classrooms. The National Education Union says that they should be supported to work from home, especially in areas where cases are particularly high. Then there are special needs children, about 1/5 of whom are absent from school, often because schools do not have the capacity to deal with their complex medical needs in a Covid-safe manner.

There must also be a risk of schools having to close completely as winter approaches. This may be in areas with a high incidence of Covid cases or it may be the result of a more general lockdown.

The issue of funding is another area of concern. Schools have been provided with additional funding but this is far from adequate when costs of additional cover teachers, PPE equipment, extra cleaning and adaptations to their buildings are taken into account. Teachers are already complaining that they and their pupils are feeling the cold from windows and doors being left open. How much worse will this be in the winter months and what will the effect be on heating costs?

Then there are the Government's planning failures. There have been real concerns over a growing learning gap between the middle-class children whose families are well provided with computers and laptops and more disadvantaged children, some of whose families might lack these things. Laptops were promised but often failed to materialise. Also to be remembered is Boris Johnson's promise of catch-up tutoring over the summer months. Again, this did not materialise. The promise is now for November or even January but the tutors will either be unemployed teachers or non-specialists with two weeks training. As Nick Brook, general secretary of the National Association of Headteachers, commented: "The cavalry may simply arrive too late



**Schoolchilids being taught in bubbles**

to be of any help to many schools".

A further area of concern is how older students will be assessed in the summer term. They have missed perhaps six months of face to face teaching. Surely, if it is still possible for exams to take place, they should be examined on what they have learned, not on what they have been unable to learn. Scotland has now gone further than this and cancelled next year's GCSE equivalent examinations altogether.

There has also been considerable criticism of Ofsted's determination to visit schools this term. School leaders and staff are working flat out to introduce all the required safety measures and to develop online learning and are unlikely to welcome this added pressure.

Ongoing demands on government should be that it:

- Moves rapidly to improve the Track and Trace system (also required more generally of course), transferring it to the public sector.
- Provides adequate funding to support schools in protecting their pupils and staff.
- Plans effectively for all likely contingencies.

School staff generally have responded magnificently to the pressures they have been subjected to. It is a pity that the response of our Tory Government has been so far from magnificent. **C**

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

## ECONOMY

# For a caring economy

**Hana Abid** reports on an innovative prospectus for a gender equal economy rejecting a focus on growth

**W**hen the Women's Budget Group launched our Commission on a Gender-Equal

Economy we could not have imagined that the final report would be published in the midst of a global pandemic and economic recession. When the Commission was launched in Spring 2019, the idea was simple: to take a proactive approach to policy-making, with a vision for what a gender-equal economy could look like, and how it would work.

To accomplish this, the Commission travelled across the four nations of the UK, gathering evidence, holding consultation sessions with local organisations, researchers, policy experts and politicians, on what our future economy could be.

The final publication, the report 'Creating a Caring Economy: a call to action' could not have been launched at a more poignant time. The report lays out the vision for a caring economy and outlines eight steps on how to create it.

The Commission's caring economy is an economy that is based on gender equality, sustainability and wellbeing, rather than an economy that is focused on growth. This economy would prioritise care of one another and our environment, ensure that everyone has time to care for loved ones, as well as having time free from caring responsibilities. A caring economy would make it possible for men to share in unpaid caring responsibilities equally.

We all give and receive care at some point in our lives, and a caring economy is one that not only recognises but values this. A caring economy is also one that recognises that our existing economy fails not only both women and men, but any group that is marginalised in society, including people from migrant and BAME communities.

After explaining what a caring economy is and laying out what makes our current economy so uncaring, the report proposes how we can create a caring economy in 8 steps:



**Woman care worker**

1. Re-envision what we mean by 'the economy'
2. Invest in social and physical infrastructure
3. Transform the worlds of paid and unpaid work
4. Invest in a caring social security system based on dignity and autonomy
5. Transform the tax systems across the UK
6. Refocus fiscal and monetary policy on building a caring economy
7. Work to develop a trade system that is socially and environmentally sustainable
8. Work to transform the international economic system

What this means practically is that workers' rights are respected, people have secure jobs, women and men are equally entitled to care leave, are paid at least a living wage, the gender pay gap is closed, the standard working week is shortened and 'green jobs' are prioritised as valued career paths. Whilst some employers have already taken steps towards this, others focus only on short-term financial gain over long-term investment in people.

In a caring economy, government spending on high quality paid care services and social security is a crucial investment in the health and wellbeing of people

now and in the future. In a caring economy, taxes are understood as a contribution to creating the public services and social security we all need and benefit from, which corporations are not exempt from.

What the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on the economy have shown us is that although all of our lives have been changed, we are not all facing the same struggles. The entrenched inequality of our current economic model, the neglect of workers, people and the planet and the consistent prioritisation of financial interests over health and wellbeing, have all been made clear in the light of the pandemic. However, the coronavirus crisis has also provided a glimpse into what a caring economy could look like. Local neighbourhood groups formed to look after others, air pollution levels fell, and many were able to enjoy more time with their families and loved ones. As we rebuild, it is important to remember that the economy is not an abstract entity that we must accept like the weather, but something that we all create. We make the economy, and we can make it work for all of us. The report of the Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy lays out the vision, and the steps for how we can do this, the next stage is to make it happen. **C**

**Hana Abid is a member of the Women's Budget Group**



# Facing oblivion

**Simon Tait** reports on the dire prospects for the Arts in a time of Covid

**B**ecause the arts sector is so easy with hyperbole its cries for help tend to be taken with large helpings of salt by politicians, but this time it's serious.

By 2019 the creative industries - music, theatre, digital gaming, architecture, film, TV, publishing, museums - had become the most progressive in the UK economy, surpassing even financial services and worth £111.7bn a year to the economy. But in June the think tank Oxford Economics said the arts were "on the brink of devastation" and set to lose £74bn by the end of the year, so profound have the effects of Covid-19 been.

Commissioned by the Creative Industries Federation (CIF), the report, *The Projected Economic Impact of Covid-19 on the UK Creative Industries*, boiled that down to £1.4bn a week, and a total of 400,000 jobs, or one in five, gone despite the Jobs Retention Scheme.

In June Adrian Vinken of the Theatre Royal Plymouth, who had just laid off 110 of his people, was writing in the *Daily Mail*: "The entire performing arts industry is now facing oblivion. This is not only a human and economic disaster - it is a cultural catastrophe". Even Dame Judi Dench said she thought theatres would not reopen in her lifetime. In July the Southbank Centre said it was £21m in debt and couldn't reopen before April 2021, if then. The Royal Albert Hall, which gets no subsidy but was nevertheless referred to by the culture secretary Oliver Dowden as one of our crown jewels, said it might never reopen.

Planning is almost impossible. To go by the rules the government has set for performing arts venues - 2m distancing - theatres are doomed. The rule means that they can only operate at 25% capacity and break-even in the best of times is 75%-80%. Some theatres, like the Nuffield in Southampton and the Leicester Haymarket, have already succumbed, and now with the loss of the winter panto, usually a reliable banker, others are teetering.

Though theatres, museums and concert halls are reopening and live music is being played despite

the counter-intuitive maths and the latest coronavirus spike, it's largely through reliance on reserves and determination. Nicholas Hytner's Bridge Theatre near Tower Bridge has reopened with a series of Alan Bennett Talking Heads monologues to 25% houses, and the National opened its Olivier in October reconfigured in the round to allow almost half capacity. The major museums have reopened but with sometimes tortuous distancing routes through galleries that mean they have about 30% the footfall they had before March. All this has been achieved with furloughed staff many of whom will be made redundant by the end of October. And 75% of theatre workers are freelance and ineligible for help.

Traditional arts funding has been a thing of the past for some time. Subsidy, national and local, has gone down by 33% since 2010; business sponsorship has all but disappeared, scared off by the witch hunts that have harried the arts loving fossil fuel and pharma industries; philanthropy, once the Tories' answer to subsidy, has shrunk to a shadow of what it offered a year ago; and the charitable trusts and foundations that were such a bulwark have suffered from the onslaught of newly needy causes and the effects on their income of serial market collapses.

If the arts are taking a beating from Covid, it seems they have few friends in high places. At the end of July, as the National Theatre was handing out 400 redundancy notices, the film and theatre director Sam Mendes reportedly rang Boris Johnson to ask for theatres to be reopened and got the usual non-committal response of "as soon as we safely can". But at the end of the call Johnson didn't hang up properly, and the unmistakable voice of Dominic Cummings could be heard exclaiming: "The last people we're going to allow back to work is those f—g dancers!"

Nevertheless, after relentless lobbying in June the government appointed a Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, Neil Mendoza (now Lord Mendoza whose brief appears to be long term planning), and six weeks later Rishi Sunak announced a £1.57bn Culture Recovery Programme, not



**Arts suffering-Tate workers striking for jobs**

under Mendoza but a board chaired by a management consultant, Damon Buffini with the new commissioner merely a member. Many say the largest ever arts grant will be nowhere near enough.

The share-out was announced in early October. Arts Council England (ACE), which has already handed out £160m in rescue grants, will distribute £622m, £500m of it to theatres, music venues and museums, and the big organisations will get theirs in long term low interest loans.

But this bonanza is only designed to get the arts back to a pre-Covid position. The damage has been so profound that nothing but a radical re-think of arts funding - needed long before Covid struck - will rescue the cultural economy. Of the 406,000 jobs Oxford Economics predict will go, 287,000 are freelance and may never be recovered.

Reports like the Fabian Society's *Cultured Communities: The crisis in local funding for arts and culture* want a politically explosive plan that rationalises and has most arts funding devolved to local authorities, with ACE taking on an advisory role.

It is, says Caroline Norbury of the CIF, time to understand the value of the arts and creativity in different ways, and for radical thinking to ensure that not only are they preserved but free and encouraged to develop. "It is time to both imagine and engineer our future" she says. "We will need our creative industries to do that. They are too important to ignore." **C**

**Simon Tait is a former arts correspondent of *The Times* and is editor of the online magazine *Arts Industry* ([www.artsindustry.co.uk](http://www.artsindustry.co.uk))**

# Torrid economic outlook

As the pandemic underlines the failure of neo-liberalism **Richard Murphy** argues the left should embrace Modern Monetary Theory and an Alternative Debt-Financed New Deal



Roosevelt signing his New Deal: A rejection of previous economics

**T**his winter the UK faces an epic economic crisis. As relatively generous government support comes to an end it is likely that the UK economy is heading for collapse. The government now suggests there may be four million unemployed people when the current furlough scheme ends. The National Audit Office has suggested that up to 80% of the loans made to more than 1.3 million small businesses to help them through the crisis might not be repaid, suggesting that these businesses may, in turn, fail.

There are obvious consequences to a crisis of this scale. Tax revenues will collapse; the cost of universal credit and other benefits will increase; many households will be unable to meet their basic liabilities; the likelihood that homelessness will increase is high; mortgage and other loan defaults are very likely and could create a banking crisis; house prices are likely to fall; demand in the private sector is unlikely to return to anything near last year's level, whilst demand for public services will increase. Unless that demand is met there will be health, education, housing, justice, and other crises. Meanwhile, the environmental crisis is continuing,

and Brexit creates significant risk of disruption in the economy, including to food supply chains, whilst creating the risk of inflation that would have a particularly serious impact on those on low incomes. To describe the economic outlook as torrid is to be kind.

I have, since 2007, been a member of the Green New Deal group, which suggested in 2008 that a programme of job creation, financial and tax reform, and a focus on green issues that would create jobs in every constituency of the UK, would deliver the recovery required at that time. I remain confident that we were right.

However, things are now very different from 2008. That crisis had an identifiable, and potentially correctable, source that was endogenous to the financial system. The risk that we now face is exogenous, out of control, and beyond correction within that financial system. The risk now is much higher, and after a decade of neoliberalism the public services are in a weaker state. On top of that, a decade of neoliberal thinking has led to a focus on the extraction of shareholder value from business rather than on investment in tangible assets and productivity increases, let alone adaptation to long term environ-

mental demands (Leaver, et al 2020). This has left much of the UK business sector ill-equipped to face an economic downturn, and exceptionally vulnerable to it.

So a different response is required. First, the UK needs a New Deal before this can be transformed into a Green New Deal, the difference being a matter of focus. The Green New Deal focuses on longer term economic transformation to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. A New Deal has the more basic objective of keeping the structures of the economy, the state and everyone in the country going until the immediate crisis is overcome.

To comprehend the scale of the issue, we should remember that the New Deal, flawed as it was, succeeded to the extent that it did because it was based upon a new understanding of economics. Roosevelt explicitly rejected the prevailing economic narratives dictated by the gold standard and the resulting philosophy of austerity. Before Keynes formalised the principle, Roosevelt accepted the need for deficit funding to get the USA back to work again. At the core of this transformation was a rejection of the prevailing narrative of monetary constraint on the actions avail-



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able to government.

We are, of course, suffering the consequences of a similar narrative. Covid-19 cannot be blamed on neoliberalism, as far as I know. Our lack of preparedness for it can be. That philosophy has at its core a belief that inflation is the great curse. This narrative has been promoted to prevent deflation in the value of debt, in the interests of the wealthy who own that debt. In pursuit of low inflation, interest rates were allowed to float, creating crushing debt burdens. At the same time unemployment was considered the buffer stock for risk: if it rose as a consequence of the floating interest rates, so be it.

To reinforce this profoundly anti-working people narrative, independence was granted to central bankers, who were given the power to run the economy in the interests of capital, including the bond markets who, it was believed, could always constrain governments. Socialists and social democrats alike went along with this policy, including to its discredit, the last Labour

## Many on the left remain wedded to neoliberal values. The left must leave its neoliberal past

leadership team. So it is hardly surprising that the left has appeared irrelevant to economic debate.

The New Deal that we need must begin with a rejection of the prevailing monetary framework and move to that of Roosevelt to have a chance of addressing this crisis. The monetary system now is nothing like that of the 1930s. The gold standard was finally consigned to history in 1971, by the USA. Since then we have had only fiat money, backed solely by the government's promise to pay, which is in turn solely backed by its legal right to impose taxes, which is all that gives our money its value.

What is more, even the Bank of England has now recognised since 2014 (Macleay et al, 2014 ) that all money is created by bank lending, and destroyed on loan repayment. What those authors forgot to note was that this process extends to the loans that the Bank of England extends to its owner, HM Treasury, to fund the latter's activities. These loans can be made at will and are only cancelled by tax payment. This means taxes do not actually fund government spending at all and are



Stephanie Kelton- author of *The Deficit Myth*

simply a tool in fiscal policy, used to control inflation by constraining the money supply.

This has, of course, been proved by quantitative easing (QE) over the last decade. As the Bank of England has said, this is a money creation programme. It has not delivered inflation. It has, however, neutered the mythical power of bond markets: not only can they no longer influence interest rates, if they try to do so the government can (and does) repurchase government debt to remove the threat.

Government debt is also cancelled in the QE process, though the Office for National Statistics falsely claim otherwise. The debt is replaced by bank reserve accounts at the Bank of England maintained by UK High Street banks and building societies which they cannot effectively withdraw without another bank or building society immediately redepositing the withdrawn funds back with the Bank of England. In other words, the QE process replaces debt with money that keeps our banking system solvent.

Yet many on the left still dismiss the reality of this process, which is described by modern monetary theory (MMT). MMT is best explained by Stephanie Kelton in her 2020 book, *The Deficit Myth*. Those on the left who criticise MMT seek to do three things: first to maintain the power of independent central bankers; second to maintain the myth of money market constraints on governments, including by the threat of interest rate rises; and third, they want unemployment to remain a mechanism for control-

ling the economy. Why they should want these things baffles me, but that's the consequence of what they say.

Modern monetary theorists reject this. They do not argue for money creation, as such, despite what some claim. What MMT says is really quite simple. Firstly, using the logic already noted, it points out that governments cannot go broke because they can always create the money required to pay their debts. In turn this means that they can always control interest rates. Then MMT suggests that the proper role of money is to serve the economy, and not wealth, so full employment should be the objective of an economy; until this is reached inflation cannot be created within an economy, except as a result of political or external shock that economic policy cannot control. Spending should, therefore, always have this goal. That would, for example mean that the QE we have known to date would be replaced by what Colin Hines and I have called Green QE (Murphy and Hines 2010 ).

Finally, MMT suggests that because all government spending is created by debt, tax can take on a role in social as well as economic and fiscal policy to deliver wealth and income distribution, irrespective of so-called revenue costs. MMT is, then, the perfect economic tool to tackle the crisis that we face. What baffles me is why so many on the left are in denial on this issue, and remain wedded to neoliberal constructs. We will have hope when the left leaves its neoliberal past behind. **C**

## ECONOMY

# Debt myths

**Dennis Leech** says Labour has to ditch the pursuit of balanced budgets or become irrelevant



Chancellor Rishi Sunak dodges shoppers on the High Street in Northallerton, Yorkshire

**T**he media and the Tories are frightening people daily with scare stories about the economy. We are told that the UK faces the deepest recession in three hundred years, and - therefore it follows - that the highest priority is to keep the level of government borrowing down. The same message keeps being repeated again and again by commentators using lurid tones and frightening language to tell us what the level of the national debt is without putting it in proper context.

People are scared into the belief that scale of government assistance in the fight against coronavirus has to be cash limited if our children and grandchildren are not to inherit an unbearable burden of debt they will have to pay back during their lifetimes.

This is economic nonsense. Labour needs now to step up to confront this narrative for the scare story it is, something it has always lacked the courage to do until now.

Austerity is the wrong policy because it derives from a false view of how the economy works. The government in Westminster is not like a household. Politicians who talk about tax revenue and government spending in the same way as they would discuss the income and outgoings of a household are being highly misleading. We have had ten years of this false logic under George Osborne and it has only resulted in a decade of austerity and a very slow recovery from the 2008 crash. And, by the way, it did not succeed in Osborne's stated aim to bring down debt as a percentage of national income. Unfortunately, some economists, notably the Institute for Fiscal Studies, give credence to this.

Labour must say loud and clear that government and the private sector are not rivals competing for a limited pot of money. Government spending does not crowd out private sector growth. On the contrary, they are partners that trade with each other in the

same economy. Government spending stimulates the economy by putting unemployed resources to productive use. In the present pandemic circumstances, where jobs would otherwise be lost without government financial support, it is keeping the economy going and preventing recession.

And we should make the point that a government economic stimulus that creates jobs also creates wealth in the form of output of goods and services. The answer to people who say "how can we pay for it?" is "by increasing production by putting the unemployed to work, otherwise their labour would be wasted".

The recession is partly a supply-side shock to production due to the necessary COVID-19 restrictions - the earnings of businesses like pubs, shops and restaurants, for example, are down because of social distancing reducing their productive capacity - and partly a demand-side reduction - a drop in consumption due to a fall-off of consumer confidence and people



saving more. Government aid is needed through the furlough scheme and in other ways like tax reliefs to keep the businesses going.

But it is more than that. This is not just about the survival of the businesses affected. Most importantly it is also necessary to consider the knock-on effects. Without government aid there would be a lack of effective demand due to the drop in workers' incomes. It is vital to address this issue not only to prevent large scale unemployment - and even the destitution of people who are barely surviving on very low wages and are already on the edge of poverty - but also to give the fight against the virus a chance of succeeding. It is in all our interests that everybody in society has the means to self-isolate if they have symptoms or test positive and not infect others as they try to earn a living. Taking the pandemic seriously requires policies that will increase the incomes of low paid workers. The main priority is to make sure that all members of society have enough incentive to behave in a socially responsible manner.

There is too little serious debate on the left about economic policy. Many left-wing commentators frame all economic problems as deriving from the contradictions of capitalism. Important, even fundamental, though Marxism is as an overarching theory of a capitalist economy, there is still a need for the left to talk about economic policy. Socialist parties in democracies need economic manifestos for government. Whether an economy is capitalist or socialist, questions of macro-economic policy, concerning unemployment, inflation, economic growth and so on are salient and need to be debated. That needs a realistic view of how the economy works that goes beyond class.

Unfortunately, in the recent past, probably since Gordon Brown was chancellor, the Labour party has tended to follow the neoliberal Tory view in treating the state as being like a big household. (Margaret Thatcher used to say that her greatest achievement was Tony Blair.) If it continues to do that, as it has done under a series of shadow chancellors, most recently John McDonnell, who adopted a fiscal rule not very different from his predecessors, it will be ineffectual in government.

Aneurin Bevan stated the case against basing policy on focus groups and opinion polling. He wrote, in *In Place of Fear*: "Then

there is the disposition to smooth away the edges of policy in the hope of making it more attractive to doubtful supporters. It is better to risk a clear and definite rejection than to win uneasy followers by dexterous ambiguities."

What greater dexterous ambiguity is there than making a promise that a future Labour government will balance the budget and pay down the national debt while at the same time bringing jobs and green economic growth - when such ambitions are inherently contradictory. The 2015 Labour manifesto promised to eradicate the current deficit "as soon as possible", by cutting spending in all Whitehall departments except health, schools and overseas aid. Ed Balls said: "while jobs and growth are vital to getting the deficit down, they cannot magic the whole deficit away at a stroke."

That was in 2015 after five years of Osborne's ineffectual and disastrous pursuit of what he claimed was fiscal responsibility but was anything but. Had Labour won and Balls implemented his policy the result would undoubtedly have been stagnation and further damaged Labour's reputation for economic competence.

Today things are seriously different: we have the coronavirus crisis on top of the debt overhang from the 2008 crash. The idea that the way to deal with it is to continue the fiscal policies of the Tories is delusional because it is based on false economics. And the crisis is now so much worse that these policies are no longer even feasible.

The stock response to any demand for government spending is to point out that government borrowing is sky high. There are several responses to this: it is not so high really once you put it in context; it does not matter anyway because the government is not like a household with a credit card; government spending does not increase the debt burden but reduces it if there are unemployed resources; the Left needs to have a serious debate on the ideas of Modern Monetary Theory.

First, the national debt increased from 41 percent of national income (as measured by GDP) in 2007 before the 2008 crash to about 83 percent by 2020, after the banking bailout, recession and following Osborne's long austerity programme. This is not high by historical standards - remember that after WW2 it exceeded 240 percent. It is pre-



dicted to rise next year to 115 percent of national income, an almost unprecedented increase. Surely this is unsustainable?

But hang on a minute. What exactly counts as debt? Borrowing is a burden if the interest payments are high, or it has to be repaid. In fact the UK government has never had any difficulty in borrowing so paying off the debt is not an urgent priority, and interest rates have never been lower, so debt is cheap and not a burden on the taxpayer.

But even more significant is the fact that the extra £300 billion it has raised this year is effectively borrowed from the Bank of England - government owned - through the so-called Quantitative Easing programme. This is on top of the £645 billion already outstanding. So it turns out that about a third of the national debt should not be counted since the government owes it to itself!

Second, the way to bring the level of debt down is by growing the economy. In current circumstances where there is spare capacity a fiscal stimulus package that allows people a decent standard of living will do that.

Third the Labour party needs to engage with the ideas of Modern Monetary Theory. They could start by reading the new best seller by Bernie Sanders' economic adviser, Stephanie Kelton, *The Deficit Myth*. **c**

**Dennis Leech is a member of Bethnal Green & Bow CLP and emeritus professor of economics at Warwick University**

## CORBYN LEGACY

# Reflecting on the Corbyn years

**Duncan Bowie** looks at differing assessments of what went wrong for Labour

**N**ot surprisingly, a year after that terrible election defeat, we are seeing a number of new books reflecting on the recent dramatic years of Labour Party history. While some books take a longer perspective, such as Panitch and Leys' *Searching for Socialism*, Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire's *Left Out* presents a detailed study of Corbyn's leadership circle.

This was a depressing read. Pogrund and Maguire are both journalists, respectively for the *Sunday Times* and *The Times*. This therefore would not be expected to be a sympathetic study. They are nevertheless well informed about the inner workings of the Labour Party leadership under Corbyn. What is most depressing is the extent to which the study focuses on personalities and so little on policies. Moreover, there is little in the book about Labour's response to external events and surprisingly little on the overall direction of the Labour Party, Corbyn's relationship with his shadow cabinet or even of the role of Momentum, though Jon Lansman as an individual makes a number of appearances.

This is all about the infighting amongst the select group of Corbyn's advisors. So, it is Karie Murphy, Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray who dominate the narrative. Ian Lavery, the neanderthal Labour Party chair has a surprisingly significant role as leading Brexiteer and self-appointed representative of the Northern red wall. Len McCluskey is the only union general secretary who has a significant role – Frances O'Grady the TUC general secretary, clearly had little influence (she does not appear in the index!). Corbyn's on-off relationship with John McDonnell is a central theme.

What comes as a shock is not so much the incidents referred to in the blurb somewhat sensationally as 'jaw dropping revelations' but the general nastiness not just in the relations with the pre-existing party general secretary, Ian McNicol, who is seen as the enemy of the leadership group (and is finally driven out into the House of Lords), but the infighting within the Corbynite group, with Corbyn

himself unable to take decisions and batted between his competing advisors. Corbyn is presented as a nice person (we all know that) unable to say no to anybody, protective of his old friends, some of whom are appointed to the most sensitive and inappropriate positions, and unable to dismiss any of his advisors or staff for incompetence or damaging interventions. It sometimes appears that Corbyn would prefer to return to his previous oppositionist role on the back benches and is really uncertain as to whether he actually wants to be Prime Minister and actually have to make decisions which actually matter. It is his wife, Laura Alvarez, who comes over as the driving force (and on occasions a source of sanity).

Much of the narrative is driven by the anti-Semitism crisis, and Corbyn's inability to see himself as part of the problem. As a lifelong anti-racist, he failed to make a clear distinction between criticism of Israel state policies and hatred of Jews and fell into the trap made by the Zionist lobby and their promoters in the Israeli government and the London Israeli embassy. Corbyn's carelessness in both his past and present associations hardly helped his case. The fact that his personal secretary could invite herself to his first meeting with the MI5 director, wearing a Palestine

## LEFT OUT

The Inside Story of Labour Under Corbyn



GABRIEL POGRUND AND PATRICK MAGUIRE

badge, and then attack MI5 for Islamophobia, is just one example of the inability of Corbyn to manage important relationships, just when MI5 was apparently prepared to discount Corbyn's historic associations with militant Irish republicanism.

The other dominant narrative is the internal struggles over the line on BREXIT, with Corbyn unable to hold a line between those who still held the historic left Eurosceptic position – that the EU was still an international capitalist conspiracy – such as Lavery and Murray, with which he clearly still sympathised, and those like John McDonnell and Emily Thornberry who were taking a more nuanced approach to arguing for a second referendum. I'm not sure Corbyn was ever convinced that 'constructive ambiguity' was a viable position – it just became a default position as a result of an ability to develop a coherent alternative line. The consequence of course was that Labour lost Leaver seats while failing to hold onto Remain votes, while failing to shift the debate back to matters such as inequality, employment, education, health and housing which might have won or at least held onto Labour votes. For readers who consider the book a hatchet job by two right-leaning journalists, I suggest you read Owen Jones' book *The Land* – as

**Left Out**  
Gabriel Pogrund  
and Patrick  
Maguire  
Bodley Head  
£18.99

**The Fall and Rise  
of the British Left**  
Andrew Murray  
Verso £14.99



Jones, formerly a cheerleader for Corbyn, retells many of the incidents recorded in *Left Out*, with a demonstration of the dysfunctionality of Corbyn's office which is perhaps even more severe.

Andrew Murray's *The Fall and Rise of the Labour Left*, was written in early 2019, on a false optimism generated by Labour's showing in the 2017 election, which many on the Labour left regarded as a victory, rather forgetting that Labour did not actually form a government as a result. Murray clearly believed that the Labour party and the labour Left were on an unstoppable path to power. While Murray spends much of the book reviewing the roles of an array of alternative Left parties and

groupings (and the history of the left in the Thatcher and Blair eras), it is perhaps odd that at no point does he mention his own membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain and its Stalinist successor organisation, the Communist Party of Britain, which he stayed in till November 2016 or his pro-Russian fixation - he had worked for the Soviet Novosti press agency. Murray's book is both boring while demonstrating how out of touch with the real world, in Britain never mind the wider world, the clique around Corbyn actually were. Yet Murray was at least conscious that political direction was important, whereas from the Pogrand and Maguire book, the main focus of the leadership group seemed to

be the personal power of individuals within the clique, for whom Corbyn and the Labour Party as a whole were just tools to be manipulated to strengthen their personal positions and their ability to conspire against and to be rude to the elected Labour politicians. It is not surprising that so many members of the shadow cabinet, never mind the PLP, the wider Labour Party and the electorate as a whole, were not just lacking in a belief that Labour was fit to govern the country but were alienated by this performance.

This is a part of our history that is best forgotten. We can only hope that it is also forgotten by the wider electorate before we face another General Election. **C**

# Voting change at heart of new democracy

**Tessa Milligan** says the penny is dropping as Labour members swing to electoral reform

**W**e are seeing the dangers in real time of what happens when a Party which polls a minority vote under First Past the Post secures a huge, disproportionate majority in the House of Commons.

The result is a Government intolerant of its own MPs, intolerant of any dissent, which refuses any form of co-operation, dodges accountability, rushes legislation through parliament to avoid scrutiny, and funds a Government of mediocre friends, family, donors and cronies with our money.

A Government elected by a minority delivering an incompetent, corrupt, populist autocracy. Make no mistake: this is a de facto coalition of the old-style Tory Party with Farage's lot and the hard right.

What is their approach? To poll on or around 42% for the hard right-Tory Party de facto electoral coalition - a minority of the vote - with a good chance of that securing permanent Government under first past the post.

This is then spurred on by a series of invented or hugely inflated rows to fire up the voting base, be they scare stories of dinghy invasions across the channel, faux-outrage about a Rule Britannia sing-song at the BBC Proms, or something else. These rows are designed to stoke up

division, especially racist divisions - a strategy which can work pretty well under the divide-and-conquer first past the post voting system.

We end up with a so-called 'culture war', which splits the country in two, and drives us, as an electorate and as a society, apart.

For a more inclusive, representative and collaborative democracy, we need Proportional Representation.

Proportional representation cannot - on its own - change the culture of how we govern and are governed. It has to be part of a package of reforms which roots decision making as close to the people as possible by those who are accountable to the people.

The first casualty in pursuit of democratic accountability should be the House of Lords. It's an affront to democracy and, instead, Parliament's second chamber should be elected by proportional representation.

The second casualty will be our unwritten constitution. It's not fit for purpose and - as lawyers would say - it's not worth the paper it isn't written on.

The third casualty should be First Past The Post, to be replaced with a proportionally representative system which is fairer and fosters an atmosphere of collaboration in which division for division's sake struggles to thrive in the same way as it does under First Past the Post.

It's not perfect. It's not easy. I'm not trying to come up with solutions which are easy for politicians. It is their duty to seek collaborative solutions which work for voters and which deliver functioning democracy and better governance.

We are of course seeing how fairer voting can work in the Labour Party, having adopted the Single Transferable Vote in some of our National Executive Committee elections (I'm one of those to blame for that).

The penny is dropping with most members that winner takes all slates are of the past, vicious attacks on opponents work against you, and, ultimately, if elected, you are going to be working with some of your election rivals.

STV is more representative, more inclusive, gives the voter more choice, and means votes matter more. Its adoption marks a vital step in the right direction towards healing some of the bitter divisions in our party.

But bitter divisions continue to exist in politics outside of the Labour Party. Bitter divisions which are being exploited by those in power. We need proportional representation. We need a New Democracy.

Proportional representation would bring the possibility of collaborative, inclusive politics reflecting the progressive majority - and a future that is negotiated rather than imposed. **C**

**Tessa Milligan is  
Co-chair Open  
Labour**

## BLACK HISTORY

# Black curriculum and eroding racism

**Olivia Bridge** says post-Brexit UK immigration rules undermine efforts to make the UK's national curriculum more diverse



**B**lack, Asian and other minority ethnic people in the UK have long tried to highlight racial discrimination that is at large in the UK – from education, the workplace to treatment in the NHS and the criminal justice system.

Indeed, students and teachers alike have been subjected to discrimination by their peers, black employees face disproportionate barriers to promotions while black patients are less likely to be taken seriously by healthcare professionals when in need of medical attention. While black women are five times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth, black men are three times more likely to die from COVID-19 – and twice as likely in police custody. Stop and Search initiatives in the police has further spiked cases of ‘racial profiling’, where black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to be stopped than white people, and then be handed a disproportionate sentence by white law

enforcers if they are found to be guilty of any crime.

Yet despite incidents relating to racism and hate crime shooting up in the aftermath of the 2016 EU referendum, it took the murder of George Floyd in the US to finally give this conversation momentum.

One initiative that has sparked off the back of the Black Lives Matter protests is the Black Curriculum campaign. Campaigners want to see children from reception all the way up to A Level taught an equal account of black lives and black history, in the hope it will stamp out racism and/or prevent it from being learned in the next generation.

But even more than that, the current modules on offer by GCSE exam boards are doing a huge disservice to British youth, who are taught a watered-down version of their own history. Statistics gathered by The Guardian show that a meagre 28,412 (11%) of current GCSE students study modules that reference black people's contribution to the UK. Of all 59 his-

tory modules outlined by Edexcel, AQA and OCR, only twelve reference black history – seven of which with a skewed focus on the US and transatlantic slave trade, leaving an underwhelming five to discuss black people existing in Britain. The most popular exam board, Edexcel, doesn't even mention black people in the UK whatsoever.

Instead, the curriculum remains blinkered – and outdated – in its focus on teaching the 19th century and Shakespeare. Lavinya Stennett, founder of The Black Curriculum said: “The school curriculum is very white-washed, and black history is usually either omitted entirely or taught only in terms of colonialism and slavery, rather than black people's achievements.”

Yet implementing structural changes to the curriculum takes time and money – two things most UK schools are in severe shortage of. Besides, hopes of a reform have been dampened by the Government's own insistence that the curriculum is “already incredi-

**Olivia Bridge**  
writes as a  
correspondent  
for the  
Immigration  
Advice Service



bly diverse."

However, even if the UK were to tweak the curriculum, any efforts made are vastly undermined by the lack of representation of black teachers, academics and professors in universities and schools.

Consider that of the 217,000 and 223,000 academic and non-academic staff recruited in 2019, less than 1% (0.7%) were black, while 85% identified as white.

However, here to throw another spanner into the diversity imbalance is the post-Brexit immigration rules. Pencilled in for January 2021 is a new points-based-system under which all non-British individuals will require a visa and immigration permission to enter and remain in the country. In other words, professors, researchers, teachers and all supporting academic staff will need to accumulate 70 points to be eligible for a UK Work Visa – and will need to pay extortionate fees for the privilege throughout the

duration of their time in the country.

The same can be said for EU students who will no longer be eligible for Student Finance, yet will need to pay international student fees and for the Student Visa.

Although it isn't inherently 'racist' to have domestic immigration policies, racial bias has become the paradigm through which the UK's points-based immigration system has been born. The past decade alone has exhibited the cruelty of these rules; from the 'hostile environment' deporting innocent, black Britons belonging to the Windrush generation overseas to 'Operation Vaken' deploying 'go home vans' to drive around six London boroughs, and texting 40,000 people with the same message, in the hope that undocumented migrants would voluntarily leave the UK.

To add to the catalogue of errors, the Home Office has been forced to pay out over £20 million

in the last three years in compensation as a result of unlawfully detaining migrants. The Government's very own visa algorithm that has been in full force for the past five years has only recently been suspended for exhibiting unconscious human biases, including racial discrimination against applicants of a certain nationality. Yet even recently, migrant UK-based researchers have been refused permanent settlement in the UK for conducting research overseas.

Clearly, there remains little confidence that the UK's now stricter immigration rules will be any better. But the true cost will fall on the shoulders of the UK. Without diversity and the cross-collaboration of talented minds and with a 'hostile' immigration system firmly in place, racism will sadly linger within generations to come and the landscape will be ever further from reflecting a welcoming, ethnically diverse and multicultural character. **C**

# UK Black experience matters

**Robbie Scott** says we can't allow Johnson's government to sideline BLM issues

**T**he Black experience in the United Kingdom has never been more relevant. The death of George Floyd has swept it to the heart of our politics despite attempts to delegitimise it by the government and elements of our media. When it comes to the black lived experience, too many deny it and in doing so reject the idea that it deserves a prominent position in the sweep of British history.

George Floyd's murder may have taken place a world away, but here at home, we are not strangers to police brutality. Cherry Groce, was shot by police in 1985 during a bungled raid. The incident left her paralysed from the waist down. Unarmed Mark Duggan was fatally shot by police in 2011 sparking widespread protests. In 2015 a member of the public saw up to six police officers kneeling and lying across Sheku Bayoh. He was heard shouting "Get off me." Ninety minutes later, Sheku was pronounced dead in hospital. His body had 23 separate injuries.

Police brutality in the US is in a different league. However, when it

comes to other forms of systemic racism, the black experience in the UK is in many ways equally as pernicious. We see it in the disproportionate British ethnic minority COVID death rate, which is more than twice that of white Brits.

Previous recessions have hit ethnic minorities hard, and this one will be no different. Ethnic minority job seekers send out 60% more applications compared with white people to secure the equivalent number of interviews, regardless of qualifications. Add a wider backcloth, that Ethnic Minorities represent 26% of the prison population in England and Wales. If prisoners reflected the make-up of the actual population, we would have over 9,000 fewer ethnic inmates behind bars. The economic cost of over-representation is estimated to be £234 million a year.

Protests and rallies across the UK show us that people are sick of broken promises. When Prime Minister Boris Johnson looks down a camera lens and says "Black Lives Matter" with a straight face, you know the government wants to kick the issue into the long grass. We can't let that happen.

Whether anger stems from state abuse or neglect, whether it's historic or contemporary, it will always find an outlet. The marginalisation of UK ethnic minorities and black lives, in particular, is gaining widespread acceptance. The Women's and Equality minister, Kemi Badenoch's shameful speech in this year's Black History Month's debate in parliament, is the latest in a long list of attacks on antiracism. Criminalising critical race theory, attacking unconscious bias critics or the selective use of the terms 'identity politics' and Culture Wars serves to quieten the campaign against structural inequality. We can't let that happen.

We didn't get here by accident, and won't make progress by chance. There must be a library somewhere with scores of inquiries into the effects of institutionalised racism gathering dust. We need to begin implementing their recommendations. This time seems different. If the enthusiasm of Black Lives Matters protestors is anything to go by, this is just the beginning. **C**

**Robbie Scott is a member of Chartist EB and Poplar & Limehouse CLP**

## JAPAN

# Learning Japanese

**Glyn Ford** finds change through continuity may not stabilise the fortunes of Japan's ruling party

On 16 September 16 Abe Shinzo Japan's longest serving Prime Minister stepped aside for Suga Yoshihiro, his former and faithful Chief Cabinet Secretary, after a vote inside the right-wing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) triggered by Abe's ill health. Suga won well. He would have won worse without the collaboration of the LDP's Secretary General Nikai Toshinori, who chose to exclude the Party's members from the selection process at the expense of their favoured candidate Ishiba Shigeru. Suga as the continuity candidate would have beaten Ishiba. But a narrower victory would have forced an accommodation with him, his policies and his people. As it is Suga takes all. Why was Abe ill? The next General Election was less than twelve months away, public support was shrivelling and the LDP was floundering in the polls as the economy, already stuttering before coronavirus, slowed further. The promise of late Olympics, casino resorts and constitutional revision were all looking a gamble, and Abe was at odds with friends and enemies both - relations with Seoul being as bad as with Beijing.

On top of it all the opposition, broken by the shambles of their maladroitness governments - three between 2009-12 - were putting themselves back together again, as the electorate began to forget, with the fusion of the mass into Edano Yukio's new Constitutional Democratic Party. The worry was with Abe at the wheel come the General Election the LDP would, while hanging on to power, suffer substantial losses that would result in the LDP's minority current replacing his right-wing nationalism with their soft centrism. The Japanese system makes US Presidential elections look democratic. Suga looks to be doing a Gordon. After Blair fell to Gordon's knives in June 2007 there was a honeymoon period where the expectation was Brown would call a General Election. During Party Conference that year he told his coterie he would announce the election on the Monday; poster sites were booked, printers contracted and lists of which friends of Gordon were to be imposed where were



**Yoshihide Suga - merely a transitional PM?**

drawn up. On the Sunday - spooked by a delinquent poll - he wrote off £1 million and his election. Suga has his honeymoon, but events threaten to disfigure the beauty of not being Abe well before he summons up the nerve to call it.

If Suga doesn't deliver change he will be a mere transitional figure. But which way to jump? At the heart of Japan's problems is the contradiction between mind and heart. To kick-start the economy Tokyo needs Beijing not Washington. For all the talk of re-shoring back to the Home Islands by Japan's Zaibatsu (Industrial Conglomerates) it's China that builds the components jigsawed into Japan's products, and it's China's emerging middle class that buys them. Abe, back in 2006, when elected for his first term, broke precedence travelling to Zhongnanhai before the White House as a symbol of the economic reality. The fact that he subsequently destroyed that relationship doesn't change the numbers.

Yet security and diplomacy conversely have Tokyo sheltering under Washington's umbrella. Abe's drive to revise the Constitution and remove Article 9 - the article outlawing war - is dead. The US, much to their later chagrin, locked in the 1947 Constitution by imposing revision by referendum. The Japanese people are happy with peace. Abe didn't get the message. It's all redundant. The Japanese Supreme Court is willing to tell anyone that asks that they will be complicit in Tokyo's militarisation.

Japan had closely guarded troops in Iraq. They already have ships at

sea deterring Somali pirates and North Korean sanctions busters, and self-defence can be offence. Current plans enabling pre-emptive strikes against North Korea are scarcely distinguishable from preventive war. Suga will enhance these capabilities and squander billions to America's military industrial complex with Aegis Ashore missile defence systems. But he's under pressure from Washington, deep in the process of orchestrating confrontation with China, to transpose quantity into quality. Abe collaborated with Trump's devising of a Quad 'alliance' of US, Japan, India and Australia. Then Washington arbitrarily announces the G7 will give way to the Democratic 10 packed with the addition of India, South Korea and Australia. The rallying cry of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' is code for challenging Beijing in the South China Sea. Cursory concurrence is one thing, serial-at-sea deployment another.

Suga is being coerced - like South Korea, but that's another story - to develop a 'blue water' navy and become a founder member of the D10's Armed Wing. After all Johnson's signed up sailing Britain's new aircraft carrier off there. Despite cancelling most of his Asian Tour, when Trump went down with coronavirus in early October, Pompeo persisted to Tokyo for the Quad meeting. As NATO wastes away across the Atlantic Washington wants to resurrect its spectre in the Indo-Pacific. Will Suga opt for the numbers, 'NATO' or indecision? What price will he and Japan pay? **C**

**Glyn Ford is an author and ex Labour MEP**



# Fig-leaf replaces oven-ready

**Julie Ward** on an unseemly end to a near 50-year partnership

**A**t the end of a long, productive, mutually beneficial and largely friendly period where we occupied a privileged position as an exceptional yet rather eccentric member of the European Union with various privileges, opt outs and rebates, it looks like the 47 year relationship between the EU and the UK is finally descending into an unseemly fish fight.

Being an island nation with mainly porous borders might have contributed to the rise of our favourite national take away - Fish and Chips - but it has not done us any favours in the field of international diplomacy. The English Channel quite literally keeps us apart from our nearest neighbours, which is worrying at a time when we need to align more closely and demonstrate that same Dunkirk spirit of solidarity in the face of multiple global crises which mobilised us during the fight against fascism.

The 20 mile stretch of water between Dover and Cap Gris Nez near Calais begins to feel like an ocean these days with Boris Johnson setting a course for Australia rather than building bridges to continental Europe. With Tony Abbott on board there won't be much room for manoeuvre in respect of a level playing field.

As I write Macron has said he won't sacrifice the fisherfolk of Boulogne Sur Mer in order to throw Barnier a line and Johnson is thinking more about Aussie-style barbecues than cod and chips. The Belgian Ambassador to the EU, Willem van de Voorde, meanwhile introduced a little known historical fact into a meeting with fellow ambassadors on October 7th, citing a treaty signed some 350 years ago by King Charles II which had granted 50 Flemish fishermen from Bruges "eternal rights" to English fishing waters. Does Johnson know about these archaic rights? Will the hapless Bruges fishermen who still choose to exercise this right be subjected to detention and deportation along with the desperate refugees who risk their lives to reach our wretched country? Or worse still imprisonment in the Tower of London along with activist lawyers and arch remain-



**French fishermen v British boats**

ers (like me) who are reviled by Priti Patel and condemned as traitors by the Murdoch press.

Meanwhile, new borders with Europe are being created in the leafy lanes of Kent, much to the consternation of locals, many of whom voted Leave. They were not fully informed of how withdrawal from the single market and the customs union would in fact create even more red tape than that required by Brussels, along with the creation of gargantuan ugly lorry parks and a surfeit of portaloos in their own backyard.

Our other border with the Republic of Ireland appears to have moved into the Irish Sea where it's impossible for the fish to know which side they are on. To be fair, however, the cows would have the same trouble with a land border on the island of Ireland - the grass is always greener...As the 27 heads of the European Council prepared to meet on October 16 with major disagreements on several substantive issues it became increasingly hard to predict the outcome of one of the most ill-tempered divorce settlements ever.

Across the pond in the USA the UK fish market is non-existent and the offer of chlorinated chicken and hormone-injected beef for our children's school dinners is

fading along with Trump's fake tan as his popularity in the polls wanes and Covid deaths rise. Biden is more predisposed to the EU than the incumbent clown with a squirrel on his head, and our breaking of international law has gone down badly with Joe's team.

It is hard to predict just quite how lonely we will be as an independent nation on January 1st 2021 but even if there is an agreement between the UK and the EU it is likely to be a bare-bones 'fig leaf' deal which will leave many issues still to be discussed, thereby prolonging the pain of complete excision for a decade at least. Meanwhile, the matter of state aid, which has little to do with fish (but everything to do with fishiness) should give British citizens cause for concern as Dominic Cummings has a cunning plan to chuck generous subsidies in the general direction of tech-mates as part of his plan to completely get rid of the civil service and run the country on Artificial Intelligence.

Like most of the Europeans, including the French, Michel Barnier is probably hoping that all this is a bad dream and that we will soon wake up - it will be June 24th 2016 and Remain has won the referendum. **C**

**Julie Ward was a Labour MEP for NW England**

## GREECE

# Greek 'Golden Dawn' fascists jailed

Josephine Grahl on an historic victory against Greek neo-Nazis

**O**n Wednesday 7th October the five and a half year trial of the Greek neo-Nazi organisation Golden Dawn finally concluded with guilty verdicts for all defendants.

After the verdicts were read out, Magda Fyssas, the mother of murdered anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas made her way to the steps of the courtroom. Raising her hands to the sky, she addressed her lost son, calling out "You've done it my son – do you hear me? You did it." Magda Fyssas has been a mainstay of the trial, inspiring in her dedication to have her son's killers brought to justice, and in her solidarity with the other victims, their families, and those struggling against fascism and the far-right in Greece and across Europe.

The 68 Golden Dawn defendants, including the leadership and former MPs of the neo-fascist group, were on trial for multiple charges, including the murder of Greek musician Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, the attempted murder of Communist trade unionists, the attempted murder of Egyptian immigrant Abouzid Embarak in his home in June 2012, and finally the charge of running a criminal organisation.

The final charge, crucially, was based on evidence showing that Golden Dawn is a neo-fascist organisation, operating under hierarchical, mafia-style discipline, and that members carried out the violent crimes under orders and with knowledge of the leadership.

Unlike the slick, pseudo-respectable European far-right parties we have seen over the last few decades – dangerous as those are – Golden Dawn is distinct from the French Front National, Alternativ für Deutschland in Germany, or the BNP in this country. During the 21st century it rose to become the most effective and well-funded neo-Nazi party in Europe, with its own militia, a hierarchical, mafia-style discipline, and a slick propaganda machine, promoting an openly pro-Hitlerite programme and stirring up hatred and violence against refugees, migrants, trade unions and the left in Greece. Although the organisation was first constituted in the 1980s, it was after the 2008 global financial crisis that it rose in prominence, exploiting and manipu-



Magda Fyssa, the mother of Pavlos Fyssas, antifascist rapper murdered by a member of Golden Dawn

lating the anger of Greek people at the austerity measures inflicted on Greece by the European Union. After the May 2012 election, in which Golden Dawn won 21 seats in the Greek parliament, its rise seemed unstoppable.

In 2013 the murder of Pavlos Fyssas finally prompted even the tame Greek judiciary into action. A huge array of indictments were bundled together into a single, overarching trial, ranging from individual acts of murder and violence to the leadership and organisation of Golden Dawn itself. This complexity enabled a huge number of delaying tactics on legal grounds, and a widespread fear among anti-fascist campaigners that the trial would result in a whitewash and a 'not proven guilty' verdict. Golden Dawn members and leadership, as well as informants from within the organisation, took to the witness stand to give contradictory and often false testimony, and to claim ignorance of the operations of the organisation.

Golden Dawn were also known to have deeply infiltrated the Greek justice and security institutions. So confident were members of the organisation of their support among the police that as officers arrested Giorgios Roupakias for the murder of Fyssas, he appealed to them: "I'm one of you – I'm a member of Golden Dawn."

In December 2019, the public prosecutor advised the court to dismiss the charge of 'operation as a

criminal organisation,' controversially arguing that Golden Dawn members were acting alone in committing the other crimes. Lawyers for the victims presented huge volumes of evidence to demonstrate that in carrying out violent attacks and murder, individual members operated under orders and that the Golden Dawn leadership should share criminal responsibility with their organised cadres. Supported by the anti-fascist coalition KEER-FA and Pavlos Fyssas' family, the lawyers also exploited a clause in the criminal justice code to allow those representing the victims to have a formal role in the proceedings.

Finally, in mid October justice was served. In addition to the heavy custodial sentences handed down to Golden Dawn leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos and other former MPs, as well as life sentences for those found guilty of violent crimes, the finding of the court that Golden Dawn was a criminal organisation guarantees that it will be outlawed from civic and political activity in Greece.

What some have described as 'the largest trial of Nazis since Nuremberg' has ended in a victory which will be welcomed by antifascists across the world – including the trade unionists, activists and politicians in this country who over the duration of the trial have stood in solidarity with our comrades in Greece. **C**

**Josephine Grahl is secretary of Greece Solidarity Campaign. See GSC website for a fuller report**



# Fight Snub

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a  
moment of  
hope and  
expectation

There are very few plays that have been turned into great movies. Plenty have won Oscars like *'Driving Miss Daisy'* and *'Amadeus'*, but these movies have been defined by central performances from the likes of Jessica Tandy or F. Murray Abraham rather than classic moments of cinema. Still, these filmed plays often contain better writing than your average three act Hollywood screenplay if not always great dramatic moments. A case in point is *'One Night in Miami'*, adapted by Kemp Powers from his 2013 stage play.

Powers is having a terrific year, Covid-considered, having written and co-directed the upcoming (and well-reviewed) Disney Pixar film, *'Soul'*. His play is well-served by the actress Regina King, making her feature film directorial debut. Ultimately, padding aside, it is just four guys in a hotel room on 25 February 1964 arguing about next steps. But the four guys are the black activist and Muslim convert, Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir), the boxer Cassius Clay (Eli Goree), the soul singer Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom, Jr) and Cleveland Browns fullback-turned-actor, Jim Brown (Aldis Hodge). Before the night is out, Cassius will change his name to Muhammad Ali and Malcolm will break with the Nation of Islam, a movement mired in controversy, particularly for its treatment of women.

Ostensibly Cooke and Brown are there to celebrate Clay's win over Sonny Liston, improbable the previous year when the brash twenty-two-year-old boxer was clobbered by Henry Cooper. Malcolm, Clay's 'spiritual adviser' is keen to oversee the boxer's conversion to Islam and for them to be seen together, but when Clay learns that he isn't becoming a member of the Nation of Islam, rather Malcolm's breakaway movement, he suspects he is being used. Cooke finds himself vigorously opposed to Malcolm; for him, success and working

within the system is a better way of fighting racism than declaring war on white people. Cooke owns a label and champions black artists. Brown thinks earning big bucks in Hollywood is the answer, though in his first role in the western, *'Rio Conchos'*, his character dies early. He is told that for all his \$34,000 salary, he is cannon fodder. In an early scene, we see him similarly humiliated when visiting a Southern gentleman (Beau Bridges), who admires his running and will drink lemonade with him on the porch, but won't let him inside the house.

The clash between Cooke and Malcolm is the heart of the film.

affecting moments.

Although the drama takes place at a particular moment in American history, barely three months after the death of John F Kennedy, but five months before the passing of Civil Rights Act, it speaks to us now. In the film, we see the appeal of a binary view on the world in which groups are either on one side or another. This view, illustrated by Malcolm's philosophy, leads to the cementing of division. Cooke offers a different view, more nuanced, less overtly confrontational, placating rather than fuelling the fire of hostility. None of the men in the film represents a viewpoint with which we can wholly agree, but they all have elements of an appropriate response to racism and injustice.

The actors rise to the challenge of their iconic roles in different ways. Foree gives us the swagger of Cassius Clay, with the hyperbole to match. 'Alexander conquered the world when he was thirty; I conquered the boxing world when I was twenty-two,' he boasts after his victory against Liston. Ben-Adir emphasises Malcolm's quiet strength, though the casting does not suggest that he is seventeen years Clay's senior – the cast seem broadly the same age. Odom Jr embodies Cooke's easy charm and sense of self-worth, while Hodge projects Brown's solidity; he too has nothing to prove.

The finale is cathartic. Cooke did become a more politically engaged artist, with the song, 'A Change is Gonna Come', though both he and Malcolm would be

killed less than twelve months after this fateful evening. Bertha Franklin, the woman who allegedly shot Cooke in December 1964, was never charged. The film doesn't dwell on the future, but holds us in the moment of success, hope and expectation.

**'One Night in Miami' debuted at the London Film Festival in October 2020 and will be released on Amazon Prime in January 2021.**



Malcolm humiliates him by playing his record, a love song with bland lyrics, and contrasts it with Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind', asking him why it took a white guy to articulate 'our struggle'. However, Malcolm also admires him, describing how at one concert, when Jackie Wilson (Jeremy Pope) sabotages the speaker system, Cooke got the initially hostile audience to generate a rhythm against which he could sing. The scene, staged as a flashback, is one of the film's more

## BOOK REVIEWS

# The Man of Myth

**Glyn Ford**  
on Orwell  
and  
detractors

**Becoming George Orwell; Life and Letters, Legacy and Legend**  
**John Rodden**  
**Princeton University Press £25.00**  
**Orwell; A Man of Our Time**  
**Richard Bradford**  
**Bloomsbury £20.00**

There is an industry inspecting and dissecting each and every aspect of Eric Blair's life. *Becoming George Orwell* looks at his transfiguration into the man of the myth carved and shaped to suit the span between vanilla and reaction, while *Orwell; A Man of Our Time* argues his work reverberates with contemporary politics, Brexit and Trump, populism and inequality, even anti-semitism and Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party.

*Becoming George Orwell* has all the pieces of the jigsaw to show Orwell in the round, but Rodden just can't put them together. He's blind-sided as an American conservative. He writes, that in 1942 the Special Branch absurdly reported that Orwell held "advanced communist views and several of his Indian friends say they have often seen him at communist meetings". The only thing 'absurd' here is Rodden. Orwell had fought on the frontline in Spain with the anti-Stalinist POUM, had been in Barcelona during the civil war as the Spanish Communist Party, under pressure from Soviet agents, began the bloody suppression of the non-Stalinist left. The POUM's leader and former Catalan Minister of Justice Andreu Nin was arrested, tortured and murdered, with Moscow listing Orwell and his first wife Eileen for liquidation.

Orwell went left not right. In the run-up to war in September 1939 he was preparing to go underground to fight the threat of a coming British totalitarianism. It was the Nazi-Soviet Pact that was his call to Britain's Imperialist War. As a member he sided with the faction arguing in the ILP's Left that this was a war that beginning as a national-imperialist conflict could be transformed into an international war against capitalism-imperialism. His enthusiasm for the Home Guard was, like Tom

Wintringham's, as street fighting guerrilla warfare units available to fight both Germans and British Imperialism. Orwell's 1941 polemic *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* just put it that much more politely. Orwell was a communist, but one who rejected the totalitarianism of Hitler and Stalin. If Special Branch weren't watching him they weren't doing their job.

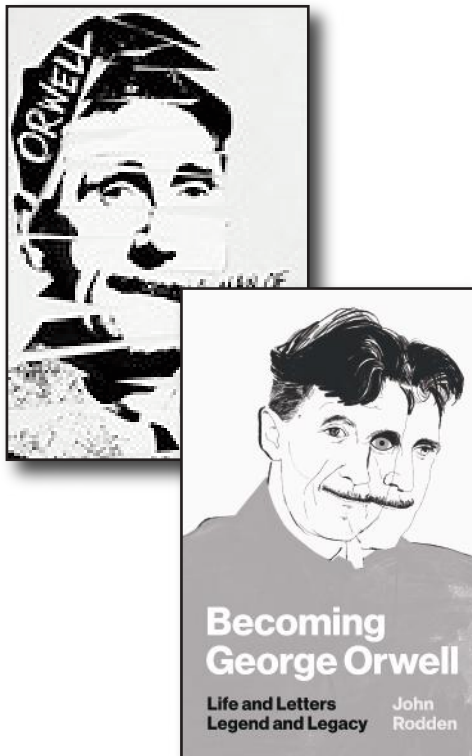
Rodden's lack of political nuance creates a simulacrum whose manipulation by the CIA and other less benign forces he charts. He is right in that the pro-

servative prejudice, fallacies and fabrications is nothing new.

Bradford is at his best on Orwell and Europe. The Spectator's rabid columnist Toby Young has claimed Orwell for the Brexiteers. Nothing is less likely. For Bradford, Orwell was a righteous European expounding the fact that in a post-colonial world, Europe's nations had no choice but to unite. It had been their very failure to adapt as the world changed under them that had created the long war of 1914-45. In his 'Towards European Unity' for America's Partisan Review (July/August 1947) he made the case that the only way to recovery was within the new community of European States. He presciently warned 'The Russians cannot but be hostile to any European union not under their own control' and that hostage as Britain was to Washington, 'there is always the danger that the United States will break up any European coalition by drawing Britain out of it'. A dog that barked seventy years later.

The case was lost by abeyance. Labour's leadership looked across the Atlantic not the Channel. The traditional left was little better. A similar piece by Orwell for Tribune was almost certainly the only one of his they failed to publish. Yet Orwell was not alone. There was the ILP, Common Wealth and the small group of Labour MPs, like Fenner Brockway, Kim MacKay and Will Warbey, in the Socialist Europe group in the House of Commons who used the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe to argue their case. It was MacKay's *Federal Europe* (1941) that had stated socialism followed European unification rather than led it. The reason there even has to be a debate today is that this facet of Orwell and the post-war pro-European left he was part of were crushed in the jaws of that Soviet - American political vice that left no living space for an independent non-Stalinist left. It was Washington or Moscow.

Rodden and Bradford are both good 'bad' books, not without interest, but with lobotomised Orwells marching to their tunes.



cess is eased by the reels of Orwell's history being played backwards in America. *Animal Farm* and 1984 overhang *Homage to Catalonia* - his obituary of POUM and the Spanish Revolution - and *The Lion and the Unicorn* in a manner that's less true in the UK.

Orwell; A Man of Our Time has a shallower furrow. Making a concurrent case for 'doublethink' and the Two Minutes Hate in the face of 'alternative facts' and Trump rally incantations of 'lock her up' and 'send her back' is hardly rocket science. True the craft practices of the Ministry of Hate have been industrialised. Nevertheless, the anarchy, lies and subornation of social media underpinning con-



# The lost year of 1975

**Trevor Fisher**  
on the first  
Referendum

**Yes to Europe**  
**The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain**  
**Robert Saunders**  
**Cambridge University Press £24.99**

British politics is dominated by fantasies. However, fantasy is not limited to the hard right dominating the Conservative Party. Brexit has been based on an understanding of British history and constitution which is as full of holes as a piece of Swiss cheese. Britain does not have a written constitution so when its history is lost, politics goes off the rails.

The key lost reality is the 1975 EU referendum. The failed People's Vote campaign was based on the idea they wanted a second referendum. This was historical nonsense as the second referendum had taken place in 1975. But from the Guardian to Plaid Cymru, campaigners asked for a second, and in so doing lost the democratic and constitutional arguments. Saunders wrote in 2018 "As the dust settles on a second referendum its capacity to inflame political passions has lost none of its explosive potential". When he published the book he must have expected that the realisation that 1975 was the second referendum would be established, and campaigners would start to campaign for a third. But nothing changed. With the People's Vote arguing for a second vote, the belief that there could only be one vote and PV was undermining a democratic decision was accepted even by some Remainers.

While there is no chance of another EU referendum in the near future, Neverendums are here to stay. This reality will blow up in May next year as the SNP is almost certain to win the Holyrood election and demand a second independence referendum. If Labour does not back this, it will compound all the problems it has suffered in Scotland since Blair.

Lost territory must be regained, notably understanding of the key historical issue which

as he writes is that "Cameron followed the Wilson playbook almost to the letter: yet when he sought to repeat his predecessor's success, the device blew up in his hands". Both Prime Ministers had the same strategy, but the centre could not hold and that is the key fact for today's politics, dominated as it is by the hard right.

The history as told by Saunders is accurate, but Saunders only touches on the most astonishing

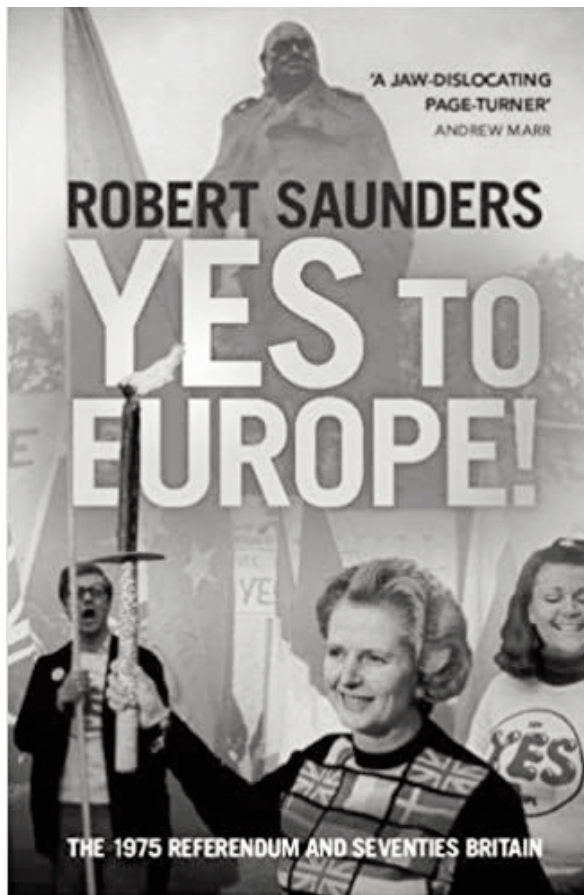
explained. Saunders provides accurate detail of all aspects of the first campaign. He indicates why the Powellite Tories won control of their party and British politics forty-five years later.

The seeds of their success are touched on in the Epilogue and Saunders describes how the antis mobilized to reverse the Remain victory – a two thirds majority for staying in – both EU Referendums have been about Leaving. The pro Europeans claimed the result was final. The constitutional change became a skeleton in the Westminster cupboard. The fact that the first referendum was buried meant this book which was originally published in March 2018 (but is now out in paperback) had little impact.

The fact that referendums are the way constitutional issues are resolved is a fact but became a deep rooted piece of cognitive dissonance. The political class implicitly agreed they would only be used to solve problems which could not be resolved by a Westminster vote. The second UK referendum was the AV vote of 2011 agreed by the Tories and Lib Dems as part of the deal for the 2010 coalition. The Third UK referendum of 2016, and second EU referendum, was to hold the Tory Party together. Referendums as such did not become a regular device unlike

Switzerland and until Saunders produced this book, there was no study of the half forgotten 1975 referendum.

While there is no chance of UK rejoining the EU in the foreseeable future, the fact that referendums have become the skeleton in the constitutional closet cannot remain the case. The likely SNP victory in seven months time will turn a bright light in a dark place. Labour must defend the Union, but cannot go into the Scots election echoing the Tories that no vote is possible. It has to grasp constitutional reality. In doing so, Saunders' book will be essential reading.



contrast between 1975 and 2016, that all the players in the 1975 vote changed sides by 2016. The Scots and Welsh nationalists completely changed to be pro European by 2016, when they wanted to leave in 1975. Of course, Labour and the Tories were split in both votes, and Saunders is good on the internal battles especially that Thatcher was pro-European in 1975. The Anti wing of the Tories was leaderless as Enoch Powell had left the Tories for the Ulster Unionists in 1974. Tony Benn of course led the anti faction in Labour, but he lost to Wilson and the way this was done is well

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Unconventional hero

**Steve Cushion**  
on a  
transnational  
revolutionary

**Garibaldi in South America**  
**Richard Bourne**  
**Hurst £25**

I do not often read military history, but this is an exception, partly because so little is known about Giuseppe Garibaldi's time in South America but also because it is the history of a very unconventional, and thereby effective, military leader. Having fled Italy with a price on his head after a failed nationalist conspiracy, Garibaldi arrived in the southern Brazilian province of Rio Grande del Sur in 1838, at that time engaged in a separatist rebellion as the Republic of Piratini. Garibaldi was a sea captain by profession. He was given command of the breakaway republic's light boats on the Lago de Platos, the enormous lake that runs parallel to the sea coast of Brazil, where he operated as a privateer, a sort of licenced pirate entitled to a large share of the booty.

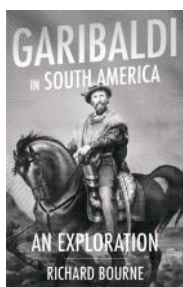
He was subsequently given command of land forces that included several thousand freed slaves, the Lanceros Negros. During this campaign, he met and eloped with his future, possibly bigamous, wife, Anita,

a truly remarkable warrior in her own right. However, in 1841, he departed with Anita for Montevideo, but the book is unclear why he left. Uruguay was engaged in a civil war, la Guerra Grande from 1838-51, in which the Buenos Aires dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas, aided a warlord, Manuel Oribe, against another warlord called Fructuoso Rivera. Rivera controlled the capital Montevideo, Garibaldi supported him and quickly became one of the military leaders of the Colorado faction, commanding a legion of volunteers from the Italian population of the city.

The book's description of Garibaldi's remarkable military leadership is fascinating, but gives us no real idea of his politics. Why did he side with Rivera against Oribe? What was politically preferable in his eyes about the rebel Republic of Piratini in comparison with the Empire of Brazil? The protagonists are referred to as Liberals or Conservatives, but with no real explanation as to what that meant in terms of the time. The book leaves us with the impression that these wars were only large-scale gang fights between warlords intent on personal power.

But there was so much more going

on that gives context to the wars. Let us take for example the question of slavery. The breakaway Republic of Piratini freed its slaves and recruited thousands of Afro-Brazilians into its army, while the Brazilian Empire maintained enslavement until 1888. Maybe something worth fighting for. The economy of Piratini/Rio Grande del Sur was based on cattle ranching, an industry that is not particularly suitable for slavery - if you have to give a slave a horse to carry out his functions, there is little chance he will return at the end of the day. So, freeing the slaves was not particularly controversial in the region and when Piratini finally lost the war in 1845, slavery was not reimposed. This is an example of how the military history could be so much better understood if the contending social, political and economic factors were explained. Garibaldi was accused by his enemies of being little more than a freebooting mercenary and a brigand. That is far from true, but this book does little to really explain why and how he provided such leadership both in the wars of the Southern Cone and in the later reunification of Italy.



**Nigel Watt**  
on NATO,  
Russia and  
China

# How the rest learned to fight the West

**The Dragons and the Snakes**  
**David Kilcullen**  
**Hurst £20**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall 'the West' (effectively the US, plus its UK poodle and other mostly democratic states) was militarily unchallenged in the world. This book, in the author's words, tries "to make sense of what is happening ... as great power and nation-state competition returns... and warfare assumes new forms that combine old tools and techniques in new ways." Kilcullen succeeds in pulling together a complex history in a mostly very readable style, though I found some of the military detail rather heavy going.

The dragons are the resurgent great powers, Russia and China - North Korea and Iran being 'lesser dragons'. The snakes are the array of non-state actors such as al-Qaeda, ISIS and the Taliban. While 'the West' exhausted itself in Iraq and Afghanistan the dragons grew stronger and the snakes went on causing trouble.

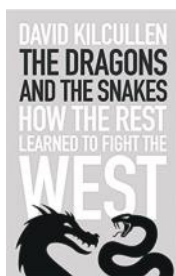
Kilcullen marks the moment when the tide turned as 5.30am on 20 March 2003 when the strike to kill Saddam Hussein and his sons failed. Hindsight

shows this to have been the culmination of western "high-tech, intelligence-led, precision-strike model of battlefield dominance." The author is quite honest in showing how the Russian and Chinese 'dragons' were driven to be enemies through Western foolishness. Russia was weak, poor and humiliated after 1990 but then Russia's neighbours, especially the former Soviet Baltic republics, were allowed to join NATO - to which Russia had briefly been invited as a partner. When NATO intervened in Kosovo, Russia was not consulted. It was in and out of the G8. The US was present in Afghanistan and Russia's old fear of being encircled was reinforced. Russia under Putin began to flex its muscles, rearming, fighting in Georgia, reinforcing the border with Norway, playing a big role in Syria, occupying the Crimea and supporting dissident areas in Ukraine - and maybe playing around in cyberspace.

China's hostility to the West was set alight by the US bombing of its embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo crisis, and it accelerated its rearmament. With its increasing economic power China could threaten America's protégés - Japan, Taiwan, South Korea. It has armed the islands in the South China

Sea, and it has developed a growing presence in Africa (e.g. in Zimbabwe) and a military base in Djibouti (next to that of the US). However, China sees its path to power more through a mix of economic and diplomatic weight rather than simply military power. Meanwhile the snakes continued to defy 'the West', shifting and dividing into different groupings and becoming more technologically sophisticated.

Simultaneously American power declined. It was difficult to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan. Most Americans were tired of trying to be the world's policeman. Obama tried not to go too deep into Syria and Libya. Trump resented NATO and although he threw money at the military and provoked North Korea, Iran and China, he avoided plunging into war. When a dominant power declines sometimes another one rises to take its place as the Byzantine Empire did when the western Roman Empire collapsed, and as the USA itself replaced Britain. The author fears there is now no single candidate to take up the baton from a declining USA and that the duty is likely to fall on a collection of European and Asian states working not for victory but for "a better peace."





# Legacy of Seattle

**Ewan Flynn**  
on five days  
that shook  
America

**Radical Seattle - The General Strike of 1919**  
**Cal Winslow**  
Monthly Review Press, 2020

In February 1919 the workers of Seattle - all of them - laid down their tools and aprons and went on strike. Those working in the shipyards, having played a critical role in the United States' war effort, demanded fairer pay. Others, from laundry workers to sweet makers, came out in solidarity. As Cal Winslow, labour historian and activist, explains, these were 'five days that matter'. Never before had this happened in the history of the United States.

The great strength of Winslow's book is that it chronicles the general strike as the culmination of a long process where working-class consciousness, organisation and radicalism developed. Through his research, Winslow demonstrates the crucial role played by largely forgotten events in laying the foundations for the strike.

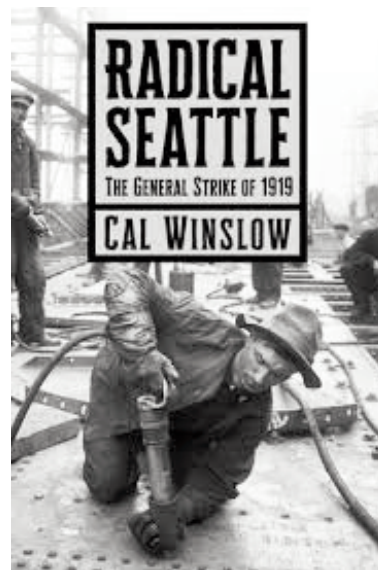
The stories of the 1916 Everett Massacre (where Workers of the World members were murdered by

reactionary vigilantes - 'a Peterloo for the Pacific Northwest'); the case of labour leader Thomas Mooney (persecuted and wrongly convicted for the San Francisco Preparedness Day bombing); and The Shilka (a Russian ship, flying the red flag when docking in Seattle's Elliott Bay just weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution) are electrifyingly recounted.

Winslow tells the history of Seattle and its Great Strike from the perspective of the workers who made it. His chapter on the timber trade, exploring the appalling labour conditions and disastrous environmental impact of the industry in the early 20th Century, screams with prescience.

The book also illustrates the critical role played by women like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Anna Louise Strong in emboldening Seattle's workers to strive for a fairer society.

Despite the wave of repression and surge of racist violence that followed the end of the strike, Winslow makes a compelling argument for reclaiming its legacy from those who dismiss it as a failure. Seattle's workers showed Americans that "a better world was indeed possible".



**Paul Salveson**  
on some  
19th  
century  
radicals

## A popular working-class movement

**Chartism in Nottinghamshire: Themes and Overview**

**Julian Atkinson and Roger Turner**  
Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Labour  
History Society £5

The history of the Chartist movement, which swept much of Britain from the late 1830s to the end of the 1840s, is patchy to say the least. The traditional interpretation was that of a well-meaning but ultimately doomed movement led by demagogues such as Feargus O'Connor, with implied or often overt anti-Irish racism thrown in.

The core demands of the Chartist Movement were based on the 'six points' which boiled down to universal 'manhood' suffrage, with secret ballots, payment of MPs and equal-sized constituencies. So ostensibly it was a 'radical democratic' campaign but its activities went far beyond that, taking in land reform and co-operatives, the 'Irish Question', factory conditions and women's suffrage.

In the last thirty years a more measured view of what Engels admired as a genuinely popular working class movement, has emerged. The work of the late Malcolm Chase has made a

major contribution to our understanding of this complex and deep-rooted movement, but left plenty of space for more local and regional studies.

This booklet provides a thorough account of the rise and fall of Chartism in Nottingham, covering the period from 1836 to the early 1850s. Nottingham in the mid-1830s was an expanding industrial city, centred on the hosiery and knitwear industry. In the surrounding areas, coal mining as an expanding business. Atkinson and Tanner document the appalling housing conditions and poverty in the city which gave local radicals no shortage of issues to campaign on.

The Nottingham Working Men's Association (NWMA) was formed in January 1838 and became the nucleus of the Chartist movement locally. As well as adopting the 'six points' of the Charter later in the year, the association called for the extension of educational facilities and the establishment of a public reference library. As the movement grew, local Chartists became involved in trade union struggles as well as supporting the demands of the local unemployed. The hated New Poor Law was a particular focus of the radicals' hatred.

Working class women were involved in the local Chartist movement, providing "the social cement" to keep the movement together. A Nottingham Female Political Union was established and organised packed meetings in the city centre where the issue of women's political rights was raised.

The movement ebbed and flowed, with peaks in 1838, 1842 and 1848. Despite a huge meeting in April 1848, attracting around 10,000 people to a rally in the city, the movement entered a steady decline in the early 1850s. Some of the main activists became involved in the secularist movement, others in co-operation. Many drifted into the Liberal party and formed its 'radical' wing in subsequent decades.

Atkinson and Tanner have done a thorough job in telling the story of this important episode of our history, building on the work of Chris Richardson, whose book *A City of Light - Socialism, Chartism and Co-operation* - inspired their work. We need more local and regional studies of this crucial period in British political history.



**Feargus O'Connor**  
Chartist leader

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society

**Andrew Coates**  
on an  
epochal  
rupture

**The Life of Marx and the Development of His Work Volume 1. 1818 – 1841**

**Michael Heinrich**  
Monthly Review Press \$34

A man dressed like Karl Marx” Michael Heinrich observes “would hardly arouse attention walking through the streets of Paris of London today.” Jonathan Sperber recently asserted that Marx was a product of a past epoch, the early 19th century “increasingly distant from our age.” By contrast the first volume of Heinrich’s projected account of Marx’s life sees his reflections on the ‘epochal rupture’ that created modern capitalism, to be, if more arresting than his clothing, recognisably part of today’s world.

Heinrich has not written a guide to Why Marx Was Right. Volume 1 of *The Life of Marx and the Development of his Work* begins with probably the best account of time, place, family and culture of Marx’s early years in the German provincial city of Trier. Demolishing a common ‘biographical fiction’ his Dutch mother, Henriette Presburg, was not an ‘uneducated housewife’ but intelligent and witty, who cared deeply for her children and followed political developments. Marx’s Jewish family background was less an influence on his youth than ‘Enlightenment-humanist’ ideas, from his father Heinrich onwards. Marx was never an ‘outsider’. Within his family and friends at the Gymnasium he grew up in a ‘politically interested enlightened-liberal milieu’.

Marx passed from his early education to studies at the University of Berlin. A possible influence on later work, the lectures of the radical Hegelian Eduard Gans, who had read

Saint Simon, is carefully assessed. Heinrich places Gans, in a way another Marx biographer, Gareth Stedman-Jones, would, within early French socialist ideas about ‘association’. The biographer is not sure that they prompted the Communist Manifesto’s picture of history as the record of class struggle. There have been many candidates for that, including the disciple of Charles Fourier, Victor Considerant.

influence of Old and Young Hegelianism.

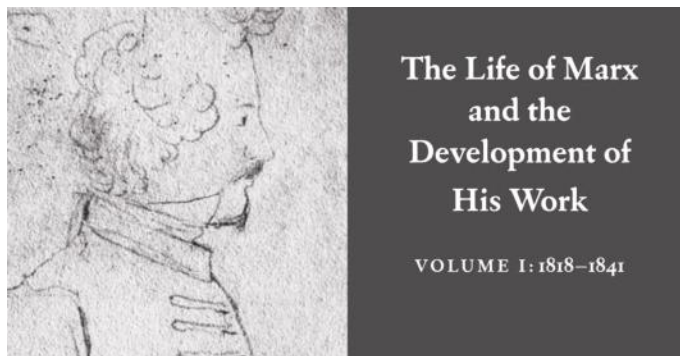
The ‘broad current’ of radical Hegelians developed the groundwork of the ‘dialectical method’ some Marxists hold to. But they were above all interested in the critique of religion, and embedded in theological debates of the time. Paralleled in Britain and France in critical approaches to the Bible and revealed Truth, they could be seen as part of the process of secularising history and politics.

Marx’s engagement in the radical Hegelian Doctor’s Club, which moved from discussions about atheism to demands for intellectual and social rights, suggest a similar direction. Yet early studies in the philosophy of religion reflected how his education and intellectual debut was “far more shaped by religion than it would be today”. This suggests that not everything about early modern society would be recognisable today.

The volume ends with an essay on How is Biographical Writing Possible Today? It discusses a variety of approaches to the history of ideas, including Quintin Skinner and Michel Foucault. Marx, he notes, “obtained his influence primarily through his writings, having an impact both during his lifetime and after.” This

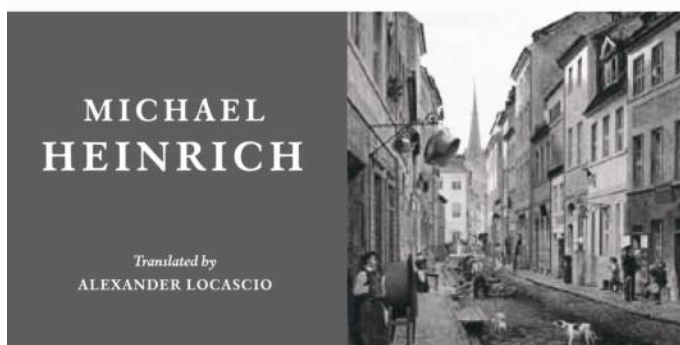
leaves one expectant for a future account of Marx’s role in the First International. This was an intervention that Gareth Stedman Jones considered to mark the moment when Marx’s ideas both converged with and had an effect on the emerging socialist and labour movement.

An exceptional and carefully researched book, if not always easy-going when dealing with abstract philosophy, Heinrich’s volume will be essential reading for anybody interested in Marx.



“Marx has found his perfect biographer.”  
—RICCARDO BELLOFIORE, author, *In Marx's Laboratory: Critical Interpretations of the Grundrisse*

## Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society



One of the greatest strengths of Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society is to rethink our accepted ideas about the Young Hegelians. This is not just a concern of Marxologists or browsers in a virtual Great Library of Alexandria. Books and articles still circulate explaining the left Hegelian ‘dialectic’ that Marx and Engels made ‘materialist’. Heinrich begins by stating that it is not possible to reach a consensus about the substantive characteristics or even the duration of



# Colonial censorship

**Nigel Watt**  
on African  
cinema

**Tropical Dream Palaces**  
**Odile Georg**  
**Hurst £45**

The title of this book makes it sound more light-hearted than it is. In fact, this is a well-researched account of the introduction of cinema in the British and French colonies in West Africa, a rather specialised subject but of interest nonetheless. The first screenings were around the year 1900 and by the 1930s there were many cinemas in cities and even in smaller towns, as well as mobile cinemas going to the villages in some areas. They were organised by European companies and individuals as well as often by the large Lebanese community and sometimes by African entrepreneurs.

They provided social meeting places as well as entertainment and became increasingly popular. But the context was a colonial system that feared any kind of subversion.

The early films were mostly American – cowboys and gangsters – and after 1945 French, British, Indian and Arab. The colonial rulers set up censorship, tighter than in France or Britain, to ensure that scenes depicting Whites being defeated by Blacks or having too much social or sexual contact were cut or the films banned. They mistook illiteracy for stupidity and claimed to be trying to protect the Africans from immorality and to prevent discontent.

As educated African elites developed, they objected to too much censorship but were also (especially in

the Gold Coast, now Ghana, where there were many cinemas) involved in the regulation of films for the less educated classes. The British were on the whole slightly less paranoid than the French who, up until De Gaulle's acceptance of semi-independence in 1956, banned or emasculated numerous films. For example, they began to insist on translations of Arabic films to ensure nothing subversive was spoken.

Africans liked cinema but by the 1950s began to wish for material that spoke more to their condition, a reason that Indian and Arabic films became more popular than American or European ones. This opened the way for African film production which began on a small scale after the independence of these countries in 1957-60.

**Tropical Dream Palaces**



**Cinema in Colonial West Africa**

# Neither scapegoat or hero

**Duncan Bowie**  
on an  
Edwardian  
statesman

**Haldane**  
**John Campbell**  
**Hurst £30**

This is an unusual biography. The author is not the John Campbell who has written biographies of Heath, Bevan, Lloyd George and Thatcher, but the chairman of a private equity company, who has been a life-long admirer of Haldane. Haldane was one of the leading Liberal imperialists with Asquith and Edward Grey, who became war minister and Lord Chancellor in the Campbell Bannerman and Asquith pre-WWI governments before becoming Lord Chancellor's in Ramsay Macdonald's short-lived 1924 Labour Government.

Haldane however had a life outside politics and this is the main focus of this new biography. The book is also unusual in that the study is thematic rather than chronological. The first half of the book seeks to get to grips with Haldane the man and thinker, while the second half focuses on what he did, with chapters on his work as educationalist, war minister and statesman. This can be confusing as the first half not surprisingly refers to events which are only considered in detail in the later chapters. Much of the early chapters focus on Haldane's family background – there is much about his ancestors, his early romances (he never married), his sister, who

became a prominent reformer in her own right, and his mother, who lived to 100 and was in correspondence with her son discussing all aspects of his life and work. The book uses much of this correspondence, in which Haldane, the son, is referred to as 'bear'.

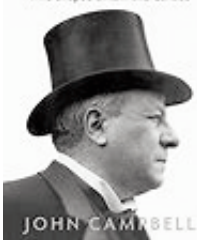
This book is an intentional rehabilitation of Haldane. It contrasts with Stephen Koss's 1969 biography which was subtitled, perhaps unfairly, 'Scapegoat for Liberalism'. Campbell's book is well researched and certainly gives us a full picture of Haldane and his wide range of interests. However, it is completely uncritical – seeking throughout to demonstrate how Haldane was not just influential but always right.

There is much on Haldane's philosophy and attitude to life and work, but the author's insistence on putting his subject at the centre of politics and government tends to lead to rather excessive claims for Haldane's achievements – not only for winning the first World War (by reforming the army, establishing the British Expeditionary Force and the Territorials and the Royal Flying Corps), establishing Mi5 and Mi6, reforming the administration of central government (through the 1918 Machinery of Government Commission), reforming or establishing Scottish, Irish, London and most provincial universities, establishing adult education, inventing industrial psychology – the list is almost endless.

Haldane was a polymath and an obsessive worker, and was involved in all these projects, often behind the scenes, but by putting Haldane at the centre of everything, Campbell underplays the roles of his numerous collaborators. Moreover, by focusing on Haldane's wider life, Campbell perhaps understates his political role. There is surprisingly little on Haldane's role in early reform campaigns on taxation and housing and collaboration with the Fabians (his attempts to introduce development tax in the early 1890's being significant), on the pre-war liberal governments, and practically nothing on Haldane's move to the Labour party and contribution to the 1924 administration. For this we have to turn to Koss' earlier study.

Haldane's interest in German philosophy and reference to Germany as his 'spiritual home' was his downfall. He was not the only politician or administrator to be ousted for his German connections in the early years of the war. Koss has a chapter titled 'the Member for Germany'. His return to power in 1924 reflected a recognition by Ramsay Macdonald of his valuable experience. Despite the limitations, Campbell's study is well worth reading – Campbell is right to draw attention to Haldane, though the cover claim that he was 'the forgotten statesman who shaped Modern Britain' is somewhat open to question in terms of both its claims.

**HALDANE**  
The Forgotten Statesman  
Who Shaped Britain and Canada



## VIEW FROM WESTMINSTER



# Why I opposed the Covert Human Intelligence Services Bill

Apsana Begum is Labour MP for Poplar and Limehouse

**Apsana Begum** on dangerous government incursions on human rights



**T**his October, I voted against the Covert Human Intelligence Services (CHIS) at its 3rd Reading, after it passed through the House of Commons unamended.

Just before the summer, the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill passed through Parliament introducing significant curtailments of civil liberties, which will disadvantage ethnic minorities. It also will delay the long-awaited review of Prevent, which fosters discrimination against Muslims in particular.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 was debated in September, about which human rights and anti-racist campaigners have raised concerns that powers are being used in discriminatory ways, particularly against black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

The CHIS Bill gives authorisation for criminality by undercover government agents. I believe that the vagueness of this authorisation is extremely dangerous, and does not protect against those who are vulnerable, and most likely to suffer forms of state violence. Some have suggested that protections with the Human Rights Act

(HRA) would counter this. However, the Conservative Government have in the past stated that the HRA simply does not apply to the covert agents.

Ex-shadow Attorney General Baroness Shami Chakrabarti wrote in The Guardian that the bill 'gives the green light to serious crimes'. In the same article, she imagines a world in which our government is able to incite criminal activity within any political organisation that they disagree with. The lack of regulations in the CHIS Bill would allow our incredibly reactionary government to do just that.

The Bill also contains within it worrying clauses that might affect trade union activity and political protests, both of which fall within the wordings of examples given in the bill of instances in which criminality would be legal. The Government have proven time and time again that they see both political protests and trade unionism as nuisances.

Throughout the debate earlier this year surrounding the reopening of schools, the Government took no notice of demands made by education unions for a safe workplace. At the Conservative Party Conference, Priti Patel referred to Black Lives Matter protests as 'thuggery and hooliganism'. We cannot trust this Government to deal with trade unionism and political activism with any kind of respect, and this Bill is indicative of such motivations.

Furthermore, the Bill offers no protections to Black, Asian and minority

ethnic communities, who still face persecution on a regular basis, and are statistically more likely to suffer from forms of state violence. Unfortunately, such a lack of protection is in step with a Prime Minister who throughout his career as a journalist and politician has used inflammatory language to describe minority groups across our society.

The Overseas Operations Bill is soon returning to Parliament for a 3rd reading. Just as with the CHIS Bill, the Overseas Operations Bill essentially legalises a variety of criminal acts in the UK's overseas operations, including torture and sexual violence. Under the bill, offenders of such crimes would not be prosecuted if their case was not settled within five years. Taking into account the length of time usually taken by such cases, many offenders would end up without charges.

Without sufficient safeguards and protections for human rights and civil liberties, I will not be able to support the Overseas Operations Bill at its 3rd reading, in the same spirit in which I voted against the CHIS. Together, these Bills undermine the basic human rights and civil liberties of citizens in the UK and abroad.

I stand against both, as a representative for the community that I grew up in: Poplar and Limehouse. I do not feel that I could stand up for my constituents whilst supporting Bills which have had devastating consequences for communities here. **C**

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