

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#312 September/October 2021

£2

Labour tilting at windmills

Andy Burnham

Electoral Reform

Don Flynn

Social democracy crisis

Glyn Ford

German Elections

Kate Bell

Paul Nowak

Post-Covid economy

Shaista Aziz

Islamophobia

Julie Ward

Anti-Roma racism

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Democracy supplement

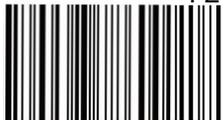
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CHARTIST

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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SOLIDARITY GREETINGS TO DELEGATES - LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE 2021

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Cover by Martin Rowson

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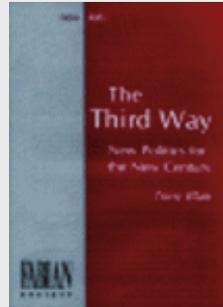
OUR HISTORY 98

Tony Blair The Third Way (1998)

It is perhaps open to question why Blair's pamphlet is included in a series entitled 'our History' as most Chartist readers will not consider Blair to be part of our libertarian democratic socialist tradition. However as Blair's interpretation of a liberal centrist social democracy was dominant within the Labour Party and to a large extent British political culture for nearly twenty years, given this column has over the last fifteen years adopted a broad pluralist approach to the history of socialist thought, it seemed inappropriate to ignore Blair, however much we might wish to. Blair, party leader from 1994 and prime minister from 1997 to 2007, was not a theorist. Some would question whether he was a socialist or even a social democrat. Relative to his predecessors, Blair actually wrote little, other than his autobiography *A Journey*, published in 2010. Blair only published one other substantive book: *New Britain: My Vision for a Young Country*, published in 1996, before he became Prime Minister.

The *Third Way* was published as a pamphlet by the Fabian Society. Blair owed much of his approach to the writings of Anthony Giddens, the sociologist and director of the London School of Economics, who published *Beyond Left and Right* 1994 and then his *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* in 1998. Giddens is now a member of the House of Lords. For his thinking on the 'Big Society', Blair drew on the work of the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray, author of *Persons in Relation*. Blair was not the inventor of the 'third way concept', a term also used by the Austrian Marxist, Otto Bauer, for whom the 'third way' was between Stalinist communism and traditional social democracy (and Chartist). Harold Macmillan, Conservative prime minister between 1957 and 1963, in 1938 had published a book entitled *The Middle Way*, though this work in supporting a programme of nationalisation to support economic regeneration, can be seen as to the Left of Blair's 'third way'. The pamphlet does not reference any previous socialist writers, not even the early generation of revisionists such as Anthony Crosland. Blair does not refer to 'socialism' or 'socialists' preferring the term 'progressive centre-left'; a term which would incorporate most liberals.

"The 'Third Way' is to my mind the best label for the new poli-



tics which the progressive centre-left is forging in Britain and beyond. The Third Way stands for a modernised social democracy, passionate in its commitment to social justice and the goals of the centre-left, but flexible, innovative and forward-looking in the means to achieve them. It is founded on the values which have guided progressive politics for more than a century – democracy, liberty, justice, mutual obligation and internationalism. But it is a third way because it moves decisively beyond an Old Left preoccupied by state control, high taxation and producer interests and a New Right treating public investment, and often the very notions of 'society' and collective endeavour, as evils to be undone."

"My vision for the 21st century is of a popular politics reconciling themes which in the past have wrongly been regarded as antagonistic – patriotism and internationalism; rights and responsibilities; the promotion of enterprise and the attack on poverty and discrimination. The Left should be proud of its achievements in the 20th century not least universal suffrage, a fairer sharing of taxation and growth, and greater improvement in working conditions and in welfare, health and educational services. But we still have far to go to build the open, fair and prosperous society to which we aspire."

"The Third Way is not an attempt to split the difference between Right and Left. It is about traditional values in a changed world. And it draws vitality from using the two great streams of left-of-centre thought – democratic socialism and liberals – whose divorce this century did so much to weaken progressive politics across the West. Liberals asserted the primacy of individual liberty in the market economy; social democrats promoted social justice with the state as its main agent. There is necessary conflict between the two, accepting as we now do that state power is one means to achieve our goals, but not the only one and emphatically not an end in itself"

Where is the review?

Robbie Scott on not learning lessons

Since Labour's heavy loss in the 2019 General Election, there has been no review of the campaign, expected to come under the Starmer leadership. Nor has there been any official party review of the mixed fortunes of Labour candidates in the delayed 2020 council and mayoral elections. What worked, what didn't work? Why did Labour lose the Hartlepool seat? What helped Labour hang on to the previously safe seat of Batley and Spen?

Answering these questions is central to building an effective party. Instead, the Community

Organising Unit set up under the Corbyn leadership has been axed, 90 members of staff face redundancy, and management has failed to properly consult staff on the strengths and weaknesses of the 'Organise to Win' re-organisation, and worse, the membership has not been consulted on their views on a way forward. Moreover, many CLPs have been suspended and internal groups expelled, causing rifts and infighting when we should have a laser focus on the Tories.

Of course, if members break party rules, investigations should ensue but with due process and speedy outcomes. Surely this was

the 'under new management' message Keir Starmer was seeking to project.

Labour has had recent successes. Andy Burnham's successful campaign for re-election as Greater Manchester Mayor saw Labour win every single ward, Parliamentary constituency and district across Greater Manchester. What lessons can be drawn from this experience? Similarly, Welsh Labour made significant progress in May's elections. Urgent lessons need to be learned. Members need to be empowered in this process. Time is running out. **G**

Robbie Scott
Chartist EB
member

Labour tilting at windmills

Almost 18 months into Keir Starmer's leadership and the Labour Party is not moving ahead in the polls. Covid-19 has cost over 155,000 lives, many unnecessary due to government incompetence, but Labour has not managed to shift opinion against Johnson's gang of right-wing privatising authoritarian little Englanders.

There are plenty of open goals: the decision to peg nurses' pay at 3% and other public sector workers even lower, despite a sustained wage freeze. Another, the plan to end the £20 uplift on the misnamed universal credit, driving millions back into poverty. Worse, the impending end of the furlough scheme could see over a million workers joining the 700,000 already jobless or four million in precarious zero hours or agency employment as **Kate Bell** explains. The safety of workers has been downgraded by the government's cavalier attitude to ending lockdown without enforcement of necessary safeguards like mask wearing in shops, on public transport or entertainment venues. **Paul Nowak** sees this as a continuation of gung-ho approaches to staff safety in hospitals and care homes seen at the start of Coronavirus.

Meanwhile the NHS is facing a huge reorganisation under the guise of Integrated Care Systems which open doors to greater private profiteering and reduced democratic accountability as **Stephanie Clark** reports.

In the face of a climate emergency and the upcoming Cop26 conference in Glasgow the government delays huge fossil fuel projects, Cambio oil drilling and a new Cumbrian coal mine, to avoid embarrassment. **Nigel Doggett** outlines the dimensions of the environmental crisis as Extinction Rebellion mount more street protests to raise awareness.

On all these fronts Labour has been pulling its punches instead of endorsing trade union and civil society campaigns.

Under Johnson's regime, allied with the impact of the pandemic, inequalities have widened on every front, most conspicuously between rich and poor rubbed in by the awarding of billions of public money to crony companies. David Cameron's £7 million from the collapsed Greensill Capital shows another side of Tory greed.

Black and Asian people have been hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic, in terms of deaths and infections, as **Farah El-Sharnouby** explains, particularly hitting health workers. Meanwhile the government is ramping up the racist divide and rule policies we saw much of during the Brexit campaign. **Don Flynn** reports on the Nationality and Borders Bill designed to toughen already tight restrictions on asylum seekers and migrants while **Julie Ward** highlights how racist attacks on Roma and Gypsy communities have grown.

In the wake of the UK's neo-colonial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and bungled interventions elsewhere, thousands of refugees and inhabitants of these shores face a rising tide of Islamophobia as outlined by **Shaista Aziz**. Again, Labour needs to set its own house in order as well as turning the heat on the government for its direct culpability in fuelling prejudice against migrants with its 'hostile environment' policies.

Labour seems to be tilting at red wall windmills in its efforts to find a direction. We have yet to have an official review of the 2019 general election and later Hartlepool by-election defeats or the successes and failures of the recent mayoral and council elections, as **Robbie Scott** reports. Instead we have the divisive purging of radical groups in the party and particularly Jewish members as reported by

Dave Lister.

At the heart of Labour's problem is the issue of democracy. On present showing Labour is unlikely to win an outright majority and with boundary changes and voter suppression it faces a steeper climb. But we have a government ruling with barely 43% of the electorate, an 80 seat majority with a significantly higher left of centre vote out in the wilderness. This is why we have joined with others under the banner of Labour for a New Democracy, to secure a change in our antiquated voting system. This Chartist supplement is a contribution with leading articles from Manchester mayor **Andy Burnham** and **Nadia Whittome** MP supporting Proportional Representation. A commitment to electoral reform could well get Labour over the line to form the next government and make the democratic changes and radical policies on wealth redistribution, green new deal and social justice so desperately needed.

The fundamental question on winning the next election and preventing two decades of Tory rule is tackled by **Don Flynn** who argues "new deal for workers" is but a tepid beginning in the process of identifying the agencies and policies for winning. Certainly Labour needs to win back voters in red wall seats but not at the expense of Generation Left (millennials and younger voters of an internationalist, liberal minded, egalitarian green outlook) in the cosmopolitan cities and other regions.

As the mirage of 'global Britain' fades in the face of the botched Afghanistan withdrawal, Brexit realities of labour and food shortages and the failure to secure all but tiny trade deals **Paul Garver** assesses the first period of the Biden regime and finds the window for radical reform beginning to close. In Europe **Glyn Ford** looks at prospects for the left in the German elections which could have significant global implications. **Jason Gold** shines a light on the creeping fascism in the little reported Balkan state of Montenegro while **Francie Molloy** MP finds the changing demographics and Tory bungalows over the Northern Ireland Protocol underline the legitimacy of a poll on Irish unity.

Starmer's Labour cannot afford not to be brave. The targets are clear. It's the Tories deepening the wealth and social divide in this beleaguered isle. What's needed is a commitment to democratic reform and a strong political message to protect and empower the many against the privileges and greed of the few. The pandemic has seen a lurch to corporate style capitalism but as the plug is pulled on state support Labour needs to enter centre-stage with a persuasive narrative of social and employment support, popularising policies for a green and democratic revolution.

CHARTIST AGM

Can Labour find winning ways?

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Winter Hill - Britain's biggest 'mass trespass'

Paul Salveson celebrates a victory for right to roam

The Winter Hill rights of way battle of 1896 was Britain's biggest 'mass trespass'. Over three successive weekends thousands of Bolton people marched over Winter Hill to reclaim a right of way they claimed had been illegally blocked by the landowner. Whilst the 1932 Kinder Scout Trespas is rightly celebrated, the events of 1896 lay forgotten for many years. A group of Bolton people have got together to plan a major celebration in 2021 to mark the 125th anniversary.

The memory of the event was kept alive by Allen Clarke in his book *Moorlands and Memories*, published in 1920. He wrote that "on Sunday September 6th 1896, ten thousand Boltonians marched up Brian Hey to pull down a gate and protest against a footpath to Winter Hill claimed and closed by the landlord."

The main confrontation was at the gate which Ainsworth had erected to stop people accessing the track from Coalpit Road to Winter Hill. A small party of police and gamekeepers were no match for the huge crowd of protesters, who broke down the barrier and continued on their way along the disputed stretch of road to the top of Winter Hill. They continued down to the moorland village of Belmont, before heading home to Bolton. The Bolton Journal commented afterwards:

"Thus ended a demonstration perhaps unprecedented in the history of Bolton, a great majority returning to the town, and the remainder besieging the local hostleries for refreshments. The demand was said to be so great that the wants of the hungry and thirsty rambles could not be satisfied; and the appearance of such a mighty host naturally created much excitement in the village."

Clarke wrote a popular song, in local dialect, called 'Will Yo Come O' Sunday Mornin?' which urged people to claim their rights and join the next Sunday's march:

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



Oh there moors are rare and bonny

And the heather's sweet and fine
And the roads across the hilltops
– Are the people's – yours and mine!"

And many thousands did. The huge demonstrations, organised by local socialists, continued over two more weekends. The marchers gained in number as they tramped through working class areas of Bolton and out onto the moors.

The landlord, Colonel Richard Ainsworth, issued writs against the leaders and the case was heard in Manchester, in March 1897. The key figures were Joe Shufflebotham, a clog-maker and leader of the local branch of the Social Democratic Federation, and Solomon Partington, a journalist who went on to become a local independent councillor. They were represented in court by Richard Pankhurst, husband of the suffragette leader Emmeline and an active member of the Independent Labour Party. Despite a strong defence, with many witnesses stating the road had been used for generations, Ainsworth won his case - with costs. Yet if the law was on the side of Ainsworth, the people of Bolton were behind the campaigners. Local people rallied round and the fines were paid off, but the road remained officially closed for nearly another hundred years.

The events of 1896 were celebrated 86 years later with a march over

Winter Hill, led by Benny Rothman who took part in the 1932 Kinder Scout Mass Trespas. It was led up Halliwell Road by Eagley Band and the Horwich Morris troupe. An eight-year old Maxine Peake took part in the procession. A further event took place in 1996 when the road was finally declared a public right of way. A memorial was erected at the gate recalling the events of 1896.

The route of the 'mass trespass' is easily walkable today and is a recognised public right of way – but only since 1996. There is a memorial stone to the 1896 campaigners at the start of the track, which continues to the summit of Winter Hill with stunning views across Bolton and Greater Manchester, as well as Rivington Pike and the Lancashire coast.

A celebration of the original march is taking place on Sunday September 5th. There will be a procession along the original route, with a newly-made banner leading the way. The march will start from the bottom of Halliwell Road, a mile north of Bolton town centre, assembling at 10.00 for departure at 10.30 – just like the original march.

The walk will reach Belmont village by mid-afternoon and a fleet of buses, provided by local bus company Diamond Bus North-West, will be on hand to take people back to Bolton or be dropped off where they need.

There is a facebook page, 'Winter Hill 125' with more details. Chartist readers and supporters are invited to join us! **C**

Paul's book *Moorlands, Memories and Reflections* features the story of Winter Hill. It is available for £20 plus post and packing. Details on www.lancashireloominary.co.uk or email info@lancashireloominary.co.uk

Electric cars and heat pumps show way

David Toke explains how the energy transition will be much cheaper than the climate sceptics claim



A gang of so called climate cost sceptics on the Tory backbenches are busy spreading rubbish about the allegedly high cost of a low carbon energy programme. In reality the most effective measures, including heat pumps and electric cars, will turn out to be very cheap and the cost of making sure it happens will be very low. Meanwhile the big fossil fuel companies are conniving with the climate sceptics by pretending to be in favour of low carbon policies. They do this by advocating the most expensive means of doing this and then they cynically expect the public to turn against the programme.

Certainly if you costed what windfarms and solar farms used to cost 10 years ago then adding more wind and solar projects would cost a bundle. But turning the technologies into a mass industry has brought the costs down sharply – and now they are less than half the cost of fossil fuels, whose prices have recently peaked in a new global energy crisis.

You can see this most graphically with electric cars. A few years ago if you wanted a pure electric car with a range over 100 miles you had to pay £50,000 for a Tesla, but now you can buy a Nissan Leaf with not too many miles on the clock for less than £10,000. The

prices of electric cars are plunging, the ranges are shooting upwards and the time to recharge is falling fast. It will not be very long until they are cheaper to buy than many fossil fuel cars, and certainly a lot cheaper to run. So really, outside of a few Government incentives, the notion of the public being saddled with huge costs for electric cars will be nonsense. The main car manufacturers are starting to switch to electric, and supply chain costs are tumbling.

The same will happen with heat pumps. The only barrier to this process is the climate sceptics and the fossil fuel industries themselves who are trying to delay the programme. Sure, like early electric cars, solar pv and wind turbines, they are very expensive. And, by choking off the policies to make sure heat pumps get a substantial early part of the home heating market, fossil fuel interests and their right wing climate sceptical friends hope to keep it that way.

Current Government targets are for the sale of new petrol only vehicles to be banned by 2035 (by then electric cars will be as cheap as chips) and also that gas boilers should not be fitted in new homes from 2025 (note, not all homes). The new home market could give heat pumps a decent sized market which would allow costs to be low-

ered, but the oil and gas industry is keenly trying to stop that one. They talk of plans to use hydrogen in place of natural gas, giving the impression that the system is ready to be implemented (anything but) and that it won't still involve producing large amounts of carbon dioxide – which it will since for many years there will be only a blend of gases used with hydrogen forming a small part.

The big energy utilities just love talking about how it is necessary to dramatically increase energy prices through carbon taxes – no doubt hoping to put people off the whole carbon reduction programme. Now a small increase in prices to pay for some incentives for heat pumps and energy efficiency would be a good thing, but proposals for large tax increases on energy are just a distraction.

In reality the Government's targets for phasing out petrol cars and gas boilers are pretty timid – but let's try and make sure that even these don't get derailed by the climate deniers. We have a big job to make sure that such targets are not scrapped and that we campaign for decent incentives for heat pumps and energy efficiency, as well as delivering a much larger increase in wind and solar power than the Government are currently considering. **G**

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

Government puts workplace safety on back burner

Paul Nowak indicts the government for its cavalier approach

Health and safety has always been important for unions, but the last 18 months have placed H&S at the top of the TUC's agenda. Back in March 2020 we sat round the table with unions, employers and government to agree safe working guidance for everything from construction to retail to ensure that those going into work would be as safe as possible in the face of the pandemic. That process wasn't perfect, but like the development of the furlough scheme, it proved the value of government engaging unions and employers on an equal footing, and drawing on the industrial nous of union officials and reps.

Fast forward to summer 2021 and things look very different. In advance of unlocking the economy on July 19, the government steadfastly refused to engage employers and unions in developing revised, legally binding safe working guidance. Instead we got half-baked guidance issued just two working days before millions were due to start returning to the workplace. On issues like face covering the guidance was at best confused. Despite government making it clear that wearing face covering could help reduce virus transmission in crowded spaces it lifted the legal obligation to wear masks in shops and public transport, much to the consternation of unions in those sectors and beyond. Citing the need for people to take 'personal responsibility' the government effectively washed its hands of the responsibility for keeping workplaces safe, drawing criticism from groups like the British Chambers of Commerce as well as the TUC.

This cavalier approach is sadly symptomatic of the government's wider handling of the pandemic. All too often decisions are taken without input from those operating at the sharp end, and through the prism of party politics rather than focussing on what will actually make a positive difference on the workplace.

It's one of the reasons why the TUC is determined to ensure the forthcoming public inquiry into the



Confused government face covering guidance for shops puts retail workers at risk

government's handling of the pandemic is comprehensive and wide ranging. From the scandalous delay in getting PPE into our NHS and care homes, to the exclusion of millions from the furlough and self-employed income support scheme, to its failure to provide decent sick pay, and its 'friends and family' approach to handing out contracts, we want the government to be held to account for its actions over the last 18 months.

But we don't think it's enough to simply wait for the inquiry to run its course. Instead there are things the government could be doing right now to give people confidence that it is doing all it can to make workplaces as safe as possible.

They could start by fixing our broken sick pay system. The two million people at work who are not entitled to sick pay, or the millions more who only receive statutory sick pay when they are ill, often simply cannot afford to follow instructions to self-isolate if they come into contact with someone who has Covid. By giving everyone access to sick pay paid at least the rate of the real living wage, the government would make sure everyone could afford to follow public health guidance and reduce transmission rates in workplaces.

The government could also do

more to boost the work of the HSE. I gave evidence to a DWP select committee in March and made the point that despite the fact that 14,500 people of working age had lost their lives to COVID, the HSE had issued just two prohibition notices to employers for failing to put in place measures to safeguard their staff, and not one single employer had faced prosecution. As we emerge from the pandemic the government needs to reverse the cuts inflicted on the HSE over the last decade, and make sure it has the resources it needs to be an effective guardian of workplace health and safety.

Finally, government needs to put in place safeguards for those suffering from long Covid. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) one million people in the UK have been affected by Covid-19 symptoms lasting longer than four weeks. A recent TUC survey found that over half of those suffering from long Covid face some form of discrimination or disadvantage because of their condition – which is why we have called the government to urgently recognise long Covid as a disability under the Equality Act. Covid-19 should be designated as an occupational disease. That would allow workers who contracted Covid at work and are living with the consequences to claim the compensation they are due.

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on workers, their families and communities. Tens of thousands have lost their lives; hundreds of thousands have lost their livelihoods. But if it wasn't for the work of our unions, and crucially union safety reps in workplaces up and down the country, things could have been so much worse. It was unions that pushed hard for decent and legally binding safe working guidance and union safety reps who worked to ensure risk assessments were robust and carried out. Whatever happens with the pandemic over the next few months, I hope government will recognise and build on the vital role unions have played and will continue to play in keeping workplaces safe and healthy. **G**



Paul Nowak is TUC Deputy General Secretary

Tories building back insecurity

Kate Bell on how unions pushed the Tories on furlough scheme but stop-start short-termism is creating unnecessary redundancies, especially among black workers

Record labour shortages” “hospitality hiring crisis” “pay rise for lorry drivers”. Anyone glancing at the news in summer 2021 might think that the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic had been a welcome shift in workers’ bargaining power. But behind the headlines lie significant challenges for workers. There’s a long way to go before workers’ prospects recover even to their pre-pandemic levels – and even further before we deliver the changes we need to ensure everyone has the chance of decent work.

We should start with what is good news: it’s clear that the furlough scheme, negotiated by unions, has helped protect jobs. In May 2020, the Bank of England thought unemployment could rise to 9 per cent. They now think that the peak will be at the current level of 4.7 per cent – still far too high – but representing over a million fewer people out of work than predicted, and representing a big success for the job retention schemes. 11 million people were supported by the scheme for employees, and around 2.9 million people claimed the self-employed income support grant.

The TUC pushed for the scheme to be extended in September 2020 – at a time when the Treasury was arguing it was no longer necessary. Eventually the scheme was extended three more times – with this stop-start approach leading to uncertainty and redundancies. That’s one of the reasons the TUC is now calling for a permanent short-time work scheme to be put in place to deal with industrial disruption in the future. Because although we all hope the worst of this pandemic is behind us, we know there will be future episodes of economic change, driven by technology, the necessity of responding to runaway climate change, and future financial instability. Our proposals build on the evidence both from the UK and across Europe that government action to protect jobs delivers results.

But the success of furlough shouldn’t blind us to the very real increase in unemployment, and the disproportionate impact it’s had on Black workers. Around 200,000 more people are now unemployed



than before the pandemic, and there are a corresponding 200,000 fewer people on payrolls. These job losses have hit BME workers hardest, reflecting the structural racism endemic in the UK job market. Already high BME unemployment rates have risen, from 6.1 per cent to 8 per cent in the year since the pandemic hit. That’s an increase three times faster than that for white workers – for whom unemployment rose from 3.6 to 4 per cent.

Those unemployment figures could get significantly worse if the government goes ahead with its plan to end furlough at the end of September. While the numbers of people supported by the scheme are falling, the latest official figures show there were still 1.9 million people on furlough at the end of June – many of whom could also face losing their jobs without further support. Alongside putting in place a short-time work scheme to protect work in companies that can bounce back, the government should be investing to create the new jobs we need – in our hard stretched public services, and in the green industries of the future.

Stopping unemployment is important but there’s far more to do to make work better. The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the reality of insecure work in the UK.

Care workers, delivery drivers and shopworkers played a crucial role in keeping society going. But too many of these workers face unac-

ceptable working conditions, with zero hours contracts, false self employment and insecure agency work rife in some of the jobs we relied on most to keep us safe.

There are now 3.6 million people in insecure work in the UK – and there’s no sign that the promises to them to ‘build back better’ are bearing fruit. The government shelved its long-promised Employment Bill and won’t even deliver an increase in sick pay to the two million workers currently missing out because they earn too little. And with a £20 cut to Universal Credit planned for September that will hit over two million low-paid working families, the government is adding insult to injury.

The continued refusal of the government to act on employers’ attempts to push down workers’ terms and conditions through insecure work and fire and rehire is one reason that headlines around ‘boom times for workers’ should be taken with a pinch of salt. But there’s one positive sign that workers’ bargaining power has been boosted – the increase in trade union membership. Between 2019 and 2020 trade union membership increased by 100,000 – the fourth consecutive year of growth. With union density at just 23 per cent, here too, there’s a long way to go. But if we want to deliver decent work, and to build back better for everyone, we know that trade unions and collective bargaining are our best hope. **G**



Kate Bell is senior TUC economics adviser

SOS Health Emergency – Tory Bill puts profits before health

Already struggling under the unprecedented impact of the pandemic **Stephanie Clark** explains how the Health and Care Bill 2021 mortally threatens the NHS

On 6 July, Government plans for a wholesale re-organisation of the English NHS were presented to Parliament in the Health and Care Bill. Sped through to its second reading on 14 July just before the summer break, it is now (from 7 September) under consideration by the House of Commons Public Bill Committee where amendments will be considered, and expected to go to the Lords in early November.

The NHS is reeling from ten years of underfunding across the board, resulting in critical staffing shortages and anger at eroded pay, a maintenance backlog, reduced capacity - with further reduction in beds and Accident and Emergency provision planned. And now there is the impact of Covid: a record 5.45 million on NHS waiting lists reported in July, and rising, and increasing demand from Long Covid.

So, will the Bill improve our healthcare? Government spin is that this Bill undoes the damaging effects of the last re-organisation created by the 2012 Health and Social Care Act. This fragmented the NHS and imposed costly and wasteful contracting out of NHS services. The Bill is lauded for providing the integration of health and social care. However, there is nothing in the Bill that would improve social care or build on existing coordination between health and social care services.

New Organisational Structures

The Bill legalises the break-up of the NHS into 42 “Integrated Care Systems” (ICSs). Each ICS will have its own tight budget, forcing cuts in care. ICS Boards will include providers. This will institutionalise a conflict of interest, since the Boards are to decide which services to provide in their area, who provides them and where. Worse still, the Boards can include private companies – Virgin already is on an ICS Board in the south west.

<https://lowdownnhs.info/integrated-care/virgin-given-seat-on-ics-board/>

Others potentially eligible are around 200 firms, including at least 30 US health insurance companies, already approved by NHS England (NHSE) to support the development and management of ICSs.

Deregulation

The Bill removes the requirement (“irksome requirement” in Matt Hancock’s words) to put contracts out to tender. It also exempts the NHS from Public Contract Regulations, which safeguard environmental, social and labour laws (including the right to strike). Thus it replaces a regulated market with an unregulated market: removing vital safeguards including, by removing transparency and accountability, against the kind of corruption we have seen from the Government’s Covid contracts.

The Bill also provides for deregulation of the professions: Loth the removal of a profession from regulation and for the abolition of the regulatory body that oversees the conduct and competence of healthcare professionals, so putting patients at risk. Significantly, there is no requirement in the Bill for a seat on the ICS Boards for a medical or nursing representative or finance director.

Democracy undermined, Lack of accountability and transparency

The Bill grants the Secretary of State major powers: to exert political control of ICSs by placing senior staff onto their boards, to abolish NHS related bodies and to intervene directly in local decisions such as imposing local service reconfigurations.

Local authorities have reduced influence in the new organisational structures. Each ICS is set up with a Health and Care Partnership body. This body is supposed to have a responsibility for planning and overseeing local services, but is tied to the strategic planning and resource allocation of the ICS Board. Local authority representation on the ICS board is limited to a single representative for all the LAs in the

ICS area (which cover populations of between two and three million).

The Bill removes existing powers of local authorities to scrutinise NHS decision making in their areas. It also gives no guarantee that ICS meetings will be held in public, that papers will be published in advance, or that the public can raise questions. In practice the decision making of the 42 ICSs will be distanced from local community input.

The Bill repeals the legal requirement to assess patients for their social care needs before discharge. Pressure to free up beds and the crisis in social care has already led to faster discharge, increasingly with no more than a possible offer of “simple access to information, advice and services; including support and access to information to enable self-care and self-management”, but no guarantee even of that before sending vulnerable people home.

So it seems the onus for arranging support is on the patient, their family or carer. The Bill introduces a new model of healthcare, ‘digitally enabled’ and driven by cost-cutting.

What does this mean for patients?

- More companies given access to confidential patient information, with no clear protection for patient privacy
- More digital services, creating a two-tier health service, depending on whether you are able to make use of computers or smart phones
- Fewer face-to-face appointments with GPs and less chance of seeing the same health worker
- More patient care given by less qualified (cheaper) staff, directed by computers and manuals
- Growing expectation that patients will “self-care”, using phone apps or websites for information or advice
- More risk that services will be cut or rationed and non-urgent referrals to hospital delayed or refused because of pressure on ICSs to make savings

What does this mean for staff?



Stephanie Clark is a member of Keep Our NHS Public and Bethnal Green and Bow CLP

- Threat to national agreements on pay, terms and conditions as each ICS Board will have their own limited budget and seek to cut costs

- Flexible working with staff redeployed across and even beyond the ICS area, undermining team working, union organisation, continuity of care, imposing extra travel costs and stress for staff

- A deregulated and down-skilled workforce – supposedly justified by new technology but actually risking harm to patients and interfering with professional judgement and staff development.

What can we do?

The Government can't get away with this if enough people are aware of what it means for us – as users of the NHS and as staff. From September, Parliamentary battle will be in two arenas before return-

ing for its final reading in the Commons: the Committee and the House of Lords. In the Lords, the newly elevated Sir Simon Stevens, recently retired head of NHSE and ex-President of Global Health Division of US health corporation UnitedHealth, is mobilising support for the Bill; Joan Bakewell and Michael Cashman are mobilising against. We know that there is some trepidation amongst Tory MPs – fearing a public backlash against the Government if there is public understanding.

A call to action:

- Spread the word
- Sign and circulate the petition:
www.change.org/p/health-secretary-sajid-javid-protect-the-nhs-stop-the-health-and-care-bill
- Call on your Union to oppose the Bill

- Write to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee with your concerns.

This Committee is considering the Health and Care Bill and any amendments needed. It is now inviting written evidence from people with "relevant expertise and experience or a special interest in the Health and Care Bill". That includes all of us who use the NHS. www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/july/have-your-say-on-the-health-and-care-bill/

- Go to the website of Keep Our NHS Public for more information: <https://keepournhspublic.com/campaigns/scrap-the-health-and-care-bill/>

- And here to register for the "Protect the NHS" online rally on 8 September 7-9pm <https://keepournhspublic.com/event/protect-the-nhs-rally/> **G**

Government delay spells unnecessary deaths

As Scotland plans to open a judge-led inquiry by end of year **Jo Goodman** challenges the Westminster Government's deadly delay in holding a full public inquiry into the Covid-19 crisis

Since I last wrote (Chartist 305) much has happened in some respects while in others frustratingly little has. In May we were delighted that the Prime Minister confirmed that a statutory public inquiry would be held into the handling of the pandemic. This was a huge victory for our collective of bereaved families and confirms that the inquiry will have the powers needed to get to the truth.

However, at the same time we were presented with a hugely unsatisfactory timeline with the Prime Minister declaring that the inquiry would begin in Spring 2022, arguing that to start one before then would distract from the efforts to handle the pandemic.

We've since heard from the Cabinet Office that the Government is yet to even begin work on deciding the terms of reference for the inquiry, the first step for making any progress on it. This indicates that they are going to delay proceedings for as long as possible.

This is troubling for families on a number of levels. Firstly, it is galling

for the Prime Minister to suggest that the Government is too busy handling the pandemic at the same time as it lifts almost all public health measures and talks of the need to "live with the virus". This is particularly difficult to hear given that we know even now with the progress of the vaccination programme, "living with the virus" for some will mean dying with it, as 100s continue to do daily. How many of those deaths could have been prevented and how many more will pass away needlessly and leaving families marked by trauma?

Since the outset of our campaign our priority has been to ensure that lessons can be learned in order to save lives. Of course, I would want nothing more on this earth than to bring my Dad back, in all his grumpy glory, but I know I can't do that. What I can do is try to prevent another family going through the same horror.

That's why, particularly with the understanding that Covid-19 isn't going away any time soon, we cannot allow the public inquiry to be kicked into the long grass. Every week we delay the inquiry, we delay the learn-

ing of crucial lessons that could save lives both now and further down the line. Be it in relation to care homes, preventing transmission in hospitals or wider public health measures such as masks and ventilation, there are so many issues that remain unaddressed and the failure to learn puts so many at risk in the future.

Pushing back the inquiry also causes unnecessary pain and frustration for the bereaved. For many in our campaign like myself, the unanswered questions around our loved ones' deaths haunt us every day. If different political decisions had been made, would my Dad still be with me? An inquiry that answers the many questions that our members have is critical to us experiencing closure and moving forward with our lives. The Government is denying us that.

Nearly 18 months after my Dad's death, it's heartbreaking to still see families joining our group with such similar stories. If you'd like to support our campaign to learn lessons and save lives, please consider following us on Twitter and Facebook, making a donation or setting up a regular contribution to our campaign. **G**



Jo Goodman, co-founder of Covid Families for Justice (<https://www.covidfamiliesforjustice.org/>)

Covid lays bare lies of austerity

Tory hostile environment has deepened health inequalities during pandemic says
Farah El-Sharnouby

COVID-19 has forced us all to look inwards, but as well as teaching us about ourselves, it has also exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities in our society, coinciding with racism, classism, and xenophobia to result in worse health outcomes for ethnic minorities and migrants in the UK. Our government's response to COVID-19 has often mirrored these injustices, highlighting which lives they deem expendable, and which, to them, are worth saving.

Very early on in the outbreak, it became clear that black and brown people were dying at higher rates than their white counterparts. This has often been put down to overrepresentation in frontline jobs: they are more likely to work as taxi drivers, security guards, hospital cleaners, social care workers, nurses and doctors, with healthcare workers in particular three times more likely to die of COVID than the general population. But if it were simply exposure to the virus that increased mortality rates, one would expect healthcare workers of all ethnic backgrounds to have similar mortality rates, however, of the healthcare workers that have died of COVID-19, two thirds have been ethnic minorities. There must therefore be compounding factors explaining the poorer outcomes in ethnic minorities, ranging from biological: having more co-morbidities, to socio-economic: ethnic minorities are more likely to live in cities and deprived parts of the country, which alone doubles their risk of mortality.

Structural racism and discrimination have been identified as potential root causes of the aforementioned risk factors, and one of the most blatant examples of discriminatory government policy pre-dating COVID-19 is Theresa May's "hostile environment", the aim of which, the government makes quite clear, is to deter immigration to the UK by making it such a cruel and uninviting place that even those fleeing war and famine will not want to live here. In 2017, this was extended into the NHS, meaning those not "ordinarily resident" in the UK require ID checks and are charged for their healthcare upfront. For years this has jeopardised



Government's "vaccine amnesty" insufficient in addressing health discrimination against migrants

ised migrants' health, as many have found it difficult to register with a GP due to lack of identification/proof of address, and avoided seeking medical help when necessary due to fear of deportation or getting into crippling debt, which the Home Office can use as grounds to deny their visa applications. Restricting access to healthcare based on immigration status is appallingly xenophobic in normal times, but in the midst of a global pandemic has had even more deadly consequences. There have been reports of undocumented migrants found dead after contracting COVID-19, their loved ones citing fear of deportation as a key reason for not seeking medical help, and many support organisations across the UK state that migrants and refugees have avoided seeking healthcare during the pandemic due to fear of charging and data sharing with the home office.

In an apparent attempt to mitigate this phenomenon, COVID-19 was added to the list of communicable diseases exempt from upfront charging, and the government has created a "vaccine amnesty" to encourage undocumented migrants to get the job. These measures are laughably insufficient in undoing years of justified mistrust, but also futile if those who need to make use of this exception are not aware it exists. As the pandemic has progressed and key information is now disseminated online, many migrants have been left out of the loop, often living in destitution with-

out access to the internet, and dependent on support organisations to translate government guidance into their mother tongues. This renders discussions regarding "vaccine hesitancy" amongst ethnic minorities particularly tone deaf, as it masks the complex and varied reasons people feel unable to get vaccinated. It is however consistent with the government's strategy of denying all culpability throughout the pandemic, instead shifting the blame onto the people, often using ethnic minorities as a convenient scapegoat. Muslims have been blamed for outbreaks, black people protesting police brutality were "flouting the rules", but at no point has the government conceded that Eat Out to Help Out increased infection rates, or apologised for not securing sufficient PPE.

COVID-19 has laid bare the lies of austerity, confirming that there is indeed a magic money tree, but the government selectively decides whom to adorn with the fruits of said tree. If they can afford to hand millions of pounds out in contracts for a failed test and trace system, they can afford to stop charging migrants for their healthcare, and end the hostile environment once and for all. The pandemic has affirmed what ethnic minorities and migrants in this country have always known – we are worth keeping around so long as we are willing to risk our lives driving buses and intubating patients, but our lives are only worth saving if they keep others alive too. **G**



Farah El-Sharnouby is a junior doctor working in Northwest England. She volunteers as a clinic support worker for Doctors of The World and is part of the Docs Not Cops network, which campaigns for an end to the Hostile Environment in the NHS

Borders policy that aims to strip away human rights

Don Flynn on the iniquities of the Government's new Borders Bill

Among migrant rights activist circles a great deal of focus is now being placed on the question of borders and their role in structuring the worst of the oppressive features of modern society.

Advocates of this take on government policies have been helped in making their case by the phenomenon which is being referred to as 'bordering' and also the emphasis in the most recent proposals for new legislative measures which ramp up the idea that frontiers can be made more-or-less impermeable.

On the latter, Home Secretary Priti Patel has offered raw meat to those she sees as making up her political base in the form of the Nationality and Borders Bill now going through Parliament. The need for yet more legislation to the eight immigration acts passed since 1999 points to the critical instability of border control regimes in a country like the UK, which projects the fact that it is simultaneously open to for global business whilst at the same time retaining the capacity to impose limits on the movement of people across its frontiers.

There is a tension here: business activity demands that people and populations are in a state of constant movement; the political class would find it much more convenient if people stayed where they are so they can be counted and controlled. The inability to settle this dilemma has meant a constant return to the fundamentals to see if this time they can finally get the matter right.

At this point in time, the offence which figures highest in the Home Office's eyes is the clandestine entry of people seeking asylum on the small boat route across the Channel. The numbers are rising, as Maël Gallison reported (*Chartist 211*, July-August). This is happening because the countries which refugees see as places of safe haven have been slamming the doors for much of the last 20 years. But far from the total exclusion of refugees, this has led to the emergence of a sizeable population of displaced people drifting through countries where they are cold-shouldered by authori-



ties unwilling to accept responsibility for their settlement. This means that the hope of finding a home hinges on the refugees' own initiative and whatever services are on offer from people-smuggling gangs operating outside the law.

Junking eligibility

The Nationality and Borders Bill aims to reduce this hope even further. In the past, asylum seekers have been buoyed by interpretations of international refugee law which says that the clandestine crossing of a national border should not invalidate a claim for protection from persecution which is found to be justified on the facts of the case. Patel's bill aims to junk this principle almost entirely.

It will introduce a set of eligibility rules which will confine the grant of refugee status only to those people who have been brought into the country under the terms of one of the UK's approved refugee resettlement programmes. Arriving outside these schemes will mean claims will not be considered by the authorities, even if the person considered still bears the visible marks of torture and ill-treatment. The intention of the government is that individuals in these categories will be sent back to either the country of their nationality or any third country through which they are assumed to have travelled.

To say this is unsatisfactory is an understatement. Refugee resettlement programmes – which do have

an important place in any comprehensive international system of protection – entail long, bureaucratic processes on people suffering immense hardship in camps which are also places of political violence and persecution. They are also administered in accordance with the whim of governments which feel they have the right to reduce or even suspend quotas altogether if it seems politically expedient. The UK's schemes have exhibited many of the worst features of these resettlement schemes.

Unsurprisingly, migrant and refugee support organisations have pledged themselves to oppose the bill and are currently organising campaigns which brief Parliamentarians on all the reasons why the planned measures run counter to the fundamentals of human rights protection.

Beyond the rituals of parliamentary lobbying, a politics of borders is hardening on the left of the migrant rights movement which is represented in publications such as Leah Cowan's *Border Nation – A Story of Migration*. Cowan argues that borders need to be seen in a wider context, having a role in state practices and institutions that "uphold laws and protect the status quo of inequality". If this is the case, then the appalling Nationality and Borders Bill needs to be fought against by social movements that include, and go beyond, the heroic band of migrant and refugee rights defenders. **C**

Don Flynn is founder director of Migrant Rights Network

Islamophobia is racism

Shaista Aziz on rising Islamophobia and why Labour needs to step up

The horrifying and devastating images from Afghanistan, showing the desperation of Afghans trying to escape their country to seek sanctuary in the West following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, will be archived forever and juxtapositioned alongside images of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, twenty years ago this September.

The launch of George W Bush and Tony Blair's catastrophic "war on terror", and the subsequent wars and political instability and upheaval they've created across the Middle East and North Africa, has accelerated and entrenched Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism and bigotry in the UK and the West, alongside anti-refugee and migrant hate.

The words 'Muslim', 'terrorist', 'ISIS', 'Taliban', 'refugee' and 'migrant' have become interchangeable and mainstreamed in so much of our political and public discourse, fuelling racism.

The UK's Muslim population numbers around 3.4 million people, or 5% of the population. This number is likely to increase when the Census data is published and it's also likely to reflect how diversity has grown amongst British Muslims and how young the Muslim population is. There is documented evidence of Muslims having a presence in Britain since the 16th century. The UK's first Muslims are documented to have arrived in Liverpool and were of Yemeni background. Britain's Muslim communities are incredibly diverse, practice many strands of Islam, speak a number of languages and follow a diversity of cultural practices. Yet this plurality and diversity is very rarely seen or understood in the public, political or media representation of Muslims in the UK.

Overwhelmingly, Muslims are viewed as outsiders and as 'other'. We are viewed as separate from mainstream society and are suspect until we prove otherwise. Over the last few years, and especially since the Brexit campaign and referendum, the UK has seen a reported rise in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate.

The 'phenomenon' of Islamophobia isn't new, however,



The Labour Muslim Network aims to combat Islamophobia in the Labour party

and the alarm has been sounded numerous times over decades about the pernicious nature of this form of bigotry and its impact on British people and communities.

Muslim women are disproportionately affected by Islamophobia. We suffer from the intersection of racism, Islamophobia, sexism and misogyny. We are viewed as foreign, alien, a threat to the West. Shamima Begum, the British teenager who left her home in East London and joined Isis in Syria, is just one case in point. Begum has had her British nationality stripped.

One of the UK's highest profile Muslim politicians, former chair of the Conservative Party Sayeeda Warsi, has since 2011 consistently raised her voice against racism in her own party, government and society. In 2011 Warsi declared "Islamophobia has passed the dinner table test". The Tories have been accused of turning a blind eye to Islamophobia and continue to do so. The current prime minister, Boris Johnson, wrote about Muslim women in one of his newspaper columns, referring to us as 'letter boxes' and 'bank robbers' for wearing the niqab, the face veil. The Muslim Council of Britain cited 300 allegations of Islamophobia against the prime minister and members of the Conservative Party to the Equalities and Human Rights

Commission. The group called on the commission to formally investigate the governing party over Islamophobia. It's the second time that the Muslim Council of Britain has called for an inquiry to be launched, with no action taken.

The Labour Muslim Network has been investigating Islamophobia in the Labour Party and has called on the party to root out Islamophobia, create Islamophobia awareness across the party's structures, and to hold Islamophobes to account.

Islamophobia is not recognised along the same lines as other forms of racism; it's even debated if Islamophobia is in fact real or if it exists. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims in 2019 adopted the following definition of Islamophobia: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness."

Drawing on analysis published since 2019, the Muslim Council of Britain's report sets out core conceptual components in accessible terms, establishing a framework of reference that helps determine what does – and does not – constitute Islamophobia. Types of intervention that would be Islamophobic include: "causing, calling for, aiding or justifying acts of aggression against Muslims"; "dehumanising, demonising or making stereotypical allegations about Muslims"; and "prescribing to/propagating conspiracy theories about Muslims".

If we on the left are serious about creating and actioning equalities and anti-racism, Islamophobia has to be tackled head-on and rooted out. This means challenging all forms of Islamophobia, including structural racism, as part of creating a diverse and representative anti-racism movement and anti-racist politics and policies. There needs to be a far more sophisticated understanding of who British Muslims are in all our plurality and diversity, and the impact of social, domestic and foreign policy on our lives and life chances. We Muslims' lived realities and stories need to be told as part of the wider narrative and stories of what this country was, what this country is, and what it could yet become if we enact the vision we have for creating a fair society that values everyone. **C**

Shaista Aziz is a journalist, writer, and a national anti-racism and equalities campaigner. She is an Oxford Labour Councillor and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities

@shaistaAziz

Let the people decide!

Francie Molloy argues that government duplicity on the Northern Ireland protocol underlines the need for a poll on Irish unity



Irish unity is now firmly on the political agenda both in Ireland and Britain like never before. Increasing numbers of people are looking to a better future, considering new choices and deciding on what is best for them and their families. They are looking to a future beyond Brexit and beyond the union towards a new Ireland.

We have an opportunity afforded to few in the modern world; the opportunity to build an entirely new society based on the wishes of the people.

The Good Friday Agreement, with its provision for a referendum on the constitutional future of the island guarantees this opportunity. Under that Agreement, it is up to the British government's secretary of state for the north to decide when a poll should be held when he or she feels that a point has been reached where people want to change the constitutional status quo.

That change is happening. It is all around us. The political realities in the north and across the island have changed utterly. The old unionist majority which once appeared monolithic is now gone. Successive elections have shown that it no longer exists.

At Westminster, fewer pro-union MPs are elected from the north than non-unionists and pro-union MLAs are also now in the minority in the Assembly. That is a concrete indicator of the genuine and tangible change which is taking place in the north.

Opinion polls regularly show declining support for the constitutional status quo and increased support for Irish unity. Polls also regularly show that more and more people are now prepared to consider new options for the future as they look for something better.

It is time for the British secretary of state and the British government to recognise and acknowledge this significant change. Brandon Lewis needs to start the process of preparing for a referendum on a new future as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

To date, successive British governments have shown themselves unwilling to fully implement the Good Friday Agreement. This needs to change. The Agreement was endorsed by a majority across the island of Ireland in referenda and is an internationally binding accord. It cannot be dismissed or set aside.

The Irish government, as a guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, also need to ensure its full implementation. It has a key role in upholding this essential part of the Good Friday Agreement and also a duty and a responsibility to Irish citizens north and south who want to see the unity of their country. There are, of course, a number of things which have to happen before a referendum can be held.

The disastrous Brexit referendum has shown everyone the folly of holding a poll without providing people with proper information first to allow them to make up their minds and make informed decisions about their future. Preparation is

key.

Those who claim, for whatever reason, that the time is not right are out of step with the mood of the people across the island. The conversation on Irish unity has already begun and is well underway. It has been accelerated by the British government's intention to renege on its commitments on the protocol and its signalled willingness to break international law. Now that conversation needs to be supported by practical planning for change. The British government need to announce its intention to hold a poll and set in train the process for a referendum.

The Irish government also have a key role to play in the preparations for Irish unity. As a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement they should move now to actively begin preparations, not only to put pressure on the British government to live up to its responsibilities but because it is the right and sensible thing to do.

We now need to see the Irish government setting up a citizen's assembly on constitutional change, inclusive of the entire island, bring forward a white paper on Irish unity and create a ministerial position with responsibility for preparing for change. Now is the time to prepare, to give people the information to make the best choices for their future.

As an Irish republican, I am confident that Irish unity provides the best hope for a better future for all. It should now be up to the people to have their say. **C**



Francie Molloy
Sinn Féin MP for
Mid Ulster

Crossroads for social democracy

Don Flynn examines Labour's "new deal for workers", asks where are its working class backers and what role for Generation Left?

The lament that no one knows what Labour stands for anymore has only been partially addressed by the publication of the party's new deal for working people at the end of July.

Discomforted by what turned out to be the narrowest of wins at the Batley and Spen by-election, the new deal is motivated by the hope that it will put Labour back in touch with the concerns of the people who make up its ideal support base. Numerous think tank reports have pointed to the gulf that has opened up with voters who feel the party has nothing to say to people struggling to sustain themselves on current supposedly living wage levels. The new policy is supposed to be an answer.

Listing the five principles which underpin Labour's approach on these issues has been the easy part of the exercise: what lies ahead is the much more difficult task of finding a fragment of working class opinion and interest that will fight to make them the starting point for working class conversations about the plight wage earners find themselves in.

Historic bloc

Once, Labour had a cohort of advocates for its polices in the form of the blue collar trade unionists working in industry, back in the days when the TUC had over 12 million affiliated members. Only a minority of these were working in places that had the industrial heft to constrain the interests of their corporate employers. Back even then, much larger numbers worked in white collar and public sector jobs which the benefits of trade union membership, as a consequence of being the 'big battalions', won concessions from national incomes policies and shaped the basic character of employment legislation. In classic Gramscian terms, the trade union movement functioned as an 'historic bloc' which fused together a wide range of diffuse and, in areas, conflicting interests into a social force in which a consensus had formed about what constituted progress for all elements of those social forces. The donkey-jacketed, steel-cap-booted factory worker exercised hege-

Labour's new deal for working people

1. Security at work

3.6 million people are in insecure work. This means they can't plan for the future.

Labour would give workers full protections from day one on the job, and we'd strengthen trade unions.

We'd also ban fire and rehire and give people the right to work flexibly.

2. Quality jobs

One in six working families live in poverty in the UK. This isn't right. Labour would support British businesses so we buy, make and sell more in Britain. This would help to create well-paid, green jobs in the industries of the future.

3. A fairer economy

Your high street businesses pay their fair share of taxes in the UK but some big, global businesses, like Amazon, don't. Our British businesses are being undercut and losing out.

Labour would level the playing field and give our businesses the boost they need to create good jobs locally.

4. Opportunity for all

Too many people can't get the training or opportunities they deserve. We'd deliver a job-promise for young people with a guarantee of quality education, training or employment.

5. Work that pays

People should be able to raise a family on their wages, not struggle to make ends meet. Labour would introduce a real living wage of at least £10 an hour.

monic influence within this bloc that reached out deep into other trade unions and directed the policy machinery of the Labour Party.

Social democracy is in a state of deep crisis today across its historic European heartlands because blue collar employment went into steep decline back in the 1970s. This was largely under the impact of the rationalisation of industry produced by the energy crises of that period and, subsequently, the trend to outsourcing fostered by the neoliberal dispensation forged in the 1980s.

The working class which remained after this historic bloc dissolved as deindustrialisation took hold looks like the one described in the Great British Class Survey back in 2017, arising from a collaboration between university sociology departments, which painted a picture in which diverse social and economic fragments loosely cohered into some version of working life. No part of it could be described as a

leading component of this motley crew: all description of working class life degenerated into dispiriting accounts of corrosive infighting between fragments based on geographical location, generation, social and cultural status.

This vision of the working class today has been adopted wholesale by Keir Starmer and his co-thinkers in the Labour leadership. Refined by the work of Claire Ainsley during her time at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, now taking her place as Starmer's executive director of policy, the fragmented class analysis sees the task of producing any sort of political consensus as being dependent on the arcane sciences of focus group discussion, earnestly attentive listening sessions and one-to-one interviews.

Amplifying distrust

Whole dimensions of class experience vanish when politics is reduced to this sort of public opinion sam-

pling. The fact that its subjects might have a memory of the stages of history and the events that brought them to their current sorry plight is elided by an approach which encourages people to dwell on what they feel now and which of the following three empathy icons best illustrates how they feel about the world.

The methodology has the advantage of allowing the trained public policy researcher to remain in charge of interpreting the data and make sure it delivers outcomes that can be translated into policy. But rather than ensure that working class subjects are at the centre of the process, it gives all the initiatives to members of the middle class commentariat which, we are told, 'ordinary' people have learned to despise. Unsurprisingly, the result is a profound distrust of the policy proposals which emerge from all this listening, on the grounds that no one was interested in what they really wanted to say.

'Trust us' becomes the least likely course of action for a line of working class thinking which is making total distrust of politicians the one unifying factor in their class identity. In the days of the historic social democratic bloc, an independent evaluation of the credibility of politicians' promises was possible through the conversations taking place in the works canteen and union meetings, in which the opinions of shop stewards and other officials would have carried some weight, including running policy proposals through a rough-and-ready sense of realism as to what was really possible given the circumstances.

The male-centric provenance of this critical evaluation was only marginally balanced by conversations that spread in waves into the places in community life where other social groups, most vitally women, were present, allowing for some sort of consensual view to emerge. This account of the way working class people engaged in politics in the heyday of social democracy is not intended to sing its praises, but rather just to offer an account of how social blocs cohere around hegemonic interests and viewpoints.

Searching for a new hegemon

Is there any obvious contender for the role of a social and economic vanguard which can give flesh-and-blood meaning to Labour's current vague policy outlines? A solid case is being made for the generation of millennials who are experiencing the bitter disappointment that comes from a labour market down-



Starmer and Rayner launched a "new deal for working people" to "fundamentally change the economy"

grading the hard work they have put into acquiring a high standard of education and offering so many of them dubious opportunities in precarious agency and zero-hour jobs. Keir Milburn and Brett Christophers have made compelling arguments for the pivotal role of this group, extending the causes for their dissatisfaction from jobs to their greater vulnerability to exploitation as renters in overpriced housing markets. Their resistance to the sneering contempt of the anti-woke brigade for the social values common among this group, like antiracism, commitment to internationalism, equality and concern for the environment, also add to the belief that a lot can be expected to come from this segment of the population as the left works to rebuild its social base.

However, it is not a simple matter of cheering on the new kids on the (historic?) block. Youth and relative deprivation are not constants throughout life, and for some millennials things will get better as they start to inherit the assets currently monopolised by their baby boomer parents. Further, unlike the industrial workers in the past who had authoritative positions in both the workplace and geographic communities, the millennials lead less constant lives, being continually uprooted in locality as they chase after job and housing opportunities. This is a serious impediment to being able to fulfil one of the other requirements of political leadership: reaching across to other disadvantaged sectors made up of the less well-educated and more communitarian and patriotic in their outlooks. The remarkable revolt of the gilets jaunes in France back in 2018 ought to remind us of the explosive potential of the large group of older, 'left behind' people who feel oppressed because their standing as

citizens has been downgraded and the demands for decarbonisation of the economy will deprive them of the chance to drive a white van.

If democratic socialism is to be reconstructed as an historic bloc that draws on the energies of jostling subaltern malcontents united by their agreement that radical change of some sort is needed, and if the overall direction of that change is towards progress, then the party which aspires to a leadership role needs to be drawing on a range of strategies - ones that keep its constituencies in civil dialogue with one another and ready to cut the deals needed for a working consensus. Labour has weakened the chance it can play this role in recent months because of Starmer's apparent decision to set his face against concessions to millennial agitation in the belief that the change this group wants to see will alienate voters in its former Red Wall seats.

The 'Generation Left' demographic (Keir Milburn's more satisfactory term for millennials) is unlikely to compromise on core values that do most to get up the noses of its parents - and nor should it. The political initiatives it will need to proclaim more loudly will be around the democratic change needed to make sure that all voices are heard: initiatives taken to direct investment into communities that have been marginalised for decades and structural economic reform to end the culture of shareholder value, while building a stronger co-operative and public sector to provide the basis for decent jobs.

Labour, for its part, needs to cut Generation Left some slack and start to make bold concessions to show they are wanted in the party, and their ideas and energies will be fully utilised to rebuild a movement which is in grave danger of going down into the grave. **G**

**Don Flynn is
Chartist
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US progressive change window closing

Paul Garver assesses the Biden administration eight months on



The narrow electoral victory for Biden and the Democratic Party staved off immediate disaster for US democracy (see *Chartist* 308). It feels better to wake up mornings free of the latest product of Trump's ego-maniacal and disordered brain. With the narrowest of Democratic margins in Congress, Biden has made some decent executive appointments and reversed some of Trump's most vicious executive orders. However, the window of opportunity for vital substantive reforms in US society is already beginning to close.

The Biden administration has not delivered on many of the promises made on the campaign trail. Desperate families are still being denied refugee status at the border with Mexico, under the pretext of stopping the spread of Covid-19. Although Biden suspended one pipeline being constructed to carry fracked oil sands petroleum through indigenous territories, his administration still defends others equally destructive,

and increased permits for oil and gas drilling on public lands. Racial justice has been addressed only symbolically by making Juneteenth (June 19th) a new national holiday.

The Biden administration has accomplished some basic economic tasks well. Half of Americans are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19 (70% of adults have received at least one shot), reducing hospitalisations and deaths. This aids economic recovery and reduces unemployment. Its one significant legislative accomplishment to date in March was a large \$1.9 trillion Covid relief bill that sent direct payments to all Americans, extended unemployment and child tax credits, and provided relief to local and state governments. Since all Republicans voted against this Covid relief package, it had to be passed in the Senate by the "budget reconciliation" process steered by Budget Committee chairperson Bernie Sanders, which does not require a super-majority of 60 of the 100 Senators to avoid a

Republican filibuster.

Most corporate leaders in the Business Roundtable supported this emergency stimulus legislation, along with about 70% of the American public. But business support faded quickly as the Left of the Democratic Party pushed the agenda to expand the social safety net and boost infrastructure spending towards longer-term reforms. Under the guise of promoting "bi-partisanship", big business interests are now directing large amounts of pro-fossil-fuel lobbying and corporate funding into propping up 10 so-called "moderate" Democrats and Republicans, including Democratic Senators Joe Manchin from West Virginia, a spokesman for coal interests, and Krysten Sinema from Arizona. Corporate interests also campaigned to block the PRO Act that would modestly strengthen workers' right to organise into unions, and against any legislation to promote voter rights against the onslaught of Republican states bills designed to discourage voting by African-Americans, Latin-Americans ('Latinxs') and young people. Above all, big capitalist interests directed their fire against any reversal of the huge tax cuts passed by the Trump administration for corporations and wealthy individuals.

This capitalist class strategy to create a "moderate" centrist bloc in Congress that would resist any sweeping climate, political, tax or racial justice reforms has had some success. Manchin and Sinema are promoted in the media as power brokers capable of derailing the crucial Democrat unanimity. Since the Senate is divided 50-50, even one Democrat defection dooms the budget reconciliation process or an end to the undemocratic and racist filibuster rule.

The Left wing of the Democratic Party, co-led by Bernie Sanders and a cluster of relatively newly elected House Representatives including the "Squad", has kept its fragile alliance with the Biden administration. It hopes to use what may be a one-year window of opportunity to legislate key steps towards a Green New Deal and Medicare for All. The Left is also

promoting sweeping social policy proposals that in the European context might appear merely “social democratic”, but in the USA would reverse the neoliberal contraction of the positive role of government and promote the broad interests of the interracial working class. Many centrist Democrats support some of these measures as essential to a full recovery from the pandemic crisis, but perhaps more crucially ones that might recoup some of the heavy defections from the traditional working class Democratic base.

However, the siren call of a “bipartisan” coalition with Republicans continues to tempt Biden and centrist Democrats. Fortunately, or not, so many Republicans are so in thrall to their defeated ex-President that they are reluctant to support any positive popular legislation that might make Biden look like a successful president.

The compromise infrastructure bill, which gained enough support from Republicans to pass with a large majority in the Senate, would provide some \$1 trillion mostly for physical infrastructure projects like roads and bridges. Excluded are the more sweeping measures necessary to combat climate chaos and the broad governmental measures promoted by the progressive Left to address racial and social inequality, protect workers’ rights to organise into unions, expand Medicare, and begin implementing a Green New Deal. These measures are now part of a \$3.5 trillion “budget reconciliation” bill that advanced for debate in the Senate with no Republican support and will pass only if all Democrats vote for it. A handful of Democratic “moderates” led by Sinema and Manchin claim that the bill is too expansive and expensive, while progressive Democrats have drawn a red line in the sand and may withhold their votes from the infrastructure bill as well if the key features of the budget reconciliation bill are weakened.

The outcome of this battle will determine whether the USA advances towards a comprehensive social democracy or falls back into chaos.

Election Setback for Left

In a Democratic primary for Ohio’s 11th Congressional District in Cleveland, Nina Turner lost narrowly but decisively by 4,000 votes to Shontel Brown, a local Democratic Party chairperson

backed by a strange combination of supporters. Prominent among them were Hilary Clinton, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, two major right-wing pro-Israel Political Action Committees, and major Republican donors who had contributed heavily to Donald Trump. Millions of dollars were expended by the PACs and donors on anti-Turner attack ads, claiming that she is too shrill, antisemitic, and out of touch with the district. Turner, an early supporter of Bernie Sanders and a prominent leader of Our Revolution (the grassroots organisation that emerged from the Sanders presidential bid), received enthusiastic support from Sanders and Squad members.

The negative campaigning seems to have persuaded many African American voters that Brown would be the safer choice. The result was a clear victory for Biden’s cautious centrism and the Party establishment and a setback for the left progressive/democratic socialist insurgency. The defeat for Turner and the Democratic Left may hearten “obstructionist” Democrats like Manchin and Sinema already being urged by their corporate supporters to block the budget reconciliation bill in the Senate.

In conceding her loss, Turner told her supporters: “Tonight, my friends, we have looked across the promised land, but for this campaign, on this night, we will not cross the river. I am going to work hard to ensure that something like this doesn’t happen to another progressive candidate again. We didn’t lose this race; evil money manipulated and maligned this election.”

But Turner’s defeat might in fact represent a Pyrrhic victory for the Democratic Party’s neoliberal establishment, who fear the slow advance and consolidation of the Democratic Socialist Left within the Democratic Party and US politics generally. The Congressional Black Caucus senior leadership is still smarting from the bruising 2020 primary defeat of ten-term incumbent Rep. Lacy Clay in the 1st Missouri congressional district around St. Louis. Victorious insurgent Cori Bush, an African American nurse and DSA member, has become a militant spokesperson for the most vulnerable, camping out on the steps of the US Capitol with “Squad” colleagues to demand an end to evictions and winning



Cori Bush - spokesperson for the most vulnerable

some delays. India Walton, another African American nurse and DSA member, had just defeated a long-term incumbent mayor of Buffalo. Caught between the Trumpist Republican Party, and the slow and halting advance of a Democratic Socialist Left whose most visible spokespeople are working-class women of color, the space for centrist Democrats to triangulate and obfuscate felt diminished.

By rejecting Nina Turner, the Democratic establishment slowed the progress of the Left, but may have tolled the death knell for the PRO Act that would strengthen unions and the Democracy Act, that would secure voting rights for the Southern African Americans that are an important constituency for the Black Congressional Caucus. Turner’s defeat may also reduce the scope of the sweeping Budget reconciliation bill to extend basic social democratic policies to segments of the Black and Latinx populations excluded from the original New Deal.

I hope to be wrong in this pessimistic assessment. But if the Democrats do not deliver substantial material results for most working class Americans before 2022, the Republicans are odds-on favourites to win the 2022 Congressional elections and the Presidency in 2024. I fear the extinction of US democracy at the hands of racist xenophobic bigots. **C**

Paul Garver is a member of Democratic Socialists of America

Enact Labour policy on Palestine

As the new Israeli regime threatens thousands with illegal eviction **Louise Regan** says it's time for action

In recent months we have seen huge demonstrations in the UK and globally in support of the Palestinian people. These demonstrations followed several key events. Firstly, the threat of forced removal from their homes of several Palestinian families in the Jerusalem area of Sheikh Jarrah. Secondly the incursions and attacks in the Al Aqsa compound by Israeli military during the Holy month of Ramadan and finally the military attacks on Gaza killing and injuring significant numbers of civilians including children.

Since then, Israel has begun demolishing Palestinian structures in the Silwan area of Jerusalem. Sixteen families are under imminent threat of home demolitions, with over 4000 facing the threat of eviction or home demolitions across Jerusalem. Residents attempting to save their community have been met with brutal violence from Israeli forces.

This is part of Israel's demographic manipulation of Jerusalem to remove Palestinians and is a clear example of systematic ethnic cleansing. In the case of Silwan, Palestinians are being pushed out to make way for an Israeli park.

Words of condemnation are not enough. The UK has an obligation to uphold international law, which includes holding Israel meaningfully accountable for these illegal acts.

Time and time again the Government has issued statements acknowledging the illegality of Israeli settlements and calling for Israel to cease demolishing Palestinian homes. Statements alone are not sufficient to protect Palestinian rights but must be backed up with real consequences when Israel continues to ignore international law.

Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah are high profile cases now but are by no means unique. Israel has demonstrated it will continue expanding illegal settlements and undermining peace for as long as there are no real consequences.

The Labour Party should be calling on the UK government to take immediate action and stop allowing Israel to act with impunity. It must demand an end to current proceedings to evict these families, and start holding Israel accountable for

all its actions, which contribute to the crime of apartheid. This includes implementing sanctions and banning the import of goods from Israel's illegal settlements.

Over the past few years, we have seen a real attempt to silence those voices speaking out against the injustices faced by the Palestinians. Whilst at times our government has condemned the actions of Israel no real pressure has been exerted by them and their outright opposition to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions call make any real hope of changing the situation limited. Last year at TUC congress a motion was passed referring to an 'apartheid Israeli state' and the recent Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem reports clearly highlight the evidence that this is the case. Human Rights Watch landmark report *Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution* exposing Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights found an "overarching Israeli government policy to maintain the domination by Jewish Israelis over Palestinians" which amounts to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution. The report echoes the long-standing warnings from Palestinian civil society and the solidarity movement that Israel's racist and discriminatory policies amount to the crime of apartheid. It concludes that urgent action should be taken to bring an end to Israel's persecution of the Palestinian people.

As Palestinians have demanded time and time again, it is critical that the international community, including the UK Government and all political parties and public bodies hold Israel to account through ending all agreements, trade and funding that supports the commission of these serious crimes. Likewise, as this report makes explicit, "businesses should cease activities that directly contribute to the commission of the crimes of apartheid and persecution." This statement carries serious implications for companies like JCB, which has already been identified by the UN as complicit in violations of international law.

The B'Tselem report published in March 2021 B'Tselem position paper: "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to



the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid", January 2021 (btselem.org) found that the entire area Israel controls between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is governed by a single regime working to advance and perpetuate the supremacy of one group over another. It concludes "all of us must first choose to say no to apartheid."

At the 2019 Labour Party conference a motion was passed which stated that:

Conference resolves:

- To oppose any proposed solution for Palestinians, including Trump's 'deal', not based on international law and UN resolutions recognising their collective rights to self-determination and to return to their homes.
- To adhere to an ethical policy on all UK's trade with Israel, in particular by applying international law on settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and stopping any arms trade with Israel that is used in violation of the human rights of Palestinians.
- To work globally for an alliance with progressive sister parties rejecting trade agreements with Israel that fail to recognise the rights of the Palestinians.

It is time for the Labour Party to take real action to support the Palestinians in their fight for justice, to enact Labour Party policy and to use the Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem reports to challenge the illegal actions of Israel. **C**

Louise Regan is Vice-chair Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Creeping fascism threatens Balkan state

Jason Gold on the forgotten tribulations of Montenegro

Developments in the small Balkan state of Montenegro are a signifier of creeping fascism across the wider region, orchestrated by the pro-Putin Vučić regime in Belgrade but largely ignored by European governments. The General Election on August 30th 2020 was seen by the international community as a victory for democracy when the ruling coalition of Social Democrats and Democratic Socialists lost power after nearly 30 years. A 70% turnout in the middle of a pandemic resulted in a relationship between a new right-wing, populist, pro-Serb coalition government and the sitting Democratic Socialist President without tensions or violence. This was the narrative promoted by the EU and wider international community.

One year on and nothing could be further from the truth with the new government undermining civil society and the multi-cultural and multi-confessional essence of Montenegro on a daily basis. The influence of clerical fascism from the hard-line Serb Orthodox Church (SOC) permeates every level of government, including the appointment of Krivokapić as Prime Minister. Seasoned observers living in the Balkans warned of dangers in late 2019 when the SOC openly took a political position by attacking the then progressive government. The implementation of the "Freedom Of Religion" law in early 2020 was weaponised by the SOC who viewed it as a declaration of hatred and oppression. In fact the new "law" was viewed as a positive development by the Venice Commission. It brought the SOC in line with other religions in Montenegro decreeing that all religious institutions would be seen as equal, must register ownership of property and land, and would be subjected to relevant taxes and obligations to the State.

For a century the SOC had avoided paying taxes and refused to prove or register ownership of Churches it stole in 1919 when it subjugated the Montenegro Churches and took over their ownership. This was a year after the Kingdom of Montenegro was subsumed into the Kingdom of Serbia/Slovenes and Croats at the end of WW1. In the months prior to



Vesna Bratić - Education minister and self-styled "Chetnik"

the 2020 election the SOC organised huge demonstrations for its followers, effectively advising its flock to vote for 'The Future for Montenegro', a coalition of pro-Serb parties who intended to roll back the progress on independence which has been in process since a referendum in 2006 saw Montenegro break with Serbia.

Coalition partners with 'The Future for Montenegro' include the Democratic Front whose main party is the PzP led by Nebojša Medojević. In 2019 PzP founded Steve Bannon's 'Movement' with Lega and the Brothers of Italy. A smaller coalition partner is led by URA whose leader, Abazović, is a strong supporter of the Serb Orthodox Church. The main positions in the new government are Krivokapić PM, a devout follower of the SOC, and Abazović Deputy PM who claims that his party URA are green and grassroots despite being financed by the newspaper Vijesti which is partially owned by the right wing Austrian media company Styria. A third important government position is held by Bečić, President of Parliament. Bečić's party is called the Democrats, but he is known to be both pro-Serb and pro the SOC despite rebranding himself in recent years. All of these political appointments were ordered by the late Amfiloha Radović (head of SOC) before he succumbed to Covid 19. At Radović's funeral all Covid safety measures were ignored and thousands of mourners led by Krivokapić, Medojević and Bečić did not observe social distancing or mask wearing.

Jason Gold is secretary of Labour Eastern Europe (with support from Julie Ward)

It should be noted that all current ministers are devout followers of the SOC. Vesna Bratić who is Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Science is from Srpska Republic (in Bosnia Herzegovina) and only took Montenegrin citizenship a few years ago. She declared herself to be a Chetnik (who were infamously WW2 Nazi collaborators) and praised the SOC's role during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. She has fired most directors of education institutes, universities and schools and replaced them with people loyal to the SOC. Bratić is also changing the school curriculum and encouraging the teachings of the SOC doctrines.

Human rights and civil society activists have been threatened or detained for questioning by the police, and right-wing news portals such as In4S (a radical Serb outfit) make death threats to anyone asking questions of the government. Vile anti-Montenegrin graffiti has become so commonplace that the media no longer reports it. Many NGO's say nothing about what the government is doing although criticism of the last administration was frequent and public. President Vučić of Serbia has often spoken publicly about a 'Serb World' - a triangle of Banja Luka (Srbska Republic), Podgorica (Montenegro) and Belgrade (Serbia) - where Serbs will be 'protected'. This is reminiscent of Milošević's chilling ideal of the 1990s.

The international community is either guilty of turning a blind eye to recent developments or is ignorant of the facts. Montenegro was far from perfect under the last regime however it did stay true to its multi-ethnic, secular anti-fascist principals. The most important National Day is July 13th when, in 1878, the Berlin Congress recognised Montenegro as a Sovereign State. It also marks the beginning of the People's Partisan Uprising against the Nazi occupiers in 1941. At this year's 80th anniversary of that uprising President Đukanović addressed a huge crowd of thousands of people including foreign dignitaries and not a single government official took part. History may be in the process of being rewritten along with a repeat of the ethnic violence that led to unspeakable crimes against humanity. **C**

Time to stand up for Roma people

Julie Ward reports on anti-Roma racism in the North East

Every summer the highways and byways of County Durham are dotted with colourful horse-drawn wagons as the County's largest ethnic minority group make their way to Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria. This event is the biggest annual gathering in Europe for the Gypsy Romany Traveller (GRT) community. Last year's Fair was cancelled due to the pandemic, and Government Covid restrictions delayed this year's gathering but at the beginning of August approximately 10,000 people from the UK community travelled to Appleby on the banks of the River Eden to enjoy the rights granted to them by James II in 1685. A further 30,000 visitors enjoyed the spectacle of painted wagons and horses being washed in the river, bare-back riding children and women decked out in their finest attire. However, beyond economic benefits to the tourism industry and behind the voyeurism there is a pervasive anti-Gypsyism in our society emboldened by Tory rhetoric.

The government's anti-traveller legislation will do nothing to combat this specific form of racism, giving police greater powers to break up roadside camps, move people on and prosecute those in breach of the law. Even before the 2019 General Election Priti Patel's proposals to appropriate GRT property were described by George Monbiot as "legislative cleansing". Other leading Conservatives such as Michael Gove had also piled in with their own anti-Traveller rhetoric, as documented by Open Democracy in a research project which gathered evidence from campaign activity in the lead up to election day. The study found that dozens of Tory candidates had shamelessly made "inflammatory and discriminatory statements about Gypsies, Roma and Travellers" as a vote-catcher, promising action against traveller camps.

Anti-Gypsyism is not new. The Roma remain the most discriminated against minority in Europe. Along with Jews, trade unionists, disabled people and gay men, the Roma were rounded up and sent to 'labour camps' during the Nazi regime. Up to 1.5 million Roma may have been exterminated representing 75% of the population. Unlike

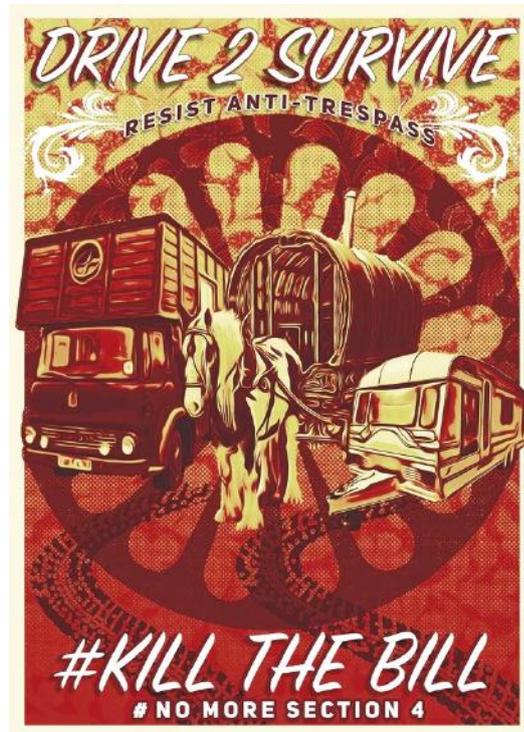
Jewish survivors the Roma have received no reparation from the German government. In what is now the Czech Republic the Roma were completely wiped out and a pig farm was established on the site of a Roma genocide, even receiving EU funds. The 'Dignity For Lety' campaign led by the European Grassroots Anti-racist Movement was successful in challenging the authorities, with support from the European Parliament, and I was proud to be part of that campaign. The site is now earmarked for memorialisation.

The Police Crime Courts and Sentencing (PCCS) Bill currently making its way through parliament threatens the GRT way of life. If the bill becomes law transgressors could be fined up to £2500, imprisoned and have their homes (vehicles) confiscated, simply for stopping on the roadside. Those who find themselves imprisoned may have their children taken into care.

Legal campsites are inadequate with insufficient places to accommodate the GRT population as becomes obvious every year when the pilgrimage to Appleby begins. The author of a letter in the Teesdale Mercury (July 28th) was openly hostile to a traveller who had stopped to give his horses respite on a patch of what is now common land in Barnard Castle. The writer warned that the town would be 'inundated' with unwanted 'Travellers' and concluded with a threat that echoed centuries old violent racism, "get the Gypsy Council told there will be no stopping in the town".

The award-winning Friends, Families and Travellers support organisation has been doing its homework, however, along with other human rights and anti-racist organisations, lobbying at the highest level. On July 5th the Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights wrote to the House of Commons and House of Lords urging all members "not to accept provisions on the new criminal offence of trespass" and to reject Part 4 of the PCCS Bill.

According to the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Bill raises serious questions about "compatibility with the UK's obligations under international human rights standards". The Commissioner's letter



followed a report from the Joint Committee on Human Rights which concluded that Part 4 of the Bill gives rise to several human rights concerns.

Once again the UK is out of step with its European neighbours and prepared to ride roughshod over international human rights norms. Meanwhile, for 19 year old Dylan who was residing on family-owned land in County Durham with his siblings and mother (an anthropologist and trained teacher) it is too late. Following a sustained barrage of racist abuse over several years, this gifted student took his own life in May this year. The #JusticeForDylan campaign spearheaded by Labour activists and trade unionists raised nearly £9,000 to help pay for Dylan's funeral and support the family.

In order to prevent further tragedies the Labour Party needs to step up support for the GRT community and demand education and awareness-raising campaigns as well as robust opposition to the PCCS Bill. Activists should also get behind the Drive 2 Survive campaign which has been mobilising rallies over the summer and will be at the Tory Party conference along with other Kill the Bill activists. Follow @Drive2Survive3 on Twitter for info. 

Julie Ward
 Chartist EB and
 former NW
 England MEP

Germany goes Green or goes nowhere?

Glyn Ford examines the state of play for left parties in forthcoming German elections

Germany goes to the polls on 26 September marking Chancellor Angela Merkel's long goodbye after 16-years in power. The election was to be dominated by Covid handling and recovery, but July's floods pushed the environment joint top of the table. The final outcome is far from clear. Yet - absent Merkel - the one thing that is certain is there will be a sharp shift in the German political landscape and foreign policy which will knock-on across Europe.

Much of the focus has been on personality rather than policy and the question of trust - who can Germans rely on to take over from Merkel, who adroitly guided the country through serial crises? The conservatives promise "stability and renewal", while progressives promise a "new start rather than status quo". Germans actually want both, but don't know how to get them and who to trust to deliver them.

Tackling climate change will be a top policy issue. Zero carbon emissions is a common goal - save for the far-right Allianz fur Deutschland (AfD) - but the question is when, how and how much? Here, unsurprisingly, the Greens have the most ambitious plans, while the Christian Democrats and the Liberals prioritise a flexible approach that mitigates climate regulation to protect industry. Meanwhile the SPD's Chancellor candidate, Olaf Scholz, favours a version of having your cake and eating it with a massive infrastructure programme, renewable energy and zero carbon for 2045.

No party has any prospect of winning an overall majority. At minimum it looks like a three party coalition. Six parties are on the board, and four part of the political jigsaw. At the moment - even though they are likely to finish second (18-19%) - the most certain party of Government is the Greens, closely followed by the conservative CDU/CSU currently on 24-26%, along with one of the FDP (Liberals, 11-13%) or the SPD (centre-left Social Democrats, 17-19%). Die Linke (post-Communist, 7%) will not be part of any coalition, while there is a 'cordon sanitaire' around the AfD (far-right, 10-12%).

The Greens want another taste of



Green Party leader Annalena Baerbock

government after their spell as junior partners to the SPD (1998-2005). The sweet spot for them, which looked feasible two months ago, were the twin options of a two Party coalition with the CDU/CSU and an alternative on the left - Greens - SPD - (maybe) FDP with Die Linke support from outside. The maths no longer adds up. Support has ebbed from the CDU/CSU's Armin Laschet and the Greens Annalena Baerbock and boosted - to a degree - that of the SPD. Now the nightmare scenario has the Green - CDU/CSU needing either the SPD or FDP to govern. If negotiations between the Greens and CDU/CSU would have been hard, adding a third into the mix will make talks at worst close to impossible and at best prolonged. As for the SPD, going into a coalition as the third party would be a sign of failure - though the siren voices of power will attract the leadership. Last time around the SPD virtually destroyed its political base in the interest of state and nation. Its militants will be wary of compounding the offence. It might work if they pip the Greens for second place, and they do have momentum on their side.

Back in May voters were disgruntled with the government's tardy vaccination campaign and its climate change policies. There were hints of a seismic shift and even a Green-led government as they briefly outpolled the CDU/CSU. But they manufactured from crumbs

'scandals' around the Green Chancellor candidate Baerbock (inflation of her CV, failing to report bonus payments, plagiarism allegations) which have hurt. Mere peccadillos compared to the CDU's own massive corruption, nevertheless Green support peaked and shrinks. Internal Green polling back then showed 8% of 'hardcore' supporters, 6% 'fellow-travellers' and a block of 6-12% of voters considering 'lending' their - often former SPD - support to control the CDU/CSU. Those voters are drifting back 'home' as the electorate find Scholz the best of a bad bunch; an acceptable candidate in a thin year.

It was argued Baerbock was an unknown quantity. It turns out that was a positive. The longer the negative headlines drummed the less attractive they found her. If anything Laschet's fared worse. To boring predictability he stirred in a series of gaffs and blunders. The favoured candidate to replace Merkel is 'none of the above'. There is a real prospect of a virtual three-way tie between CDU/CSU, Greens and SPD. If that's the case, with the FDP running interference, this trinity may leave Germany with no government for months and then a leaderless position without power. With Macron in deep trouble, after his Party's lacklustre performance in France's provincial elections, we may find that, to paraphrase former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, the one thing worse than EU Franco-German leadership is no leadership at all. **C**

Glyn Ford was a Labour MEP

Jewish Voice stifled?

Dave Lister reviews the calls for a halt to the purge of Jews from Labour

The Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) group has made a submission to the Equality and Human Rights Commission and to the Forde Enquiry claiming that one result of the Labour Party's efforts to counter anti-semitism has been a purge of Jews from the Party.

JVL state that they represent some 350 Jewish Labour Party members and that Jews have been disproportionately and unjustifiably investigated with at least 40 investigations of Jewish Party members for anti-semitism having taken place. They describe this as "administrative persecution" and "a form of discrimination".

JVL also assert that the party is only listening to the Jewish Labour Movement grouping within the Party and to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. They see this as acceptance of one view of Judaism, which includes support for the State of Israel, and a refusal to consider that there may be alternative views. They also point out that the Board of Deputies represents associated synagogues but not the large number of ultra-orthodox Haredi Jews and of secular Jews like myself.

The submission then documents a number of cases. They quote a JVL officer as saying that "I don't know of any precedent in which a group of Jews has been subjected to accusations of anti-semitism". They accept that there are cases where criticism of Israel

has been anti-semitic but in other cases criticism of Israel has brought the wrath of the Party down on individual members. Of JVL's 17 officers and committee members nine have been investigated for anti-semitism and three are currently suspended. They quote from a blog by Mike Cushman that "Defence of Israel has been adopted, in contradiction to all Jewish theology, as a religious obligation... It is inappropriate for the Labour Party to attempt to adjudicate in a dispute between Jews on aspects of Judaism and views on Israel".

There are really complex issues involved here. Is Judaism just a religion like Christianity and Islam or are the Jews also a people? The exclusive nature of Judaism is important here. Jews generally did not set out to make converts. I grew up in Edgware in a majority Jewish community and identify as Jewish as well as British, internationalist and socialist. When I had my DNA tested the result was that I am 95% Ashkenazi Jewish. However Jonathan Freedland has made the point about secular Jews that members of my generation may identify as Jewish but if we do not practice the religion will our children necessarily feel the same way?

In my view Keir Starmer was right, when he became leader of the Labour Party, to take a strong stand on anti-semitism, given the damage that accusations of anti-semitism have done to the Party. I also believe that it



is wrong to deny that any Labour Party member has been guilty of anti-semitism. However, it is important to have a clear idea of what anti-semitism is. It surely primarily refers to racist comments about Jews and giving credence to conspiracy theories. Thus there are some rich and powerful Jews but most rich and powerful people are not Jewish. Clearly anti-semitism has resulted in persecution and genocide but in a Labour Party context we are mainly concerned with what people have written and passed on. The woman who wrote that "Jews have long noses and support Spurs LOL" was surely being racist but criticism of Israel and support for Palestinian rights is not racist unless it is couched in racist terms. I think that if we were to proceed along these lines there would be less conflict.

We are faced with a corrupt, extremist, incompetent Tory government. The Labour Party needs to be united and effective going forward if we are to combat them successfully. **C**

Dave Lister is a member of Chartist EB

Printer ad

A Modest Proposal

Mel Benk on the return of Young Executives for Labour

The Labour Party is under New Management, and Young Executives for Labour (YXL) has been re-founded to make the most of the situation, for a sensible Labour Party that supports business. Our recent Annual General Meeting has elected a new set of officers, with myself re-elected as Secretary (once the upper age limit had been abolished). And, of course, the Re-Launch party afterwards was an excellent networking opportunity to link up the movers and shakers in business with the new movers and shakers in the Labour Party.

And what a lot of shaking there has been! The Labour Party is changing in a sensible, business friendly direction, and YXL stands ready to play its part in this transformation. Already we have put several potential high value donors in touch with the new Leadership. This is not just about getting extra cash. This is about a fundamental change in the balance of power, in a pro-business direction.

In the recent past, the Labour Party was totally dependent on lots of small donations from its members, with more from the trade unions. This created two problems. Firstly, a lot of the donations were small, and, obviously, a small donation is not good as a large donation from a high net worth individual. Secondly, all these donations from members came with an awful lot of strings attached. If the little members are allowed to fund the Labour Party, then they will want a say in making the policies of the Labour Party, even though they do not, usually, have the expertise of the business community in understanding how the economy actually works. The result? Lots of silly motions in favour of increasing the National Minimum Wage and re-nationalising the railways. Nobody seriously believes that you can run an economy like that. And nobody seriously believes that you can win a General Election like that, either. Yet, these policies were allowed to get through, and Labour duly lost.

Here in YXL, we want to play our part in re-connecting the Labour Party to its business roots. Let's face it, the Labour Party was carrying an awful lot of fat, in the form of excess members. This made the Labour Party unwieldy, un-



electable and, worst of all, uncontrollable. By trimming the fat, and getting rid of the excess members, we can sort this out, once and for all. Once the membership has been brought down, the remaining little members can never hold the financial reins again, meaning that the only way for the Labour Party to be able to afford to win an election (or do anything much) will be through working through high-value business people. So, this is not just about the current leadership (however much we like it), but also locks in any future Leaders to the business community, in case they start getting any funny ideas. Then the Labour Party will have no choice but to continue as the party of business, which so many of us want it to be.

Great strides have been made in reducing the Labour Party membership to manageable levels. But what of the future? Of course, this is partly self-regulating (Invisible Hand anyone?) as a lot of the dinosaurs realise that they are not welcome and lumber off to wherever it is that they go. But if we are to lock the Labour Party into being a small, but professional, organisation, then we need to go further. We cannot show the world (or the voters) that we are now business friendly, if members keep showing up looking scruffy and carrying ridiculous placards. So, we need to go further in

getting rid of these people. And here the anti-business dinosaurs have shot themselves in the foot, once again. All these members with a sense of entitlement, thinking that they should make the policy, keep passing ridiculous motions attacking Israel. Of course, this is horrendously bad for business. Supporting business must include supporting the defence industry (what else are we going to export?) and that must mean supporting the Israelis, who have so much cutting-edge kit that they have developed. But, on the plus side, it means that we get to expel them all for anti-semitism, and we can thin out the dinosaurs even quicker.

The Labour Party is being transformed into a safe, sensible party that supports business, and, in turn, is supported and funded by business. YXL stands ready to help drive this forward. But don't take my word for it. See for yourself. This year's Annual Conference will be the first one since the dark days of 2019. There will be far more business exhibition stalls, and far more business funded fringe meetings. There will also be far fewer irrelevant meetings organised by trade unions and "campaign" groups, which have nothing to say about business, and therefore have nothing to say about winning elections, either. The business of Labour is business, and we are well on our way! **C**

Mel Benk is Secretary of Young Executives for Labour (YXL) and has been fast-tracked onto the Labour Party's Future Candidates Programme

The funeral of America

Glyn Ford
on China's
Global
Dominance

Has China Won?
Kishore Mahbubani
Public Affairs £25.00

The long funeral of the American Empire is live. Trump was symptom, not the cause of America's decline. Obama glimpsed the failure of past and future and pivoted Washington to Asia. Yet, it was Trump that joined Congress and country in an anti-communism crusade without communists. Unlike in most everything else, here Biden has effortlessly taken that baton and run. Yet the danger for victors is they replay yesterday's war as tomorrow's. America's cold war Keynesianism forced the Soviet Empire to live a lie and run an arms race that it lost, left its civilian economy eviscerated and its population absent of hope, while American's economy only boomed. The US won that war - in the West. Now Washington is awake to the fresh danger, it plans to play the same gambit in the East with China. The problem is it's a different enemy.

Has China Won? looks at whether the US can stop history. Either end the rise and fall of great powers that has endured for half a millennium or at least craft a pre-emptive armistice that saves face and force. Mahbubani is a Singaporean diplomat and academic, who knows the strengths and weaknesses of both protagonists. His snapshot of the US is brutal. For him, in any meaningful sense of the term, the US is no longer a democracy. The Supreme Court legalised corruption. The American dream is a nightmare. Inequality is yawning and class is caste. There is greater social mobility in China than in the US, and US living standards are carried on the backs of China's poor.

Beijing's biggest danger is itself. Early arrogance and hubris, plus underestimating the strength and power of Washington's death throes as it loses global primacy, would threaten the seemingly inevitable. The US in sanctioning

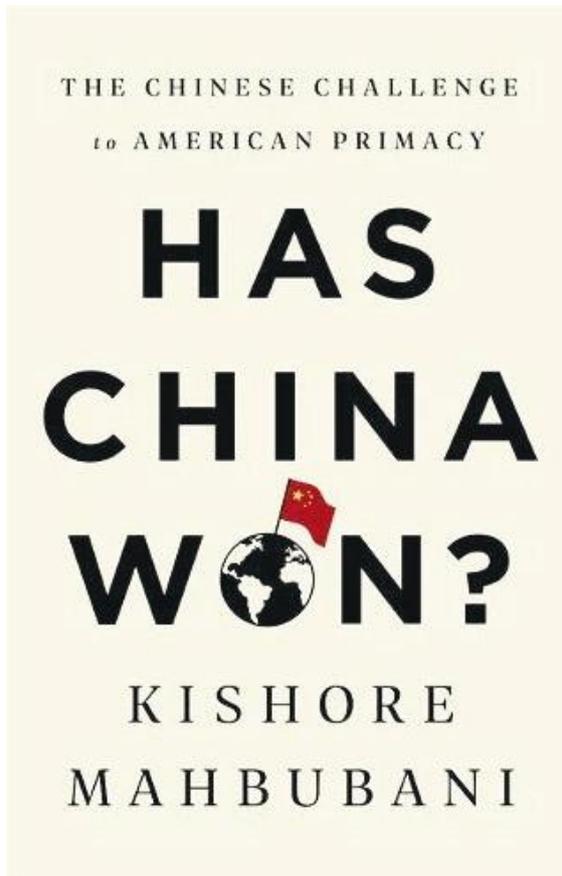
China is holding a gun to its own head and threatening to pull the trigger. Since the demise of the Soviet Union the world's manufacturing hub has migrated from North America to East Asia. Even the US global political architecture is under threat. The IMF and World Bank, UN and WTO are facing the challenge of China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Belt and Road Initiative and November's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The last uniting fourteen Asian countries

hollow from a country responsible for the deaths of 300,000 Muslims in the last three decades, not counting sanctions. Who's better equipped to cope? The self-confident, vigorous, embedded Chinese nationalists in Beijing or the hidebound, inflexible, doctrinaire and divided American polity? In one of the early Republic debates in 2016 six out of the nine candidates professed to not believing in evolution.

Is there a path to peace or is it inevitable that Washington is caught in 'Thucydides' trap, resorting to war in a last desperate attempt to put a brake on the growth of Chinese power? Mahbubani remains optimistic, even if peaceful transitions are the exception that proves the rule. One can concede that despite revolutionary socialist John Maclean's forecast to the contrary in his *The Coming War with America* (1919,) London was able, across 1916-45, to swallow its pride and power and surrender global Britain in Empire for the reflected glory of America's subaltern. But that averted passage of arms was within the Anglo-Saxon 'tribe'. The coming switch crosses races. The threat of the 'yellow peril' is being flaunted in Washington with a trepidation that would have been impossible to prefigure a short century ago as Washington started to surge past London on the inside lane. China is a threat to the Western way of life and no

a mere shuffling of the global pecking order.

In today's global world there are no hiding places. Nevertheless, it is in Europe's interest to try to smooth the passage. Certainly, both the European Union and the United Kingdom need an Indo-Pacific Strategy, but one that is not cut and pasted from the Trump-Biden playbook. An independent EU Security and Defence policy is long overdue, if only to avoid NATO's transposition to the South China Sea alongside Britain's Aircraft Carrier Queen Elizabeth.



around China with 30% of the world's population and GDP offering WTO-lite for those who find the West's version weighed too heavily towards self-interest.

China has its internal problems. In Hong Kong Beijing let the real estate tycoons drive the working poor into a 'rabbit hutch' existence that bred dissent. In Tibet it's only the 81 year old Dalai Lama that's holding the line against Tibetan nationalism's return to violence, while in Xinjiang the over-reaction to Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism is arming Western reaction. Yet claims of genocide ring

Champion of workers' democracy

Andrew Coates
on essays
from a
critical
Luxemburgist



The Living Flame, The Revolutionary Passion of Rosa Luxemburg
Paul Le Blanc
Haymarket Books £20

Rosa Luxemburg is a figure who has a special place in the heart of the left. The American socialist writer Paul Le Blanc begins *The Living Flame* by noting her “profound warmth and humanity”. Murdered after the Berlin Spartakus uprising by right wing Freikorps in 1919 she continues to exert an influence. Her inspiring values, he continues have made her accessible to a large audience, one growing with the publication in English of the Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg. Le Blanc continues by recounting his own introduction to her in C. Wright Mills’s book *The Marxists* (1961), a still valuable paperback anthology of the wrings of founding Marxists.

The present work contains a selection of Le Blanc’s accessible

essays including an interview on Rosa Luxemburg. A central theme is her commitment to workers’ democracy. The leading critic of ‘revisionism’, the anti-Marxist tendency in the German Social Democratic Party she was also an early critic in the 1900s of Lenin’s Bolshevik centralism. Le Blanc argues that her hostile views on Lenin’s ‘Blanquism’ simply “cannot hold up under the weight of facts”. At the same time Le Blanc notes the “sectarian potential in Lenin’s conception...”

A lengthy attempt to justify Bolshevik organisation in the wake of mass strikes of 1905 follows. He claims a number of times that Luxemburg respected and liked Lenin. The writer does not make comparisons with contemporary left groups whose own versions of democratic centralism have faced strong criticism over the decades often from making reference to ‘Luxemburgism’.

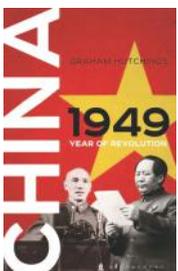
In a not distant vein Le Blanc

writes of Luxemburg’s criticisms of the Bolshevik regime after the Russian Revolution that she was wrong to attack the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. The soviets were more democratic – a view he does not back up with evidence. Yet he states, “for me, her defence of freedom and democracy as being at the core of socialism is essential.” We shall never know if the workers would have voted in a 1920s free and fair Russian general election as they only had Lenin’s party and its fellow travellers to vote for in the Soviet system.

The Living Flame draws attention to Luxemburg’s writing on capital accumulation imperialism and their influence on figures such as Hannah Arendt, and more recently, the economist David Harvey. With Paul Le Blanc’s clarity and depth of reference this short book can be recommended to anybody interested in socialism and Rosa Luxemburg.

Mao versus Chiang

Duncan Bowie
on a Year of
Revolution



China 1949
Graham Hutchings
Bloomsbury £20

I am not normally a fan of single year history books, especially those which start off by seeking to justify the choice of year. The Communist struggle to take power in China was a notably long march. Hutchings’ book does however give the backstory to the events of his chosen year, which concludes with the Communist military capture of the mainland and Chiang-Kai-Shek’s retreat to Taiwan. Most studies of the Chinese revolution focus on the Communist side of the civil war, often from a partisan perspective. One of the benefits of Hutchings’ narrative is that he gives equal attention to the nationalist republican side in the civil war. The book is more than a simple narrative of military campaigns, which to anyone other than a military historian can be somewhat tedious, as he considers the politics within each side of the civil war, as well as the relations between political and military leaders.

Hutchings, while not belittling

the modernising achievements of the early years of Chiang’s administration, exposes the conflicts within the nationalist regime, examining the factional behaviour of competing provincial warlords and the (temporary) abdication of Chiang in favour of Li Zongren, who became acting president in the final months of 1949, a significant development often ignored in more summary histories. Hutchings also focuses on the relationships between Mao and the communist generals, giving specific attention to the role of Bai Chongxi.

Rather than focus on the long march and the politics of rural communism, which has been the subject of many previous studies, Hutchings pays attention to the fall of the major urban centres to the Communists – first Beijing (or Beiping as it was then called), then the nationalist capital of Nanjing, and finally Shanghai, also considering the impact on Hong Kong, which was under threat of Chinese communist takeover. Hutchings argues that both Taiwan and Hong Kong were saved from Communist occupation by the Korean war where the

US, having pursued a policy of non-intervention in the civil war in China, in effect abandoning their ally, Chiang-Kai-Shek, now led a strategy of communist containment. Hutchings uses a wide range of sources, including memoirs of Chinese and Europeans. The narrative is enlivened by following the trajectories of individuals across the selected year and beyond. Hutchings also helpfully provides a brief note on what happened to his principal characters after the fateful year. He also provides a useful summary of developments in the early years of Communist rule and an afterword on subsequent international developments.

This is an excellent study and highly recommended. For those interested in the republican government, while this is still under-researched, there are two good biographies of Chiang Kai Shek, both having ‘Generalissimo’ as the title - Jonathan Fenby’s biography of 2005 and Jay Taylor’s study of 2009, the latter also covering China’s post 1949 rule of Taiwan. The studies of Mao and Communist China are too numerous to mention.

Not the right kind of hero?

Duncan Bowie
on Putin's
Nemesis

Navalny
Jan Matti Dollbaum, Morvan Lallouet
and Ben Noble
Hurst £20

This is the first biography of Navalny in English. Navalny has come to the fore as the leading dissident – or at least opponent of Putin in Russia. Previous leading dissidents such as the politician Boris Nemstov, the defected Soviet agent Alexander Litvinenko and the journalist Anna Politkovskaya have been assassinated, while a number of Putin's London based critics have met suspicious deaths. Navalny, like Sergei Skripal survived poisoning, though is again in jail in Russia. Navalny can at least be considered to be brave in returning voluntarily to Russia, he knew he would be imprisoned. His mistake was perhaps in believing he was too well known internationally to be killed by the Russian state, though in this belief that he would be rescued by the 'west' he may perhaps be wrong.

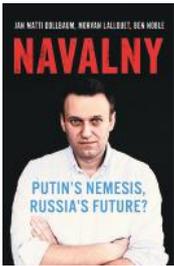
Navalny is known for his anti-corruption campaigns and using social media to attack Putin and his leadership group (sometimes referred to as his 'cronies'.) What is less known are what he actually stands for. It is significant that the Russian ambassador in London in a recent interview with Channel 4

news, could point out that Navalny did not appear to have a political, social or economic programme. Mr Kelin would appear to be making a valid point. The three co-authors of this book, academic researchers based in London, Canterbury and Bremen, attempt to get to grips with what Navalny believes. The book is divided into three main sections – the anti-corruption activities; the politician and the protestor.

Navalny seems to be a free market liberal, in that he supports the free market. In his early years he was involved in a number of enterprises which have led to a series of court cases. He is not a believer in the state having a greater role in management of the economy or provision of services to the population – he is not a socialist or a collectivist. As far as social policy is concerned, he has little to say. While attacking the political elite, he does not appear to have any view on how wealth or income could be distributed more fairly. As far as his politics are evident, he is clearly a Russian nationalist, having been involved with right wing nationalist groups and opposed immigration to Russia from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. While claiming to advocate democracy, he has no specific proposals for electoral reform or to increase political devolution. He has joined and left a number of political organisations, his depar-

tures generally relating to disagreements with rival leaders, apparently on who should be leader rather than on policy. He in fact has a reputation for being somewhat autocratic in relation to colleagues within organisations he has controlled. This is not a pretty picture, and perhaps is unavoidable within the current political context within Russia.

There has been some controversy over Amnesty International's decision to remove Navalny's status as a 'Prisoner of Conscience' on the basis of some of the views he had expressed. While clearly Navalny's actions do not justify his continued detention by the Russian state authorities, we need to avoid taking the simplistic perspective that because Putin is clearly authoritarian and anti-democratic (leaving aside, putting it mildly, his problematic international policies), we need to be wary of viewing Navalny as an alternative leader of Russia. He may organise protests but he has not actually been elected to any position at either regional or national level. While social media has allowed him to develop a reputation as a leader of protest, perhaps a clearer political position and programme is needed from him before socialists in the west, and Amnesty International, would feel more comfortable about associating with him.



Africa, Empire and Fleet Street

Duncan Bowie
on
journalism
and
imperialism

Africa, Empire and Fleet Street
Jonathan Derrick
Hurst £35

This is a study of the journalist, Albert Cartwright, who edited a series of journals in the first half of the 20th century, including the journal West Africa, which he founded in 1917 and edited until 1947. Derrick has previously written an excellent book on African nationalists – Africa's Agitators, which was reviewed in Chartist. Derrick worked for the West Africa journal in the 1960's and in its final years before its closure in 2003.

Official and semi-official histories of publications can be tedious for the non-specialist. The West Africa journal was initially primarily a business publication focusing

on trade between Britain and West Africa – traders were its main audience. It did however increasingly cover issues of governance within the British West African colonies – Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Its politics can be described as liberal rather than nationalist. It was edited from Fleet Street though included contributions from African leaders.

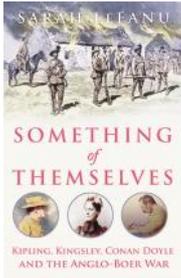
Cartwright started his career as a journalist in South Africa. He was actively involved in what may be best described as liberal politics in both the Cape Colony and Transvaal between 1889 and 1911. He was an opponent of both Boer nationalism and of Rhodes' aggressive imperialism. He was a colleague of politicians who were trying to ensure collaboration between Boers and British settlers

and who also recognised that native Africans should have a role in local governance. What is often forgotten is that Africans actually had a vote so long as they met property and educational criteria. The early section of Derrick's book provides a very useful narrative of Cartwright's work with politicians such as John X Merriman and W P Schreiner, both of whom were Prime Ministers of the Cape Colony. Derrick's first chapter also provides a useful overview of earlier newspapers dealing with South and West Africa, including newspapers run by native Africans as well as those by European settlers. This is therefore a useful book, especially since it covers an extensive chronological timescale – from Victorian empire to the early years of decolonisation.



Writers on the Boer War

Duncan Bowie
on Kipling,
Kingsley and
Conan Doyle



Something of Themselves
Sarah Lefanu
Hurst £25

This is a group biography of the impact of the Boer war on three imperialist writers. Rudyard Kipling, Mary Kingsley and Arthur Conan Doyle all visited South Africa during the war - Kipling as a journalist; Kingsley as a nurse and Doyle as a doctor. All three were renowned in British literary circles at the time. Kipling was seen as the poet of imperialism - he had visited South Africa before and was a friend of Cecil Rhodes. Kingsley had already published her two studies of West Africa and was known as an explorer and scientist as well as a writer. Conan Doyle had written his first set of Sherlock Holmes stories.

Although Lefanu's focus is on the Boer war, and the experiences of her three subjects in that two-year period, she effectively

tells their back stories - their personal lives as well as their literary achievements. Kipling is shown to be a more critical imperialist than usually perceived, though one who is nevertheless convinced of the rightness of the British case in South Africa, his empathy is with the common soldier rather than with the military elite. Kingsley is shown to have been critical of British colonial administration in West Africa - in South Africa she ends up nursing Boer prisoners of war, with whom she has a growing sympathy. Doyle is seen as having growing respect for the Boers but most focused on getting his narrative of the war published before that any of his rivals.

Lefanu presents a short interlude of brief contributions by or on other participants including the radical Journalist Henry Nevinson who reported on the Ladysmith siege, Sol Plaatje, an interpreter at Mafeking and later a founder of the African National

Congress, the Transvaal president Paul Kruger, the Anglo-Irish diplomat Roger Casement, the Indian stretcher-bearer Mohandas Ghandi, the Xhosa journalist John Tengo Jabava and the feminist writer, Olive Schreiner, who was married to a leading progressive (and opponent of Rhodes) South African politician.

Lefanu also reviews the 'after-life' of her three subjects - Kingsley died of TB in South Africa and her main legacy was the Africa Society founded in her memory. Kipling returned to write Kim and the Just So Stories, Conan Doyle to more Sherlock Holmes stories but also to getting involved in E D Morel's Congo Reform campaign. All three subjects have of course had previous biographies, but Lefanu's new book is well worth reading and does give a different perspective on the three writers as well as provide a useful, if partial, narrative of the war.

Nigel Watt
on migrants
in Italy

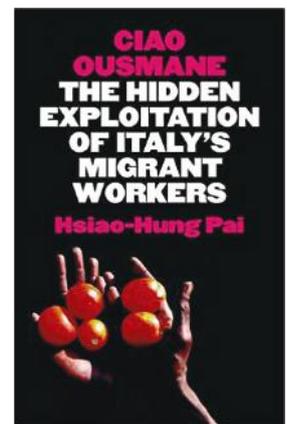
Migrant voices

Ciao Ousmane. The hidden exploitation of Italy's migrant workers
Hsiao-Hung Pai
Hurst £20

The countries of 'the North' are confused in their reaction to migration: they want cheap labour but are fearful of being flooded by alien immigrants. Nowhere is this starker than in Italy which, because of its geography, receives a big influx of migrants who have survived the dangerous crossing over the Mediterranean from Libya. This book tries to see the story through the eyes of the migrants themselves. The author has spent time with Benjamin, Mohammed, Sanji, Alieu and others - young men (and very few women) mostly from the Gambia, Senegal and Nigeria who had experienced murderous treatment in Libya and found Italy only marginally better. These migrants were working mostly in western Sicily and sometimes in Calabria. The Ousmane in the title was squatting in a derelict farmhouse. He died when lighting a match, causing a gas cylinder to explode. He had been one of the luckier ones. He had received his

papers, had a mattress to sleep on and a job picking olives. Yet the local Italian community and authorities neither knew nor cared. His dream was to earn enough to support his parents in Senegal.

Most of the other migrants named in the book survived but the hardship they endured - and still endure - is incredible. They move from place to place where there is work. No accommodation is provided by the government or by the farmers, who depend on them for their harvest of oranges, asparagus, tomatoes, olives and pay them as little as possible, even less than the Tunisian and Romanian workers. The racist attitudes of the farmers and most of the population are beyond the worst of Britain seventy years ago. Africans cannot get a room even if they can afford rent. When a 'tent city' is established, the authorities bulldoze it. When they occupied deserted houses (of which there are many since many of the local people have migrated north or abroad) they had lie low. One town in Calabria, Riace, tried to get some good publicity as a place of integration. It was not allowed to last - and Italian politicians from Berlusconi to Salvini and the leaders of the



Five Star Movement competed in their anti-migrant rhetoric and action. Lawyers demanded extortionate fees for help with immigration papers. The Mafia was a constant presence.

The book is somewhat repetitive as so many of the migrants' experiences are equally ghastly. It gives little indication of conditions further north in Italy but hints that they are equally bad, especially in the agricultural sector which is where the economy needs them most. I have started looking carefully at the origin of stuff I buy in the supermarket!

Don Flynn
on
socialism
and work

Dagenham at the world's centre

The Dignity of Labour
Jon Cruddas
Polity, £14.99

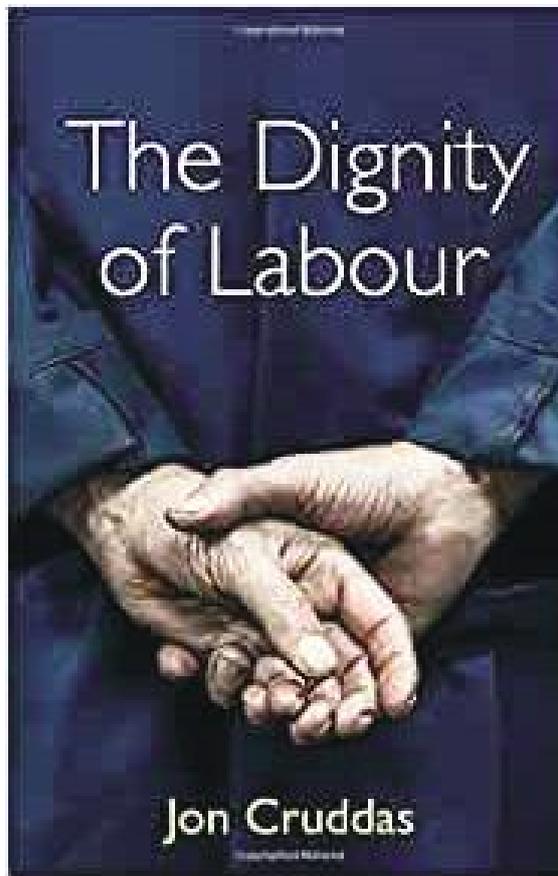
Jon Cruddas sets out the argument that work has been displaced as a matter of central concern for the left by a passion for redistribution. This would once have been a criticism levelled at revisionist social democracy, with its belief that the capitalist system itself could be left intact so long as it conceded a welfare state to citizens. But the principal objects of Cruddas's ire are the Marxian-inflected journalists Paul Mason and Aaron Bastoni, with the latter's advocacy of fully-automated luxury communism being particularly distasteful.

Cruddas sees in these writers a celebration of the end of work, brought about by the rise of AI-level robots and the ushering in of a new age of abundant leisure for the masses. He takes a stand against this primarily because it ignores the role which work plays in sustaining positive identities and the intrinsic enjoyment to be got from physical and mental labour which also provides the bounds for cooperation and solidarity between individuals. But another important part of his argument is that the full and complete automation of society just isn't going to happen. The claims for the robotic revolution and what it portends are indeed deeply contested, and Cruddas comes down on the side of seeing it as a tide that will not wash away the need for human labour.

The book advances its claims on two distinct fronts. The first of these is the charge that the technology utopians have a woolly grasp on labour value theory – more Ricardian than Marxist – and the second that the truth of what is going on can be fully revealed through the lens of the constituency that Cruddas represents in Parliament, Dagenham and Rainham. This might seem to make his argument concrete and highly relevant; but in fact the parochialism of his perspective blinds him to the obvious fact that labour today can't really be

understood outside of its vast, global context.

That idea is of the Essex town of Dagenham, at least in its heyday, as an ideal staging post for what a real advance towards socialism might look like. In the decades up to the 1980s the main features of Dagenham life were the huge council estate at Beacontree, providing good quality affordable housing to thousands of families, the Ford Motor production plant with its 40,000 strong workforce, and a commu-



nity ethos which instilled pride in working class identity. Yet this proved insufficient when it came to dealing with the challenges of Thatcherism and its programme of deindustrialisation in the 1980s. Cruddas hints at the tenant right to buy council homes as one of the reasons for the fall from grace but his consideration of the wider implications of neoliberal economic perspectives adopted by the resurgent right is limited to a discussion of the manoeuvrings of Ford's US-based managers. In truth this was just one local skirmish in a bigger battle shaped by the new forms of global capitalism.

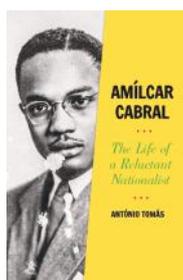
Cruddas is right to be sceptical about claims for technology undermining work in modern economies. But the question then has to be why it is that the demand for labour has fallen so sharply across the last four decades, measured by near-stagnant real wages, the growth of the phenomenon of under-employment, and flatlining productivity? It is astonishing that he has a gloss on all of these points without once mentioning the globalisation of wage labour, dramatically expanding from the 1970s onwards as capitalism expanded its foreign direct investment operations, outsourcing through low-cost producers managed through 'arms-length' management techniques. Capitalism, in other words, dramatically reduced the demand for labour in its heartlands by finding ways to corral a larger share of the world's population into wage labour.

It really ought to be impossible to talk about the plight of labour in the world today without making this new form of imperialism the context for understanding developments. Cruddas's honourable defence of the global workers who only lately washed up on the Beacontree estate decades after it was completed for what was seen as a white working class is welcome. But until it is integrated into a more comprehensive account of the way capitalism exploits labour under the neoliberal dispensation it falls short of what is needed.

Cruddas is right to proclaim the need for a revival of left politics that centres on the work process and how it should be re-humanised rather than gleefully abandoned to the false hope of full automation. He has a point in registering deep scepticism about the current fashion for a universal basic income as a magic bullet to revive the left. But his Dagenham-centric model for explaining the travails of labour leaves too much unsaid about the challenges the left really faces.

Reluctant nationalist?

Nigel Watt
on a hero for the left



AMILCAR CABRAL
António Tomás
Hurst £30

Leading the struggle against Portuguese fascist colonialism, Amilcar Cabral was a hero for us on the left in 1971. That year I was invited to be a security man when he addressed a big crowd at the Central Hall, Westminster. Luckily no-one in the hall appeared to want to kill him – but he was killed, by some militants of his own party, two years later.

This book is a detailed and well-researched biography. The author is an Angolan journalist with a doctorate in Anthropology. Portuguese Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands were very different. Guinea is a small, thickly forested piece of the tropical mainland bordering Senegal and Guinea-Conakry with numerous ethnic divisions and languages; the Cape Verde Islands, poor and arid, had been settled long before by people mainly of African descent but Portuguese by language and culture. In fact, the colonial officials in Guinea were mostly Cape Verdeans, of whom Cabral's father was one.

Amilcar studied agricultural engineering in Lisbon where he was influenced by revolutionary ideas. He then worked in Guinea where his work put him in close contact with the people. It was the sudden independence of French Guinea in 1958 when Sékou Touré led the country against De Gaulle's neo-colonialist plans that gave Cabral the inspiration and the means to organise violent resistance inside the Portuguese territory, although the PAIGC, the party for independence of both territories, had been founded in 1956. Cabral was not reluctant but, with his suit and tie he was not a typical revolutionary going around in military fatigues. He was most adept at diplomacy and travelled widely – including a first visit to London where he met Basil Davidson – and the PAIGC thus gained much international support from the few independent African countries, from the Communist world and some from the west, especially Sweden. He was not a Communist and he managed to finesse his message to satisfy all sides, even visiting the US Congress and having an audience with the Pope.

The battle within Guinea was not enormously successful. When Antonio Spínola took over as governor he counter attacked, using one ethnic group against the others and the liberated areas where the PAIGC had established a brilliant network of schools and clinics were put under great pressure.

Meanwhile the Portuguese fascist state, the Estado Novo was beginning to crack up. The army suffered massive desertion and loss of morale. Salazar had given way to Caetano and a disastrous raid on Conakry succeeded in destroying Touré's useless airforce but failed to kill Cabral. He was in fact assassinated in 1973 by some of his Guinean followers, although Spínola was blamed for it. There had in fact been numerous plots – but the underlying cause was the resentment of Guineans to a leader seen as a bossy Cape Verdean. A year later, the "Carnation Revolution" overthrew the regime in Lisbon and a law was passed to decolonize Portugal's overseas territories. The PAIGC ruled Guinea and Cape Verde until 1991 when finally the two ill-assorted countries went their separate ways.

Hackney - always 'woke'

Linda Wainwright
on spotlighting East End women

Women from Hackney's History
Hackney Society £12.99

Women from Hackney's History is a small but important work produced by The Hackney Society and Hackney History. It was written and produced entirely by Hackney women volunteers. It's well laid out with excellent graphics and has an attractively tactile cover.

The book is a collection of 113 short histories of women with a Hackney connection over the last five centuries. The stories include Elizabeth Cresswell (17thC brothel keeper), Eliza Askew (involved in the 1880s strike which unionized unskilled workers), Edith Garrud (jui-jitsu suffragette), Tricia Okoruwa (educator), Andrea Enisuoh (community activist), Khadija Saye (artist) and Barbara Windsor (actor), not to mention Mary Wolstonecraft.

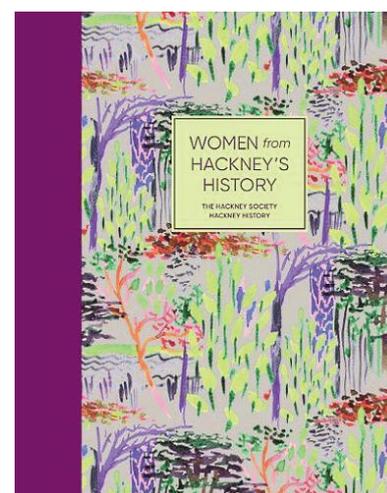
Their stories tell of hardships, adversity and successes as social,

educational, medical and political reformers; writers, artists, musicians and film producers; chemists and engineers.

The book is significant in at least two ways. First, it's an engaging and informative introduction to some of the remarkable women whose achievements have often been unacknowledged (blue plaques for women in Hackney are rare). These women are inspirational role models for women today and confirm that one does not have to live in the privileged milieux of Bloomsbury or Hampstead to effect change and make a contribution to society.

Second, the women's stories show how much Hackney has changed over the centuries. The book also highlights how many of the 'old' problems are still with us in the areas of housing, poverty, education, and social inequalities. The women's histories underline the importance of being awake and sensitive to social injustices in order to overcome these many challenges.

Hackney is now synonymous with 'woke culture' and it is often thought that this is a recent mind set as a result of the trendy 'beardification' of the borough. This book shows that this is not a new characterization of the area. Hackney has always been woke.



Climate at tipping point

Nigel Doggett is a member of Chartist EB

Nigel Doggett says the IPCC sounds the alarm but magical thinking rules the UK government approach

As the saying goes, science is true whether you believe in it or not. The long-heralded reckoning on global heating is looming, as set out in the publication of the 6th scientific Assessment Report (AR6 WGI) from the IPCC. This develops the messages of the previous report in 2013:

- The global mean surface temperature has risen by 1.08°C since pre-industrial times and the 1.5° target is likely to be breached in the early 2030s; but achieving net zero emissions will rapidly reduce the rate of heating and even start to reduce surface temperatures.

- Global mean land temperatures have already risen by 1.59° (and more in polar regions) and, even with very low emissions temperatures, will remain above the latest decade until at least 2100, with worse impacts than those we already struggle to handle.

- Methane (CH4) leaking from fossil fuel extraction, meat and dairy agriculture and melting permafrost is an increasing driver, second only to carbon dioxide (CO2).

- Potential tipping points triggered by cumulative temperature rises that might accelerate warming include rapid melting of the Antarctic and Greenland ice shelves and permafrost regions, as well as die back in forests.

- The rate of sea level rise increased to 3.7mm/year to a total of 20cm between 1901 and 2018, driven by thermal expansion and increasingly by melting ice sheets and glaciers.

Its conclusions are stark, notably:

- “Unless there are immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to 1.5°C will be beyond reach.”

- “To limit global warming, strong, rapid, and sus-



tained reductions in CO2, methane, and other greenhouse gases are necessary.”

Two recent research reports have also concluded:

- Ongoing deforestation in the vital Amazon basin makes it a net source of carbon emissions; and,

- The Atlantic gulf stream that brings warmer water (and weather) to North West Europe is starting to break down.

Magical thinking is a term used for the belief that one’s thoughts correspond with performing an action, often defying laws of causality. The last five years has provided ample evidence for its prevalence in the UK Government, manifested in at least three major crises: Brexit, Covid and now Afghanistan. Each time statements of intent were presented without either factual backing or proper contingency planning.

Likewise, Boris Johnson is still failing to address the climate emergency seriously, see-sawing between grandstanding and genuflecting to his ‘real boss’ the Telegraph and right wingers. The expansion of oil drilling in the North Sea and opening a new Cumbrian coalfield have only been put on hold to save face at the November COP26. There are clear divisions on the right, with some Conservatives, including COP26 President Alok Sharma, the 100 MP-strong Conservative Environment Network and Climate Change Committee chair Lord Deben, alongside much of big business, taking it seriously, though most cling to free enterprise mantras rather than accepting the

need for government intervention. But others such as Nigel Lawson’s notorious Global Warming Policy (sic) Foundation claim action plans are unaffordable in the wake of the Covid pandemic. New GWPF trustee Steve Baker stated “I’m increasingly concerned about the astronomical costs of the current Net Zero plans. ... [Taken] to their logical conclusion, it would mean the end of the comfortable lifestyles we have enjoyed for generations.” (Clearly a man with a short and selective memory, despite his recent discovery of poverty in his Wycombe constituency.) Such sentiments are at odds with leading economists and financiers such as Nicholas Stern and Mark Carney who recognize the case for rapid decarbonisation whereby even narrow cost benefit analyses show climate mitigation as a sound investment.

Erstwhile climate sceptics and deniers are also switching tack to “it’s too late and we must look after ourselves”. This message, just as with the pandemic would be disastrous. We need international solidarity with the Global South to create resilient sustainable social and technological systems worldwide: ‘either we hang together or we hang separately’. A political tipping point may be underway to reach an international consensus, with or without leadership from the UK government. The Labour Party Conference in September needs to keep climate firmly on the agenda, applying pressure for both domestic and coordinated international action in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow. **C**

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