CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#310 May/June 2021

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ECONOMY FAILURES

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CHARTIST
For democratic socialism

Editorial Policy

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

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

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

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Making Labour policy

How does a political party of more than 500,000 people make policy that matters and has currency? Arguably this is one of the key challenges for Labour as membership grows (hopefully) and members expectations to be able engage and influence increase. Members want a voice and member led democracy is a central value of the Labour Party, it separates us from other political parties.

The National Policy Forum has inevitably changed and flexed over the decades. It's not perfect but it does have its strengths.

Formulation of National Labour Party policy is in the hands of Labour members. Policy is made democratically, again not a perfect system, through discussion and consultation with members, the public, businesses, experts and civil society groups. The NPF has evolved into eight separate commissions, it has integrated equalities, it has an overarching policy strand to 'knit together' policy and it is based on the election of representatives. The NPF has a secretariat that drives forward a comprehensive work programme for each commission. Policy Forum sessions enable regional representatives, trade union and cooperative party members, NEC reps and MPs and Shadow Cabinet members and advisors to come together to review submissions and to take evidence to inform policy. It's complex but it works.

The NPF also has a website, where members, branches and CLPs can participate. It also serves as an invaluable resource hub.

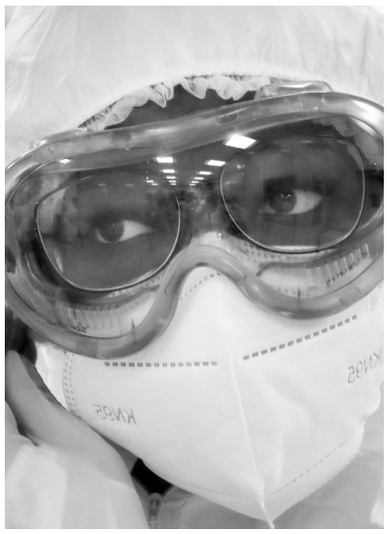
Covid-19 lockdowns have resulted in an increase in branches and CLPs contacting their regional reps to facilitate discussions. Use of digital connections to extend our democracy are to be welcomed.

Also, on the policy front there will be a detailed consultation on Labour's policy-making structures with a probable deadline of 24 June, so be sure that your CLP has a meeting to discuss this before the deadline.

See more and contribute here, or contact your CLP Policy officer

https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/about/npf

Karen Constantine Thanet CLP & Chartist EB



Women left out in Sunak's budget – Page 8

Tories shun world's victims – Page 14

A future for European left populism – Page 16

FEATURES

8 **BUDGET IGNORES WOMEN**
Ebyan Abdirahman says Sunak's budget does nothing for women and the poor

9 **LABOUR'S WRONG ECONOMIC MODEL**
Dennis Leech on why Labour needs to challenge not pander to neoliberalism

10 **CRONY CAPITALISM**
Prem Sikka uncovers the millionaire winners in the Covid contract handouts

11 **WAR AND PEACE**
Bob Newland questions Dave Lister on Syria

12 **NHS & PRIVATISATION**
Jan Savage sees Health White Paper as green light to privatise NHS

13 **OPEN LABOUR**
Tom Miller reports on ideas from Labour's new left

14 **TORY OVERSEAS AID CUTS**
Andy Gregg on the callous cuts to developing nations

16 **LEFT POPULISM**
Marina Prentoulis discusses an alternative to nationalist populism

18 **ISRAEL ELECTION IMPASSE**
Omri Preiss examines the rightist game-playing

19 **EMPIRE NOSTALGIA**
Glyn Ford on collapsing Tory fantasies

20 **SOCIALISTS IN SPAIN**
Juan Fernando López Aguilar looks at the progressive record of Spanish socialists

21 **FREE JOSU**
Bob Newland on the campaign to free imprisoned Basque nationalist

22 **BREXIT OUTCOMES**
Paul Teasdale looks at Brexit realities and myths

23 **STOP HASSOCKFIELD**
Julie Ward on the campaign against another immigration removal centre

24 **CHINA PRAGMATISM**
Jenny Clegg says sanctions not the road

Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
Number 310 **May/June 2021**

REGULARS

4 **OUR HISTORY 96**
Paul Hirst's Associative Democracy

5 **EDITORIAL**
Starmer honeymoon over

6 **POINTS & CROSSINGS**
Paul Salveson on leisure v business rail

7 **YOUTHVIEW**
Ewan Wadd on backing PR

25 **FILM REVIEW**
Patrick Mulcahy on Apples

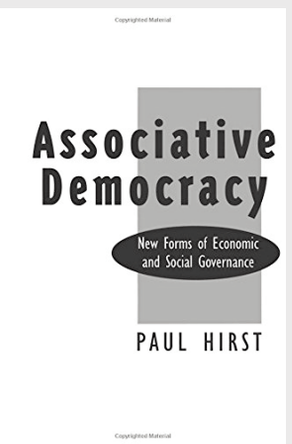
26 **BOOK REVIEWS**
Bob Brecher on Tory corruption; Gardner Thompson on Empireland; Mike Davis on Susskind's work and women surrealists; Duncan Bowie on slavery; Don Flynn on Mamdani; Mary Tapissier on James Baldwin

32 **LABOUR FOR NEW DEMOCRACY**
Robin Cook and Mo Mowlam on transforming our democracy

OUR HISTORY 96

Paul Hirst Associative Democracy 1994

Paul Hirst was a sociologist and professor of social theory at Birkbeck College, London. In the 1970's and 1980's, he was a leading advocate of structural Marxism and together with Barry Hindess, wrote *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* in 1975. He became a critic of Althusserian Marxism, referencing Wittgenstein, Foucault and the American logician Willard Quine. Changing the focus of his work to the issues of democratic governance, in 1990 he published *Representative Democracy and its Limits*. Moving towards a more pluralist approach, being attracted by the writings of British political pluralists, Figgis, Cole and Laski, Hirst developed the concept of 'associationism' as a basis for reviving socialism, as an alternative to state socialism and free market liberalism, drawing on some of the concepts and governance structures of the guild socialists and seeking to set out a third way combining the theories of Marx and Proudhon. Though without acknowledging the libertarian socialist tradition within the First International advocated by the Belgian Cesar de Paepe. *Associative Democracy* in 1992, subtitled 'New Forms of Economic and Social *Governance',* was followed in 1997 by *From Statism to Pluralism*. His later work focused on globalisation and the built environment, publishing *Space and Power: Politics, War and Architecture* in 2005. Hirst was active in Charter 88 and contributed to the 'Open Democracy' website. Hirst died in 2003.



"Associative democracy is not merely a doctrine of devolving power to voluntary associations, since it is accepted that not all social affairs can be administered in this way. Associations require a common framework of regulatory rules if they are to interact satisfactorily with one another and their members. Internal self-government needs to be answerable to minimum but non-optional standards to ensure that it is fair and does not infringe the freedom of individuals through unequal forms of authority or undue group pressure. Associations may need public funds to perform their functions, and must be answerable to the funding body for them. Further, there are certain affairs common to all members of society, and that cannot be devolved to the governance of associations chosen by their own members, such as the defence of the territory, certain police powers, certain environmental and public health provisions, and certain forms of compulsory control of individuals (such as mental health regulations)."

"The public power in any associationist system, even given federal decentralisation and the devolution of many functions to voluntary bodies, would not be a marginal entity. Whilst power should be as localised as possible, and where possible individuals should be able to choose the form of governance of most social activities they prefer, there must be a common public power. Such a power should be based on representative democratic principles, deriving its authority from a federal constitution that prescribes and limits its powers. It would consist in a legislature elected on a territorial basis by universal suffrage and an independent judiciary appointed on legal merit, with autonomy to enforce the laws. Such a public power would be, in effect, a liberal constitutional state, but with limited functions. Associationalism and liberalism are not inherently in conflict. Indeed, given the self-government of most activities by voluntary associations and a federal state, liberalism would become a reality. At present classical liberal ideas are in contradiction with centralised, bureaucratic public service states that substitute state for society and circumscribe the 'private' sphere of individual liberty."

Reasons NOT to be cheerful on PM's green agenda

Approaching 6 months until the crucial COP26 Climate Conference the government trumpets its supposed green credentials, including a 78% carbon emissions reduction by 2035. This target is less ambitious than it appears: Carbon Brief estimates that around 50% savings were reached in 2020.

The Guardian's Fiona Harvey lists a number of issues where Tory actions bely their words:

- Green lights for a Cumbrian coalmine, which provoked a months-long row forcing the promise of a public enquiry.
- New licences for oil and gas exploration in the North Sea, while asking other countries to forego fossil fuel reserves to stay within global carbon budgets.
- Cutting overseas aid, much needed for low carbon projects in poorer countries, from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP.
- Support for climate sceptic Matthias Cormann to head the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Scrapping the UKs only 'green recovery' measure, the green homes grant.
- Support for airport expansion, despite huge uncertainty over future travel patterns.
- Slashing incentives for electric vehicles while setting a 2030 end date to sales of new cars powered by internal combustion engines.
- Provisional go-ahead for Sizewell C when wind energy and other renewables are safer and cheaper.

Johnson's wooing so called red wall voters has proved a tactical triumph but a strategic nightmare as Brexit reality emerges without a prepared recovery plan. The UK needs 'build back better' and 'levelling up' to guarantee both an environmentally and economically sustainable future into the longer term after 2030.

One thing that increasingly unites the progressive left and the Labour Party is a commitment to prioritising real action on the climate emergency. In the run up to COP26, as Keir Starmer's team strive to present a clear alternative, the whole Labour and green movement needs to follow Ed Miliband's lead and call out every Tory failure to take real action to tackle the climate emergency. **C**

Can Starmer's Labour meet the post-pandemic challenge?

As the UK emerges from a year of Covid induced lockdowns and restrictions Labour's softly softly style of opposition will be put to the test. Polling indicates Labour is lagging when we should be ahead. Winning back the 'red wall' seats and elsewhere still seems a long shot. Local, Scottish and Welsh elections will show if gains are possible but auguries are not good.

The NHS-led vaccine programme, in contrast to the failed £32billion Test and Trace scheme outsourced to the private sector, has paved the way for a resumption of something resembling normal life.

Damage has been extensive to both life and livelihoods with 126,000 deaths – one of highest rates in the world, due to a catalogue of government failures. With the Tories' new-found magic money tree we've seen the biggest bailout since the Second World War, disguising the impact of the pandemic and of Brexit, and pushing debt to record levels. However, furlough schemes benefitting over 10 million workers will be withdrawn by September. Already unemployment is creeping up. It is likely to rise significantly. Labour must be clearer about its economic alternatives. It must be greener, more radical and more committed to investment in green jobs and socially useful employment**. Ebyan Abdirahman** makes clear women, who have carried us through the pandemic either in hospitals, in childcare or care homes, deserve not just more than a 2 per cent pay award but serious public investment. Sunak's budget barely mentioned women, health and care workers. 10 years of cuts have deepened inequality, now multiplied by the pandemic. It's a scandal that public sector workers – from transport to schools - face an effective pay freeze.

Dennis Leech critiques Labour's timidity on reversing decades of neoliberalism. Whilst shadow chancellor Anneliese Dodds has been one of the feistier of Labour's front bench, unfurling a more radical programme for a fiscal stimulus and a green industrial revolution needs to be centre and front of stage. We should not be timid about taxing the giant corporations or redistributing wealth. Instead of the broken anti-Keynesian economic model we should use the trillion dollar Biden recovery programme as a guide.

Labour is now looking at some open goals. With Tory sleaze beginning to bleed from the pores of this government Starmer has a real opportunity to put the boot in. As **Prem Sikka** explains, numerous corporations, wealthy aristocrats, tax exiles, Middle Eastern royals and many more were given billions in public money for contracts without proper tendering processes or monitoring. Many were Tory donors and mates. Worse is now emerging with revelations from spurned Dominic Cummings that Boris Johnson was involved in a dodgy deal with Brexiteer tax exile Dyson for tax breaks for his employees. Cummings is likely to reveal more.

While big business and the wealthy got huge handouts, small and medium sized businesses and the recently self employed fell through the net. Worse, as **Jan Savage** reports, the NHS is being undermined through the vehicle of Integrated Care Systems, allowing further incursions from private companies.

Labour not only needs a robust socialist economics that builds on the best of Corbynism; it must also reignite the enthusiasm of its members and embrace a radical democratic agenda involving PR, spearheaded by Labour for a New Democracy as emphasised by **Ewan Wadd**. A constitutional convention on the antiquated British state, devomax in Scotland and Wales and local devolution of powers and resources to local communities squeezed by ten years of cuts must also be on that democratic agenda. **Tom Miller** of Open Labour echoes these themes.

A deeper discussion of why Labour lost has yet to be had in Labour ranks. Starmer's director of policy, Claire Ainsley (The New Working Class) and Labour MP Jon Cruddas (The Dignity of Labour) have both published books on the importance of winning working class votes. But which working class? There is a tension between the older traditional workers, who have suffered deindustrialisation, perhaps now home owners and socially conservative, and the youthful precariat and techo workers in cities and towns. The latter have become strong Labour voters embracing Europe, liberal values and green policies. If Starmer tacks too close to the views of the former there is a danger of losing support of the latter to Greens and Lib Dems. **Marina Prentoulis** outlines the case for a radical left populism to overcome this dilemma. She draws lessons from the experiences of Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece and Corbynism in the UK, arguing that a politics that roots itself in communities, builds prefigurative projects and champions radical democratic redistributionist policies could help Labour build a winning majority.

Countering racist rhetoric must be instrinsic to Labour's plan

Besides post-pandemic rebuilding two big clouds hang over our politics: post-Brexit fallout and the global climate crisis. **Paul Teasdale** outlines key economic, social and cultural challenges that Labour must grasp. **Andy Gregg** highlights the shocking cut in the UK overseas aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP (in breach of the Tory Manifesto). He outlines the dire implications for developing and war-torn nations, particularly in the middle east and Africa. Johnson's commitment to a faster carbon reduction programme belies the actions of his government, from the aid cut to green lights for coalmining, airport expansion and axing green home grants. **Glyn Ford** and **Julie Ward** highlight the dangers of nostalgic empire nationalism and the migrant bashing rhetoric behind building new detention centres for asylum seekers.

Countering a strident nationalist and racist rhetoric must also be an intrinsic part of Labour's positive plan for post-pandemic renewal. The corruption, lies and incompetence of this wretched government must be relentlessly exposed alongside the unfolding of a positive programme for prosperity and social justice.

Which way for railways?

Paul Salveson on more leisure travel and halting HS2

I joined in with an interesting stakeholder conference for one of our train companies based 'up North' the other day. It was a useful discussion and a few important points emerged. Research done by the rail industry is suggesting that long-term commuter travel is going to be down by about 40% of the pre-pandemic levels. Business travel will be down less, but a still thumping 25% reduction. The classic commuting trip, the five-days-a-week slog on overcrowded trains, will probably never return as people work from home either all the time or at least a few days a week. Instead of long journeys to business meetings in London, many firms will continue to organise meetings on-line.

On the other hand, leisure travel is likely to grow by around 10% and this is borne out by the current surge in rail travel to seaside and country destinations. Train companies are already ready, in some areas, running more trains on Saturdays than weekdays. At the same time, rail freight is doing pretty well. It suffered less from the pandemic than passenger operations though business was down. It is growing again and if the Government is serious about reducing carbon emissions it has a great future and freight is growing steadily once more.

The implications of all this are huge, turning on its head so many assumptions that have governed thinking in the rail industry for the last forty years or more. The main drivers of rail development in the past have been commuting and business travel, with 'leisure' coming generally a poor third and freight 'fitting in' as best it can. Weekends were the time for doing engineering work and foisting people onto 'rail replacement' buses.

The methodologies underpinning 'demand forecasting' – which strongly influences investment decisions - have been based largely on commuting and business travel. These approaches are now discredited. Growth is likely to be in 'leisure' – both relatively short but also long-term journeys.

We need to build an entirely new approach to forecasting demand for rail travel in which leisure travel plays a much bigger part and move away from the traditional obsession with commuting and business travel.

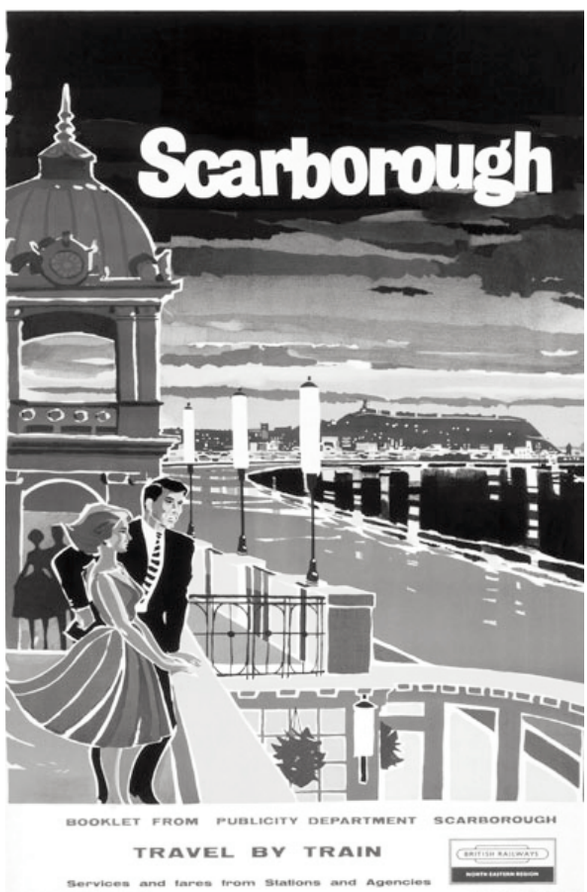
Another aspect of this emphasis on leisure is questions around the journey itself. The conventional wisdom within the industry has been to push for faster and faster end to end journey times. Yet leisure travellers are less bothered about super fast journeys and more concerned with avoiding changes, reliability, good information, getting a seat and general comfort.

So that means putting in more stops (within reason) on many services and not obsessing about knocking a few minutes off the end-to-end journey.

And while I'm on this particular tack, what does all this mean for HS2? If it ever had any justification, it doesn't any more. It is a classic example of pre-Covid thinking whose justification (if there ever was one) has been blown off the tracks by the pandemic. Far fewer long distance trips, less justification for very high speeds – and much money to go around.

Will it be scrapped as a result? No, don't think so. It will carry on swallowing up resources that are desperately needed to support the regional and InterCity networks. That said, I can't see it getting beyond Crewe, and for all that Leeds might huff and puff, I don't think it will get there either. By the time we realise what a huge white elephant HS2 is we will have squandered eye-wateringly huge sums of money that could have been put to far better use.

Labour should break with the cross-party consensus and call for HS2 to be curtailed. Having some extra capacity south of Rugby would be useful (though I wouldn't say essential) and building as far as the south Midlands would 'save face'. Much could be done with existing infrastructure, not least improving capacity into Birmingham, by-passing Stafford and re-modelling Crewe. There's a lot more, including trans-Pennine electrification, gauge widening so higher containers can be shipped from the North-east to the Mersey, and some line re-openings. The new east-west line from Oxford to Cambridge is going ahead, but bizarrely as a diesel-operated railway. This is total madness and rail professionals can't fathom the stupidity of the Government persisting in using this outdated and highly polluting form of traction.



Leisure travel likely to grow

Rail is a seven-days a week service and the outdated idea that people don't – or shouldn't- travel on Sundays has to change. Network Rail is very much aware of this and the alternatives are more night working during the week.

The rail network is now effectively under state ownership and control. Network Rail is a state-owned company accountable to the secretary of state. Train operators are either in public ownership or operating to tightly-determined contracts enforced by the Department for Transport. So let's see what this new model can deliver; the challenges are huge. C

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

A young person's priority

Ewan Wadd on why we need a representative parliament

My politics, like many of my generation, was galvanised by the EU referendum. My friends and I felt like our opportunities were being taken away when we were not old enough to have the luxury of being asked. The general election in 2017 acted like a watershed moment, showing me that the politics of togetherness and hope can truly inspire. Following that I started to educate myself about politics through YouTube and the news. I stumbled upon a video from the creator CGP Grey entitled "Why the UK Election Results are the Worst in History.". In five minutes, it explained the 2015 general election results in detail, saying that despite only winning 37% of the vote, the Conservatives won 51% of the seats – giving them complete control over Parliament and the direction of our country.

Soup kitchens - consequences of Tory austerity

Growing up in the Tees Valley, and volunteering at my local soup kitchen, shone a spotlight on the damage austerity was doing to towns like mine. Yet the party causing such damage could govern with near impunity when they had nowhere near majority support. From there on, I was convinced that if we wanted to be a democracy that works for everyone, where parliament accurately represents how the country voted, we had to change how we elect our representatives.

Fast forward to 2020. The plucky, optimistic sixteen-year-old from Teesside is now living in Bristol for university, has been a Labour member for nearly a year, and is devastated by the 2019 election. The politics of togetherness and hope lost. Badly. After becoming one of Bristol West's delegates to the South West Regional Conference, I see that a motion will be debated on the party supporting proportional representation. I met Mary Southcott at a LCER stall and signed up to the mailing list. However, the PR motion was not debated. The delegates presenting it could not attend due to awful weather. It was literally rained off. That opportunity to discuss our failing voting system was lost like a school football game.

Throughout the pandemic, LCER South West ran zoom events about how electoral reform could benefit all progressives, whether you are a trade unionist, social democrat or democratic socialist. Despite moving my CLP back to my hometown of Darlington during lock down, I still attended. The events include an excellent discussion between Joanna Kaye and Jeremy Gilbert on why the left should embrace PR. I learnt about Labour for a New Democracy (L4ND). A joint campaign by twelve pro electoral reform organisations pushing for one objective, making the Labour party support proportional representation at Annual Conference 2021.

There are two prongs to this campaign. First, submitting resolutions to the National Policy Forum (NPF) Justice and Home Affairs Commission in response to their consultation on electoral reform. The Commission meets in May, its report is compiled in July and goes to conference, giving it a big impact on our chances. The second is sending resolutions to conference, prioritising one about changing to PR when we are next in government. In both these lines of attack, the more motions passed, the better our chances of success. Every resolution passed needs to be submitted to the Commission. Over two hundred constituency Labour parties have done this already.

Being a student gives a unique opportunity. You can choose whether to have your CLP in your home or university address. You can use the knowledge and experience of places where there are many supporters of electoral reform to push the L4ND campaign where there are not. We need to do as much work as possible in the northern and Midlands seats where Labour has in the past always succeeded. Here, the argument for electoral reform has yet to be won. Virtual meetings make us able to participate wherever you are in the country. When in Bristol for lockdown three, I still debated the L4ND motion in my home CLP of Darlington – succeeding in making Darlington the 150th CLP to send in a resolution.

Covid-19 has taken so much away from my generation. We had to stay indoors and were not able to go out and do what every generation before us has done. It is frustrating, and it is hard. But we have so much energy and determination to make the future better than the present. That energy gives us the potential to create real change. This seemingly small change can transform politics. The potential has been made dormant by the pandemic. If we unleash it, the more open, honest, and progressive future we all want may be closer than we think. C

Ewan Wadd is a young Labour student from Darlington

A path for recovery, but for whom?

Ebyan Abdirahman finds Sunak's March budget leaves women, Black and ethnic minorities and the poor adrift

Some have dubbed COVID-19 as 'The Great Equaliser'. However, evidence from one year on shows the impact of the pandemic has been anything but equal. Measures set out by the government to curb the level of damage have not only exacerbated existing inequalities but have seen progress towards women's equality undermined. There has been a strong focus to 'build back better', but what would that really entail for a truly equal recovery?

On 3rd March, Rishi Sunak claimed in his budget speech that 10 years of Conservative "fiscal resilience" is why the government has been able to respond to the pandemic as strongly as it has. Alternatively, it can be argued that 10 years of cuts have in fact left our healthcare, social care and childcare services weakened. This made us more vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic, leaving the UK with one of the highest mortality rates from Covid-19 in the world per capita.

From the last decade of austerity measures, research shows that women, people on low incomes, Black and minority ethnic and disabled people are hit hardest from cuts to public services. Even before Covid, 1.5 million people had unmet care needs. During the pandemic the number of unpaid carers has increased from 4.5 million to 13.6 million. The childcare sector faces similar problems with 58% of local authorities expecting some childcare providers in their area to shut permanently. Women are more likely to need care as adults, more likely to work in the care sector, and more likely to be the ones who have to provide unpaid care if care services are not available.

Noticeably absent from the Chancellor's budget speech, however, was any mention of health, social care or childcare - all services that were hit the hardest by the pandemic. The budget offered an opportunity for the Chancellor to mitigate these impacts and deliver a structural reform plan that promoted wellbeing, sustainability and gender equality. Instead, what we received were more public spending cuts, most of which were not mentioned in the official speech.

An independent study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) revealed public spending cuts of up to £4 billion per year tucked away in the budget. The Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions are expected to suffer cuts of 3% in 2022-23, and an overall spending cut of £16 billion on public services compared to pre-pandemic plans. Although Boris Johnson has promised not to return to a period of austerity, these cuts mirror the years of Cameron/Osbourne post-2010 period and undermine Johnson's levelling-up agenda.

The biggest headline grabbers of the budget were the extension of the furlough and self-employment support schemes, and a six-month extension of the £20 Universal Credit (UC) uplift. Although these are welcome changes, they provide only a short-term fix that risks pushing families into debt and undermining the recovery.

The extension of the furlough scheme until September will protect many jobs in the short term. However, many of those currently furloughed are likely to be worrying if they will have a job once the scheme ends. Estimates at the end of January 2021 put the number of furloughed workers at 2.32 million women and 2.18 million men, putting women at a higher risk of redundancy when the scheme ends.

The extension of the UC uplift confirms what we all know: UC is not enough to live on. By failing to make the uplift permanent, the government risks dragging a further 760,000 people below the poverty line when the extension ends. It fails to mitigate the harmful impacts of benefit rate freezes in recent years that have seen increasing numbers of women and children fall into poverty.

A care-led recovery with increased spending on care services would create 2.7 times as many jobs as the same spending on construction, and employment would particularly favour women. It would also tackle the crisis in social care and looming crisis in childcare.

The lack of additional funding for these vital public services leaves local authorities and those who depend on their services completely exposed and vulnerable. Women make up 75% of the local government and school workforce, leaving women disproportionately affected by cuts to these services. Local government funding needs to be urgently restored to a level which enables councils to meet their statutory obligations to support the wellbeing of women and children. C

Ebyan Abdirahman is a member of the Women's Budget Group

Labour lacks ambition and radicalism on the economy

Look to Biden's fiscal stimulus and more says **Dennis Leech** in finding Labour's alternative lacking

Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds is not promising the radical economics that we urgently need. In her Mais lecture, "Labour's cast-iron commitment to delivering value for money", she sticks with an essentially neoliberal and resolutely anti-Keynesian approach to economic policy.

She sees the economy as a giant household with a limited budget. She talks of public spending rather as George Osborne would, as if it is something desirable if it can be afforded, to be costed from a limited budget. But in present circumstances, with the UK facing multiple challenges: the biggest Covid recession of the G7, and before that the slowest recovery from the crash of 2008, a more radical vision is needed. Priority should be to maintain a high level of effective demand and thereby generate income for unemployed workers and businesses, both directly and indirectly through the spending multiplier: a stimulus package in other words.

But in using words like "responsible" and "prudent" in relation to government debt and deficit, rather than the real economy, she shows no evidence that Labour has learned lessons from Osborne's repeated failures. Indeed she cites the fact that government debt increased under Tory "budgetary responsibility" not as evidence of the failure of austerity policies - that the economy does not work like a household, as Keynes taught us - but as of the Tories' mismanagement. We are left to assume Labour will manage the household budget better, getting better value for money. This resembles more something intended to impress a focus group of 'red wall' swing voters than a serious recipe for getting out of the current crisis. Labour will not succeed in ending austerity if it persists with this essentially conservative economics and which has anyway failed to inspire electoral support repeatedly in elections from 2010-on. What is needed today is something much more radical to address the short-term post Covid recession - that means fiscal stimulus.

Dodds has said, quite rightly, in response to chancellor Rishi Sunak's budgetary proposals, that now is not the time to raise taxes. This sounds like a good Keynesian principle of demand management: just what is needed because a general tax increase would reduce spending and choke off the recovery. But she was actually objecting to Sunak's proposal to increase corporation tax, a tax on profits, to 25 percent, from its present 19 percent, which is among the lowest in the world. It meant Labour seemed, surprisingly, to be advocating trickle-down economics: hoping to incentivise profitable companies to invest more in productive capacity.

As the Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz pointed out, profit taxes fall on the most profitable firms and do not incentivize spending, so it is a fallacy. Taxing profits, which are largely received as income by the wealthy, and tend to be saved not spent, is redistributive and progressive. It is disappointing that Starmer's Labour appeared to be triangulating by sounding radical while acting the opposite; and being able to claim Labour as business friendly.

Labour should be supporting higher taxes on profits, lower taxes on families, as well as higher wages, decent benefits, and increased social spending generally, not just to reduce poverty and inequality, but as a strong fiscal stimulus to reduce poverty and inequality. That would be truly responsible and progressive because it would prioritise the health of the real economy, the circulation of income and spending, in the knowledge that the budget will take care of itself as we know from past experience. There should be no risk of inflation in present circumstances with the economy in recession.

Meanwhile, with Labour in the UK talking the language of fiscal prudence and responsibility, in the USA the Democratic Biden administration is following the Roosevelt New Deal of the 1930s, with a fiscal stimulus package aimed directly at supporting low income families, infrastructure investment aimed at jobs and productivity and greening the economy. It is also raising taxes on business. Biden is following the overtly Keynesian policy that international bodies like the IMF have been saying are vitally necessary. But much more is needed.

Anneliese Dodds- not promising a radical economics

One of the greatest failures of the New Labour government was to offer the truly alternative economic policy that the country needed (and still needs). Instead it continued the neoliberalism of Thatcher and Major, relying on the fat profits of the deregulated, booming financial sector for tax revenue to pay for more spending on education and health. But this was short sighted and bad for the economy as a whole. Economic policy should have been directed to developing former industrial and mining towns.

Essentially Britain was (and still is) suffering from what has been called The Finance Curse where the City is so successful that it crowds out the rest of the economy. Thus, in the UK there is now very little industry and serious manufacturing jobs in 'red wall' towns are scarce. Addressing this failure of economic policy - which is not simply a matter of regional infrastructure investment but requires both regulating the City and a regional industrial policy- ought to be at the centre of Labour thinking. **C**

Dennis Leech is emeritus professor at Warwick University and a member of Bethnal Green CLP

Tory handouts to royalty, rich elites, tax exiles…

Prem Sikka on the corporate winners in the pandemic

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has helped many UK businesses stay afloat during the pandemic by paying 80% of the wages of furloughed staff. The scheme has been extended to run until September 2021, though increasingly employers will have to bear a greater share of the wages. The cost of the scheme is expected to be around £66bn.

UK furlough scheme

By 15th March 2021, some 1.3 million employers and 11.4 million jobs have been supported by the furloughed staff subsidy. The government has released a spreadsheet showing the names of nearly 860,000 businesses who have claimed CJRS support up to January 2021. The February 2021 claim information is expected to be made publicly available on 6th May 2021.

The spreadsheet does not show the exact amounts claimed by businesses. Instead, the amounts are shown in bands: £1 to £10,000, £10,001 to £25,000, £25,001 to £50,000 and so on, right up to £50m to £100m and £100m and above.

Early analysis suggests that the highest support has been claimed by businesses in the wholesale and retail, motor vehicles repairs, accommodation, education and food services sectors, as many non-essential shops and most of the hospitality industry had to close. The lowest support is claimed by the finance and insurance, water, real estate, information and communication industries. This isn't surprising as banks have boomed and people have been using online platforms to work from home. The closure of non-essential shops and hospitality has hit female employment particularly hard. Younger people in the age bracket of 25-34 and people in regions with dense populations have been the biggest recipients of the furloughed staff support. London and south east England lead the field.

So which businesses have received the CJRS support? This question is not easy to answer as the names of the companies on the spreadsheet are only those who have a record with HMRC and have claimed furlough support. HMRC operated the CJRS support, so the names on the spreadsheet could be less glamorous companies in a group rather than the headline names that people may be familiar with. Some familiarity with business names and group structures is therefore needed to make sense of the disclosures. In addition, HMRC will not publish details of employers claiming through the scheme if they can show that publishing these would result in a serious risk of violence or intimidation. All in all, the analysis is very time consuming.

Claimants of the furlough support

Nevertheless, the government spreadsheet provides an interesting insight into contemporary capitalism as royalty, foreign governments, wealthy elites, presidents, hedge funds, political parties, tax abusers, tax exiles, neoliberal think-tanks and even those failing to pay the national minimum wage have received public money.

An analysis by The Guardian revealed that various dukes, earls, viscounts, marquesses and peers, including some of the biggest owners of inherited estates, have received public funds.

The Ritz hotel, owned by the brother-in-law of the Emir of Qatar, claimed between £500,000 and £1m. Harrods, the posh London store owned by the Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar, claimed between £2.5m and £5m. The Dorchester Hotel, controlled by the Brunei Investment Agency, a government-owned investment organisation, received between £500,000 and £1m.

Trump International Golf Club Scotland Limited, controlled by former US President Donald Trump and his family, had turnover of £3.3 million in 2019. It received between £25,000 and £50,000.

The Queen's nephew, David Linley, received between £10,000 and £25,000 for his furniture business David Linley & Co Limited. In 2019, the company reported pre-tax profits of £2.3 million.

Lord Prem Sikka is a Labour peer and emeritus professor at Essex University

Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver is reported to have wealth of around £240m. In 2019, his company, Jamie Oliver Limited, made a pre-tax profit of £3.5m. It received up to £10,000 in furlough support.

The Arcadia Group, controlled by billionaire Sir Philip Green and his family - better known for brand names such as Topshop, Topman and Dorothy Perkins - received between £5m and £10m. The group is in administration and most of its shops are expected to close.

Two of the highest claimants are Mitchells and Butlers and JD Wetherspoon. Mitchells and Butlers is better known for brands such as Toby Carvery, Harvester and Vintage Inns, and it claimed between £25m and £50m. Wetherspoon is a well-known pub restaurant. In January 2020, its Brexit-funding chairman, Tim Martin, sold 4.37 million shares at £11.50 each for £50m, but still received £25m from the furlough scheme. Whitbread Group, the owners of the Beefeater and Brewers Fayre chains of restaurants and Premier Inn hotels, received between £10m and £25m.

Ryanair, the Dublin-based budget airline, claimed between £2.5m and £5m. EasyJet received between £5m and £10m and British Airways received £10m and £25m. Gatwick Airport, partly owned by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, hedge funds from Australia, pensions funds from California and South Korea, received between £1m and £2.5m. Heathrow Airport, owned by a consortium which includes the state-owned Qatar Investment Authority and China Investment Corporation, collected between £1m and £2.5m each.

Primark claimed between £10m and £25m. Marks and Spencer has shut down a number of its stores and received between £5m and £10m. TJX UK, the owner of retailer TK Maxx, received between £10m and £25m. House of Fraser, the department store bought by entrepreneur Mike Ashley's Sports Direct in August 2018, received

between £1m and £2.5m.

In December 2020, Pizza Hut (U.K.) was named and shamed for failing to pay the national minimum wage to 10,980 workers, which added up to £845,936.41. It received between £1m and £2.5m.

The Brexit Party Limited, controlled by Nigel Farage, and with 2019 income of £17.3m, received up to £10,000. The Socialist Party also received up to £10,000.

The Institute of Economic Affairs, which champions free markets and calls for a minimalist state, received up to £10,000. Another neoliberal think tank, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, also received up to £10,000.

In 2018 Britain's largest book chain, Waterstones, was bought by hedge fund Elliott Advisors. It has received between £1m and £2.5m.

With a fortune of £12.5bn, Sir Jim Ratcliffe was listed as Britain's fifth-richest person in the Sunday Times Rich List. In 2018 he moved his tax residence to Monaco, a tax haven that does not levy income tax. However, his UK businesses, Home Grown Hotels (£500,000 to £1m), Lime Wood Group (£250,000 to £500,000), Belstaff (£50,000 to £100,000), and Ineos Group (£10,000 to £25,000) have all benefited from the UK Government scheme.

For years, Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic Airways has been controlled from the British Virgin Islands, a tax haven, but the company received between £2.5m and £5m in support.

Nigel Farage comtrolled Brexit Party received £10,000 of furlough support

In 2018, HMRC defeated a £71m tax avoidance scheme used by Ladbrokes. Nevertheless, the company has claimed between £10m and £25m in furloughed staff support from the public purse. In 2016, the tax authority shut down a £30m tax avoidance scheme designed for Greene King by Ernst & Young. The company claimed between £10m and £25m in furlough support.

The sight of public money invites some to commit fraud and CJRS is no exception. In some cases, employers have failed to pass the furlough support to staff. In others, 'furloughed' staff have been assigned other duties. The Government has given HMRC additional funding of £100m to appoint 1,000 inspectors to investigate fraud in the furlough scheme and other Government support programmes. Some 10,000 inquiries have been launched and more are likely to follow. In one of the earliest cases, HMRC clawed back £357,000 from a company which threatened to sack staff unless they worked through the pandemic, but still claimed CJRS to cover their wages. C

Promoting debate on left policy

Bob Newland questions **Dave Lister** on interventionism

Chartist is an excellent vehicle for discussing the development of a creative, forward looking left policy. There isn't space in the journal for significant polemic but the online forum offers that.

I have concerns about trends within recent Chartist articles regarding peace, nationalism and internationalism. The discussion appears to be reacting to an established imperialist agenda seeking to modify it. We should start from our principles and develop our own case. We must recognise that Britain and many European nations were imperialist and colonialist - occupying countries, enslaving their peoples and stealing their resources.

Dave Lister's article on 'simplistic internationalism' (Chartist #309), appears to set up false arguments to knock down to defend intervention in Libya and Syria, suggesting that to oppose these would mean opposing the International Brigades. There was substantial opposition to the International Brigades within Social Democracy with the French Government closing the border and the wider embargo on arming the Republic. This contributed to the Fascist victory.

We need to ask Who? Why? In whose interest? Whatever the disguise for such interventions they have mainly been against socialist or anti-imperialist regimes and driven by the fight for resources and markets.

Bob Newland is a member of Poplar and Limehouse CLP

We should avoid choosing arbitrary dates to justify our argument. The crisis in former Yugoslavia was provoked by Germany unilaterally recognising the breakup of Yugoslavia, against UN and EU policy, to gain advantage in the race to buy the assets of those weakened states. The international campaign against Serbia was provoked by their refusal to privatise state enterprises and return public housing to 'former' owners. The crisis was not started in 1998 in Kosovo but with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and didn't end with the return of refugees to Kosovo, there was massive ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo. I am not defending the horrific events that were unleashed but return to why and in whose interest? C

NHS White Paper opens door to profit-seekers

Jan Savage explains that Integrated Care Systems mean systematic privatisation of the NHS

There was much delight recently when media coverage of a Government White Paper (Integration and innovation: Working together to improve health and social care for all) suggested this marked the end of competition and less private sector involvement in the NHS. In reality, it means quite the reverse.

The White Paper is a prelude to an NHS Bill due to be laid before Parliament soon with remarkably little opportunity for scrutiny or debate. Its proposals suggest a raft of changes to the NHS carried out in the name of 'integrated care', an approach epitomised by what are now called Integrated Care Systems (ICSs).

Background

No one is arguing against the seamless integration of patient care. However, in the context of NHSE restructuring, 'integrated care' has little to do with patients' experience of care. Rather, it's an idea that can be traced back to a World Economic Forum (WEF) project in 2012/13 that considered the sustainability of publicly provided health services that were facing 'a growing burden of disease' and 'raised patient expectations'. The project's report called for governments to take a step back from providing health services and allow the private sector a larger role. It argued that sustainability means cutting high cost services (such as hospital care) and rolling out new payment systems that induce providers to make savings. Moreover, it means raising the productivity of health delivery systems by introducing new models of care that manage 'demand' more efficiently while encouraging patients to 'self-care'.

Significantly, membership of the WEF initiative was dominated by senior delegates from corporations such as McKinsey and, notably, the US giant, UnitedHealth, represented by Simon Stevens. At the time, Stevens was President of UnitedHealth's global health businesses, but very shortly afterwards he became the head of NHSE. Once in charge of the NHS, he quickly drew up plans echoing many of the WEF's recommendations, especially those for 'integrated care'.

Stevens's first move towards integration was to fragment the NHS in England into 44 local health economies initially called Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs), and then Accountable Care Systems. These are now in the process of morphing into 42 ICSs.

Integrated Care Systems

According to NHSE, ICSs bring NHS organisations, local authorities (LAs) and 'others' together to work in partnership and take collective responsibility for managing resources. One of an ICS's key roles is to control the performance, especially the financial performance, of all the partners within it. They will have a capitated budget (a single budget calculated per head of population), and rely on the extensive use of population–level data to identify and focus on high-risk groups while more generally emphasising ill-health prevention and self-care.

NHSE's introduction of ICSs has raised a number of concerns that are accentuated by the White Paper's proposals. For example, they suggest a shift from fundamental NHS principles towards a delivery system based on what's 'good' for a particular population. In addition, it's feared that ICSs will increase not just the presence but also the influence of the private sector within the NHS.

ICSs and privatisation

The White Paper sets out a new management structure, requiring each ICS to set up two statutory bodies. One of these (the ICS NHS Body) is responsible for the ICS's strategic direction and for developing a plan to address the health needs of the ICS's population. The other (the Health and Care Partnership) is responsible for planning and overseeing local services. The members of both of these bodies will be drawn from the NHS, local authorities and 'others' who are to be determined locally. These 'others' may include representatives from private corporations. In other words, ICSs could enable private companies to have unprecedented influence in shaping which health services are delivered, where and by whom.

With their emphasis on population health, ICSs will be heavily dependent on a wide range of digital services for the collection and analysis of vast data sets. ICSs are expected to procure these services, along with others for the development and management of the ICS itself, from the Health Systems Support Framework (HSSF). This framework lists a range of services (for example, those for risk stratification, demand management and 'patient engagement and activation' - a cryptic reference to self-care), together with the organisations that NHSE has accredited to provide these. The HSSF currently lists over 80 such organisations, the majority of which are private corporations like McKinsey, Deloitte and Centene. These companies will be playing an increasingly substantial role within each ICS, as well as having unprecedented access to confidential patient records.

As for the end of competition, the White Paper proposes revoking Section 75 of the notorious Health and Social Care Act of 2012, together with the associated Regulations that enforced competition in the NHS. However, this will do nothing to end the marketisation of the NHS. Instead it will serve to turn a regulated market into an unregulated one, without environmental, social and labour protections. At the same time, it will allow ICS commissioners to choose whether to award a contract directly to a provider, or use a more formal procurement process. This is alarming, as it's been clear during the Covid pandemic how emergency measures to relax procurement regulations have led to a rapid rise in corruption and cronyism.

The future of the NHS looks bleak, unless there is strong opposition to the legislation foreshadowed by this White Paper. C

Jan Savage is a member of Keep Our NHS Public's Working Group on Integrated Care Systems

A politics of hope?

Tom Miller says Open Labour conference opens new directions

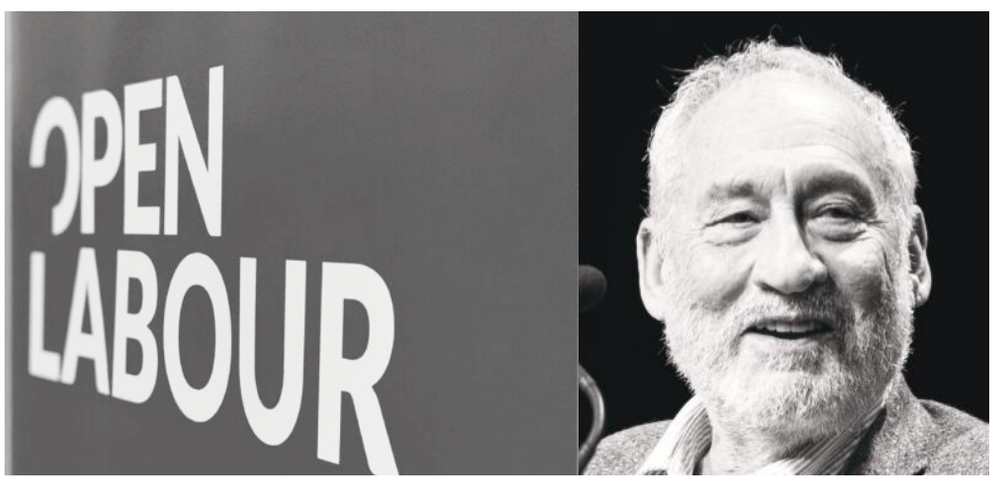
This March saw the annual conference of Open Labour, Labour's grouping for 'plural left' activists and trade unionists. The faction has spent the last six years dragging Labour away from our favoured hobbies of personality politics and sectarianism, and towards a movement which can accept and overcome difference.

From its starting membership of 49, Open Labour is now pushing towards 2,000 activists and trade unionists. It had a solid political win last year, supporting Ann Black and Alice Perry back onto the NEC, narrowly missing with Jermain Jackman, and had helped set the ideological terms of the earlier Labour leader and deputy contests. Though facing lockdown, its members sought to respond to the present 'vision gap' in Labour by sketching an optimistic vision around the idea of a politics of hope.

There were contributions from a range of broad left figures, including Norwich MP, Clive Lewis; former Momentum national coordinator and activist Laura Parker; Alex Sobel, Open Labour's Parliamentary Officer; former McDonnell and Labour staffer James Meadway; former left-wing Glasgow MP Paul Sweeney; and 2020 NEC candidate Jermain Jackman.

The conference went beyond the 'platform speaker' approach with a large number of participative breakout sessions led by activists on topics such as left media, climate change and green recovery, proportional representation, reimagining socialist foreign policy, police accountability, and a launch for Open Labour's 'New Foundations' book.

Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds, presently the target of an unpleasant Blairite whispering campaign, was a keynote speaker. Dodds is felt to represent a threat to the right's influence at the top table. She aims to translate a fairly radical economic offering into something professional and cohesive, and to make sure that Labour's core values are bound to its efforts to become a winning party. She was joined as a keynote by Nobel Prize winning economist Dr Joseph Stiglitz, who argued that a radical transformation in America can act as a model elsewhere.



Joseph Stiglitz at Open Labour - US can act as model

Dodds spoke of the need to reward the key workers who have supported the country during the pandemic, of the need for strong investment into green infrastructure, and for a new 'future jobs programme' for a generation thrust into youth unemployment. She attacked the government for its involvement in private sector procurement, access scandals and state sanctioned waste, not least when nurses have been left without effective PPE, with lives lost because of it. She called for the eventual abolition and replacement of Universal Credit as a key part of combatting child poverty, and discussed how measures to support women in particular should have formed a much bigger part of the response to Covid.

Whilst she is a passionate advocate, Dodds also shows an ability to refer every policy detail back to her economic brief, which hints at a good working relationship with colleagues. It is clear that a framework is beginning to develop for Labour's economic thought: market-sceptic, welfarist, and focussed on spending for infrastructure and sustainability. In this sense it perhaps provides a bridge between Ed Miliband and John McDonnell, but real questions remain as to how this thinking finds its audience, and whether it can truly inspire and lead debate in the party or the country.

Interviewed by journalist Zoe Williams, Dr Stiglitz laid out a fairly radical vision for a reshaped US economy, based around the Biden stimulus and green recovery packages. He appealed for a total structural rebuild around a shared idea of the good society, by using targeted investment to move towards a sustainable, knowledge-based and more equal economy. He suggested that Washington should vastly increase locally targeted spending and hike corporation tax with the expectation that this would have a minimal impact on private investment, though this would need to overcome 'checks and balances'. A repeated theme was full employment - the only way to raise the relative incomes of excluded groups in American society and begin healing race and gender divides.

It is clear that there is a new period of common ground emerging between the US left, social democrats in Europe, and insurgent left economists internationally. The real question in Britain is how hope and transformation can overcome the inertia of Toryism. Corrupt, useless and divided right-wing governments have now triumphed repeatedly, and the right has built a powerful and growing coalition reaching into many working class communities.

Overcoming this requires a movement which combines old roots with new alliances, realist insight with radical policy, solid thinking with vision, and heart. C

Tom Miller is a Brent Councillor and co-Editor for Open Labour

Tories' death knell for millions

Andy Gregg says Government overseas aid cuts are harmful, unprincipled, unjustified and weaken Britain's influence

Over thirty years ago, the Live Aid concerts were held as part of a response to apocalyptic BBC pictures of famine caused by war and drought in the Tigray province of Northern Ethiopia. The world attention that was focused on the scenes of utter destitution in 1985 resulted, over some years, in a push to get Britain and other developed countries to meet a target set by the OECD of spending 0.7% of their GDP on aid. This target was finally adopted by both main political parties in the UK and was one of Boris Johnson's manifesto promises at the election in December 2019.

The Government's decision, only just over a year later, to renege on this promise and cut its aid spend to 0.5% of GDP comes at a time when another civil war in Tigray is set to cause a massive famine on a similar scale to that in 1985. How sad that as a country we are moving backwards in our commitment to provide aid and assistance to some of the poorest countries on Earth. Johnson's Government claims that this is only a temporary cut due to the need to start rebalancing the UK's budget as a result of expenditure on the Covid pandemic. Characteristically, the Government is not saying when they will move to restore the aid budget to 0.7% of GDP. At the same time, all comparable developed countries are expanding, or at the very least maintaining, their level of aid spending. In April, the UN's food agency warned of famines of "biblical proportions" in 2021 without billions in aid from the developed nations.

A leaked report earlier this year suggests that officials are considering cutting aid to Syria by 67% and Lebanon by 88%. Aid to Somalia could drop by 60%, South Sudan 59%, and the Democratic Republic of Congo by 60%. Of course, these are all countries in conflict and turmoil which are responsible for producing a large proportion of the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom eventually arrive in the UK (to the consternation of Priti Patel). This is the Government cutting off its nose to spite its face. Cuts to Syria and Lebanon are particularly hypocritical at a time when the Government has moved to cut numbers of asylum seekers and refugees arriving "legally" in the UK, claiming that it wants its spending on refugees to take place in the parts of the world that produce or currently host refugees (so as to try to keep them there). As the UN's chief humanitarian coordinator, Mark Lowcock, says, "a decision to turn away from Syria today will come back to bite us tomorrow", with increasing chances of another huge exodus to Europe and eventually the UK. He concludes: "millions of Syrians are resorting to desperate measures to survive".

Just across the Red Sea from Northern Ethiopia lies Yemen, which is currently in the grip of the world's worst famine. As in Tigray, this is also caused by a civil war in which Britain is selling many of the weapons that are responsible for the blockade and

Lifesaving research on fighting the climate crisis has already been closed

Andy Gregg was Director of Race on the Agenda

bombings that are causing such a huge loss of life. Aid to Yemen will be cut by half at a time when it has never been needed more. At the same time, UK weapons sales to the Saudis, who are largely responsible for the war (and thus the famine), are set to increase.

A number of charities, aid experts and MPs have declared that the cuts could see a million girls lose out on school, up to three million women and children go without life-saving food, and 5.6 million children left unvaccinated, causing up to 100,000 deaths and 7.6 million fewer women and girls losing access to family planning and contraception. Women and girls in the Global South are likely to be by far the worst hit.

A group of Tory MPs has obtained a legal opinion that the Government's decision is unlawful, and it is likely that there will be a substantial (though not decisive) rebellion amongst Tory backbenchers if and when the cuts come before the House of Commons (the Government is currently refusing to allow them to be tabled). Tory MP Tobias Ellwood, who chairs the defence select committee, said: "The recruiting sergeants of Hezbollah, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Isis and other armed militia will be the immediate beneficiaries of the cuts to the UK's humanitarian programmes. China and Russia will not hesitate to fill the vacuum we create."

The UK is about to chair the COP26 climate change conference and is promoting itself as a lead player at the G7 summit. As the world cries out for global leadership, the decision to cut our aid spending sends the message that the UK is just not up to the job and is likely to make the Government's objectives for the two conferences unachievable. At a time when the UK needs to be exerting its soft power to strike trade deals after our catastrophic exit from the EU, this is just not what a global Britain with world-leading soft power and influence is supposed to look like. Indeed, some of the cuts will adversely affect Britain and the world's ability to deal with the next pandemic due to cuts to Britain's budget for pandemic and disease research.

Cuts to aid are not only deeply unprincipled and cynical but they are likely to do harm to our longer-term interests

UK Research and Innovation has told businesses and research institutions that cuts to overseas development assistance will leave a hole of £120 million in 2020-21, putting vital research in both climate change and pandemic management at risk. Lifesaving research on fighting drought and the climate crisis in Africa has already been closed as a result of UK Government cutbacks, damaging Britain's reputation as a trusted partner in future collaborations.

At the same time, the cuts have left openings for China to move even further into a position of influence in Africa – arguably against our own strategic interests.

Meanwhile, the Government has recently closed the Department for lnternational Development, which has now been subsumed as part of the Foreign Office. The primary strategic aims of this department do not include the effective distribution of aid or the promotion of international development. Instead, the strategic driver of the Foreign Office is Britain's diplomatic and military prowess in the world. The first of these, our diplomatic posture, will be fatally undermined by the decision to make such large cuts in development aid. The increasing attempts to link aid to Britain's military defence and trading interests will tie us in even more closely to some of the most unpleasant regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, as well as diminishing our ability to be seen as an honest broker in international affairs.

A further point is that in addition to the general aid programme, there will be a substantial need for debt relief over the next period. However, starting this year, debt relief is now being considered as part of overseas development aid, which is bound to put an even larger squeeze on other aid.

The Government's cuts to aid are not only deeply unprincipled and cynical but they are likely to do serious and substantial harm to our longer-term interests, both internationally and here in the UK. This is a very steep price to pay for decisions that (like so many other current Government policies) are designed to appeal to little Englanders and "my country first" bigots and xenophobes. **C**

Left Populism: Learning from the past, preparing for the future

Marina Prentoulis outlines key arguments and lessons for socialist strategy to be drawn from Spain, Greece and the Corbyn experience

Marina Prentoulis has been a prominent figure in left wing activist circles over the past decade. During the heady days of the Greek defiance of the 'Troika' (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) and its ultimately successful campaign to impose the most draconian version of austerity on the country, she represented the left wing party Syriza, then operating in populist mode, at countless protest events and conferences here in the UK.

She no longer speaks for Syriza, and is highly critical of the path it took after the party's leader, and then Greek prime minister, Alex Tsipras, capitulated to the Troika's austerity demands in 2015. But she has remained committed to the style of politics that was being developed by social movements and political parties committed to representing the viewpoints of the indignados who launched themselves in militant opposition to the austerity being demanded by the governing elites of Europe in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008. Her new book on this subject, *Left Populism in Europe*, will be published by Pluto Press in May. She spoke to Chartist editorial board members, **Mike Davis** and **Don Flynn**, about the book in a Zoom discussion recorded in early April.

She began by explaining that she does not use the term 'populism' in the way that it is commonly understood, as a syllogism for anti-democratic, demagogic politics.

"I start from a different perspective. For me populism is much more a political logic." She contrasts it with conventional politics, which seeks small incremental change but otherwise leaves the system intact.

"Populism works differently, by creating a mass of people with different demands but they come together, and they are against the institutions as they are."

What populism of all kinds does – in its right and left wing versions – is create a 'people' out of this process of coming together which pits itself against the established elites. At this initial point the political content of the movement is raw material that can turn out to have a left or right wing orientation. It is there to be taken in one direction by a figure like Donald Trump, or another by the Spanish populist left party, Podemos.

She is keen to stress the difference between the left populist approach and that of traditional Marxism to these movements of 'the people'.

"Populism needs a crisis. [My] book stresses the importance of the financial crisis of 2008. This created a large political and economic issue. It put question marks against what the political elite is doing with the crisis."

Populism needs a crisis

The important point for Prentoulis is that the turmoil cut across classes and made possible a large social bloc that was now in opposition to conventional politics.

"This is the importance of the '99 percent'". She is adamant on this point. Whilst the impact of the crisis was felt in economic terms it also went to the heart of people's identities as they stood prior to the meltdown.

"The people as they come together, their identities are changed as they start to understand themselves as a part if this people. It is not only an alliance – it is more than that. The 99 percent slogan is trying to get to the

idea that 'the people' – not only a class – is suffering because of the system.

Nationalism

During the discussion it became clear that, for Prentoulis, the question of nationalism was critical in determining whether the populism movement went in a right wing or left wing direction.

"[The right] uses the nationalist discourse very effectively. People feel very emotional about nations. This is one of the reasons why the right is successful.

"For the left the situation is different. It is globalisation which is pushing us to think beyond the nation-state. The reality was the crisis was happening across Europe and the US. People were going beyond borders when their livelihoods and situation was under threat. We had to realise that it cut across borders to create solidarity.

"When it came to putting content into the populist logic the right wing approach was nationalism. But for the left it had to be different. The left position has to be inclusive and anti-nationalist. It has to go beyond borders."

She pondered the relationship between nationalism and patriotism. Left populist movements in Latin America have certainly used patriotic themes to rally the masses against the constraints on progress in that region, which means using anti-American, anti-imperialist sentiment. But whilst this is patriotic, Prentoulis insists it isn't nationalistic.

But in any event the situation in Europe is very different.

"In Europe you have some of the biggest ex-empires, so talking about nationalism is like a slap in the face. Nationalism in England? You created an empire. You pushed this path [towards globalisation]. What is nationalist in Britain and what is nationalist in Venezuela I think is very different."

Left populism stalled

The discussion moved on to consider why the left populist wave in Europe seems to have subsided. The case studies here cover the examples of Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and also the Corbyn movement in the UK.

Prentoulis argues that, although all of these currents flirted with different elements of left populism, none of them worked on a consistently left populist strategy.

"For example, the Labour party – I don't think that it has ever managed to create 'a people' in the way right wing populism did around Brexit." What Corbynism did, she argues, is draw a new generation of left wing people into activity within Labour and then use their energy to fight in very traditional party terms against the right. It was not the social movement which populist theory sees as the first step in severing the emotional identification with the established order.

This continues to show itself in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. She asks what Labour's involvement has been in organising resistance at grassroots community level. The Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, had excited people with his criticism of government policies over support for people in poorer communities who were required to isolate during lockdown, and this was very good. But had the party really forged an identity with civil society activities running food banks and similar? She sees a radical municipalism as a critical element of a left populism, examples in UK being the Preston community funds model or the Brixton £, building community empowerment through local government and civil society initiatives.

[The right] uses the nationalist discourse very effectively. The Left has to be different: inclusive and anti-nationalist

In both Greece and Spain the social movement element of left populism had seen activists establishing health clinics and running food banks in the areas where austerity had hit hardest. The strategic problems for left populism in these countries, which Prentoulis considers in detail in her book, were connected to the challenges of moving from functioning as a social movement at the level of communities to becoming a force in electoral politics. In Greece the challenge had been catastrophic for Syriza; in Spain Podemos still wrestles with its role as being a movement of the indignados and a partner in a conventional centre-left government with the Socialist Party (PSOE).

Success is never guaranteed in politics, and when mistakes are made it is essential that we learn from them. For Prentoulis the period of left populism deserves to be studied because it provides rich lessons on the way politics folds itself across mass society in the conditions of neoliberal post-democracy when politics are run by elites and people have been kept away from making meaningful contributions. The conditions that once allowed politics to be represented as a contest between monolithic parties of the centre-right on one hand and centre-left on the other, constantly switching roles as parties of government and opposition whilst leaving the architecture of the state fundamentally unchanged are now coming to an end.

As democracy seeks to get a grip on the situation once again, identities are as much in the mix as social class and populism allows us to think through some of the dilemmas of what is inevitably a more fluid and volatile situation.

The discussion drew to a conclusion with thoughts as to what the future has in store for democratic politics. The conditions that facilitated the populist surge after 2008 will happen again, Prentoulis insists. Back then the catalyst was an economic crisis triggered by the greed of a globalised financial elite. The current pandemic and the adjustments that will be required to survive this and future contagions will be the starting point for the next wave of populist insurgency. Not so far beyond that there will be the challenges of climate change and the rebuilding of democracy from the ground up to ensure that doesn't produce carnage for the mass of people on the planet.

"Transnationalism, working in and out of the institutions, for example the European Union, to create projects together, local, municipal and wider" is critical. "Brexit may give us the opportunity, we are Europeans, we believe in solidarity so we need to think about ways to connect and exchange, a new mutuality."

As we move into the next phase of crisis Prentoulis's message is that the left had better learn how to do politics in this world of increasing social dislocation and turmoil. If we haven't learnt to think and act as an effective populist political movement we can be sure that the right will. C

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Israel stalemate

Omri Preiss says Israel's tumble down the rabbit hole continues, yet sees a last hope for progressive secular Zionism

The fourth election in Israel in two years has brought about the same unstable stalemate, and yet managed to push the country that much deeper down the rabbit hole, with a lurch even further to the far right. Peace, human rights and reconciliation with the Palestinians draw further way. And still, a glimmer of hope for liberal democratic values survive.

Ever since Netanyahu was first elected, he has eroded basic democratic norms and the rule of law. He has pushed the rock bottom of politics ever lower with overt racism, demolishing the peace process with the Palestinians, incitement of hatred and violence, undermining the justice system, and the outright corruption for which he is now on trial. Political eventualities that seem unimaginable until they come into being become the new normal, a new rock bottom, and then the bottom drops again. That process has been the hallmark of Netanyahu's time in power, and his journey to destroy the very foundations that the Israeli state was built on. That he has once again been given the mandate to form another government is exasperating, depressing and tedious. Even the deft deployment of Covid-19 vaccines ahead of the March elections could not cover that up.

These past elections have been referenda on Netanyahu's rule, and his opposition agree on not much more than they want him out, along with his multiple corruption charges. Still, the outcome of the elections is a true reflection of a deeply divided society, one that is split up into factions that have increasingly less in common. The ruthless horse-trading that has always characterised Israeli politics has only intensified. Somehow, Netanyahu swindles his way to the top each time, on the back of a new gullible politician who falls for the same trap of empty promises.

This time around it will be Naftali Bennett, one of the religious far right leaders, who will jump at the opportunity to be swindled, and it is not hard to imagine what will happen next. Promises will be made, the junior partner will be led by the nose, only to be betrayed and undercut, at which point bickering will lead to the coalition's gradual collapse and new elections will ensue. And so, what's different this time around?

The Israeli parliament has never been more nationalist and extremist than it is now. It now boasts at least five different far right nationalist parties and two ultra-Orthodox conservative parties. A new entry is the Religious Zionism party, an incarnation of the defunct banned terrorist organisation Kach. They are a Jewish-supremacist religious fundamentalist group that advocates expelling or killing Palestinians. They have previously not made it into the Knesset, but have performed well above expectations now due to Netanyahu's direct support. Israel, along with any prospect of peace with the Palestinians, is in dire straits.

In a bizarre twist of fate, Netanyahu now needs the support of the Arab-Israeli Islamic party Ra'am in order to form a government. The irony is overwhelming. With newfound pragmatism, the party has relished the kingmaker position it now finds itself in. For the first time in its history, Israel's Arab parties have veritably jumped into the mire of coalition-building and been brought in. Now, a Jewish supremacist far right government could conceivably be supported by conservative Islamists. We are only left to ask how much deeper the rabbit hole will go.

And yet, there is unexpected hope. The group of democratic parties promising change ran an effective campaign of mutual support and solidarity that is rare in politics these days. Above the noise, Merav Michaeli, the new Labour leader, took a battered and destroyed party and built it back up. Her clear and determined feminist leadership changed the public debate in Israel and offered up a fresh new way of doing things. The predictions of the total annihilation of left wing parties did not come to pass. A constellation of democratic parties is Israel's last line of defence against authoritarianism.

For the three decades before and after its creation, Israel was built and governed by social democrats and liberals who wanted Israel to be a liberal secular social democracy. Their great failure was that they came short of offering a clear and compelling enough vision for what that secular democratic Zionism entailed. They were too eager to fall back on populist tropes about the mythology of the promised land. By doing that they deferred to nationalism and religion, which offered up easier answers, and so also won the political battle. Now, with so much hanging in the balance, Israeli progressives provide vision, together.

Who knows - there might be a way to claw a path back up the rabbit hole. But it's a very, very long way up. **C**

A welcome requiem for the English Empire?

Glyn Ford on post-Brexit fantasies

Much has been written in the long shadow of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* of the fate of its British equivalent. Yet unlike Rome that collapse has yet to go to completion. Within one Empire was hiding a second. The post-war collapse of Empire was the first act of a drama whose second seriously kicked off with the June 2016 Brexit vote and spurred on repeatedly in its unreeling. The English Empire is under threat as the political - and economic - strains tear it apart; an Empire that for so long hid in plain sight persisting in the shadowlands of history.

Yet the subjection and occupation of Wales, Ireland and Scotland were the self-same process that later were to vanquish and subjugate North America, India, and much of Africa. War and terror, massacre, murder and mayhem with the use of quislings and collaborators completed and policed territorial assimilation. The first conquered was Wales. While earlier Norman Kings had made forays into the South, it was Edward I between 1277-83 that conquered the Principality of Gwynedd and its ruler Llwywelyn ap Gruffudd. Edward built forts, new towns like Flint and Aberystwyth populated by English settlers and imported an army of occupation.

Now Brexit promises the last decolonisation. Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Welsh all voted Remain. The narrow majority for Leave in Wales was the arithmetic of England's colonists. Front of stage is Scotland. Long resentful of Westminster rule, still with a sense of community lost generations ago in London and the South East, its Scottish National Party (SNP) has gone from the home of contingent protest votes to government, and from nativist traditionalism to social democracy. The 2014 Referendum saw 55-45 opt for the status quo as Britain's political establishment wrapped themselves around the flag.

Labour sacrificed party for nation. It was to prove the last nail in Labour's coffin in Scotland, for it

was never going to challenge the Tories as the party of Union. There was a strong left case for Remaining in the UK and Europe, but Labour never made it. A class case that pitched the interests of employee against employer, labour versus capital that would conclude that the best interests of the Labour Movement were served staying in both. For Labour's supporters opting for independence in 2016 would have left Scotland adrift in the North Atlantic with no guarantee Madrid would rescue them and behoven to the generosity of Westminster's disgruntled Tories determined to punish the insurrectionists.

Four years on coffled to Britain's other nations, they have been cruelly dragged from a continental Union in the interests of a middling nation state. The very idea that circumstances have not changed sufficiently to warrant a second independence referendum would be ludicrous if it wasn't so consequential. The SNP landslide in May will make it hard for Johnson to hold the line without generating serious civil disobedience. If a referendum comes the money will be on leave - and it should be. From an economic and political standpoint the choice of being an integral part of the EU, one of the world's three largest economic powers, or marooned as a peripheral appendage of 'Singapore on Thames' is not difficult to answer.

As for Northern Ireland May and Johnson could have been closet members of Sinn Fein judged by their actions. They have welded the economies of North and South together while simultaneously pulling those across the Irish Sea apart as Northern Unionism was offered up to 'Get Brexit Done'. All at a time when Ireland has demonstrated over abortion, gay marriage and the rest that it is streets ahead of Democratic Unionism's reactionary instincts. 'Rome rule' holds few, if any, fears for the young and progressive in the North today. In the wake of Scotland voting for independence within a decade Dublin could trigger the proviso in the Good Friday Agreement for a referendum on a United Ireland. Dublin would have to act very stupidly to lose. As German Unification demonstrated Belfast can slip seamlessly back into the EU with no negotiations.

Wales has always been the laggard. Yet support for independence has been soaring and is 33% and rising. Cardiff will never lead, but it may follow. With Scotland and Northern Ireland gone, being England's last settlement may lack appeal, and there are seven EU Member States with a smaller population.

Where do socialists stand? We have accepted Scotland and Northern Ireland's right to self-determination - and would argue by analogy Wales. We believe that the UK voting Leave in 2016 was self-harming. On that basis can we seriously advise fellow socialists in the colonies of the English Empire that their interests will be better served by London than Brussels? Some will argue Labour can't win without Scotland? Now can Labour win with Scotland? Whatever, do we really expect Scotland's progressives to immolate themselves for us? That's self-seeking of an heroic order. Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977, revised 1982) suggested that it would be the very process of disintegration that would finally destroy Britain's archaic state and allow a new politics and polity to be born from the ashes. The wisest choice maybe embracing the inevitable and working to ensure he's proved right. C

Glyn Ford was a Labour MEP

Spain's socialists in the vanguard of change

Juan Fernando López Aguilar on the achievements of Spanish socialists (PSOE) before, during and since the Franco regime

Spanish socialists led by Pedro Sanchez (centre)

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), of which I have been a member since 1983, has always been at the forefront of social transformations in Spain, fostered in a decisive way by its ethical commitment and its resolute political action. Spanish socialists tend to say that our party is the one that best resembles Spain, that is, the one that best resembles Spanish society. As a matter of fact, our name has channelled the demands and, ultimately, the achievement of rights and social advances of indisputable historical value. So much so that the bulk of the people has embraced them and no conservative government, irrespective of how fierce its opposition to our measures, has dared to modify them.

A short overview of our almost 142-year-old history shows the crucial role that the PSOE played in the attainment of the first laws for regulation of labour, the approval of universal male, and subsequently, women's suffrage, and the defence of republican values by the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931. It also championed the fight against Franco's dictatorship over four decades and, needless to say, spearheaded the design, institution building and defence of a fully democratic Spain with the 1978 Constitution, whose framework has allowed the development of the freest and most prosperous period in our history.

With the Socialist governments of Felipe González, the PSOE contributed to the historical change that Spaniards needed to modernise the country. This included the deployment of the Welfare State and the Social State after successfully overcoming several complex structural reforms that had undermined Spanish development for decades. Furthermore, it ushered in an era of openness towards Europe and dismantled the burden of the Francoist State in specific strategic areas. Along these lines, a military reform was implemented after the putsch of 23 February 1981. By retrieving some of the ideas put forward by Manuel Azaña, former president of the Second Republic, it transformed the military into a professional body subject to the Constitution over a short period of time.

In terms of external policy, the González administration secured the accession of Spain to the European Economic Community in June 1985, a fact that underpinned in the widest sense the Europeanisation of the country. The Ibero-American summits, held since 1991, have also conferred on Spain a leading role in the region and the world. This role was clearly portrayed during the Barcelona 1992 Summer Olympics and the Seville Expo, two landmarks that projected a modern, open and global image of our country.

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party has promoted every achievement on social protection and civil rights, two basic pillars for our citizens. Despite the People's Party (conservative right) opposition, compulsory and free education was expanded to the age of sixteen, while public, secular and egalitarian education has always been an utmost priority. In the same vein, the PSOE universalised access to public health, passed fundamental laws that decriminalised abortion and extended aid for dependant persons. It also revolutionised our lives in day-to-day aspects such as the penalty points driving licence, which dramatically reduced the number of road deaths, and the anti-smoking law.

During my term as a Minister of Justice (2004-2007), some of the most remarkable achievements were the adoption of a law against gender violence, the recognition of same-sex marriages, pioneered by Spain, as well as laws on gender equality and equality in gender identity civil registration. Moreover, procedures for streamlining separation and divorce were adopted, and courts on violence against women were set up. In the field of the fight against corruption, the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office was strengthened and expanded all over the country, and an aid office for victims of terrorism was created.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar is a PSOE MEP and was a former Justice Minister

In this regard, the fight against the terrorist group ETA culminated in one of the best legacies of Zapatero's era: the announcement of the "permanent cessation of armed activity" in October 2011, a milestone that marked the beginning of a new era for the Basque

Country and for all of Spain after half a century of horror and indiscriminate violence. The search for mutual understanding through political channels, from a federalist perspective sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, and identitarian plurality of the country, based on the premise of respect for the rule of Law, is the approach that socialists will continue to follow in order to lower the secessionist tension in Catalonia, fuelled by the PP government between 2011 and 2015, and still far from being dispelled.

The current Spanish government, headed since January 2020 by Pedro Sánchez in a coalition between the PSOE and Unidas Podemos, has managed to launch a number of initiatives, despite the fact than many of them still have a long legislative path ahead. These are, the guaranteed minimum income, an increase in the national minimum wage to 950 Euro (from 648 Euro in 2015), an update of pensions tied to the Consumer Price Index, the suppression of dismissal due to medical leave, the extension of paternity leave, the suppression of pharmaceutical co-payment, the introduction of new taxes on the large technology companies, the regulation of the price of property rents, and the climate change and energy transition act. Further, we have the euthanasia law, the law on sexual violence and trafficking in women, the transgender law, the new law on education,-which reduces the weight of religion in the school curriculum, and the law on democratic memory, among others.

After the blow caused by COVID-19, the administration led by Pedro Sánchez has chosen to pass an expansive budget which represents the highest social expenditure in our history, 239,765 million Euros, 10.3% higher than the previous one. The measures of 'social shield' designed to safeguard the Welfare State from the scourges of the pandemic prevent both objective dismissals and termination of temporary contracts, and regulate the duration of special temporary labour force adjustment plans (known as ERTE in Spanish) until the situation improves. Finally, evictions of vulnerable households have been suspended and electric social bonds have been extended to 1.3 million consumers.

In sum, the PSOE has acted in our democracy as a catalyst for deep transformations that have allowed Spain to achieve high welfare standards and one of the most advanced social legislation programme reforms in the world. Both the values that inspire our political action and the results attained qualify our party to head up the economic and social rebuilding that Spain and Europe will require in the post-pandemic era. c

Release Josu Urrutikoetxea

Bob Newland on an imprisoned Basque veteran

Josu Urrutikoetxea was a key figure in the Basque movement Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and played a major role in ending the armed conflict in the Basque Country and Spain. He led peace negotiations on behalf of ETA from the 1980's. In 1989 he was arrested in the middle of a truce and spent 10 years in prison. Josu led further negotiations from 2005 to 2007 in Geneva and from 2011 to 2013 in Oslo.

As was necessary for such negotiations to take place, whether they were in Northern Ireland, South Africa or the Basque Country, these talks were covered by protection for those engaged in the process. Josu had such protection from the Spanish Government with technical agreement from the French and diplomatic protection from the Swiss and Norwegians who hosted the talks. As a result of these negotiations ETA declared an end to armed struggle in 2011. Their weapons were handed over in April 2017 in Bayonne and on May 3r, 2018 Josu Urrutikoetxea announced in Geneva that ETA had agreed on its own initiative to dissolve itself.

Following the success of this peace initiative the French Government have brought two charges of 'Criminal conspiracy with terrorist intent' against Josu. These relate to periods when he was actively involved in negotiations and under diplomatic protection. He was due to appear before the court at the end of October 2020 and again in February 2021. Proceedings were further postponed until June and September 2021. Meanwhile Josu who is suffering from cancer languishes in a French prison.

Successes in Conflict Resolution in South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Basque Country have been trumpeted throughout the world as outstanding examples of how to end some of the bloodiest conflicts in recent history. None of these could have been achieved without the courageous actions of peace negotiators. Ronnie Kasrils from the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) helped bring the IRA to the negotiating table. Gerry Adams brought his experience in Northern Ireland to support the negotiations between ETA and the Spanish Government.

There remain many such conflicts which deserve a similar intervention and resolution. It is crucial to that hope that 'negotiators' are afforded appropriate protection to do their work and these should be respected after the event whether it is successful or not.

If readers know of anyone in a prominent role politically, in the arts or civil society who might sign the International Appeal please contact Thomas Lacoste:labandepassante@gmail.com. A general petition is also circulating and can be accessed at: https://www.change.org/-Free-Josu.

Sadly, this is not an isolated example of states reneging on protections offered to peace negotiators. India has initiated legal proceedings against Yasin Malik relating to attempts to resolve the Kashmir crisis. Columbia has failed to respect the security protocols ratified by its own Government, the FARC and the ELN which were guaranteed by Norway and Cuba. Recent military actions by the Turkish Government have destroyed the peace process in Kurdistan.

In the case of Josu Urrutikoetxea, an International Appeal has been established urging the French Government to respect the protections afforded to him, to immediately release him from custody and withdraw the charges against him. This has already been signed by a number of Nobel Prize winners and a large number of international politicians, lawyers writers and other personalities. They include Peter Hain and Gerry Adams who were involved in the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement; Ronnie Kasrils and Essop Pahad, South African peace negotiators, Noam Chomsky and Ken Loach. c

Brexit damage compounded by Johnson incompetence

UK economy faces a triple threat – two of those are of the government's making says **Paul Teasdale**

The pandemic has been a shock to the economy that is different in many ways to a normal recession. However, the actions of the government in the past six months – a hasty exit from the Single Market and a budget heralding a squeeze on public spending – look set to give us that traditional recession.

A recession is usually the result of insufficient spending, but with the pandemic we had an artificial suppression of spending caused by a fear of social contact rather than, say, a credit squeeze that reduces spending power. To our surprise, the Government did many of the right things to see that incomes were sustained until the fear is alleviated, and we can expect spending to return.

Like the pandemic, Brexit is unprecedented but while one was unforeseen and beyond our control the other is self-inflicted (though it is not the worst act of self-inflicted harm in British history - that has to be Churchill's return to the Gold Standard in 1925).

The two shocks hit different parts of the economy. The effects of the pandemic are felt most strongly in personal services, hospitality, entertainment. These are particularly significant employers in cities and areas based around tourism – and much of the workforce is younger people in lower paid jobs. Many of the firms in sectors that have not lost sales through the pandemic will be hit now by departure from the Single Market because trade barriers particularly affect goods, that is manufacturing and food and some retail.

There is no historical evidence on the consequences of a country leaving a successful trading union: it has never happened because the effect is predictable. Customs unions are created to lower the cost of trade – leaving would raise costs. And it is perhaps the most basic of economics axioms that higher prices lead to lower sales and output. So, there was agreement among economists over the expected costs of leaving the EU.

Forecasts made before the referendum suggested that two years after leaving the EU GDP would be about 2-3% lower than it would be otherwise. The longer-term effects come from three elements:

- barriers to trade, whether tariffs or administrative, make exports more expensive so sales decline;
- the UK becomes much less attractive as a destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) for operations serving the rest of Europe;
- loss of sales and FDI leads to lower investment in total, so slower growth and slower productivity growth, which in turn reduces exports - this is the main influence over the next decade or more.

Those forecasts are beginning to look underestimates.

Firstly, effects were apparent even before leaving the EU. Comparing the performance of the UK economy with similar economies, by 2019 GDP was already 2% lower than it would have been, had the vote gone differently.

Secondly, the deal made in December 2020 has more trade friction than anyone imagined in 2016. The government chose to leave the Single Market and the customs union.

Since January there has been a steady flow of stories illustrating the consequences of leaving the Single Market: Scottish fishing boats staying in port because they are unable to export their catch; a 50% fall in trade through Holyhead; delivery firms suspending services to Europe; difficulties for touring musicians.

Rather than allow time to work on the difficult issues Johnson's team decided to just ignore them. The deal did nothing for financial services or recognition of professional qualifications. Some firms have already relocated operations and others are set to follow. Amsterdam has overtaken London as the top share-trading centre in Europe.

Perhaps more significant are stories of individual small businesses confronting higher costs for exports and imports of small quantities. When it came into being in 1993 the Single Market promised, and delivered, gains for small businesses able to sell to a wider market, and for consumers more choice and lower prices. Now that is being reversed. It is not just a matter of learning new ways; each transaction involves additional administration and charges.

The agreement avoided tariffs or quotas but did virtually nothing about non-tariff barriers – in part because the government was unwilling to accept EU standards (even though the EU is the leader in setting standards across the world). Faced with the additional costs some small firms will stop exporting. Others will relocate some activities abroad, for example creating new distribution centres. Indeed, advisers in the Department for International Trade have advised businesses to relocate and agencies across Europe are ready to assist.

It is still hard to get quantitative indicators. Any Brexit effect is obscured by the reduction of trade caused by the pandemic. The big fall in exports to the EU in January was largely due to teething problems, but teething problems are the result of the government's own

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incompetence: most obviously insisting on making such a fundamental change in the middle of the Covid crisis when the work of government and businesses was focused elsewhere. Then making it even worse by reaching a hurried deal with many gaps and completing it only a week before implementation, allowing no time for firms to prepare. And the government failed to recruit and train enough extra officials.

When we get figures for the service sector, they will show a drop in exports but mainly due to Covid. Leaving the EU has less effect than for goods. Some exported services, such as tourism, education or film making are consumed within the UK. In finance, or professional services (e.g., architects) firms will set up branches within the EU – so the businesses will continue but reshaped. But there will be, substantial costs for the UK economy: a loss of jobs, exports and tax revenue.

This is not as great as the loss of GDP experienced in the past year but is just as serious. The economy will recover from the Covid recession – some sectors more slowly than others and they may need assistance. But the loss of exports to the EU is permanent.

Much of this was inevitable but it was possible to make preparations to avoid the worst. The blame has to be laid on Johnson. Since 2016 he has dismissed warnings as scaremongering. He cannot cope with detail, cannot look ahead, does not prepare for difficulties, and just hopes that something will turn up. This is very clear in Northern Ireland but there one wonders if he ever intended to stick to the deal at all.

Tory MPs (and the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg) say that the biggest problem now is the government debt – so the Chancellor is planning to cut demand further. This is economic illiteracy. However, we have had a succession of Labour leaders afraid to talk about the economy, or about Europe. Starmer has conceded that the referendum cannot be reversed but there is, then, all the more reason to challenge how the government is going about the task of leaving. Brexit was always going to be damaging but the damage has been compounded by incompetence in delivering it. C

No to Hassockfield - no one is illegal

Julie Ward on the scandal of a new Immigration Removal Centre

In early 2021 news broke that the government was planning to create a new Category C Immigration Removal Centre to house women asylum seekers on the site of the notorious Medomsley Detention Centre near Consett in County Durham. After years of controversy following the suicide of a 14 year old inmate and a string of convictions of former staff for sexual and violent abuse, the site had been earmarked for a much-needed housing and leisure development and there was hope that the local community could look forward to a brighter more positive future.

The announcement of the development of a new IRC took the local authority by surprise as no planning application for the repurposing of the Home Office 'detention estate' is required and therefore no consultation had taken place with Durham County Council. The original detention centre was re-named Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in 1999 and run by Serco who continued to receive £1.1 million of public money for the empty facility even after it closed following the tragic death of Adam Rickwood in 2004.

The local Tory MP, Richard Holden, is championing the new Hassockfield facility, saying it will bring jobs and investment to the area. He maintains that people voted for a 'strong immigration system' and that 'immigration detention and removal plays a key role' in this. Holden not only ignores the toxic legacy of the facility at Medomsley but fails to recognise the particular vulnerability of women asylum seekers who are known to face violence at every stage of their journey, from the moment they feel compelled to leave their homes, en route and when they reach their destination. Holden describes future inmates as criminals and illegals, stirring up racism and outright hostility which goes unchallenged on his Facebook page.

Speaking to the newly-formed 'No To Hassockfield' campaign group in February Lord Alf Dubs expressed his support for the campaign, reminding us that 'no-one is illegal'.

The UK is the only European country that uses the cruel practice of indefinite detention. A 2018 report of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Sub-Committee on 'effective alternatives to detention in the context of migration' suggests that "the wide use of immigration detention as a response to the arrivals of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants raises serious issues of compliance with human rights standards", and lays out a raft of alternatives taking into account the specificities of 'extreme vulnerability' (including gender-based factors) and cost effectiveness.

The UK's record is equally besmirched at international level. In 2014 the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Rashida Manjoo, was barred from the notorious Yarls Wood by the Home Office when she tried to investigate complaints about the centre as part of her fact-finding mission in the UK.

Recent reports on conditions at Penally Camp and Napier Barracks have been equally damning, whilst Home Office suggestions to offshore asylum seekers has been met with horror by many.

Holden likes to suggest that the 'hard left' of the Labour Party are the main instigators of the 'No To Hassockfield' campaign, a tactic clearly designed to try and inflict damage on the former MP Laura Pidcock who consistently called for a fitting memorial for the Medomsley victims. The truth is we are a human rights organisation not a political campaign. Labour & Lib Dems are working with other campaigns such as Freedom From Torture and Yarls Wood Befrienders, along with academics, medical doctors, legal experts, faith leaders and people with lived experience of seeking asylum. At an early campaign meeting Agnes Tonah from the charity Women For Refugee Women gave a distressing personal testimony. She was previously detained at Yarls Wood and still suffers psychological trauma as a result. Agnes started a petition to gather support to stop the new IRC at Medomsley. C

You can find it on the campaign website where you can also keep up to date with developments.

https://notohassockfield.org.uk/

Julie Ward is an ex MEP and member of Chartist EB

Johnson's 'tilt' to China getting nowhere

Responding the China's rise, **Jenny Clegg** puts a pragmatic perspective

As the world emerges from its COVID-pandemic paralysis, albeit extremely unevenly, it will find itself in a new place, its economic centre now shifted from West for East - for good.

Johnson's post-Brexit 'tilt' towards the IndoPacific might then seem a step in the right direction. But does it have to be military-led? In May, Britain is to send its state of the art Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier strike group to the South China Sea to join military exercises with the US. The government's Integrated Defence Review places economic and foreign policy-making on a 'defence' footing - Russia still presents the most acute threat, but China is the 'systemic competitor'. We should remain open to trade and investment, cooperate on tackling climate change, but guarding against China's apparent threat to our national security is the main preoccupation.

It is evident, now, that this kind of a la carte 'cooperate and contain' approach is getting nowhere, spiralling rapidly into an exchange of sanctions.

So far the 'tilt' has seen the biggest rise in defence spending since the Korea war. The Huawei ban was costly - estimates vary from £2bn to £18 bn - and unnecessary, given the threat to national security was manageable. Now Britain-China economic relations are being put at risk.

Trade has increased dramatically since 2000 with China not only a source of cheaper imports, from smartphones to PPE, but is also our third largest market after the US and Germany, accounting for 7 per cent of our exports. Over the last five years, investment from China has poured in, backing everything from airports, to London's black cabs, to football clubs. Last year, the Bank of China helped in the rescue of Jaguar Land Rover and Chinese steelmaker, Jingye, completed a £1.2bn deal to save British Steel, securing 3,000 jobs. Chinese companies are invested in our water, oil and gas industries and, more controversially, our nuclear power sector; Chinese visitors help to keep our tourism sector buoyant; cultural exchanges open new opportunities for our artists; and many universities are reliant on income from the tuition fees of thousands of Chinese students. At least 150,000 jobs across Britain are attributable to economic links with China including Hong Kong.

Global Britain seriously needs a reality check when it comes to China. In 2020, the British and Chinese economies were roughly the same size; now China is five times larger. It is now is forecast to overtake US GDP within the decade.

China nevertheless is still a developing country with an average per capita income of around $10,000, less that a quarter that of Britain and a sixth that of the US. The aim is to increase this to $21,000 by the mid-2030s, shifting from investment- to consumption-driven growth and from an exporter to an importer in the process.

The scope for growth is tremendous and not only in quantitative terms. China has some of world's finest researchers and is investing heavily in R&D: collaboration in the future will help our scientists and engineers stay at the cutting edge of technological change and could also bring into play Britain particular strengths in green finance and clean energy.

All this should give Labour pause for thought. But what about China's human rights abuses? Putting people before profits - this is surely what Labour should be about. But before reaching for the Magnitsky sanctions the Party needs to consider whether in fact we actually have any real leverage? Should we not take a constructive approach?

Facing developing country problems of a stagnating agriculture and a still large rural population, China is simply not up to our standards in terms of pay and conditions, health and education, environmental, legal and equalities practices and so on. In these early stages of developing a welfare state and professionalising government, Britain has much to offer. In our favour, Chinese people have positive views of Britain - Chinese leaders have long exhorted their population to 'learn from the West'.

Dr Jenny Clegg was a former senior lecturer in Asia Pacific Studies and a China specialist. Her book *China's Global Strategy: towards a multipolar world* was published by Pluto Press in 2009. She continues to write about China's development and foreign policy.

China poses no threat: it has not fought a war beyond its borders for over 40 years; it has never interfered in freedom of navigation; it has just one military base (in Djibouti); its continues to maintain a 'no first use' nuclear posture; and in the new battlegrounds of cyber-war and space - now to consume so much of our additional defence budget - China is open to negotiation.

The Tories' military-led Global Britain will engulf the country in delusions of imperial grandeur, stoking anti-Chinese racism and rightwing nationalism at home, alienating the Chinese public overseas as it takes us towards a new Cold War. and putting British jobs and livelihoods at risk.

Rather than following the same self-destructive patriotism, Labour should dare to open up debate on Britain's place in the newly emerging global multipolarity to consider pragmatically what should be done to adapt to China's rise in the best interests of people in Britain. In this way it has the chance of serving as a model in commitment to human rights - economic and social as well as individual - rather than lecturing others and indulging in empty virtue signalling. C

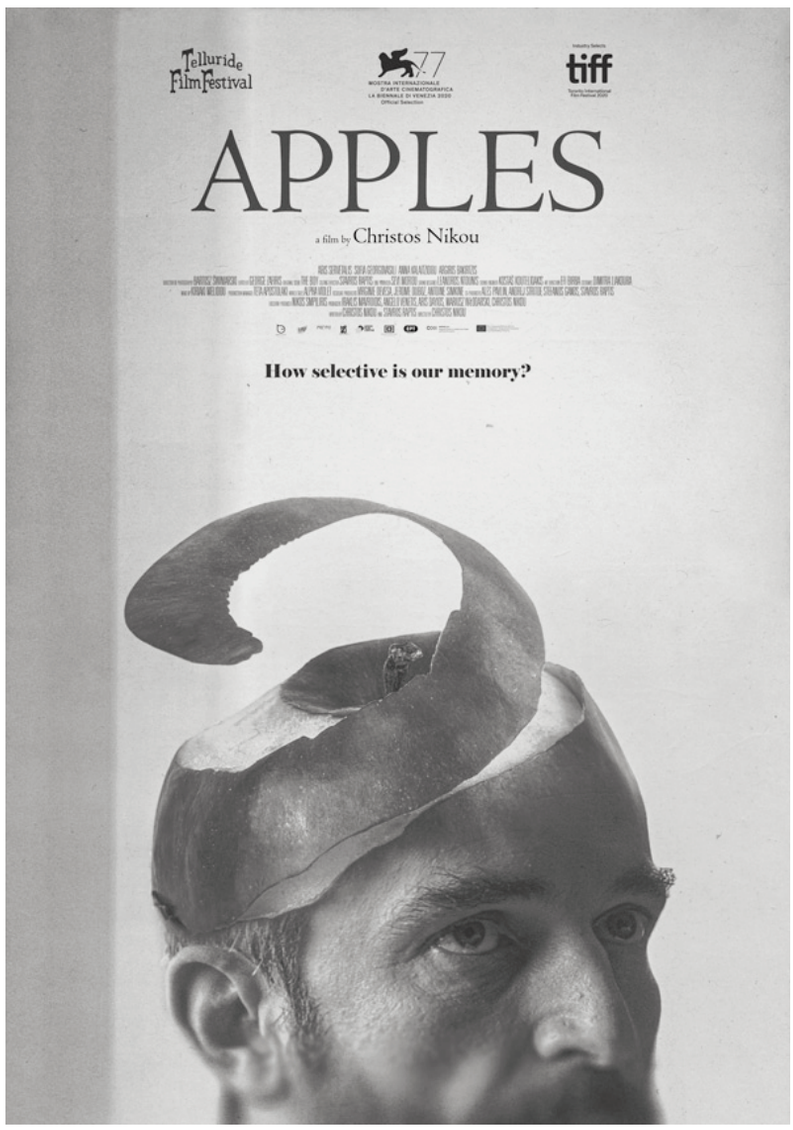
How do you like them Apples?

Patrick Mulcahy on the art of forgetting

Memory loss is usually understood to be an old person's affliction, characterised by the onset of dementia. In Greek co-writer-director Christos Nikou's highly accomplished debut feature film, ***Apples***, it can afflict anyone at almost any age. A person could be standing at a football match and not know why they are there. Or they could crash a car and find themselves sitting on the pavement with no recollection of their own actions.

The protagonist of ***Apples,*** identified only as '14842' (Aris Servetalis), is a bearded, handsome if thin, middle-aged man who very much wants to rid himself of his memories. His wife has recently died and when we first see him, he is metronomically banging his head against the wall in his apartment. Listening to the radio, he hears an announcement that more hospitals are accepting memory loss patients. After leaving flowers on his wife's grave, he rides a bus to the end of the line, feigns memory loss and is checked in. He has divested himself of identity documents, so he is categorised by hospital staff as 'unidentified'. No one comes to collect him, so he volunteers for the 'New Identity' programme. He is given an apartment to live in, an allowance and is issued with daily tasks: ride a bicycle, go to party or dive ten metres into a swimming pool. He is only required to provide a set of Polaroid photographs as proof of endeavour. The purpose of these tasks is to learn how to live and also to re-connect with a sense of normality: how to live and behave amongst others.

14842's deception makes for some wry comedy. He learns what to say to doctors from another patient and feigns an inability to recall items in little boxes. The only object he correctly identifies is a set of keys. Asked to match music to one of the pictures in a book, he associates 'Jingle Bells' with a wedding and 'Swan Lake' with a Mariachi player; he smiles as he makes his selection. He throws himself diligently into tasks (including comically crashing a child's bike) and has fun dressing up. After a fancy-dress party, he feigns being a slow-moving NASA astronaut in the outfit given to him, slowly reaching for the tape player to receive his next instruction – the items used are all retrograde, not a mobile phone in sight. He munches on apples constantly. They are the only food he eats and the only habit he doesn't break.



There is little dialogue, only of an awkward kind. We also see other patients at various stages of the programme, even a small queue who want to photograph themselves next to a poster outside a cinema.

The film tests 14842's fake desensitisation as he meets a young woman (Sofia Georgovassili) who asks him to accompany her to complete 'a difficult task'. She is simultaneously drawn to him and yet wants to keep him at a distance.

The film asks a series of questions: if we forget, do we feel guilty? Can a person without memory be manipulated to do anti-social things without fear? How is behaviour determined to be acceptable? At one point, 14842's new companion stands on her head, counts to 154 and says she did so for four minutes. '154 is four minutes?' 14842 asks incredulously.

The tests have an element of cruelty, notably when 14842 is asked to form a bond with a stranger in a hospital. He feeds him soup. The experience has a galvanising effect on him, especially as he comes to realise that some people are perfectly happy with de-sensitisation and can find experiences that should unite people 'boring'.

Forgetting is one response to accepting – or rather ignoring – a country's troubled history. There is one oblique reference to recent Greek history when a doctor describes attending a demonstration. Her elderly colleague suggests that they could get their subjects to make Molotov cocktails. Nikou demonstrates that no matter how the past might be, it is better to remember it. Better too to have a sense of oneself in the flow of history.

Apples **is available to watch on Curzon Home Cinema from 7 May 2021 and will**

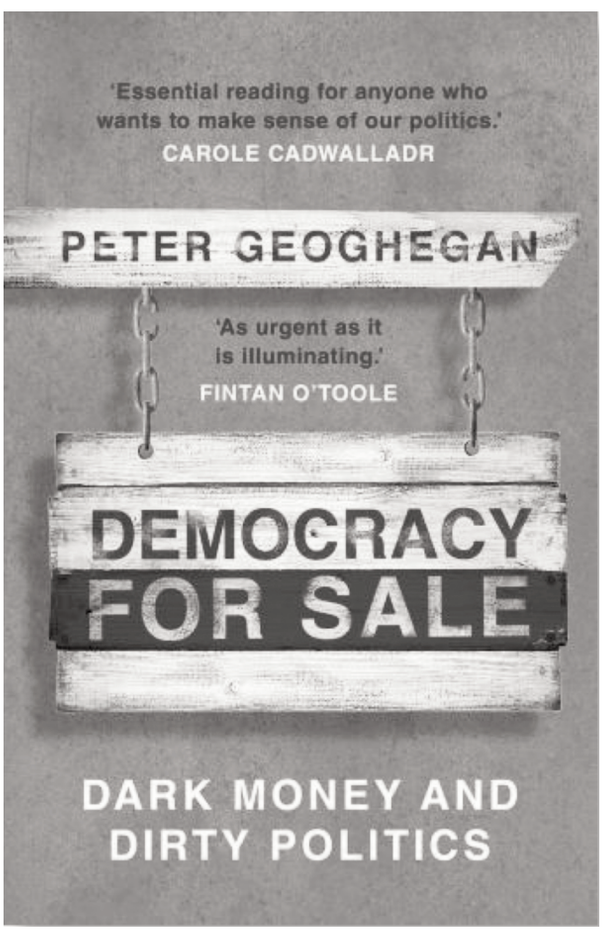
Guide to corrupt politics

Bob Brecher on the Johnson government of spivs, chancers and liars

Democracy for Sale: Dark Money and Dirty Politics
Peter Geohagen
Head of Zeus, £9.99

This is what you've been waiting for if you want a clear, jargon-free, exhaustively detailed and wonderfully readable book that explains the bizarre nature of British 'democracy' and the farce that is 'The Mother of all Parliaments'. It's no exaggeration to say that Peter Geoghegan's remorseless analysis of the sheer extent of the tentacles of financial -- and with it political and moral -- corruption is among the very finest guides to the Cayman Islands-on-the-Channel that the UK is becoming. The years of meticulous research conducted by Geoghegan and his colleague at Open Democracy are as lightly worn, however, as they are scrupulous. From Brexit – sold by vested interests after decades of both undercover and overt preparation involving an internal Tory Party coup and, more importantly, wellnigh complete control of the Overton window since the late 1980s – to the Covid-19 backhanders, this book exposes a barely believable network of the spivs, chancers and liars who run this country.

Geoghegan goes into myriad financial details in forensic pursuit of often obscure individuals who make best use of the UK's lack of any serious anti-corruption safeguards to push their vision of the lobotomised market-driven egoist of the neoliberal nirvana. At the same time, he skewers the public bodies charged with oversight of financial probity who exercise their responsibility not in the interests of the public, but of precisely those they are set up to pretend to police. To pick out examples here would be egregious, since what Geoghegan's magnificent book exposes is the sheer ubiquity of a system of governance utterly mired in corruption. That hardly any of what goes on is actually recognised as corruption is testament to the skills, determination and monumental financial clout of the European Research Group, the Institute of Economic Affairs and all the other so-called think-tanks, including a plethora of super-rich funders in the USA, that turn out in fact to function as manufacturers and manipulators of revolutionary propaganda, following to the letter the lessons of the earlier Lenin.



But this is by no means a dry political tome full of facts, figures and fig-leaves. It is written – brilliantly – in the style of a detective thriller. Almost unbelievably for a book with a serious purpose, it's a page-turner. You want to know where this story is going and how it will turn out that they managed to get away with it all. If you want an exemplar of what activist writing should be like, here it is.

Even so, I have two small quibbles, the second of which I hope I'm wrong about. The first, though, is that I think it's a shame that Geoghegan doesn't take the opportunity to expose and to explain the role of The Remembrancer in the House of Commons, the figure whose job it is to scrutinise proposed legislation in case it damages the interests of the City of London – a figure forever missing from our television screens and one whose role is systematically overlooked. Go on: do an internet trawl and see how little you come up with. It's not a coincidence. There's a small and quite old piece from the Mirror and a another on Wikipedia, but that's about it. The rest is almost total silence about this flagrant malpractice in plain sight.

The second quibble, if that's what it really is, is with Geoghegan's optimism about the possibility of extracting ourselves from the sewer: It is not too late. Democracy faces many perils, but there is still time to act. We can build better systems, we can imagine more democratic forms of politics. Not in the UK we can't. The rotting remains of a colonial polity long practised in disguising itself with the mantle of democracy will not see a resurgence of any democratic will. The most likely outcome of the Johnson years is that the UK will turn into a large-scale version of its Overseas Crown Territories, sheltered and enabled by the USA and dedicated to providing the free-market libertarian predators with the cover they need for their thousand-year neoliberal Reich. After all, neither the pre-Corbyn Labour Party, nor its temporary Corbynite manifestation, nor its current version as Johnson's pro-Zionist, anticorporation tax increasing, torture-defending spear-carrier has ever shown the slightest sign of knowing what's going on or of trying to do anything about it. At best, perhaps Wales, Scotland and the North of Ireland will at last escape the clutches of imperial little England and its anti-democratic history, structures and commitments, leaving the south of this septic isle to its ghastly fate as mirrored in Rees-Mogg's rancid figure of reaction.

Selective Amnesia

Gardner Thompson on Imperialism

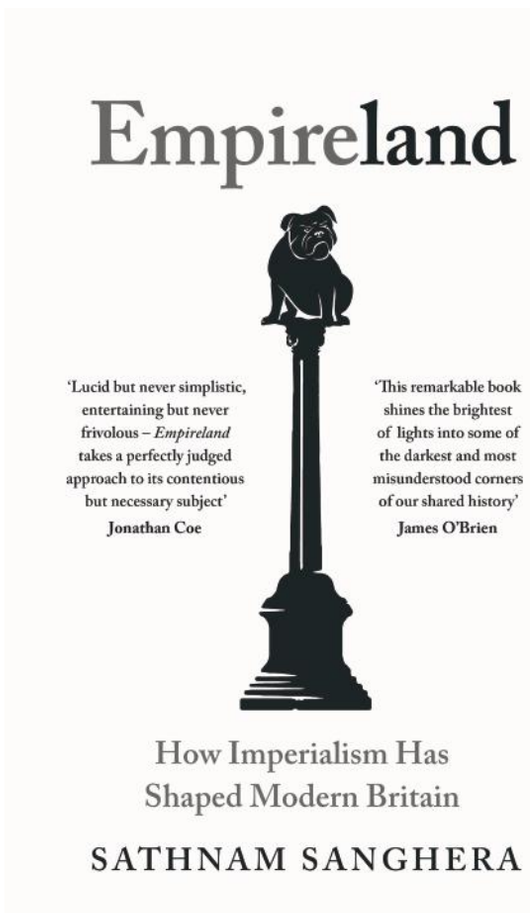
Empireland
Sathnam Sanghera
Penguin £18.99

This is a terrific book. Two recent campaigns – Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter – have revealed how passionately many people feel about slavery and empire and, at the same time, how little most people know about them. At just the right moment, Empireland offers bundles of facts and insights which help to set things right.

Born to Punjabi parents in Wolverhampton in 1976, Sathnam Sanghera is well placed to write about British imperialism and racism in modern Britain. He acknowledges that these subjects are vast in scope – his bibliography covers 48 pages - yet he succeeds in negotiating the minefield with the engaging style to be expected of a journalist and diarist for The Times, offering fair-minded judgements based on imaginative understanding as much as on mere knowledge.

In under 220 pages of text, Sanghera's range and coverage are exceptional. There are anecdotes aplenty: we learn that Lady Clive, wife of Robert Clive 'of India', had a pet ferret which sported a diamond necklace worth £2,500 then; and that Mulligatawny soup – 'still available in the Heinz range but consumed by no-one I know' – is a corruption of the Tamil for 'pepper water'. There is much more of substance, in chapters such as 'We are here because you were there' and 'The origins of our racism'. What about the railways in India? We are reminded that they were commissioned by the British for British imperial purposes, paid for by Indian taxpayers, built by Indian workers ... only to be reluctantly bequeathed, along with the country itself, in 1947. The British Empire, spread over so many places and over so many years, was nothing if not complex, and Sanghera urges us not to be simplistic and not to take sides. Any attempt to draw up a balance-sheet is 'ludicrous'. The Empire is there for us to explore and to learn from.

'Empire is a veritable industrial oven of hot potatoes'. Given the boldness of its scope, Empireland will inevitably attract some criticism. My only concern is that Sanghera does not do enough to separate empire from slavery, too easily and frequently conflated in recent public discourse. Statements such as 'slavery was an aspect of the British Empire' need more qualification than they receive. Sanghera does observe in passing that there were two distinct phases of empire, the first to the 1780s, then a second characterised by 'a more concerted power grab of India and Africa'. But more is needed. In Africa, for example, British imperialism in the formal sense followed slavery. In Central Africa, for example, David Livingstone was appalled by what he saw of the Arab slave trade in the middle of the nineteenth century and he argued for Europeans to cultivate legitimate trade as the only way of supplanting it. Today's Africans have no trouble distinguishing, from the trauma of the slave-trade, the impact - much regarded as positive - of the three or so generations of British colonial rule which followed.



At one important level this book is a call to action: to implant the British Empire in the school curriculum. Sanghera has a chapter headed 'Selective amnesia' – but forgetting implies having first known. He observes that his GCSE history left him with 'little more than superficial knowledge of the world wars, the Tudors, and Tollund man'. He adds, 'empire, bewilderingly, remains untaught in most schools: its absence in my education, it transpires, is typical'. Generations have indeed been left, in a virtual knowledge vacuum, to adopt any opinion about empire they choose – as admirable and glorious (a view which has in turn nourished a regrettable sense of British 'exceptionalism'), or as wholly deplorable.

Dispassionate study of the empire would furnish numerous lessons of moral debate about the past, informed by the facts, and awareness of all sides of contemporary opinion and interests. This would be History as a Humanity: a means of teaching us about ourselves. And let us ensure that it includes Britain and Ireland, and Britain and Palestine, enabling our students to understand rather more of the present world and its 'issues'.

And in an age of 'identity politics', it is increasingly important that we should know who we are, where we have come from; what the peoples of Britain and her empire have done to each other in the past and how we have shaped each other since. Sanghera's conclusion is as persuasive as his text as a whole: 'Let's face it, imperialism is not something that can be erased with a few statues being torn down or a few institutions facing up to their dark pasts; it exists as a legacy in my very being and, more widely, explains nothing less than who we are as a nation'.

Mike Davis on women out of the male shadow *and* on transforming work

Surrealist women

The Militant Muse
Love, War & the women of surrealism
Whitney Chadwick
Thames & Hudson £12.99

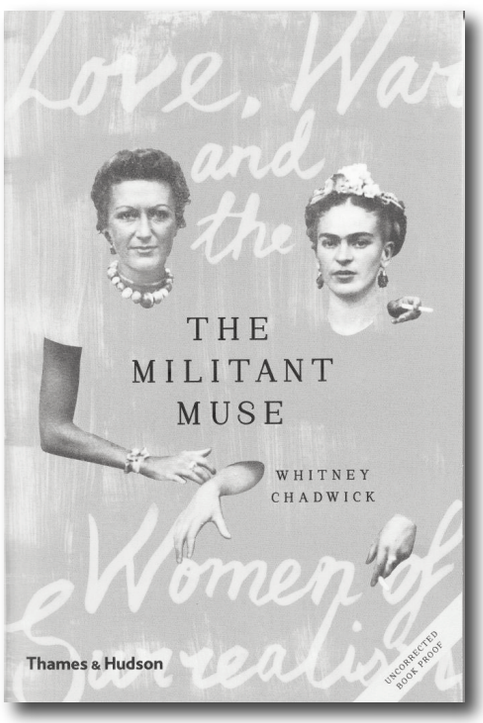
Rarely do women get a serious look-in in the world of art. Muses, lovers and models in the margins is the way they historically have appeared.

Chadwick's book does much to rectify the picture as far as the surrealist movement is concerned. Here we find studies of women in love with women, providing female friendship and solidarity in times of war and trauma, producing great art in the process.

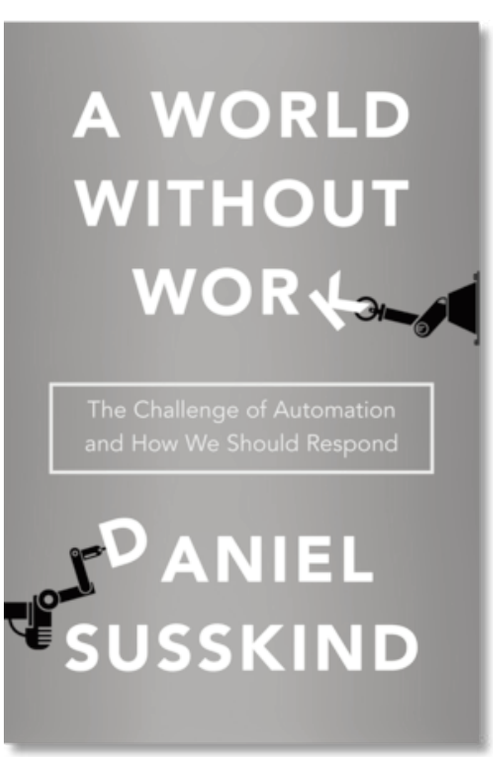
Focussing on the 1930s, 40s and 50s Chadwick charts five intense female relationships among the surrealists. The two Leonors—British painter Leonora Carrington and Argentinian Leonor Fini, particularly during the period when Carrington's lover, Max Ernst was imprisoned by the Nazis. Then there are lesbians Claude Calum and Suzanne Malherbe's love and subversive activities in occupied Jersey. Meanwhile Mexican Frieda Kahlo, married to the celebrated muralist Diego Riviera forged a powerful friendship with Andre Breton's poet painter wife Jacqueline Lamba. An impassioned correspondence emerged from time together in Paris, 'I will write to you with my eyes' wrote Kahlo.

Painter Valentine Penrose and photo journalist Lee Miller (both to be married to British surrealist Roland Penrose) experienced love and left politics in the Spanish Civil War and later world war.

These were revolutionary political women making bold and original creative work during turbulent and traumatic times. Chadwick raises their profile in the pantheon of modern artists reminding us that it was not until the 1980s that these creative women were really brought from behind the shadows of their male counterparts. With colour reproductions of their work, interviews with some protagonists, and insights into the radical outlook of these women and the surrealist movement more generally, the book presents a fresh feminist take on the female movers, emotions and politics behind their art.



Spreading it about



World Without Work
Daniel Susskind
Allen Lane, Penguin Press p/b £9.99

Covid has accelerated a science fiction world of Artificial Intelligence and new ways of working. The pandemic has forced millions of us to operate from terminals at home, abandoning offices and workplaces.

It has also underlined the possibilities and threats for jobs. Susskind's book anticipates many of the problems we are now experiencing. He explores the problem of technological unemployment and the claim by Leontief that what technical progress had done to horses-cars, tractors, mechanisation, would do to human beings. Robots, AI and computers could drive millions out of work.

Susskind's thesis is that it doesn't have to be this way. We now have technology to undertake most of the jobs performed by human labour over the last 200 years, for the first time in history. The west also has the wealth.

This is an optimistic book that explores fears about automation while providing answers: work sharing, a shorter working week, a Universal Basic Income or rather a Conditional Basic Income or Citizen's Income. He interrogates the question who would be in and who out. He discusses the question of migrants and the danger of a 'natives only' approach reminding readers that immigrants grow the wealth pie not reduce it.

A CBI solves the distribution problem but not the contribution problem. Issues of justice, progressive taxation and communal solidarity are discussed. This is a book full of ideas that can help inform a 21st century socialist agenda for transforming work and leisure for all.

Understanding slavery

Duncan Bowie
on slavery and its legacy

The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery
Michael Taylor
Bodley Head £20

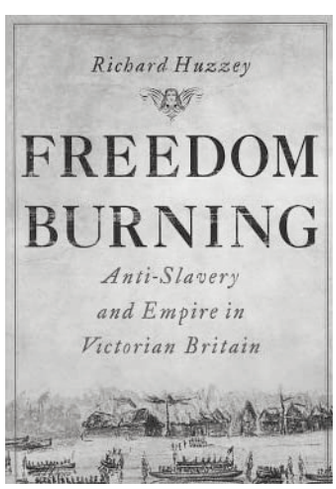
Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain
Richard Huzzey
Cornell University Press £23.99

The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society
James Heartfield
Oxford University Press £45

These three books all add important new perspectives on the history of slavery and anti-slavery. The focus of much of the earlier historical literature has been on the role of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and other members of the evangelical Clapham Sect in promoting the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade leading to the Act of 1807. These three books focus on a later period. It needs to be remembered that the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies colonies did not happen until 1834 and the end of the apprenticeship system until 1838. Moreover slavery continued in British colonies and protectorates, notably in East Africa and Zanzibar until the late 19th century, with systems of forced indentured labour until much later.

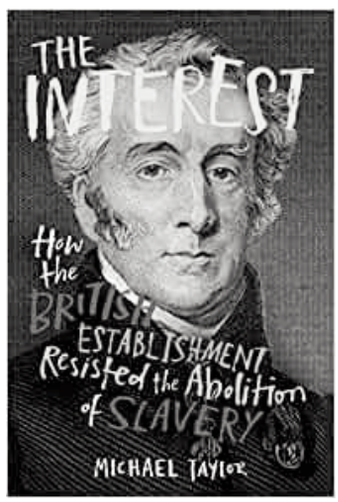
Taylor's book is important in studying the organised opposition to abolition of West Indian slavery and apprenticeships in the 1820's and 1830's studying the operation of the West India interest and their influence in parliament, and their alliance with the Tories led by Wellington. Namely, a political alliance that included both Robert Peel and the young William Gladstone, whose father John was a slaveowner and a leading member of the West Indian interest. What is clear from the narrative was that it was only with the replacement of Wellington's administration by a reforming Whig government in 1830 and the subsequent passage of the Reform Act of 1832, which made abolition possible. Moreover abolition was only possible, (given the concerns that abolition would lead to the collapse of the West Indian economy, and widespread view that freed slaves would not work the plantations as freed labour), by both the introduction of a six year apprenticeship system (subsequently reduced to three years) and by the generous financial compensation of slaveowners. The government payment of £20 million, was in real terms the largest state bailout up to the bank bailout of 2008. Taylor also provides an analysis of the British based slave owners – slave ownership being widely practised across British society and not limited to a few plantation owners and city interests.

Huzzey's book has a different focus. How after the passage of the 1807 Act, the British state used its powers to enforce the abolition of the slave trade. This is a narrative that may be somewhat surprising for those who see the British state as responsible for upholding slavery and therefore liable for reparations to the West Indies and other countries for historic suffering. The British state used its military, naval and diplomatic powers both to stop the slave trade but also to reach agreements with those responsible for supplying the trade with slaves. Anti-slavery therefore became the central justification for both African colonisation and for British inter-



vention in affairs of other countries, both European countries and native African states.

Britain became the first world policeman – a role largely supported by the anti-slavery lobby led by Thomas Fowell Buxton, and by the missionary interest - an alliance which sought to demonstrate that the growth of the British empire was based on humanitarian principles – that British colonial administration would both abolish slavery and civilize the indigenous population. The British government funded a West Indian squadron which, with questionable legality, intercepted the slave ships of any country , freeing the slaves and releasing them on settlements on the



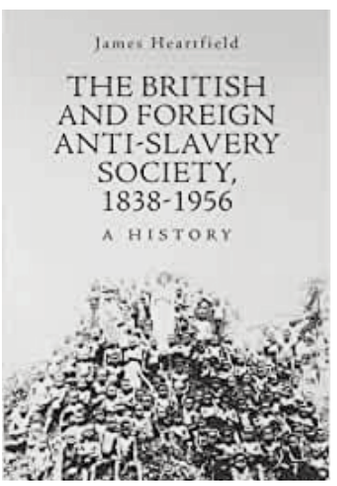
West coast of Africa. The system was administered through a network of Vice- Admiralty courts, some of which were mixed commissions with foreign representation, the result of anti-slavery treaties with countries such as Spain (1817) , the Netherlands (1818) Portugal, (1817-23), Brazil (1828-45) other newly independent South American States (1839-41) and finally the USA in 1862.

Taylor also analyses the extent to which slaves were replaced by indentured labour, primarily sourced in India. Not all British interventions were pacific. African kings who either refused to sign anti-slavery agreements or who broke such agreements were subject to the full force of Britain's military and naval might – the title of the book relating to the extent that slaving ports were subject to assault and massacre: baracoons (slavery depots) in Sierra Leone in 1849 and in Mozambique in 1851, with the destruction of Lagos in the same year. In 1861, Lagos became a British colony as a result of the threat of use of British force against the resistant chief. The suppression of slavery was a justification for the five Ashanti wars fought in the 19th century as well as the establishments of protectorates in Uganda and Zanzibar. The anti-slavery lobby, led by pacifist quakers, was somewhat hesitant to support military or naval action, but nevertheless encouraged and in fact lobbied for the extension of British control over much of Africa. They were in effect leading advocates of British colonialism. The missionaries and anti-slavers were the leading protestors against the British policy of abandoning Uganda in the 1890's, a policy which was reversed. To Huzzey, Victorian Britain was in

effect an 'anti-slavery state'.

Heartfield, a British scholar who earlier published a study of the Aborigines Protection Society, provides a detailed study of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, established in 1848 – the year apprentices in the British West Indies were given their freedom. The founders included the Quakers Joseph Sturge, Samuel Gurney, George Alexander and the Whig politician, Henry Brougham and the more radical George Thompson. In its early years the Society focused on supporting the anti-slavery campaigners in the US, such as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass and campaigning for abolition in Cuba (finally achieved in 1880) and Brazil (finally achieved in 1888). Heartfield however takes the narrative to 1956, the second half of the book focusing on campaigns to abolish slavery in West and North Africa, Egypt and the Sudan, East Africa and Zanzibar, and in the Congo Free State of Belgian King Leopold II. The Society was an effective pressure group which had a significant impact on British policy throughout the second half of the 19th century, both as critic and supporter of successive British governments.

In the 1890's the focus of the Society was on native labour and land policy in South Africa and later in Rhodesia and East Africa, this activity continuing on a somewhat reduced scale in the interwar period under the leadership of John Harris. By the 1940's the role of the Society was largely superseded by the growth of indigenous nationalist movements, supported to some extent by European and later by Soviet and Chinese socialists and communists rather than by philanthropists and humanitarians, though the groups were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The society still exists as Anti-Slavery International, a reminder that slavery still persists in different forms across the world.



Urgent lessons for today

Mary Tapissier on James Baldwin's America

Begin Again
Eddie S Glaude Jr
Chatto and Windus £16.99

I was stupid enough to overestimate White America ' writes the author of this important book in the wake of Trump's victory in 2016. He reflects bitterly that he didn't feel he could vote for Hilary Clinton and that he exhorted many other black voters to leave the Presidential ballot blank. This, the action of a black Professor at Princeton, Chair of the Department of African and American Studies , an influencer, born and raised in Mississippi. He felt let down by Obama and Clinton didn't present enough post-recession policies to help the black voters. He failed to understand that the black voters needed the Democrats, needed them to buy time. So there we were 'bookended by the likes of Reagan and Trump with, of all things, a black president pinched in the middle and wondering what will happen next.'

Glaude, now in his fifties, knew Baldwin and his writings very well and still researches his works and influences. For guidance and solace at the beginning of the Trump presidency, the Professor turned to Baldwin's artistic and political life with particular focus on America post the killings of Malcolm X and Dr Martin Luther King and the subsequent collapse of the Civil Rights Movement. 'What do you do when you have lost faith in the place you call home' ?

In 2018, Glaude travelled to a place Baldwin frequently sought out when 'home' was insupportable, Baldwin's house and a rough seventeen acres of maquis outside St Paul de Vence in Provence.

He had been warned what to expect ; Baldwin's house had been all but totally

bulldozed to make way for a block of luxury flats. He surveyed the wreckage and remembered Baldwin's admonition during the Reagan years 'White people will never change '. Glaude also recounts another memory, made later and shortly before Baldwin's death, 'when someone finds themselves digging through the ruins [of my work] …I pray that somewhere in that wreckage, they'll find me somewhere in that wreckage, that they use something I've left behind'.

Begin Again, using Baldwin's life and work as guide and inspiration, is Glaude's attempt to find a way and find some sense and comfort in the story of America through the years of Malcolm X, Dr King, the 'after years' with the Panthers, Black Power and now Black Lives Matter.

The differing themes of Baldwin's literary art, his political life, his personal life, the change and the lack of it in American attitudes, move throughout the book in a murmuration of fascinating history. The detail, occasionally shocking, is inserted into the historical narrative without disrupting the flow. Baldwin knew King well but they were not really close - King was uneasy with 'queerness'; Eldridge Cleaver was downright insulting. From white Americans, the assessment of Baldwin's work became more critical and dismissive as the artist's 'we' changed and empathy with Black Power become apparent and unapologetic.

For readers, admiring or not, of Baldwin, this book gives an urgent and honest overview of his work but also of the resilience of the artist and the people he addressed and lived among. His life was lived in perilous and vicious times for black voters and politicians. The author points out in his introduction that as he started to write, Covid had not yet asserted a grip on the world and George Floyd was still alive. As he sat down to write his first chapter, he was despairing but finding comfort and help in the years of struggle Baldwin worked through.

Trump the man is gone now and America is looking at what next ? There is a pandemic that won't be gone, ever, possibly and distracts in a way even Trump couldn't beat. David Baldwin remarked that his brother believed that Hope is invented every day. 'Not everything is lost. Responsibiity cannot be lost, it can only be abdicated. If one refuses abdication, one begins again'.

Nation-states and genocide: Escaping the legacy

Don Flynn on the nation state

Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities
Mahmood Mamdani
Belknap Harvard £23.95

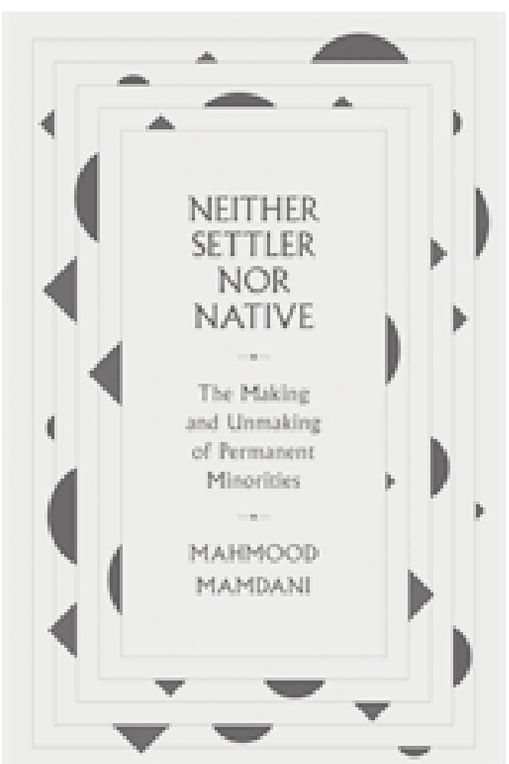
Mahmood Mamdani has written an ambitious book that seeks to show the unexamined legacy of nation-states and the exclusion of people represented as standing outside 'civilisation' and what it has laid down in principles of international law and state formation.

The nation-state, he argues, has invariably involved the violent exclusion of people constructed as the 'other'. The idea of 'tolerance' followed on from the religious wars in Europe during the seventeenth century which tempered the rejection and exclusion to some degree, but this rarely reached the territories which were being governed as colonial possessions. On the contrary, what became in Europe the idea of majority and minority among civilian populations was hardened in the colonies into a permanent division between the 'civilised' national and the 'uncivilised' native.

This was so profound a distinction it survived the independence of the former territorial possessions and remained even when the new polity presented itself, as in the case of the United States of America, as the exemplar of a society founded on liberty. Mamdani provides a fulsome and poignant account of the genocidal policies directed at the Indian people. (He insists on that term rather than the now more common 'Native American' on the grounds that 'American' was the very thing that the new state was determined the indigenous people could never be.)

The reduction of the pre-Columbian population of the hemisphere from an estimated 100 million to one-tenth of that number was achieved primarily through the perhaps unintended importation of European disease. But it was added to by quite deliberate policies that ensured the Indians were not permitted to recover from the pandemics that hit them. Expulsion from their traditional lands and forced marches resulting in the deaths of thousands became the lot of the native peoples.

The important part of Mamdani's argument is that the memories of this holocaust have haunted internal law ever since and has impacted on the ways in which other atrocities in other times have been considered and has also guided the processes which have brought other nation-states into existence. More accurately, not the memories as such, but the need to suppress the memory of a genocide associated with the formation of the United States nation, has limited the capacity of the modern community of nation-states to address the mass murders and associated injustices of their own times.



The book looks at the strange procedures that governed the trial of Nazis at Nuremberg after the second world war. Contrary to what most believe was the heart of the indictment, the murder of millions of Jewish and other people who were despised by the regime did not figure in the charges. American prosecutors resisted efforts to include these deaths on the grounds that it would furnish the defence with an opportunity to argue that the Nazi death machine had its precedents in the population policies of US governments. Keen to hide what would otherwise be revealed as the criminality of an entire system founded on nations organised as states, the victor's justice at Nuremberg preferred instead to brand individual Nazis as criminals in order to protect the integrity of the state system which had enabled their power.

Could it have been done differently? Mamdani makes the case that the experience of the South African people in accounting for the legacy of apartheid suggests that it could, even if the pious rigmarole of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission managed to muddy the waters.

In the South African case, the charge sheet was drawn up by a liberation movement that, by the time of the fall of apartheid, was comprised of the ANC, a black consciousness movement that united Africans with mixed-ethnicity 'coloured' people together with South Asian Indians, and a radical movement of white students who were refusing the privilege of their skin colour. Together they formulated a view of their collective history which made the apartheid state the criminal entity, with the actions of its people best understood as the adaptions required in order to survive in a political community founded on atrocity. Whilst individual behaviour had to be accounted for, the central task was to change the character of the state to ensure that its crimes could never again be repeated.

Mamdani considers the application of this principle of holding the nationalist component of the state to account in detailed consideration of the situations of Palestine/Israel and the formation of South Sudan as a state independent of Sudan in 2011. There is much profound insight in these reflections that needs to be bought into a much wider conversation about states grounded on the principle of nation rather than democracy.

Cook & Mowlam: Labour pioneers for electoral fairness

Alan Yearsley on earlier visionaries for democratic reform

Abridged from a longer blog which appeared on the website of GetPRDone!

You can read the whole blog on http://getprdone.org.uk/cook-mowlam-labour-pioneers-for-electoral-fairness/.

GPRD is a member of Labour for a New Democracy with Chartist

Two leading figures in the Labour Party during the Thatcher, Major and Blair years were also strong supporters of PR: Robin Cook and Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam. Had they lived longer, would they have helped to change history? Would the Blair or Brown governments have scrapped the archaic and undemocratic First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) voting system when they had plenty of opportunity – and a mandate – to do so? Imagine if Cook's talents could have been turned loose on a Tory apologist for FPTP…or a Labour backbencher in a safe seat?

As we witness a new upsurge in grassroots Labour support for PR, it makes sense to recall the political histories of Cook and Mowlam and their views on electoral reform. They both would be pleased to know that more than 200 Constituency Labour Parties have come out in favour of PR. Both argued that the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher had no right to rule with only 42% of the popular vote which the Tory Party had secured at the 1987 General Election.

In a 1989 Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform (LCER) interview Cook said: "It is curious how persistent is the faith that the system of First Past the Post is an advantage to Labour. Labour is the prime victim of the present system ending up in third place in more constituencies than any other party at the [1987] election."

Move ahead to 1992. When pressed, he (Kinnock) refused to give his own views on proportional representation. As Labour's leader, he had come across as weak on electoral reform and, it was suggested, that weakness was another reason for the unexpected election victory of John Major and the Conservatives.

In 1993, LCER published a pamphlet entitled "What's wrong with First Past the Post?" It argued that, although Labour was already backing a radical new constitutional settlement, this would be incomplete without an end to FPTP. It explained that, without electoral reform, a future Tory government would simply undo Labour's constitutional changes. In its foreword Robin Cook wrote: "I am not prepared to put up with a system which once every generation, every 30 years, gives us an opportunity to get in with a majority the way the Conservatives do and govern the same way. It is not we who pay the penalty, but the people we represent. When we win, let us seize the opportunity to change the electoral system so we do not have ever again to return to elective dictatorship of the kind we have experienced."

Mo Mowlam also wrote of the widespread disillusionment with politics that FPTP had brought. "What convinced me was listening to voters, a great many of whom are disillusioned with politics and fed up with the political process, the whole political culture of the country they don't feel a part of. If we are going to change that, we need to change the electoral system." Mowlam appreciated that creating a new voting system where all votes counted was a necessary, indeed central, part of that change.

Robin Cook also perceptively argued, (circa Labour's 1997 victory) "My nightmare is that we will have been 12 years in office, with the ability to reform the electoral system, and will fail to do so until we [are] back in opposition, in perhaps a decade of Conservative government, regretting that we left in place the electoral system that allowed Conservative governments on a minority vote.

"We are not interested in electoral reform for functional reasons because we see it as a means to an end. The electoral system is a crucial part of our democracy. And for Labour democracy cannot be just viewed as a means, it is also a value which expresses how fair, how open and how equal we are in our society."

In 2021, will it be the voices of these Labour visionaries, and Keir Hardie, who Keir Starmer listens to? C

Pandemic Poems

In May 2020 the award-winning cartoonist Martin Rowson set himself the challenge of writing a Lockdown Diary in verse. The result is Plague Songs, a unique cycle of furious, bleakly comic and often offensive poems about COVID-19, fiercely inventive and desperately funny.

Plague Songs is also available on CD, set to music by Welsh musician and playwright Jon Tregenna. £12 from https://www.tregni.co.uk/plague-songs-cd.html.

Smokestack Books £9.99