CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#313 November/December 2021

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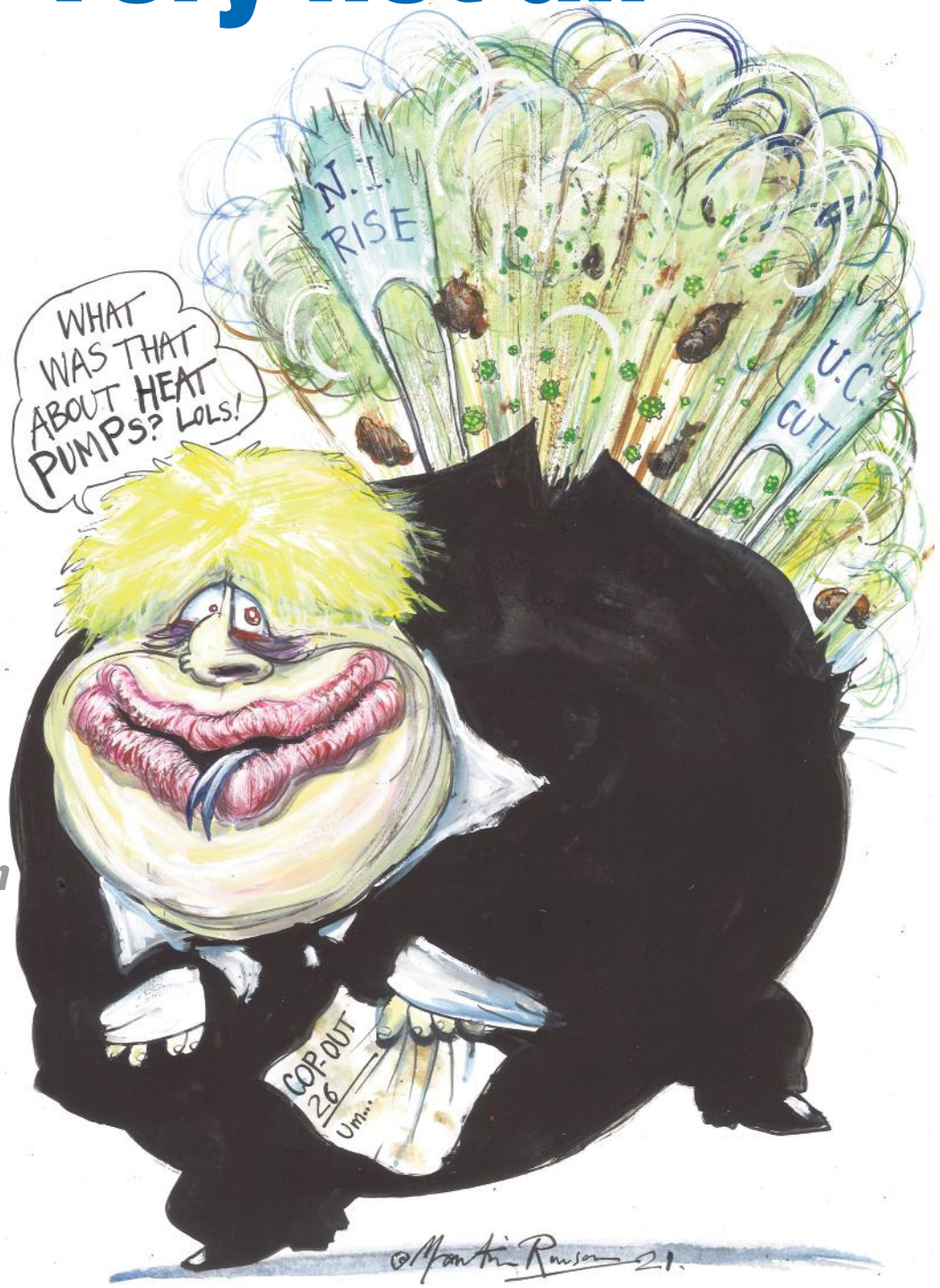
Tory hot air



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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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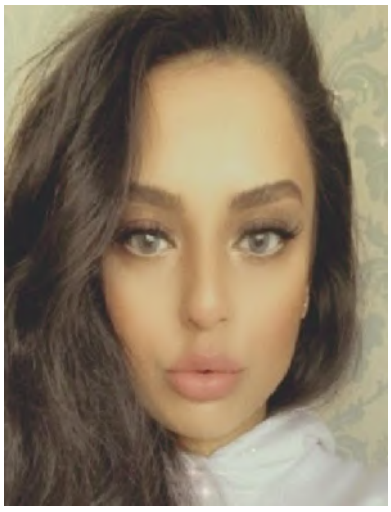

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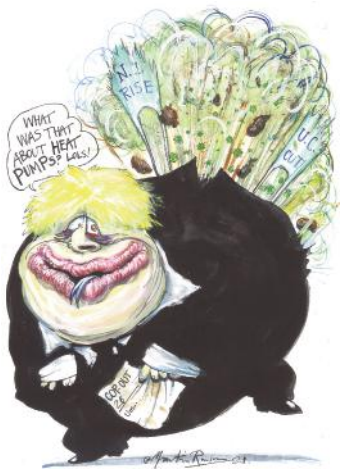


Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
Number 313 **November/December 2021**

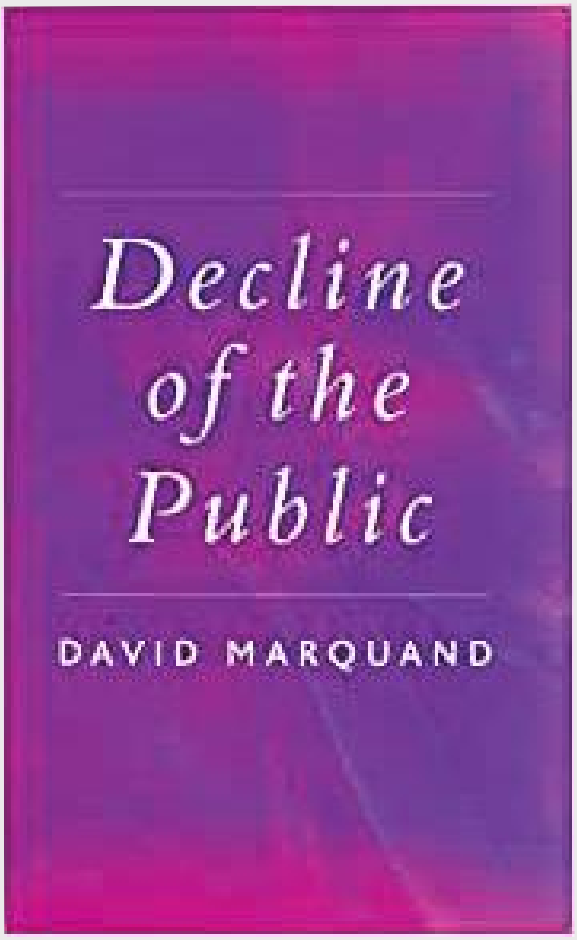
REGULARS

OUR HISTORY 99

David Marquand Decline of the Public 2004

Marquand is an academic and former Labour MP. Son of the Labour MP, Hilary Marquand, who was a Minister in Attlee's post-war governments, David Marquand was MP for Ashfield from 1966 to 1977, when he resigned to take up the position of chief advisor to Roy Jenkins as President of the European Commission. Marquand joined the Social Democrat Party, sitting on its national executive and standing unsuccessfully for parliament, and then joining the Liberal Democrats on the merger of the SDP and the Liberal Party. He re-joined the Labour Party in 1995 following Tony Blair's election to the leadership. Being more critical of Blair's government, he signed the founding statement of the left-wing group Compass in 2003. In 2016 it was reported that he had joined Plaid Cymru. Marquand has taught political science at several universities and between 1996 and 2002 was principal of Mansfield College, Oxford. In 1977 Marquand published what is the classic biography of Ramsay Macdonald. This was followed in 1988 by *The Unprincipled Society*, *The New Reckoning: Capitalism, States and Citizens* in 1997, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* in 1999 and the *Decline of the Public* in 2004, subtitled 'The Hollowing-out of Citizenship'. He has contributed to a wide range of books and pamphlets, most focusing on British and European politics and some tracking changes in Labour Party politics over the last forty years. In 2014, he published *Mammon's Kingdom*, subtitled 'An Essay on Britain Now', which was an excoriating attack on Britain's political culture.

"Towards a New Public Philosophy:



1. A vigorous and extensive public domain is fundamental to a civilised society, to crucially important forms of human flourishing, and, not least, to democratic citizenship.

2. Belief in the possibility of public interest, distinct from private interests, is fundamental to the public domain and public discourse based on that belief.

3. In the public domain, citizen rights trump both market power and the ties of family, friendship, neighbourhood and connection.

4. The public domain is, in a special sense, the domain of trust. Trust relationships are fundamental to it: public trust is symbiotically connected with the contestations, debates and negotiations, and the value of equity and citizenship, which are of its essence.

5. It follows that the public domain must be protected from the ever-present threat of incursion by the market and private domains.

6. In our time, the chief vehicles for market incursion are the pervasive notion that the public domain institutions should be managed as though they were market institutions, and the rhetoric of consumerism.

7. The rule of law, embodied in an independent authoritative judiciary, and a disinterested non-partisan professional civil service, have crucial parts to play in protecting the public domain from such incursions.

8. The goods of the public domain must not be treated as commodities or surrogate commodities. Performance indicators designed to mimic the indicators of the market domain are therefore out of place in the public domain, and do more harm than good.

9. By the same token, the language of buyer and seller, producer and consumer, does not belong in the public domain; nor do the relationships which this language implies. People are consumers only in the market domain; in the public domain, they are citizens. Attempts to force these relationships into a market mould undermine the service ethic which is the true guarantor of quality in the public domain. In doing so, they impoverish the entire society.

10. The search for competitiveness - in practice, for higher productivity, achieved by substituting capital for labour- which is proper to the market domain, is also out of place in the public domain.

11. Professions, professionalism and professional ethic are inextricably linked to the public domain. This is most obviously true of public-sector professions, which serve the public interest by definition; but it is also true of private-sector professionals, whose duty is to serve the wider public interest as well as the private interests of their own clients.

12. To carry out their duties, professionals must have the autonomy to exercise their judgement as they see fit. This means that professional performance cannot be assessed, or professional career prospects determined, solely or even mainly by market criteria or criteria that mimic those of the market place.

13. Wrongly used, state power can do as much damage to the public domain as market power. To guard against that danger, constitutional checks and balances supported by strong and vigorous intermediate institutions, standing between the state and the individual, are indispensable."

Tory failures - Labour opportunity

We are being led by a charlatan and a chameleon. Boris Johnson's populism has the propensity to adopt ever changing colours to suit the political climate. One week 'high wages, high skills', the next insisting nurses will only get a 3% pay rise, despite predictions of 5% inflation by the year end. Then saying he will not reach for the lever marked 'immigration', only to extend visas for European haulage drivers to six months with unlimited deliveries in the face of a 100,000 driver shortage. Applauding Chancellor Sunak's National Insurance hike while taking away £20 in Universal Credit uplift from millions of poorer families. Millions for a royal yacht, billions for Trident replacement while billions are cut from overseas aid and public services struggle with underfunding.

Then we have Lord Frost's threats to tear up the Northern Ireland protocol (effectively scrambling the Good Friday peace agreement) negotiated by Tory leaders and praised as a masterful deal. Levelling up, but not for our overstretched social care workers, as **Maeve Cohen** and **Georgia Sangster** write about our broken system. Levelling up but not for local councils having endured 50% cuts in their budgets over the past 11 years of Tory austerity. **Duncan Bowie** explains the doublespeak behind Tory plans.

Just like 'Get Brexit done' we are now told Covid-19 is as good as done so we can dispense with mask wearing and social distancing while infections hit 50,000 a day. Forget the developing world where as **Nick Dearden** highlights, over 100 countries have barely vaccinated 2% of their populations while being denied financial help or vaccine patent waivers to produce their own. The UK has one of the world's highest death rates from Covid with huge effects for NHS waiting lists. The joint select committee report has exposed countless shortcomings in the government's handling of the pandemic, but lessons will not be learned as Johnson pushes the Public Inquiry back into 2022.

So this is a prime minister who speaks with a forked tongue about 'sunlit uplands' while the cost of living crisis hits millions of families. **Dennis Leech** looks at the cost of Tory economic policies while skewering Labour's stubborn commitment to 'fiscal discipline'. In the midst of this fallout from Covid and Brexit the opinion polls remain firmly in the Tories' favour.

Why is this? A lot is to do with Keir Starmer's lacklustre leadership. Labour spent much of its recent conference shooting itself in the foot. As **Peter Kenyon** explains, first we had Starmer's foolhardy bid to turn the clock back on Labour's now well established method of leader election by reintroducing the old electoral college. This failed but showed the party preoccupied with internal wrangles. Then the shabby attempt to thwart conference supporting a £15 living wage leading to shadow employment minister Andy McDonald's resignation. Further, at a time when energy prices for millions are going through the roof, with multiple company failures, the leader distanced himself from public ownership of energy, one of his 10 election pledges. Currently Labour is spending more on legal fees against its own members than on campaigning. Membership has haemorrhaged by over 100,000.

So while there were many good policies on housing, education, mental health, employment (including rejecting fire and rehire) agreed at conference the public image of a unified party was sadly lacking. Chartist has put its weight behind a push for the party to commit to electoral reform. As part of Labour for a New Democracy we produced a special democracy supplement. **Mary Southcott** reports that almost 80% of CLPs supported the composite motion, but the leadership was silent on democracy. Two unions, the GMB and Unite were able to block progress but Unite's Policy Conference has just rejected first past the post and calls for consultation. Labour would have to win over 125 seats at the next election to secure a majority. A commitment to a more proportionate voting system would attract millions of voters to Labour.

This government's failure provides many opportunities for Labour to unfold a winning narrative

Yet this government's failure and doublespeak is providing many opportunities for Labour to unfold a winning narrative. The supply chain crisis arises from government dogma on immigration and free movement as **Don Flynn** explains in a detailed analysis of why in a globalised world immigration is here to stay and brings many benefits, not least to understaffed health and social care services.

Understandably Starmer wants to demonstrate he is different from Jeremy Corbyn. But the 10 pledges he fought his leadership election on provide a firm basis to build a clear opposition to Johnson's government. Labour's electoral strategy is to win back lost 'red wall' seats, keeping a foothold in Scotland while retaining and extending the vote in the cosmopolitan centres and southern England. **Bryn Jones** examines three writers who explore this pivotal question but finds them looking back to tired 'New Labour' formulas.

The climate emergency should provide Labour with the opportunity to sound the alarm at Tory failure and roll out its Green New Deal. With Cop26 taking place in Glasgow it is clear the government will not be taking the necessary action to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2035, let alone 2030. The Pandora papers reveal it is in hock to big capital and tax evaders. As **Nigel Doggett** explains a bucket of greenwash is the most likely outcome with plans to extend coal mining in Cumbria on pause, ditto for oil exploration in the North Sea, completely inadequate support for home insulation, electric vehicle infrastructure and investment in renewables. **Abel Harvie-Clark**, in the spirit of Greta Thunberg, reminds us that the student climate strike movement underlines the lack of effective government action. Labour should position itself at the head of the movement for a green social transition as a critical part of a vision for a new Britain for the many.

Labour needs to go local

Paul Salveson on red walls, heartlands and Labour dilemmas

There seems to be a renewed surge of interest in Labour's 'Northern discomfort'. It follows on from the party conference season with Labour in Brighton and the Tories in Manchester. Maybe that in itself says something, with the Tories keen to promote their 'levelling up' agenda in the North. Coinciding with all that is the publication of Sebastian Payne's *Broken Heartlands – a journey through Labour's lost England*. Gateshead-born Payne is a journalist on the FT; a canny lad who writes well and has a good questioning brain. Payne cites the major structural changes that have taken place in Britain which disproportionately impacted on Labour. The loss of highly-unionised industries such as coal, steel and textiles meant that Labour's traditional base ceased to exist, as Blair recognised and responded to. Yet now it has retreated, in England, into becoming the political expression of metropolitan professionals and a shrinking public sector workforce. There is a major gulf between Labour activists and 'the general public' which became most apparent around Brexit but also in the general dislike of Corbyn, which comes across strongly in Payne's book. Many on the left are still in denial about the scale of loathing towards Corbyn. Time is taken up debating issues which most people don't give a toss about.

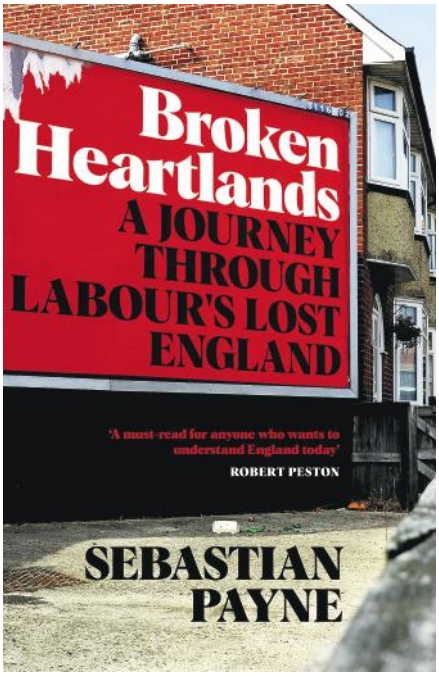
At the same time, some on the left remain puzzled by Johnson's popularity. How could an old Etonian buffoon win the support of large swathes of northern working class voters? Part of me shares that bewilderment but I can see his laid-back, shambolic showmanship going down well in pubs on Bolton's Halliwell Road.

Sebastian Payne is aware of the importance of 'place' and it's refreshing that he not only visits and talks to people in towns like Burnley, Dronfield, Middleton but doesn't lump them all together as being all the same 'up North' towns. There are big differences within a shared Northern identity. However, he struggles with questions of local identity and is far too sympathetic to 'city mayors'. His interview with Andy Burnham quotes uncritically Burnham's view that there is a strong 'Greater Manchester' identity. There isn't. There are strong 'Manchester', 'Bolton', 'Rochdale' and other town identities but Burnham is kidding himself if he thinks that many people see themselves as 'Greater Mancunians'. In towns like Bolton, Wigan and Bury quite a few people actually loathe the idea and remain doggedly attached to being 'Lancashire' – as well as Boltonian, Rochdalian etc. Older people go along with 'Greater Manchester' in a purely instrumental way (for the bus pass!) but that's as far as it goes.

For the Labour Party, the Tories' continuing success in the North presents seemingly insoluble problems. Starmer has not won 'hearts and minds' in the towns that Payne visited for his 'Broken Heartlands' book. While he lauds Neil Kinnock's emphasis on promoting Labour as the party of 'security' I don't think that's enough. That needs to be linked with a pride in place. Towns like Bolton, Burnley, Rochdale and Middleton, which had civic pride in bucket loads with fine buildings to make that tangible, don't want to be dreary suburbs of Manchester with boarded-up shops and homeless people on every street corner.

Could there be a non-Labour alternative to Tory supremacy in the so-called former 'red wall' constituencies? The Lib Dems and Greens show no sign of making an electoral breakthrough in the North as a whole and their support is essentially drawn from a similar demographic to that of present-day Labour's. The Yorkshire Party and the more recent Northern Independence Party struggle with the unfair electoral system.

In some smaller towns there is a growing sense of anger at apparent marginalisation by the larger towns and cities, a result of the local government reforms of the 1970s. Many well-run councils (mostly with Labour administrations) were merged into larger authorities, at the same time that mills and factories were closing. The revolt was a long time coming but it is here now. In Bolton alone, there are small 'hyper-local' independent parties in the 'satelliite towns' of Farnworth, Horwich and Westhoughton, with strong council representation that led to Labour losing control. While Labour likes to stigmatise all these groups as 'local UKIPs', in reality many of the activists are exactly the sort of person you'd once have found in Labour ward meetings, but don't any more.



The impact of the 'hyper-local' parties on parliamentary politics has yet to be felt. The small town identities don't sit well with most constituency boundaries. However, if they got their acts together and formed alliances with neighbouring independents, they could present a challenge to the mainstream parties.

Of course, Labour could learn from the experience of 'identity politics' in Scotland and particularly Wales where Labour continues to do well. But it needs to be based around a strong local and regional identity, with imaginative economic, social and environmental policies. The state of town centres is one of the biggest issues that people cite when they moan on social media about what a shithole their town has become. It doesn't have to be so, and there is scope for transforming town centres, large and small, instead of leaving them to rot. There are good examples to learn from within the UK. C

Paul's website is www.lancashireloominary.co.uk

His new book on socialist writer Allen Clarke ('Lancashire's Romantic Radical') is available to Chartist readers for £15 plus postage. See website

Government failure behind energy crisis

The only thing wrong with renewables is that we've not built nearly enough of them says **David Toke**

Amidst a global shortfall of gas supplies in relation to demand (and a global increase in gas prices) the anti-renewables lobbies are busy blaming a lack of wind and solar (wot solar too?) for the soaring energy prices. It's nonsense of course to pin the blame on renewables for a combination of a global oil and gas crisis and the UK's unique market vulnerability to natural gas supply squeezes, but that's precisely what is happening. The truth is we'd be much more secure and greener with a much higher proportion of energy coming from renewables backed up with a revived storage network that successive UK Governments have allowed to run down.

Of course we've had fossil fuel energy price surges and crises for decades, but now, suddenly, to read some papers and a lot of tweets, I'm told mainly from fossil fuel lobbyists, it's the fault of renewables! Remarkable!

Some are even using the crisis to boost the case for nuclear power. Now that's ironic, given that 5 out of 14 of EDF's nuclear units are offline as I write! With nuclear of course, it's always going to be better in the future (and never is). Certainly, the idea that the UK relying on 3.2 GW units (like Hinkley C and the planned Sizewell C) for its security at times of pressure is a guarantee of system security needs rather clearer analysis than is being done at the moment. (By the way, did you know that the first Hinkley C -like EPR, in China got shut down this summer because of radioactive leaks? – somebody please tell me when it gets back online).

As a lot of industry insiders have been saying for years (with nobody in successive Governments listening to them), the UK has not only swapped its, what was 20 years ago, self-sufficiency in natural gas for reliance on short term supplies of imported liquified natural gas (LNG), but it has run down its gas storage capacity. UK gas storage is many times lower than other European countries. The UK Government has refused to support investments in gas storage (which can also be used to store renewable energy in the shape of hydrogen produced from renewables). The argument has been that 'market forces' should be allowed to determine such investments.

What has happened since the lockdown is that low global gas prices repressed efforts to boost supply, so when demand increased in the East this sucked up available LNG supplies leaving the UK having to pay sky-high prices on global LNG markets to fill up any deficit in supplies. And of course all sorts of oligopolistic suppliers, as always in a tight market, will be able to limit supply in order to push up prices so as to get a lot more income in this situation.

All of this has got absolutely nothing to do with whether it's windy or sunny on particular days. It has got a lot to do with the abandonment of any sort of energy storage strategy.

Now I'm suggesting we need to get a national plan together to really boost gas storage reserves – not using natural gas of course, but basing it on substances, including hydrogen – generated from renewable energy. Centrica has plans to turn the UK's formerly biggest natural gas storage facility (the Rough site under the North Sea, closed since 2017) into a hydrogen storage facility, albeit without much interest shown from Government. Oil and gas interests have been capturing ownership of undersea aquifers to store carbon dioxide (as a residue from 'blue' hydrogen production), a move that does nothing for energy security, but which does tie up a storage resource that could be used to store green hydrogen. Indeed as leading energy efficiency authority Jan Rosenow has commented: 'Suggestions that blue hydrogen can replace fossil gas as a like-for-like replacement are difficult to reconcile with the current spike in gas prices. Blue hydrogen potentially requires even more gas, not less'.

We need much, much, more renewables. Currently the UK generates about 100 TWh a year of wind and solar compared to around 900 TWh of natural gas consumption. How on earth can you blame wind and solar for a failure to meet gas demand when the Government has so far incentivised only a small fraction of the renewable energy generation required to phase out reliance on natural gas? It's gaslighting on a grand scale (pun intended).

And, yes, there's easily enough renewables to do the job. ALL of UK energy could be supplied from offshore wind occupying less than 8 per cent of the UK's offshore waters, not counting all the solar and other renewable energy resources in the UK. C

Dr Dave Toke is Reader in Energy Politics, University of Aberdeen. His latest book is Low Carbon Politics

Labour conference – a sad spectacle of disunity

With Labour still languishing in the polls **Peter Kenyon** reports on leadership failures to heal divisions

This year was quite refreshing. Members had clearly been busy in the months leading up to a resumption of in-person political discourse. Labour's future electoral prospects without electoral reform prompted over 50% of the 600 plus constituency parties (CLPs) to call for proportional representation. The appointment of David Evans as general secretary was challenged – an unheard-of impudence on the part of members. He survived – just.

For the leadership, consolidating its right-wing coup against former leader Jeremy Corbyn appeared paramount. Preparing for minority government, which under the present voting system is the best that Labour can hope for, was apparently, as the Conference progressed, not important at all.

Party leader Keir Starmer and his allies have spent the last eighteen months since his election in April 2020 trying to air-brush former leader Jeremy Corbyn from the public consciousness. The Brighton 2021 conference was to be the backdrop for turning the clock back a decade on how the party elects its leaders. Head office briefings plauded the return of the electoral college in which an MP's vote was worth some 2,000 ordinary members, a foolhardy attempt to try to rig the Party's next Leadership election. Unremarkably, negative reactions from the two main voting factions at conference meant it was binned before Conference started – the trade unions and CLPs, each have 50% of Conference votes. Starmer was bound to lose. So the right-wing around the leadership regrouped. They tabled a fresh plan to raise the number of nominations required to enable an Labour MP to get on a leadership ballot paper from 10% to 20%. Even then they only narrowly secured conference approval, by leaning on trade union delegations for support. Any member with a head for numbers can work out that the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs don't have to recruit many more MPs to give the Right nightmares again. The current number of Labour MPs is 199, so under the new rules the left candidate would need 40 votes. There are currently 35 Labour MPs listed on the Socialist Group twitter account.

Starmer at Brighton

In interviews prior to his closing speech on Wednesday 29 September, Starmer was asked what was more important to him - party unity or winning, to which he replied, "Winning". Well, if he is interested in winning in the country, there was little evidence of that. Ever since Labour lost Scotland to the Scottish Nationalist Party, its ability to win enough seats elsewhere in England and Wales to form a majority government at Westminster has been in serious doubt.

There are two strands in the debate – a democratic deficit has emerged as a major concern among Members, as much as tactical considerations based on Westminster parliamentary arithmetic. The Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform together with the Labour Campaign for a New Democracy have worked that out, as was evidenced in the motions tabled at Conference for electoral reform. They succeeded in securing support from over 80% of CLPs. The issue came second in the Priorities Ballot. A Composite Motion was agreed. It was debated on the floor of Conference. But here's the rub. The leadership lacked the political muscle to ensure the ideas were formally kept alive. The Composite motion to end 'first past the post' was voted down by some trade union delegations exercising their block votes – a very old Labour practice.

It was a sign of just how weak Starmer and his allies have become inside the party machine. They squandered what little political capital they had waging war on the left inside the party. There was nothing left in their arsenal (no pun intended – Starmer supports Arsenal Football Club) to persuade the unions that at the very least the issue needed further discussion.

On the Conference floor there were interesting speeches by the Party's shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announcing a major reform of business rates to ease cost pressures on the high street and create a more level playing field with online retailers through tax reforms. Sections of the 2019 election manifesto covering the Green New Deal were repackaged by former Labour leader Ed Miliband. But a big split between the right and the wider membership opened up over public ownership, especially the energy companies, and the minimum wage, with the resignation during conference of Workers' Right spokesperson, Andy McDonald. He alleged the Leader's Office attempted to gag him over support for a £15/hour minimum wage backed by Conference. Starmer's closing speech (heralded as an election game-changer) was long, ponderous and uninspiring, as evidenced by post-Conference polling.

Labour has some very good ideas for government that will improve people's lives. Unfortunately, many were set out in its 2019 election manifesto. Cue: Corbyn shroud-waving.

So, Labour remains hamstrung by its own Leader's anti-Corbyn fixation. Its best electoral hope, therefore, is that the Tories lose the next general election, and lose badly. C

Peter Kenyon is a member of Chartist EB

Democracy moves stalled

Mary Southcott reviews progress and tasks facing new democracy movement as UNITE rejects current system

The Labour National Policy Forum has no Commission or fringe event covering Democracy. The Conservatives have their Elections Bill removing democratic rights from millions of people with no Voter ID and changing Supplement Vote back to first past the post for Elected Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners. Cat Smith, Shadow Cabinet member for Young People and Voter Engagement, is leading Labour's opposition, although Nick Thomas-Symonds is Priti Patel's opposite number.

Democratic Reform/Elections is the responsibility of the Shadow Cabinet Office team, led by Angela Rayner but in policy consultation terms it is subsumed under the Justice and Home Affairs brief. Neither did 'democracy' feature in the Leader's speech although both he and the Mayors did mention Gordon Brown and the Constitutional Commission. We still await details about its remit or how to submit evidence or argument. We are no wiser about who will deal with the democracy offer in our next Manifesto.

The over 150 resolutions submitted on electoral reform was an amazing victory in which Chartist played a role as part of the Labour for a New Democracy coalition. It was not surprising that it came second in the Priority Ballot for the resolutions to be discussed at Conference and both Momentum and Labour to Win advised their constituency contacts to vote for the composite.

Chartist played another role, in commissioning articles on democracy for the magazine and website. Particularly at Conference we distributed 2000 of our supplement which contained Andy Burnham's view about Big Picture Politics and levelling up. It went like hotcakes from the stand jointly in the names of Labour for a New Democracy and the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform.

Compositing (getting 150 sets of wording down to one) was a surprisingly short and consensus seeking affair overseen by Shadow Cabinet member, Cat Smith and Conference Arrangements Committee member, Billy Hayes, both supporters of electoral reform. Arriving on the conference floor on Monday afternoon, the debate on electoral reform was sandwiched between a presentation from Wales Senedd leader Mark Drakeford, followed by the Metro Mayors, Andy Burnham, Tracy Brabin, both pro PR, and Dan Jarvis, facilitated by Geri Scotl, and Anas Sarwar the new Leader of the Scottish Labour Party. In the end 22 delegates spoke to the resolution, twenty in favour and two against, several GMB members spoke but not all followed their 2021 conference position against. Although the show of hands clearly showed conference support from the CLP delegates, a card vote was called which showed, of the CLP section 79.51 per cent in favour whereas in the Affiliates it was reversed with 95.03 per cent against. Card Vote no 44 was not carried.

Sharon Graham- UNITE leader, rejects first past the post

So where does Labour and Democracy go from now until the next General Election. First outing was the Unite Policy Conference which voted against first past the post and for examination of how other systems work, outside Westminster and in other countries. There is scope for Labour Members in Unions and at Labour's regional and national conferences to work together to replicate the discussion in Brighton with time for trade unionists to have their conferences.

Where does that leave the other affiliated unions? We need to work with all the remaining 11 unions in TULO: the Labour Unions. Unite is now engaging in the debate, as their policy conference demonstarted. GMB has policy against but increasing support at their 2021 conference. Community and NUM seem against. Unison whose policy awaits their Labour Link conference and USDAW could both change their abstention into a pro. Ditto in CWU, the communications workers, who have had open positions in the past but abstained. The rail unions, the musicians and the fire fighters all voted in favour but need to confirm their policy next year. The Bakers who were solidly pro have disaffiliated.

The debate was not just on the Conference floor. There were three L4ND fringes, the PR Debate at the World Transformed and the Fabian Society and Electoral Reform Society asked "Second Best: Does Labour need to work with other parties to win power?" Clive Lewis spoke to the Yes, which seems a no brainer with Sir John Curtice warning pacts do not work. We need to redefine a Progressive Alliance not as in 2017 withdrawing candidate necessarily but ensuring voters have the information they need to vote as in Chesham and Amersham and Batley and Spens. Compass asked "Will Labour Accept Sharing Power to Win?"

Chartist might contribute to the debate in the unions, but also by Labour councillors, with elected Mayors, representatives on the London Assembly, Senedd Members in Wales, SNP in Scotland and Peers in the unelected second chamber.

We need to revisit legacy Labour policy in terms of a constitutional convention, votes at 16, a upper house representing the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, codifying our unwritten constitution, deciding how we choose the voting system and how we both encourage the Union to stay together and adopt subsidiarity even federalism. We need to ensure that Labour MPs who have stayed out of the debate listen and join in.

So lots of work before we can enter a general election to win and reverse the anti democratic attacks on what should be our democracy. C

Mary Southcott is a member of Bristol West CLP and Chartist EB, and is former secretary of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform

Joining the dots on Labour and unions

Maria Exall says positive proposals for workers agreed at conference need joined up politics to work

At this year's Labour Party Conference Labour's affiliated Trade Unions put forward bold policies that could form the substance of a successful appeal to working class voters by Labour in the next General Election. These policies could transform the workplace and should be centre stage in Labour's offer to the electorate.

A 'Green Paper' on Employment Rights was presented by Angela Rayner as a 'New Deal for Workers' on the first day of Conference. It crystallised the results of the 'Power in the Workplace' consultation with affiliated Unions which was co-ordinated by Andy McDonald, and takes forward the commitments on worker's rights made in the previous Labour Manifestos of 2017 and 2019.

It is the summary of detailed discussion on key issues including legislation on ending 'fire and rehire', dealing with loopholes on employment status so all workers get rights from day one, improving work-life balance and tackling discrimination in the workplace as well as enhancing health and safety. These are key to dealing with the encroaching threat of the 'gig' economy and insecure work.

The paper recognises that facilitating unionisation, especially in the private sector, is necessary to improve working conditions. It makes the case for removing most of the anti-trade unions laws that have restricted the ability of trade unions to take action in defence of their members, as well as a commitment to collective bargaining across all sectors. This has the potential to transform the world of work.

Other areas covered by the Employment Paper included topics such as limiting outsourcing and tackling in work poverty were the focus of debates led by Unions on the Conference floor which were overwhelmingly supported by Constituency delegates.

The Union motions submitted to Conference included establishing a national care service and improving the rights and pay of care workers, post pandemic strategies for public services and industrial renewal, dealing with the challenge of climate change and ensuring sustainable energy supplies, and ones calling for public ownership of utilities including transport, postal services and full fibre broadband.

There were also motions that called for a massive increase of jobs based on the development of green technologies together with public investment in local and regional economic development (including a business recovery in retail on our high streets) which all point towards a positive narrative of community renewal that can appeal to those in the Red Wall, Blue Wall and everyone in between.

Other motions supported by many Unions at Conference included the 'Socialist Green New Deal', on the Grenfell tragedy and a £15 minimum wage rate. CLP motions on health and education and on equalities issues were all enthusiastically supported by Union delegates.

The fact that Union motions focused on job security for the workforce in their sectors together with the provision of quality services for the public demonstrate the importance of the two wings of the Labour movement. Building a political appeal based on the realities of peoples working lives and their community life, and the connection between these is crucial.

To link the two wings of the labour movement requires much more joined up politics between the Unions and activists and members in Constituency Labour Parties. There is a danger that without a recognition of the importance of this by everyone in the Party, including the leadership, certain existing tensions will pull things further apart.

The election of Sharon Graham as General Secretary of UNITE and Gary Smith as General Secretary of GMB on mandates for a greater focus on the workplace and growing Union membership represents a 'syndicalist turn' by Union activists and members. This can be seen as a reaction to the close involvement of some Union leaderships with the Corbyn project and the shocking result of the 2019 General Election. It also comes at a time when many think that the Party is still years away from winning power.

But we in the trade union movement know the Tories are pathologically against us and we cannot duck the political fight. The Tories have a record of hostility to us ever since the modern trade union movement came into being. In the industrial arena they have supported anti-Union employers from Murdoch in the 80's to the billionaire 'Union busters' of today.

Angela Rayner presenting 'New Deal for Workers' at Labour conference

Boris Johnson is bringing forward an Elections Bill that would in practice disenfranchise millions of (mainly) working class voters. It will drastically restrict the ability of both Unions and civil society organisations to campaign politically. This is on top of the restrictions on Unions use of their political funds by the Cameron Government in the 2016 Trade Union Act which have an even more damaging effect than the legislation of the 1930's for affiliated trade union financial and practical support for the Labour Party. As if that were not enough, the provisions of the Police Bill restrict protests, and clearly will be used to punish trade unionists campaigning and taking action.

All of this means it is imperative for the Labour Party to listen to trade union concerns on the future of public services, the necessity of public ownership and democratic control of utilities, strategic industrial policies that create secure jobs, and a more human welfare system.

The big questions of political economy need to be brought down from remote discussions on economic orthodoxies to real life. Our Labour values must be expressed in promises that are meaningful to and deliver for working class people. C

Maria Exall is a member of the CWU, TUC Executive Committee and Dulwich & West Norwood CLP

Tories put politics first on economy

Dennis Leech says Labour needs to do more than promise to balance the books

The chancellor Rishi Sunak's speech at the Conservative party conference was the usual confection of ideological nostrums and economic fallacies that are expected at such events. It was the usual litany of Tory virtues: individual self-reliance rather than dependence on the state, aspiration, hard work, and for government low taxation, and budget responsibility. He said that strong public finances are the foundation of a prosperous future and that government borrowing to pay for the Covid pandemic had increased public debt to almost 100% of UK national income. All this was vague of course and he did not explain the economics of why debt matters so much.

Getting debt down is therefore a priority for him. But it is clear that it would not be one to override others but rather something desirable to be done as soon as circumstances permit. In other words what is said to be an economic constraint binding government fiscal policy is in reality subordinate to political feasibility. Partly this reflects the division between Treasury and prime minister. The Treasury, as it has done throughout most of its history, always takes a narrow accountant's view, habitually a deflationary stance, seeking to balance the budget by limiting spending. Boris Johnson as PM, on the other hand, will be guided by political necessity even if that means sidelining fiscal rules.

The requirement to balance the budget is a political trope that the Tories use selectively to impress anyone who is prepared to believe it to justify austerity measures. They use it to tell recipients of Universal Credit that there is no magic money tree, to justify cutting their income by £20 per week. But they don't actually believe it themselves because they know it is politics and not an economic imperative; they will set it aside when it suits them such as in order to finance a new royal yacht or military adventure.

Shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves promised Labour's party conference she would make taxation fairer, by shifting the burden onto the wealthier, to make it more efficient by collecting more revenue through closing various tax avoidance loopholes, such as ending private schools' charitable status, and also insourcing government spending. She would also use tax incentives to support the high street through reforming business rates and levying digital taxes on internet companies. All progressive policies but lacking in detail.

It was disappointing that there was nothing in her long and sloganizing speech on public ownership. For the state to run transport systems, housing, mail and water, as proposed in the Corbyn manifestos, is recognized by many other countries as an efficient way of running natural monopolies and should not be dismissed on ideological grounds. Labour should be arguing for this as the neoliberal model fails.

She announced an investment of £28 billion each year for the rest of the decade in greening the economy. If this is counted from today as eight years, it is remarkably similar to the last manifesto promise of £250 billion over ten years.

There was a disappointing lack of ambition on industrial policy which ought to be a key priority because of the vast inequality in output between regions. The OECD has shown that the UK is by far the most unequal country in Europe. Instead of addressing the need for new jobs outside the southeast and London the only industries she mentioned were retail, hospitality and care. The UK economy is unbalanced with a dominant financial sector that has crowded out manufacturing and there is a need to address that, something the Blair government failed to do.

This policy of promising to stick to strict fiscal rules to limit or eliminate deficits and reduce the level of debt is not new but was used also by former shadow chancellors John McDonnell in the elections of 2017 and 2019 and Ed Balls in 2015, as well as Gordon Brown previously. It is not obvious that merely stating a fiscal rule convinces voters that Labour can be trusted with the economy. There should be an economic strategy focusing on the real economy, creating green jobs including in manufacturing to replace industries that closed in Thatcher's disastrous monetarism years: a green new deal and full employment.

Labour's fixation with fiscal responsibility defined in purely financial terms, is a mistake reflecting an economic fallacy. There is no economic justification for the UK government prioritizing a balanced budget as the main aim of its economic policy. Doing so just results in deflation and might lead to recession, as we have seen in the decade since the global financial crisis. If it convinces the electorate to vote Labour in as a government of economic competence, its implementation in office, leading to recession and unemployment, will destroy that reputation. C

Dennis Leech is Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Warwick

Labour: get strategic on combatting inequalities

Duncan Bowie on levelling up, strategic planning and Local Government reform

Michael Gove is now Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government, with his department also renamed. He is also Minister for Inter-governmental relations – ie: with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so he has got a lot of work to do. The long overdue White Paper on devolution has now been abandoned and it is expected that any proposals for reforms to local government or other sub-national governance arrangements (what we used to refer to as regional government) will be incorporated in a Levelling Up White Paper. Meanwhile the Planning Bill which was ready to be published to implement many of the proposals in last year's Planning White Paper, has been put on hold and subject to a major rethink. The planning reform proposals proved to be unpopular with Tory backbench MPs, and combined with central government setting high new build housing targets for many Conservative districts, led to the sacking of Gove's predecessor Robert Jenrick.

The Planning White Paper was largely silent on the issue of strategic planning at a spatial level greater than a single local authority and was mainly focused on further deregulatory measures – for example reducing local authorities' power to consider individual development proposals, replacing it by a very crude zoning system of growth areas, renewal areas and protected areas, which would effectively remove public consultation on specific development proposals. This was rightly attacked by Labour as a 'developer's charter', but Labour frontbenchers, critical of the current system, failed to set out what an alternative Labour planning policy would be. Labour similarly have so far failed to set out a policy on local government reform and funding, including the reform of property and land taxation, or for that matter on what Labour's approach to devolution and/or 'levelling up' would be. There is no recent statement of Labour Policy on planning, and the report of the Labour Planning Commission initiated three years ago by the previous shadow planning minister, Roberta Blackman-Woods, was never adopted as Labour party policy, with Blackman Woods retiring from parliament before the report was published.

https://labourplanningcommission.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/planning-commission-report-2020.pdf

Labour spokespersons, including Blackman Woods, have in recent years been very enthusiastic about the notion of 'localism' and the process of neighbourhood plans introduced by the Tories 2011 Localism Act, without understanding that to reduce spatial inequalities and level up both across the English regions, and within each region, localism is not enough. This requires planning at a spatial level above the local authority – otherwise each council just looks after its own, which may be OK in the better off areas, but hardly helps those more deprived areas who lack resources, and which in many cases have been hardest hit by cuts in government funding as well as by external factors such as Brexit and the pandemic.

In his first statements in his new role, Gove seems to have adopted the notion of localist planning and decided to abandon the system of nationally determined local housebuilding targets – this of course keeps his backbench MPs and the Tory voters in the better off areas happy, but hardly helps delivering 'levelling up'.

Much of the focus of the levelling up debate so far has been about shifting government investment from London and the South East to the North, notably in the so called former Red Wall seats which are now held by Conservative MPs, and by introducing more city Mayors. Labour has been similarly enthusiastic about more city and regional mayors, in the hope there will be more Andy Burnhams and Dan Jarvises, while the Tories are hoping for more Andy Streets and Ben Houchens. But just having more 'kings of the North' does not deal with the structural issues of inter-regional and intra-regional inequality. All it does is introduce stronger regional voices outside Westminster to compete for nationally determined funding – and there are real issues of transparency and accountability and fairness in such a system. What we need is a mechanism for funding local and regional investment in infrastructure, including housing, transport and employment generation, which is based on criteria including assessment of relative regional and local requirements and resources rather than political deals which favour supporters of whichever government is in office at Westminster.

There are a number of attempts to tackle the structural issues, for example the UK2070 commission led by Bob Kerslake, the former chief executive of Sheffield who became head of the civil service and is now in the House of Lords : http://uk2070.org.uk/. At a more regional level, the London and Wider South East Strategic Planning Network, of which I am co-convener, has been reviewing the challenges of the relationship of London to the wider south east and examining a range of options for improving both the evidence base for strategic planning across the wider region and governance arrangements to improve collaboration between local authorities and with central government and delivery agencies: http://wseplanningnetwork.org/.

These proposals have been discussed with government officials such as the chief planner as well as with Labour Party advisers. To deal with the issue of inequalities between regions and recognise that there remain massive and increasing inequalities within London and the wider South East, we need a much more sophisticated approach than the current anti-London rhetoric of the 'King of the North' or the pro-London rhetoric of Sadiq Khan and the London 'world city' lobbyists. We also need to recognise that all decisions about resource allocation involve winners as well as losers. There are political choices to be made, but let us base them on evidence and long-term planning rather than just short-termism, and photo opportunities. **C**

Duncan Bowie is author of numerous books including *People, Planning and Homes in a World City*

Government plans won't fix broken Social Care system

Georgia Sangster explains why social care needs a universalist long term settlement

In September, two years and a pandemic after the Prime Minister's promised to 'fix' the sector, the Government announced its plans for social care. The proposals don't come close to delivering what is needed - a secure, long-term settlement for a sector in crisis - but it is not just about a lack of funding.

Let's start with the crisis in social care. It's true that since Covid we have been hearing more about its problems. If we weren't already aware, watching carers on our TV screens during the first lockdown, whose care homes were rapidly filling with elderly hospital patients, tell us over and over that they had not been given any PPE, was a strong indication that there were big things wrong in the sector. It's been since before the financial crash though, that the Government's chronic underfunding, deregulation and lack of interest in the sector came to characterise social care.

As a result, 1.5 million people in the UK have unmet care needs. In 2019, 15% of the population over 65, did not have the help they needed to get out of bed, go to the toilet, wash and dress themselves. That figure has risen 50% since 2010. Those who have navigated the minefield of accessing care can pay enormous costs for it - residential care starts at £600 a week and can run into the thousands for those with complex needs.

It is not just those who need care that the current system fails. The care workforce, the vast majority of which is female, is one of the most overworked, underpaid and undervalued in our society - seven out of 10 care workers earn less than £10 per hour. The system also forces millions into the role of unpaid carers, the number of which has increased by around 4.5 million (nearly 60% of them women) to over 13.6 million since the pandemic.

Since social care is provided by local authorities, the poorest areas, where healthy life expectancy rates are lowest, have greater social care needs but less money to pay for them. The 2010 Coalition and Conservative government's austerity policies, which saw central government funding to English local authorities halve in 10 years (with an estimated loss of £8 billion for key services like social care) have made this problem worse.

So how exactly does the government plan to fix all this? In 2023, a tax rise of 1.25% on National Insurance Contributions (NICs) will be paid on earnings and dividends and newly applied to the over 65s still in work. Initially nearly all the revenues gained by the rise in NICs will go to addressing the patient backlog in the NHS. Over three years just £5.4bn will go to adult social care, most of which, £4.9bn is to change the funding model. Just £500 million is allocated for the professional development of the 1.5 million social care workforce and there is no allocation for increasing pay or recruiting more much needed staff.

In 2025, all the funding from the levy will be diverted to social care but given the scale of the backlog in the NHS, no one can say how much funding there will be, if there is any left at all. The changes to the funding model are a cap of £86,000 on lifetime personal care costs and a floor in assets, raised to £20,000, below which people will not have to pay for care. These proposals are aimed at protecting people against catastrophic costs, but they will only benefit the very rich. Social care funded entirely by the state will still be restricted, while everyone else will either have to pay £86,000 on their care before they receive any state support or spend down their savings until they are eligible for means-tested care.

The Government's proposals are not going to fix our broken social care system. Any model in which people have to pay for care means that many will go without the care they need to avoid paying its costs. Such a model will also continue to rely on the unpaid care of family members, mostly women.

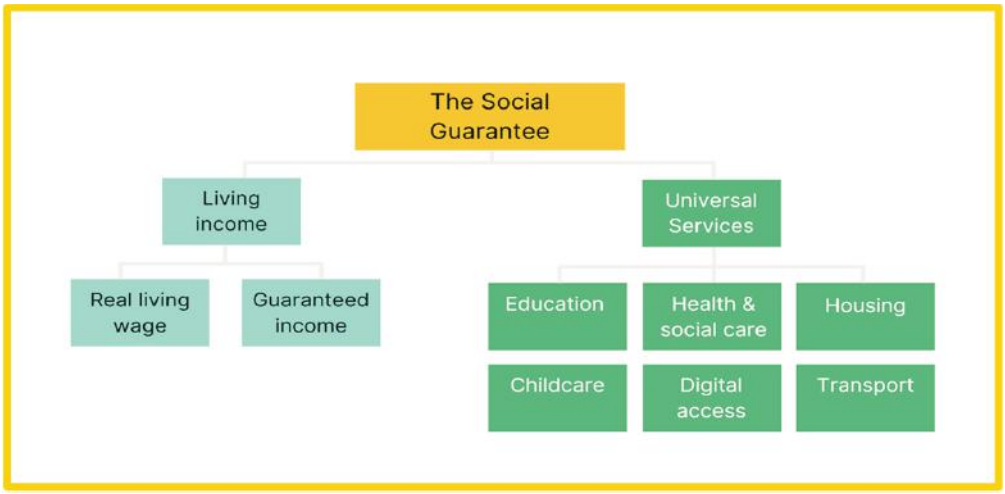
We should want more than just to adequately fund a bad system. We need a high-quality, free and universal system of social care whose provision, like the NHS, is based on need and not ability to pay. We need a system whereby people's needs are met in a way which supports wellbeing and ensures self-determination. This means going beyond a focus on personal care to cover other enriching activities like maintaining relationships and being involved in the community. We need social care to be of a high quality, and this requires a well-trained, well-paid workforce. We need our social care system to reflect the truth – that there is little more important than how we take care of the most vulnerable in our society. C

Georgia Sangster is a member of the Women's Budget Group

A Social Guarantee for Adult Social Care

Maeve Cohen says market-driven care services must go while highlighting a local alternative model

It looks like big changes are coming to the world of adult social care but what will they be? After decades of declining funding and failure to address the growing crisis in the caring sector, the government is now being forced to act. Last month a regressive 1.2% increase in National Insurance Contributions was announced to raise more money for health and social care. On the 10th October, it was revealed that the government is considering the creation of a National Care Service and a joining up of health and care services in the UK. Only time will tell what form this will take. A national care service means different things to different people. But surely we can all agree that the system urgently needs a shake-up.



In one of the richest countries in the world, insisting that the most vulnerable in society are protected and cared for should be beyond dispute. And yet our social care system, in England in particular, is failing to do just that. Big ideas for how we can fix the growing crisis in social care are welcome, but they will fail to deliver their desired outcomes unless they are designed with the core purpose of meeting people's fundamental needs.

The Social Guarantee is a framework for policy and practice that does just that. It enshrines every person's right to life's essentials through collectively provided public services and a living income for all.

A Social Guarantee in adult social care would mean everyone having access to collectively provided care services, free at the point of use or at prices that are genuinely affordable for all. This stands in stark contrast to our current system of services delivered by private, for-profit companies for prices that none but the very rich a can afford. Our caring industries are a classic case of market failure, and this must be recognised and overcome by removing profit extraction from the delivery of this essential service.

Private companies, by their nature, must make everything as efficient as possible to ensure they maximise profits. But this does not work for care. If you're ever in the position where you need to put a loved one into a care home, you don't look for the most efficient care home, you look for the one where residents are happy and well looked after. The only way to maximise profit in care is to increase the amount of people cared for in a set amount of time. Obviously, you can't deliver high quality care to infinite numbers of people in an hour, for example. Fairly early on in that process, the quality of care begins to suffer. Running a care system on a model of increasing efficiency leads to falling standards of care and harms the people who are supposed to benefit.

Another way to increase profits is to lower wages. This has led to massive labour shortages in adult social care, exacerbated by Brexit. The disproportionately female and ethnically minoritized workforce are subject to poverty wages and insecure work contributing to the gender and racial pay and employment gaps. But we can do things differently.

Cooperative Care Colne Valley provides an excellent example of what a more inclusive model of care could look like in the UK. They are registered with the Care Quality Commission and provide a host of different caring services. As the aim of the cooperative is to provide good quality care and fair employment conditions rather than to make profit, all the money it earns can be reinvested and spent on decent wages and training for staff and on making life better for service users. This has led to a higher quality of care, more tailored services, empowered users and qualified, well-paid staff.

Ownership models that enable service providers to pursue social and environmental gains, over just purely financial gains are an essential part of addressing the social care crisis in a time of climate emergency. These can take many forms, from co-ops like Cooperative Care Colne Valley, to community led initiatives, to local authorities delivering care directly.

This is not the only issue the caring industries face. Progressive taxation is crucial to adequately funding the system without increasing the burden on those who can least afford it. Preventative measures such as diet, access to green space and physical exercise are also a vital part of the puzzle, and these can be facilitated by a range of collective measures through local and national public authorities. Increased support and recognition of predominantly female, informal carers is also vital. We must recognise that carers and those they care for are assets – not burdens - to society and treat them accordingly. We can learn from examples of good practice in other countries to build a system we can be proud of. We all need to be cared for at various points in our lives. A Social Guarantee in adult social care would ensure that everyone has access to the high quality, compassionate care that they deserve. C

Maeve Cohen is Project Lead at the Social Guarantee and a Non- Executive Director at Positive Money

Make misogyny a hate crime

In the wake of the brutal murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa **Sabia Kamali** In calls for safe spaces and effective action against racism and sexism

Sabina Nessa (left) and Sarah Everard (right)

Over 50 years ago, the author Germaine Greer first penned her seminal work, 'The Female Eunuch'. The opening line was: "When a woman may walk on the open streets of our cities alone, without insult or obstacle, at any pace she chooses, there will be no further need for this book." The work was part of what the author termed the second wave of feminism, going beyond legal equalities of suffrage and property rights and looking at de facto inequalities. It also focused on violence against women, creating a movement that led to rape crisis centres and shelters.

Half a century on, with the murder of Sarah Everard six months ago, it seems despite the above efforts, structural de facto inequalities against women in terms of safety from violence are still prevalent.

According to the ONS, 4.9 million women have been victims of sexual assault across the UK. One woman is murdered by a man every 3 days in the UK, 97% are sexually harassed in the UK and 20% of women experience sexual violence in the UK. In the case of Sarah Everard, we had a serving police officer, Wayne Couzens, who falsely lured Sarah off the street, handcuffed her, raped her, then strangled her with a police belt and burned her body. Rightly so, it sent a shockwave across the nation, sparking calls to end violence against women and girls once and for all. The case has sparked a debate about trust in the police and many women are outraged that a Met policeman abused his position of power. Women feel more vulnerable now they know that the Met police has officers like Wayne Couzens, who was known as 'the rapist' by his colleagues.

The recent murder of Sabina Nessa brought to the fore the aggravated feature of race and class that many women of colour face and experience in addition to the general issue of violence and safety all women face in society. Sabina Nessa, a 28-year-old primary school teacher, is believed to have been murdered five minutes away from her home and her body was found near a community centre in South-East London. Koci Selamaj, 36, from Eastbourne was charged with her murder. During the same week, 40-year- old Sukhjeet Uppal was stabbed repeatedly at her own home by a man living on her street in Wolverhampton.

The lack of media coverage and general response to these cases provoked anger within the South Asian community. The response and lack of outrage emphasised for many the intersectional structural inequality many face in their daily lives, in which classism, sexism and racism interlock and oppress women of colour, moulding their experiences especially in terms of violence and the fear of violence. First termed by Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality describes structures of inequality that work together, aggravating the experiences of women of colour with violence.

For many of us, Sabina Nessa's death triggered 'racial anxiety with mixed emotions and growing fear'. Her death had a deep impact within the South Asian community, as we feel like we are the most invisible part within our society. Her murder has also fuelled concerns about the underlying misogyny and racism which still exist in our society. A candlelit vigil was held in Central Park, East Ham in memory of Sabina Nessa and the many other women we are losing to violence. It was organised by the Sisters Forum to create a safe space for women to raise awareness. The women there felt frustrated due to the lack of representation because of the colour of their skin. For many women this was a very personal battle. Girls are normally subjected to lots of prejudice and biases. They experience inequality within society and Sabina Nessa's murder bought anger to the surface.

Sisters Forum wanted to create a 'safe-space' for women physically and mentally to be able to express their concerns. Speaking about their fears, women from diverse backgrounds were encouraged to share their experience of attack, in the presence of the borough police Commander and Mayor of Newham.

This was important as women wanted to know what assurances the Met police would give and how they will protect women when the abuser is one of them. Police need to tackle misogyny and racist attitudes amongst their officers. We want to see our streets safer for all. We will continue campaigning to make misogyny a hate crime, despite, Boris Johnson recently, ruling out his support.

Racism and sexism are inseparable when it comes to our lived experiences. Our experience is sometimes overlooked. At times we are at a disadvantage, but there is no contradiction between the struggle against racism, sexism, and all other isms. All must be addressed together. We need to challenge the lack of representation and call out the hypocrisy within society. We have to tackle this problem from the grassroots where the mindset becomes such that women are not respected. Women need to equally feel safe all the time be it inside or outside the house, regardless of what a woman wears. C

Sabia Kamali is CEO of Sisters Forum and a London Regional Labour Executive Member

Supply chain chaos? Blame the immigrants!

Is the suppression of migration the price that has to be paid for the transition to a high wage economy? **Don Flynn** argues it rather sets the scene for a long period of economic depression that will impact on all workers

Prime Minister Johnson has been working hard these past weeks to drum up enthusiasm for his 'high-wage, low-immigration' economy to which the UK is supposed to be transitioning. According to him, supply chain disruption is a temporary price we have to pay as a consequence of the country's dramatic Brexiting from open borders and the over-supply of labour that has kept wages in check across the last twenty years. The simplistic logic of supply-and-demand – read as too many workers chasing after a limited number of jobs – is invoked as the reason why prosperity is alluding too many people.

There are obvious difficulties with this Tory take on the frailties of modern-day Britain. The first concerns the fact that the origins of low-pay Britain go back much further than the recent times that Johnson takes as his starting point. In fact, back in fact to the 1970s rather than the fifteen or so years ago that he prefers.

The 'low-wage' component of the UK economy began with the shocks to global capitalism during the era of Nixon in the US and Wilson in the UK, when deindustrialisation got underway and the number of relatively high-paid jobs in manufacturing began a long period of decimation. The service sector jobs that came in over time in the 1980s, to replace those that had been lost, were rendered as immune as they could be to upward wage growth-by the simple expedient of making effective trade union representation close to illegal. By these means a low-wage structure for the jobs market was locked into the economy – and all of this achieved during a period when more workers were leaving the UK each year than were entering. Inward immigration is blameless for having any role in setting a ceiling on wage increases during these critical years.

The Tories say that a high wage economy is achieved through the suppression of migration

Don Flynn is Chartist Managing Editor and ex Director Migrant Rights Network

Recent times

Maybe so, but how about later, when a lengthy period of economic growth from the 1990s onwards seemed to offer up a rosier picture? It was during this period that immigration became net positive, and particularly so after 2002 when workers from central and east European countries began to enter in large numbers. Isn't it reasonable to suppose this was the time when immigration put the stamp on the UK as a low-wage economy?

Understanding what was going

on in these years provides a case study in the dangers of confusing correlation with causation. Yes, wage growth remained very slow in the 2000s, even though the economy was growing at a rate of over 2 percent a year, and yes, inward migration did reach a historic highpoint. But the coincidence of these facts does not mean that one caused the other.

The relatively high GDP growth rate meant that labour shortages across important sectors were showing up and threatening the whole economy with 'bottleneck' disruptions. Much of this was taking place in labour intensive industries like agriculture and food processing and in service sector jobs such as hospitality, health and social care. Firms in these sectors operated in extremely competitive environments, often earning only modest rates of profit. Investment in capital that would raise labour productivity and hence reduce the demand for more workers was the high risk option which businesses were not able to take on because of the reluctance of financial capital to gamble in these areas.

Even so, demand for the goods and services provided by these sectors continued to grow. Supermarket expansion created a boom for fresh food from farms but at prices held strictly in check by the monopoly power of Tesco and its fellow giants. Hospitality expanded driven by tourist booms associated with the 'cool Britannia' brand. The demand for health and social services continued to rise out of a growing dependent population. Faced with this situation the only way for firms to meet rising demand for output was by increasing the size of their workforces. Since many British workers had better options when it came to employment than the low-wages and low-prestige associated with the growth sectors then this could only be met by recruiting from the one group of people who had an incentive to take the jobs – migrants from countries with even lower income levels.

Blaming business?

The rhetoric coming out from Johnson and his cabinet ministers now indicts a whole swathe of UK businesses as the employers of low-wage labour by positive preference, implying that the option of paying more was always available but they were simply either too greedy or lazy or both to avail themselves of it. If there was a systemic element to this complacency it came from the UK's encasement in the EU, which made access to low-wage migrants so amenable and further disinclined employers to up their game by becoming more productive.

The current Tory line on the transition to a high wage economy asks us to believe that the route lies through the suppression of migration and taking advantage of the opportunities to trade with the world outside the constraints of the EU. The first of these requirements might be achieved through the repudiation of what remains of the rights of migrant people which is in legislation currently going through Parliament. But the global scene today points firmly towards depressed conditions of world trade as more trouble spots appear and governments continue to stumble through a difficult transition to low carbon production. A hike in UK productivity might mean that the UK gets a bigger share of a depressed market, but bringing more labour enhancing technology into firms anticipating lower demand for their goods can be expected to produce more business failure and higher unemployment, rather than better-paid jobs.

This is a hostile environment in which businesses fail rather than go onto better things

Labour movement arguments

For some even on the Labour and trade union side of the argument much of this will seem very obtuse. Not wanting to go back 50 years to find the source of our current predicament they will look at how things stand today and accommodate to the view that an excess of labour supply in an under-performing economy is a barrier to the higher productivity and the better wages that governments should be working to achieve. The talk about transition from Equilibrium A (low-wage/high-immigration) and Equilibrium B (high-wage/low-immigration) will seem very attractive to many in this camp.

The harsher truth is that whilst transitions within capitalist systems do take place they always require a period of intense social and economic disruption in order that the Schumpeterian phase of 'creative destruction' can do its work. Recessions and depressions are the names economic historians give to these periods of time. In order for Equilibrium B to appear hundreds of thousands of jobs have to disappear, inflation disrupt the price mechanism and render life savings valueless, and the public spending which supports the health and well-being of the population slashed to ribbons. If we resign ourselves to this level of hardship there is still no certainty that Britain will return to what the Tories say is the UK's 'rightful' place in the world: the continuation of its decline into the second and third tiers of global influence and power is a just as likely an outcome.

It stretches things to breaking point to imagine that the supply chain crisis now underway in the UK will ease the way to a new capitalism that is more generous to workers. The dislocations which are emptying supermarket shelves and petrol forecourts will add to the pressures on tens of thousands of businesses across the country who will then be hit even harder by inflation, interest rate hikes on outstanding loans and a fall off in demand as consumers retrench spending to manage the squeeze on their living standards. This is a hostile environment in which businesses fail rather than go onto better things. A few will survive by buying out their competitors and reducing the size of workforces to keep a check on costs. Demand for migrant workers will certainly be dampened by this turn of events, but so will the opportunities for well-paid jobs for fully employed citizens.

Johnson and his cabinet colleagues are renewing efforts to blame migrants for the predicament the UK has found itself but the truth is that we have got here because of decisions made by politicians whose ears have been most attuned to the interest of the dominant economic elites over the past 50 years. Migrants are not the enemy of anyone who, like them, shares their interest in obtaining decent employment and worthwhile communities in which to live. Starting with that fact in mind ought to prick any balloon the Tories now want to fly that claims that their exclusion is the precondition for a better life for the great mass of wage earning citizens. C

Afghanistan and the forever war

Paul Dixon puts the spotlight on the military elite's warmongering

Chilcot found that the military elite had not only lobbied but also manipulated the Labour government to secure 'beyond maximum' involvement in the invasion of Iraq 2003.

This was 'beyond maximum' because even before the Iraq invasion the military were overstretched and breaking the harmony guidelines. These guidelines were supposed to limit the frequency of deployment of military personnel to protect their mental health.

President Bush required only symbolic British military involvement in the invasion, but the British military saw that a major military commitment would help to reverse post-Cold War cuts in spending.

Within six months or so of the Iraq invasion, there were some in the military elite who were already looking for the next war in Afghanistan. As the Iraq invasion turned into occupation, the military were looking to extricate themselves from the 'bad war' and engage in 'real soldiering' in the 'good war' in Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Blair had been a strong supporter of the Iraq invasion and also supported a 'peacebuilding', or humanitarian, mission to Afghanistan. But the government had reservations, would it be possible to commit to a new mission to Afghanistan in 2006 while also committed to the Iraq war?

A pivotal moment in the Chilcot Inquiry was when the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Michael Walker, confirmed that the government were following military advice in deploying to southern Afghanistan. Even though the Iraq war continued to escalate the generals went ahead with their 'peacebuilding' deployment to Helmand in 2006.

On arriving in Helmand, however, the military changed the 'mission' from peacebuilding and reconstruction in central Helmand to warfighting in the 'Platoon Houses' of the north. These were surrounded and the soldiers called in airstrikes leading to the destruction rather than reconstruction of these towns, and most likely alienating the local population.

Government approval for the change of mission from peacebuilding to warfighting was not sought by the military.

By 2006 the military were now overstretched and in crisis, fighting escalating wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, the military elite, who bore considerable blame for the crisis, turned this to their advantage by simply deflecting responsibility for the military's predicament onto the government.

In 2006, General Dannatt, then the new head of the British army, broke constitutional convention and publicly attacked the Labour government for the military's crisis. Tony Blair considered sacking Dannatt but was probably correct in assuming that the general's popularity was such that this would be too damaging to the government.

From 2006-09, General Dannatt, supported by the Conservative Opposition and the media, mounted a sustained attacked on the Labour government. In Brown in No. 10 (2011). Antony Seldon and Guy Lodge conclude of Gordon Brown's Afghan policy: 'It was a moot point whether Brown was shaping British policy or merely managing pressure from the services, and public opinion whipped up by the media.'

In Opposition David Cameron had exploited the military elite's attacks on the government. But as Prime Minister (2010–2016) he claimed to have been alarmed at the way the army chiefs ran rings around Gordon Brown, colluding with The Sun to whip up support for the troops 'to gain financial leverage for more equipment and more men'. He had his own problems with the military and claimed that the military elite wanted to be in Afghanistan 'almost indefinitely'.

British, US and other NATO militaries kept claiming that victory was just around the next corner to put pressure on governments to fight a 'forever war' and prevent withdrawal. Their public optimism contrasted with more pessimistic 'ground truth'.

President Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan may well have been influenced by his bruising experiences with the US military and their allies in 2009. Then, President Obama was engaged in a review of Afghan policy and came under severe pressure both private and public from the US military who were arguing for an Iraq style surge of troops.

By 2014, and after witness testimony to Chilcot, General Dannatt appeared to concede the military elite's responsibility for the decision to deploy to Helmand. He suggested that "we" and "maybe I" should have reconsidered committing the military to two operations when they only had the organisation and manpower for one.

Since then, Dannatt has ignored Chilcot's findings and reverted to his original strategy of deflecting any responsibility for failure onto the Labour government. Recently he has called for a Chilcot-style inquiry into the Afghan war, but this should include consideration of how governments can exert democratic control over their militaries. C

Paul Dixon is author of *Warrior Nation: War, Militarisation and British Democracy* (2018) available at www.Forceswatch.net

Or a free download from: https://www.forceswatch.net/resources/warrior-nation-war-militarisation-and-british-democracy/

Traffic Light at Go

Glyn Ford looks at the likely social democratic led German government and what its politics might be

In the wake of late September's German election maths and Merkel have set the stage for a traffic light coalition of red - social democratic SPD - amber - liberal Free Democrats - and Greens. Luckily for the SPD Chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz, but tragic for the left the option of a Left Coalition between the SPD, Greens and ex-communist Die Linke just doesn't add up. With the cordon sanitaire around the fascist-lite Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) there is Hobson's choice, as the Centre-Right CDU/CSU descend into internecine warfare now they can no longer shelter in denial. German voters have - in recent elections at least - voted personality, Merkel, over Party and with her departure went her voters.

SPD leader Olaf Scholz faces Hobson's choice

Thus, all the momentum and public opinion is driving an inexorable coalition deal well before Xmas; maybe even before the end of November. None of the Parties are in a position to say no. The Greens and FDP played a canny game in settling their differences first before walking in together to talk to the SPD. Now if that consortium holds there is a real danger that Scholz will end up with position, not power as the two partners colonise all the political agenda and the SPD is eaten from the inside. Yet for the Greens, its tactical brilliance is overshadowed by its strategic imbecility. Three hundred negotiators are now engaged with the three principle battles around climate, social policy and finance.

On climate the Greens want an end to coal mining by 2030 rather than the SPD's Union influenced 2038. Compromise will favour the former. On aiming for millions of electric cars on Germany's roads the FDP favours innovation over prohibition suggesting out-relief for Germany's automobile manufacturers, while the German love affair with speed will not be curbed with no national speed limit. Social Policy will see a €12/hour minimum wage, a non-discriminatory Citizen's income and easier routes to both naturalisation and deportation. The bloated Bundestag will shrink less than wanted by the small parties and more than wished by the former members of the Grand Coalition. Whether the Bundestag has the bottle to block the AfD's 'entitlement', now it's been elected twice, to the €60-70 million for its political education foundation the Desiderius-Erasmus Stiftung waits to be seen.

The war will be decided over financial policy. Ideas for spending are two a penny, but choke without money. Yet the FDP is holding the coalition hostage with its fiscal red lines. No new tax rises and no increase in the debt ceiling are hangovers from its addiction to austerity, a habit even Merkel's conservatives gave up on two years ago, while at EU level no extension of common EU debt outside of the pandemic package, this being one of the EU's most positive post-Brexit initiatives.

German Government has three key positions. Scholz will be Chancellor and then the Greens and the FDP will split the Foreign Ministry and the Finance Ministry. If the Greens take the Foreign Ministry and the FDP's Christian Lindner becomes Finance Minister the die is cast. If the Greens take Finance and the FDP are left with Foreign Affairs it's game on. The FDP is trying for misdirection, dangling the prospect of a new super Climate Ministry under the noses of the Greens. Will they take the bait allowing the FDP a veto over everything with control of the Finance Ministry? This means the new Government can tinker around with headline catching cosmetic changes, but will be incapable of taking the steps necessary at national and EU level to steer out of the crises it faces. Then the hope lies with the polls.

German parties are rarely threatened from within their parliamentary caucuses, but as inability bites there are grounds to believe this time it might be different due to the quirks of the German PR system which has 299 constituency seats and a top up to reflect the proportion vote for parties with more than 5% or three constituency seats. More than half of both the SPD and Green MPs are new. The Left has been strengthened in both parties, and more interesting, especially in the SPD, these new members are less biddable. When the selections for constituencies and the lists were taking place the SPD was down at 15% in the polls meaning it was expecting to lose at least half or more of its 59 constituency seats and pick up seats on the list. The party insiders and factions organised accordingly.

The late surge confounded all expectations. They gained an additional 62 constituency seats with the list members shrinking from 94 to 85. These new members, who never expected to be elected when they were selected, have little to lose if when the shine comes off the coalition - and it will - they use their weight like the FDP have used theirs. Germany and the EU may come to live in interesting times! C

Glyn Ford was a Labour MEP

France - left populism flags

Andrew Coates finds a fragmented left and a split far right

Next year, in April, France will hold a Presidential election. French political life has focused on the candidates who will enter that contest. Many have impressed by the victory of the German social democratic SPD and the growth, by 5,8% to 14,8% of the Green party vote.

The focus on 2022 has been reinforced by the decline in the weekly street protests against the Pass Sanitaire (Vaccine Passport). These raucous affairs, involving a variety of forces, including anti-vaxxers and the far right who clashed with anti-fascists, drew hundreds of thousands across France. There were 50,000 on the 2nd October.

In early October the French Green Party (EELV) and their allies held the second round of their Presidential 'primary', timed in the expectation of good result in the neighbouring country. Open to all who paid a nominal sum and signed a declaration of common values over 100,000 cast their ballots. There were (he supported the Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon in 2017) in-depth debates on the news channel LCI, focusing on Green issues like nuclear power and climate change. 51.03% backed the nationally known, left-leaning Yannick Jadot (he supported the Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon in 2017), and 48.97% the 'eco-feminist' Sandrine Rousseau. Polls give him between 7% and (optimistically) 9% of the vote in next year's election.

At present all the Presidential candidates of French left stand at below 10% of projected support. There are plenty to choose from. Jean-Luc Mélenchon (la France insoumise) is at 8 to just 10% The Socialist Party candidate, Anne Hidaglo, Mayor of Paris, was selected by an internal party vote of their 22,000 members. She scores between 5% and 7%. Well down beneath these are Fabien Roussel (PCF, Communist), Philippe Poutou (NPA) and Nathalie Arnaud (LO), both from the far-left, and, for his own movement, L'engagement, former Socialist Party Minister Arnaud Montebourg (if he gets on the ballot). They get between one and a couple of percentage points.

For a party to exist in French politics it is said that they need to run somebody for President. Political organisations must get their activists' enthusiasm behind a figure who can stand to head the Republic. Those trying to justify this say that some of the electorate will only vote for their own version of left or green politics. Others point to a long history of disputes between parts of the French left (notably between just about everybody and Mélenchon), or the reasons behind the Socialist defeat in 2017.

Mélenchon has called for a kind of unity from below, la union popularise. There have been independent efforts to find a figure beyond the established parties, or a common figure from them, by the Primaire Populaire. All the established groups refused to participate. At 100,000 supporters this initiative did not achieve the target of 300,000 and has come to nothing.

At present it looks as if no left force will get to the crucial second round of the Presidential battle. President Macron, backed by his 'movement' La République en Marche, is at 25% for the first round, and stands at a hypothetical ten percent win in the second round over his main opponent the far-right Marine le Pen. Macron has a small left wing, 'En Commun', and several transfers from the social democratic wing of the Socialist Party. But his politics are increasingly centre-right, as indications of the direction of new social security reforms indicate. The classical right, Les Les Républicains who have yet to designate a candidate, are not registering as a serious alternative.

Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN) has its own challenge with the emergence of a contender who is more extreme, Éric Zemmour who has some serious financial and political backing. The commentator of CNews (a successful version of GB News) is now credited with 15%, just behind her 17%. Zemmour's best known book, Le Suicide Français (2014) is a compendium of anti-May 68, anti-immigrant sovereigntist politics, and nationalist prejudice. On the evidence of his debate last month with Jean-Luc Mélenchon on BFMTV, his virulence is undimmed. His anti-woke jibes and, above all, calls for repatriation and a take on 'assimilation' including the idea that all French children have 'French' forenames. – all contested by the leader of LFI - are hard to imagine even from British national populists.

Anne Hidalgo - Paris socialist mayor

Some on the French left have given up hoping for a last minute breakthrough. Their concern is centred on the 'Third Round', the legislative Parliamentary elections that follow the Presidential battle. Will these divisions continue, or will the left be able, as it successfully did in many areas in this year's regional contests, to reach agreements on united lists? Are as some suggest, the existing party structures badly suited to make these decisions? The decline (at least in the polls) of the 'movement' La France insoumise (LFI) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, which has no real democratic structures but a fluid web-based form centred around a 'Chief' suggests that the 'left populist' alternative has not worked. All of the different currents on the French left are still trying to find a way to establish a strong, and governing, political force. **C**

Andrew Coates is a member of Chartist EB

Who are the bricks in the Red Wall?

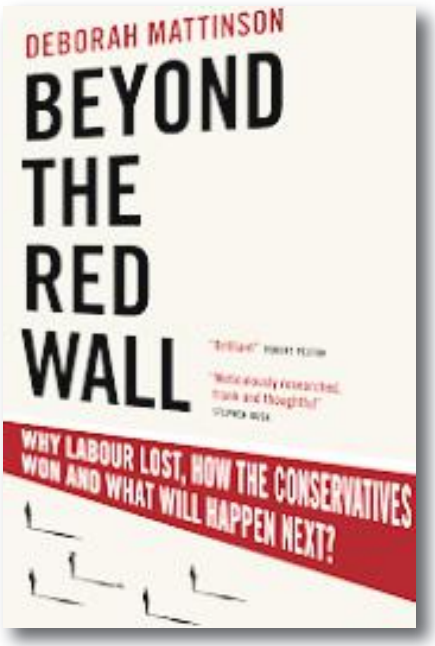
Bryn Jones reviews recent surveys of why Labour lost many traditional seats in 2019

Did long-time Labour-supporting communities ditch Labour for the Tories because of Brexit, or Corbyn's media image? Or was it slower burning trends of declining industrial jobs and trade union traditions; and New Labour's lack of interest in 'Old Labour' communities and interests? More fundamentally, does class no longer shape voter behaviour and is that because the working class has dissolved? One note of caution, not fully acknowledged by commentators is that ex-industrial, ex-Labour constituencies are not necessarily homogenous 'working class' communities. As this review shows, this equivalence is partly assumed, with misleading conclusions, in the texts reviewed here. From different parts of the political spectrum these authors are: Financial Times 'Whitehall editor' Sebastian Payne; New Labour strategist, and now senior Starmer aide, Deborah Mattinson; and New Left Review editor Tom Hazeldine.

Payne took a wide-angle tour of ten of these constituencies. Ex-New Labour strategist Mattinson used the microscope of local focus groups in three seats. Hazeldine's broader historical approach, locates the upheaval within a much longer evolution of the North-South divide; using data from published reports and contrasts between long-time Labour seats that voted differently in 2019. These authors' findings will resonate well with the beliefs of their respective audiences amongst the political classes. However, as a political sociologist, and despairing Labour supporter, my question was whether their approach and methods warrant their conclusions.

In *Lost Heartlands* Payne asked whether the cause of Labour's defeats was a 'confluence of Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn', or by 'a structural change in how England votes'; i.e. a combination of socio-economic change and shifts in popular attitudes: from Party loyalism to more individualistic lifestyles and instrumental voting. He questioned very few actual voters. In his ten constituencies, which ranged from clusters of semi-rural settlements to towns linked to bigger cities, voters' opinions are outweighed by those of ministers, ex-ministers, shadow ministers, MPs, ex-MPs and pundits. His conclusion: the Tory surge came from longer-term trends catalysed by Labour's anti-Brexit stance and negative perceptions of Jeremy Corbyn: as an out-of-touch, unbelievable spendthrift, and unpatriotic friend of terrorist threats to national security.

Payne's interviews were seemingly random and not selected for class, gender or ethnicity. Only about nine of his total of 26 local respondents seemed to have worked either in middle-ranking white collar, or manual jobs. Each constituency's sparse voter views



are topped up with celebrity politicians' opinions: Norman Tebbit, Tony Blair, David Blunkett, Neil Kinnock, John McDonnell, Ed Miliband, to name but a few. Most of these and related pundits have little or no connection with the place analysed. Instead Payne uses a topic raised in the constituency to bring them in. The ethnic dimension is tangentially mentioned by an ex- UKIP councillor in Burnley, where a 'White Lives Matter' banner was flown over the football stadium. When ethnic issues are seriously considered for Coventry North-West this facilitates a detour into pages of opinions from current Tory Health minister, and suburban Bromsgrove MP, Sajid Javid and inner-city, Tottenham MP and Shadow Justice minister David Lammy. A Coventry imam – one of only five Asians mentioned in the whole book – was a firm supporter of Jeremy Corbyn: the ex-Leader's only favourable mention by any local. However, the ethnic significance of this support is not pursued. Nor are comparisons between Asian and white voters' views. Yet five of the Red Wall seats Labour retained have 'significant ethnic minority populations'.

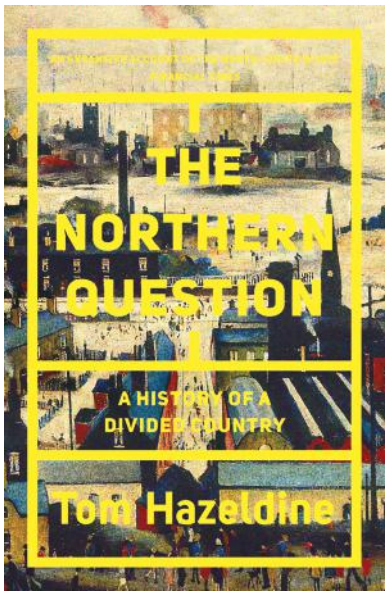
Top Starmer advisor Mattinson posed four questions: who exactly are ex-Labour, Red Wall voters; what matters to them; why did they switch from Labour to the Tories; and how might they vote in future? Her main source is, supposedly, conversational focus groups in Darlington, Hyndburn (Accrington) and Stoke on Trent, supplemented by opinion polls, electoral statistics and her polling company's studies. Focus groups can provide deeper insights but social scientists emphasise their limitations. Without repeat samples from the same population their representativeness is dubious. More importantly, a 'band wagon' effect can develop within a group. Forceful expression of a distinctive or familiar argument, by a more opinionated or vocal group member, inclines others to support it; either because their own ideas are ill-formed, or because it's easier to conform to an apparent consensus. (For a further critique see: https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/what-lies-beyond-labours-red-wall)

Mattinson's focus groups give more insights than Payne's random interviews, but their accuracy as barometers of the range of working class views is dubious. These recent 'switchers' from Labour to Conservative (an essential selection criterion) were not compared to new or loyal Labour voters, nor to abstaining ex-Labour ones. The participants were meant to be working class voters from socio-occupational groups C2, D and E: manual, routine and unskilled jobs, and unemployed. Unfortunately, C2 is a very elastic category of worker. It extends far from the conventional factory hand, cleaner or building worker. Mattinson stretches the definition further, blurring close to 'C1' professional

Bryn Jones is a member of Bath CLP and co-author of Alternatives to Neo Liberalism

and managerial grades. Her first protagonist, Accrington plumber Ian, like other respondents, is self-employed. Most plumbers run their own businesses. To fit heating systems they must pass stringent written, competence tests requiring abstract technical knowledge. Such skilled workers are relatively well paid. Unlike Mattinson's, more sophisticated social class models distinguish according to financial (in)security and assets, like house ownership. One much quoted participant, Michelle from Accrington, owns a café. Occupation classification alone is insufficient to capture class status.

The chapters on the economy, leadership and patriotism also mix Red Wall groups' opinions with voters from other localities: including Brexit 'citizens juries' conducted for the Starmerite Labour Together and Blairite Progress groups. These additions submerge the Red Wall focus and Mattinson's own political views surface. Summarising a confused diversity of views on the Blairite legacy, she baldly proclaims that Labour will not 'overcome its deep-rooted negatives without some kind of rehabilitation of its most recent period in government and its most electorally successful leader'. I could see no obvious support for this inaccurate assertion amongst the voter opinions reported.



So, we still don't know the extent to which Brexit, Corbyn or patriotism affected that choice, especially amongst Labour's main targets: young and insecure workers and impecunious families needing public welfare support and services. Most such voters will not be skilled workers but 'D and E'. Many will also be ethnic minorities and many in both these categories are more, or as, likely not to vote at all rather than vote Tory. 2019 turnout was below average in all bar one of Payne's and Mattinson's constituencies, where most Tories won by narrow margins. Electoral participation and insecure employment is particularly low amongst young voters. Yet Mattinson's focus groups only recruited people in their late '30s and above.

Hazeldine's data is mainly from aggregate surveys and voting statistics. It is his comparison of the Manchester Gorton constituency (won by Labour) with Bishop Auckland (gained by Tories) that really highlights the salience of these wider class factors. Despite similar occupational class profiles, Gorton has a higher proportion of graduates and ethnic minority voters; but also fewer stable manufacturing jobs. In contrast to Gorton and the rootless 'precariat' image of deindustrialised wastelands, 15 % of Auckland workers have such jobs. It's significant that Auckland has more older voters and home owners than Gorton. Are the marginalised groups mentioned above similar to those in Gorton and closer to the nub of the 'beyond the Red Wall' problem? Labour might better aim to convince property-less voters, with insecure jobs and finances to register and promise more secure employment and personal finance policies, than to wrap itself in the union jack and pro-business pin stripes. C

Sebastian Payne Broken** ***Heartlands. A Journey through Labour's Lost England

Deborah Mattinson ***Beyond the Red Wall: Why Labour Lost, How the Conservatives Won and What Will Happen Next?***

Tom Hazeldine ***The Northern Question: A Political History of the North-South Divide***

No one safe until all safe

Nick Dearden says Britain must follow US in agreeing a patent waiver

Recently Global Justice Now carried coffins down Whitehall to highlight global Covid-19 deaths as UK entered make-or-break talks aimed to boost global vaccinations.

The UK has vaccinated more people than 132 countries combined, new figures reveal. The UK alone has fully vaccinated 45.05 million people from a population of 68.2 million, compared to a total of 44.2 million from 132 countries with a combined population of more than one billion.

Countries collectively representing 13% of the world's population lag behind the UK, including Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Ghana, Yemen, Madagascar, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Malawi, and Zambia. Many have vaccination rates of less than 2%.

In Edinburgh, protestors in funeral attire held a white flower wreath reading 'Shame' outside the British government's Scotland office.

For more than a year the UK has blocked attempts to waive intellectual property on Covid-19 vaccines, tests and treatments at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Since India and South Africa proposed a patent waiver last October, 3.5 million people have died from Covid-19, averaging more than 10,000 deaths a day.

Germany has forced EU opposition to the waiver, despite support from countries including France. But with post-election coalition talks likely to bring a change in government in Germany, the UK could be the last opponent to the waiver at the WTO.

The development of the Oxford vaccine was 97% publicly funded but was handed over to AstraZeneca with an exclusive patent, in a deal brokered by the British government. The company has since refused to share the technology and know-how needed to develop the vaccine with the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 patent pool, known as C-TAP. Other major pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Moderna have also refused to join C-TAP.

The United States threw its weight behind a vaccine intellectual property waiver in May. For more than a year, the UK has obstructed efforts to scale up the world's vaccine supply, forcing the global south to rely on donations that are always too little and too late. Not only has the British government grabbed far more vaccines than we need, they're actively working to stop low and middle-income countries producing their own vaccines. It's shameful.

Nick Dearden is Director, Global Justice Now

Climate activism is learning

Abel Harvie-Clark says if you think youth strikes went away, think again

The climate strikes are back. After a pandemic-induced hiatus forced the monthly demonstrations online, and some internal rejigging, September 24th saw hundreds of thousands of school students on the streets around the globe, calling out inaction on climate change and making the demand to "Uproot the System". Over 50 strikes took place in the UK, from London to Ullapool, pointing towards the particular pressure that needs to be applied on the Conservative government this year. There is an onus to provide at least some kind of initiative as hosts of COP26, the UN's climate talks taking place in Glasgow. Further, there is a huge responsibility in the hands of countries like the UK to acknowledge and act on the massive historic responsibility this country has for ecological violence. Britain's contemporary position in supply chains and international finance restricts much of the Global South's ability to transition away from fossil fuels: climate reparations and debt cancellation are not only overdue, but vital for our shared ecological future.

The international connections and awareness between young people in the climate strike movement have helped shape this consciousness, an example of the key perspectives that we youth are bringing to the ecological movement. Striking in synchrony with activists on the frontlines of climate breakdown – those facing forest fires, droughts, killer heatwaves and the like - shines a light of urgency on the situation right here. Unlike those in positions of power, we have a full lifetime ahead of us, one that will be dominated to a large extent by dealing with the fallout from decisions made now. Even if we somehow stopped emitting fossil fuels overnight, there is already no shortage of ecological damage and global overheating to contend with. But the difference between that scenario, and the one that our governments have us headed towards (3 degrees or more of global temperature rises) is far from trivial.

Of course, this is not a new problem: we can look back at a series of historical patterns within which we now find ourselves. Looking back 500 years, we can identify the "plantationocene" as a foundation of the social ecological exploitation and colonial extraction that gave rise to the capitalist system, integral to the metabolic rift that is destroying Earth as a liveable planet. Looking back to our parents' generation, we discover the recent collective memory of the miners' strike and defeat - still a traumatic warning against unjust industrial transitions.

Climate strikes prepared a generation for a lifetime of struggle

But our generation is not stuck in the false dichotomy of "jobs or climate" that many try and push - our generational experience has taught us far more, to see climate not as a single issue campaign, but another reason why we must uproot the system. We grew up through neo-liberalism and global financial collapse, with zero-hour contracts as the norm, and Black Lives Matter inspiring us to mobilise for change but reminding us how far we have to go. It is plain to see that when crisis hits, our current system passes on that burden to the poorest, the most discriminated, the powerless, the oppressed. When we come to terms with the fact that climate crisis is already here, we realise that our fight against it is also the fight of the poor, the discriminated and the oppressed.

When Tory ministers told us back in 2019 that instead of climate striking, we should make the most of our (entirely insufficient) education, we painted our placards to read "activism is learning". We could obviously tell this then, but my experience since has only proved the point further. Powerful as the climate strike demonstrations are, their impact does not end there. In fact, one of the most significant things climate strikes have done is prepare a generation for a lifetime of struggle ahead.

At an immediate level we see this in those who were younger and perhaps less confident in 2019 now fiercely taking the lead in the re-emergence of climate strikes. The experience of striking has also opened our minds to an essential form of direct action that some thought those born in 21st century Britain may have forgotten. This experience was taken by climate strikers to university, where many were instrumental to setting up rent strike campaigns, a continuation of young people's political action.

A powerful alliance is forming too between climate strikers and the reviving working-class strike movement. The London branch of the UK student climate network showed their solidarity at the picket line of workers at the environmentally-critical government department for Business, Energy and Industrial strategy, and many young climate activists were founding signatories on this statement, calling for the repeal of all anti-trade union laws, so that workers can strike for climate justice.

The force and leverage of striking offers a vision of hope and reclaiming agency, out of the despair of climate doom. The next climate strike in the UK will take place on the 5th November, to coincide with the COP talks, with a day of workers action the following day. Be there - be part of the fight for climate justice. C

Abel Harvie-Clark isa student at SOAS and a member of East Newcastle CLP

Did sections of the Left get this wrong?

Dave Lister on a clearly reasoned account

Labour's Antisemitism Crisis
David Renton
Routledge (pbk £19.99, ebk £17.99)

This is a very important book which provides a balanced, well considered view of the issues. Nobody emerges from it completely unscathed, except perhaps for Jon Lansman.

David Renton is a human rights barrister and author. He is a former member of the SWP and was a registered Labour supporter in 2015 and 2017 but never a Party member. He is also Jewish. This book was commissioned by Mike Phipps, the editor of the website Labour Hub, to examine the conclusions of the EHRC report into the Labour Party. It may well be that Renton came out with a far more nuanced account than had been anticipated.

Renton provides useful insights into the history of antisemitism and the foundation of the state of Israel. He considers also the significance of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism, which has provided the yardstick by which the Labour Party has judged antisemitic behaviour. Kenneth Stern, from the American Jewish Committee against Antisemitism, who drew up original guidelines, has expressed the view that they have been misused in Britain. The problems have arisen particularly from the examples of antisemitism listed by the IHRA rather than the main body of their document, with seven out of 11 referring to Israel. Renton is clear that people should be free to criticise the state of Israel and support the Palestinian people so long as they do not do so in antisemitic language.

Renton identifies Ken Livingstone's speech on Zionism in 2016 as the point following which the situation began to get out of hand. Livingstone argued that the Jewish Agency for Palestine's agreement with Nazi Germany in 1933 proved that Hitler supported Zionism. However, this was clearly one way that Hitler saw of solving his Jewish problem and from the JAP's point of view was a means to help some Jews to escape from Germany. Arguably Livingstone's statement was highly offensive to Jews and so could be considered to be antisemitic.

From this point on, attacks on Corbynism built up from leaders of the Jewish community and the right-wing of the Labour Party. The right-wing editor of the Jewish Chronicle Stephen Pollard was particularly vehement in his denunciation as was the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who urged people not to vote Labour in 2019. Renton's comment on this is that "the partisan nature of that intervention was shocking. Effectively voters were being asked to reject racism by helping the racist Boris Johnson ("letterbox" Moslem women, "watermelon smiles" etc) into power. In my view, as a secular Jew, it was the equivalent of Jeremy Corbyn encouraging members of the Chief Rabbi's United Synagogue to transfer to the Reform!"

There is also the point, well made by Renton, that Jewish establishment critics of Labour were not nearly so vocal about Donald Trump, who referred to some Nazis as good people, but strongly supported Israel, or the antisemitic regimes in Hungary and Poland, which were also keen supporters of Israel.

Renton is equally scathing of the attempts by some people on the hard Left to deny that anybody in the Labour Party had been guilty of antisemitism. He applies this stricture particularly to the Jewish Voice for Labour movement, which defended not only Livingstone but also Jackie Walker and Chris Williamson and denied that the infamous East End mural was antisemitic, even though Corbyn himself later apologised for his earlier endorsement of it. Renton demonstrates that Walker's claim that Jews were "the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade" was completely untrue. He concludes on JVL that for them all criticism of Corbyn supporters had "by definition, to be exaggerated, factional in origin and simply wrong".

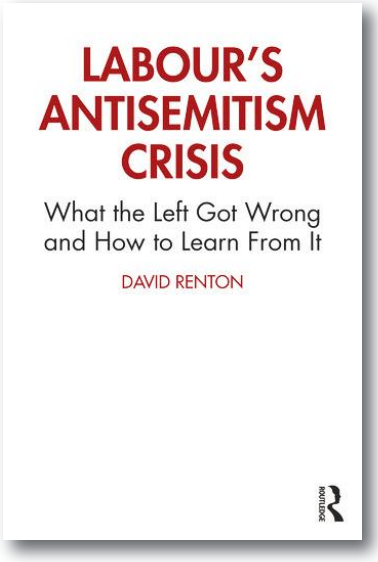
In relation to the Luciana Berger episode, Renton points out that she had initially agreed to join Corbyn's shadow cabinet, unlike many of her colleagues, and had been the victim of a great deal of abuse from the far right. Unfortunately, some members of the far left then joined the far right in abusing her on social media.

Renton identifies two distinct groups on the Labour Left that responded particularly to the antisemitism allegations- Momentum and former Unite staff in the Leader's office. In his view Momentum, under the influence of Jon Lansman, appreciated the importance of sensitivity towards the Jewish community. On the other hand the ex-Unite group were far less sensitive and did not appreciate the genuine concerns that there were. He does point out however that the complaints were investigated far more quickly once Jenny Formby was in post.

Renton also demonstrates that there were clear cases of antisemitism, especially in social media posts. For example, somebody referring to "bent-nosed manipulative liars". He cites a Labour Party member who complained of 22 instances of antisemitic harassment at meetings of his CLP including his being described as "a child killer" and "good with money".

Renton's conclusion is that the mistake made by both the left and the right of the Labour Party was to believe that these matters could be dealt with by legal or procedural means. He feels that they would be better dealt with by discussion. Thus he argues that Jackie Walker should have been given the opportunity to understand that what she had said was incorrect and to apologise for it rather than being expelled. He refers to members disciplined for sharing a platform with people accused of antisemitism, rather than something they have said or done, which again he disagrees with.

This is then a comprehensive, balanced and clearly reasoned account. One criticism might be that more could have been said about the role of the Jewish Labour Movement in the unfolding of events. Hopefully this whole sorry saga is behind us now and Labour can concentrate on challenging our appalling Tory government.



Rise and fall

Mike Davis on limits of Corbynism

Corbynism What Went Wrong?
Martin Thomas
Workers' Liberty £4

This is a thoughtful if polemical book charting the rise and fall of the Corbyn project. The essence of the analysis is that Corbynism ran aground on two political issues: antisemitism and Brexit. The remedy could have been debate and education. Additionally, only a meagre culture of political discussion was developed. Membership mushroomed with Corbyn's election in 2015. However, the older rejoiners were already 'formed' and youth were not drawn into regular activity and education—youth and student activity declined, while the right maintained control of Labour student organisation, argues Thomas.

The bulk of the book is a journey through the Corbyn years to electoral defeat in 2019. Acknowledged are the constant attacks from right-wingers in the PLP, the mass media and party machine. There were no fundamental changes in organisation, which could have helped remedy the latter. The LOTO office could have countered the Party HQ but didn't. The Seamus Milne, Andrew Murray and Steve Howell team were old Stalinists and tilted Corbyn to have little interest in Brexit, antisemitism or democracy in the party. 'Much of the structure and culture of the Blair years remained'.

Momentum figures large in the analysis. Born out of the insurgence around Corbyn's election, Thomas argues the organisation 'had no wish to push policy debates' at conference, focussing instead on a fringe festival (The World Transformed), although he acknowledges the left was weak at the 2016 conference in terms of delegates. Further, Momentum is criticised for a failure to develop democratic structures or conferences for wider political debate.

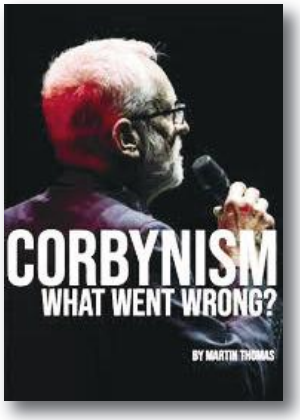
The near success in the 2017 GE is little acknowledged. Because Brexit had been a secondary issue in that contest Corbyn was able to outline a broader left alternative (little mention of socialism in the manifesto we're reminded), mount an effective social media and street level campaign enabling the Party to do well in drastically reducing the Tory majority, though not well enough to win.

Thomas is highly critical of Corbynism on campaigning. Certainly on Brexit, this is justified. Chartist has made the arguments for working in the framework of the European Union (akin to working in Westminster or local government structures), for free movement of people and the benefits of the Customs Union. Corbyn failed on this. Invoking Article 50 was over hasty and Brexit was kept off the agenda in 2016, 2017 and fudged in 2018. Too much ideological ground was ceded to the Tory Brexiteers and the leadership missed the boat on campaigning for a second referendum or joining the huge demonstrations making that call.

The wider criticism of Corbynism's lack of street protests and mobilisation is less justified. Comparisons are made with Michael Foot who supported protests against unemployment and actively supported CND. Corbyn is even compared unfavourably to Hugh Gaitskell and Labour support for mobilisations against Suez intervention in 1956. However, Corbyn supporters were prominent in the People's Assembly Against Austerity and its Labour offshoot, its various conferences and demonstrations. True, Labour did not organise any major demonstrations in its own right or seek to coordinate campaigns against cuts in local government.

This criticism has echoes of 1979/80 when Socialist Organiser was formed as a cross-Labour left united front including Chartist, Worker's Action (predecessor of Workers' Liberty), the newly formed London Labour Briefing and independent leftists like Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight and others. Alongside the independents Chartist took the longer view of the struggle against cuts stressing that the groundwork to build a broader movement had still to be done and that heroic martyrdom of councillors would not assist struggling working class families. This 'dented shield' approach was deemed unacceptably accommodating to the Tories by WA/WL and led to a split. There is some inaccuracy on Socialist Organiser. This author was co-editor until the split and several Chartist EB members were signatories to the critique.

Corbyn's election and re-election to the leadership of the Labour Party undoubtedly represented a huge opportunity to forge Labour as a popular, activist party, developing a mass movement and educating members in a new socialist politics.



No mention is made of the large conferences organised by John McDonnell's team to debate alternative economic strategies or the initial consultations with members on policy priorities. These did represent a new course and new thinking.

Owen Jones in his analysis—*This Land*—unfolds a detailed picture of dysfunctionality and an inward-looking mentality emanating from many of the figures Corbyn surrounded himself with, echoed in this book. The slowness to tackle the issue of antisemitism in the party, the evasions and lack of an apology for comments on an antisemitic mural wounded the leadership. Left antisemitism is identified as a big problem. Thomas links this to a false left analysis of the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, it's not necessary to subscribe to his stance to accept the damage done on this issue.

The fundamental problem with Corbyn's tenure as leader was the failure to reproduce the intense campaigning of the 2017 General election using the streets and social media over a sustained period of time. The promise of regular mass meetings across every town and city never materialised. Involvement of members in policy development faced a similar fate.

The book finishes with a defence of revolutionary socialist politics and organisation using this reviewer as foil. Never say never, but the left has failed to date to push capitalism to its limits and beyond through the democratic institutions created by the working class and its allies, using the Labour Party and trade unions as major vehicles. Those vehicles certainly need renovation but are the best ones we have just now. Any revolution is nine-tenths completed in the womb of the existing society. We still have way to go to that end.

None so blind...

Glyn Ford on a Political Fight Back

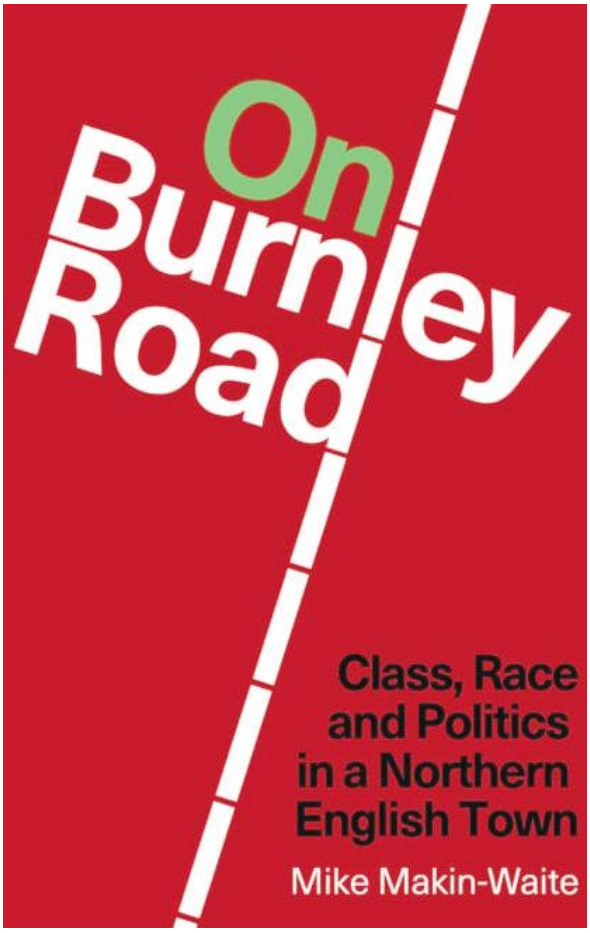
On Burnley Road; Class, Race and Politics in a Northern English Town
Mike Makin-Waite
Lawrence and Wishart £17

We only saw it coming afterwards' explains the stunned reaction to both 2001's Northern mill town riots and the short and longer-term political fall out. There are none so blind as those that cannot see. For anyone looking the spoors were there. With low - close to no - unemployment in the late fifties when Britons had 'never had it so good' the tens of thousands of economic migrants, coaxed from Mirpur in Azad Kashmir to the North by mill owners desperate to man the night-shifts as new technology and competition dictating continuous working, seemingly posed no threat to the indigenous population.

When the collapse of the Soviet Empire released the final brake the last safety nets vanished in the West that was no longer true of their descendants. Deindustrialisation combined with austerity and immiscible communities was a fiery mixture, as the children and grandchildren of those economic migrants seemingly took the deskilled jobs the white working-class would have preferred not to want. For those cast aside living standards paused, stuttered and fell. Culprits were to be found. Misdirection was the order of the day. Political parties blamed the victims. While they weren't colourblind, it was for the far and populist right a black and white issue.

Mike Makin-White, who worked for Burnley council on race relations, details how this all unfolded in his town and how it was combatted. Politically the path was clearly signposted. From the mid-nineties racist Labour councillors successively spilled over into Independents, and by 1999 they were standing and winning, matching Labour vote for vote. In 2000 there were twelve 'true labour' Independents. The gear change came in the spring and summer of 2001 with rolling race-riots in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, all capped by 9/11. Islamophobia was nationalised, internationalised and legitimated. In Oldham in the June 2001 General Election Nick Griffin won over 16% of the vote while less than two years later Burnley had eight BNP councillors and the Independents three.

On Burnley Road looks at the fightback institutionally and politically. It took time. The last BNP councillor wasn't defeated until 2012. Makin-White dismisses the early confrontational approach of the Anti-Nazi League in favour of 'Love Music, Hate Racism', argues for learning the lessons of civic mediation from Northern Ireland and having the Council directly confront claims of 'unfair treatment' for 'whites' over Asians with published argument and arithmetic. The redemption narrative is a cosy one, with, he writes, councillors in all political groups acting in good faith (authors emphasis). In the end the tide went out, but what it revealed was no return to an imagined past. In 2019 Burnley elected a Tory MP for the first time since 1910's January Election. I thoroughly recommend On Burnley Road. An intriguing detour in the political history of the town gives us HM Hyndman and his Social Democratic Federation that ended up broken on the rocks of war. It was the pro-war National Socialist Party that as part of Labour was possibly an early portend when it returned Dan Irvine in 1918.



Yet on balance it's one side of the conversation. To allow space to those who want to sunder society threatens the books moral. State complacency is centre stage, yet state complicity doesn't even get a walk-on part. Not just successive Governments' sins of omission, but those of commission. I know Oldham better than Burnley, but the narrative can easily be read across. As Makin-Waite writes in March 2001 the BNP staged an 'Equal Rights for Oldham Whites' rally outside the local police station, when the police 'helpfully' confirmed that in the previous year of the 572 racist incidents 60% of the victims were white.

The following month the mugging of Walter Chamberlain, a white pensioner, by four Asian youths was the spark. On the Saturday Oldham's last match of the season saw their 'Fine Young Casuals' - with their links to the National Front, BNP and Combat 18 - join with Stoke's 'Naughty Forty' and run amok attacking Asian market stalls and rampaging through the Muslim heartlands. When it was repeated three weeks later - with the help of Combat 18 - just as it was all being brought under control, the police mysteriously withdrew. The BNP later distributed confidential police videos of the riots provided, they claimed, by sympathetic serving officers, that clearly called into question police impartiality in the ongoing trials. All suppressed by the Authorities. Maybe the better lesson is don't just reclaim, reveal.

Beyond borders?

Don Flynn on mistakes on migrants

Border Nation: A Story of Migration
Leah Cowan
Pluto, £9.99

Something that might yet become an immigration rights movement with sufficient popular support to challenge the hostile environment consensus has begun to emerge in recent years. Motivated by the sense of the injustices inflicted on migrant and refugee people, its supporters have opened up a dozen battle fronts in their struggles with the home office.

Leah Cowan covers most of these areas of contention in her jeremiad against governments which have abrogated to themselves a vast range of powers. These allow for the constant surveillance of migrant communities, challenges to people who 'look' as though they might be immigrants on high streets, workplaces and transport hubs, to arrest and detain them. Eventually to deprive them of the lives they have built up in one country by deporting them to lands which they might have left as children many years before.

At 150 pages, it is a good book to give to someone who has been disturbed by news media accounts of cruel treatment meted out to refugees or elderly Caribbean people of the Windrush generation. If their interest is sufficiently aroused you might follow up with Colin Yeo's more analytical Welcome to Britain.

However, the book is somewhat more problematic if read as an attempt to think through the strategic problems of building a migrant rights movement which might at some point in the not-to-distant future actually win the battles it is committed to fighting. In my view seeking to build an argument that makes the issue of borders so central to progress – to the point of saying that their abolition is almost a precondition for real advance – is a mistake.

It is one that logically follows from insisting that borders have no other function than dividing the wealthy from the poor and making sure that the former continues to rule over the latter. Whilst this might be one of the consequences of imperialistic, bordered nations it fails to address what is also obviously true: that it is behind the shelter of borders that democracy and regimes of welfare and redistribution have been established to date. The demand to abolish borders is unrealistic: we should be looking instead for the integration of migrant struggles into the surge of social and political currents which are increasingly showing a capacity to fight across a spectrum of issues of injustice and inequality.

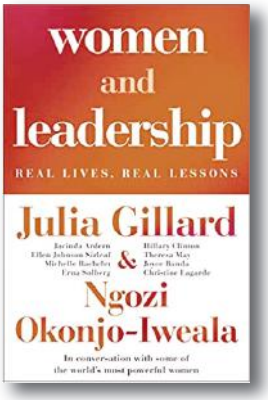
Real lives, real lessons

Ben Francis on women in power

Women and Leadership
Julia Gillard and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
Transworld Publishers Ltd, Bantam Press, £11.55

This book, written by two highly respected women leaders, is a timely reminder of the numerous structural and cultural barriers that women still face in gaining political leadership. In a world in which women are often subjected to double standards, reduced opportunity and outright threats and aggression when they become involved in politics, this gives an opportunity to take stock, assess the causes and how to overcome them.

Julia Gillard (former Australian PM) and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (World Trade Organisation Director General) have deeply considered many factors that influence women's experience of political leadership and the obstacles that can prevent them from pursuing or achieving leadership positions. They combine their own experiences with those of eight other women leaders around the world to create insightful, illustrative anecdotes highlighting every aspect of their careers. The experiences these pioneering leaders share are illuminating, but they are not the central focus of the book. Rather they add depth and context to a much more empirical approach in which the authors pinpoint eight hypotheses regarding the way women are perceived, treated and portrayed when they pursue leadership positions. The authors then examine them using data and academic literature, real world examples and the words of the prominent women leaders themselves discussing their lives and careers. This produces a much clearer idea of the specific problems and therefore a more defined route towards real, practical solutions to tackle gender inequality at the highest echelons of political life.



From analysis of the role of family and the treatment of appearance to the ways women support other women, the book breaks down the misogyny of the political world into easily understood components. Lessons drawn, such as the need to go beyond mentorship models towards active sponsorship (from passive models of advice and guidance and provide concrete support and engagement) of young women, are often accessible and practical. They are careful to include a range of experiences, acknowledging that women in politics bring a diversity of history and opinion (indeed, the eight women interviewed for this book come from across the political spectrum).

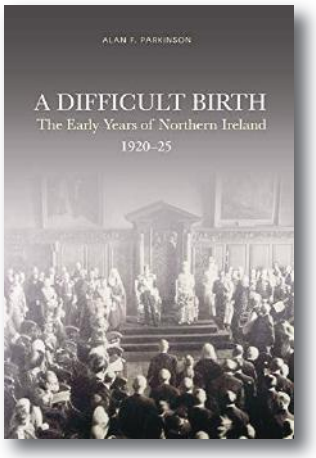
This is a thoughtful and necessary book and a welcome reminder that for any progress that has been made over the last century we remain embedded in a deeply unequal patriarchal society and that politics is still dominated by an unrepresentative clique of men. Women and Leadership offers us a chance to better understand that, and to push back against it.

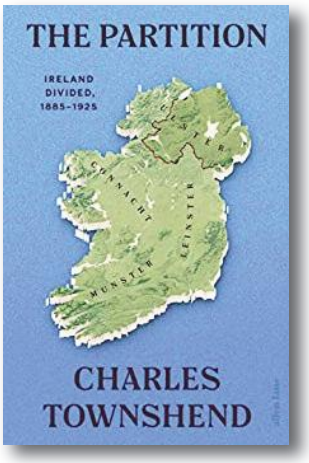
100 years of Irish Partition

Duncan Bowie
on two contrasting centenary volumes

The Partition
Charles Townshend
Allen Lane £25

A Difficult Birth
Alan Parkinson
Eastwood Books (Dublin) £25





The centenary of the partition of Ireland has produced a number of academic studies. This is to be welcomed as in contrast to the voluminous literature on Irish nationalism and its heroes and heroines, the origins and early years of the Northern Ireland administration have received relatively little coverage by academics. Townshend has written volumes on the 1916 Irish Rising and on the founding of the Irish republic.

This third volume focuses on Northern Ireland and has a longer timescale – from 1885 to 1925. He traces the origins of unionism in the opposition to Gladstone's two Irish Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1893, through to the Ulster unionist movement led by Edward Carson and James Craig who with considerable support from the Conservative opposition led by Balfour and then by Andrew Bonar Law, opposed the third Home Rule bill of Asquith's 1912 administration, which was finally enacted in 1914, though never implemented due to the outbreak of the First World War.

Townshend's study, unlike much literature on Ireland is non-partisan. He nevertheless demonstrates the extent to which Ulster protestants were opposed to being incorporated in a catholic republic, and the extent to which it was religious sectarianism rather than attachment to the United Kingdom that was the basis of their position. While the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 was not welcomed by Irish nationalists or unionists, it is significant that Craig in fact welcomed the notion of self-government in Northern Ireland and the establishment of a Northern Ireland government, of which he became prime minister, and in effect, unlike Carson, became a supporter of Home Rule.

Craig's focus was on ensuring a continuing protestant dominance in Norther Ireland, which is why he supported the concept of a six-county state, rather than a partition based on the ten-county province of Ulster. The final settlement of the boundary was left to a boundary commission, boycotted by the Northern Ireland government. The Irish administration hoped that the Commission would transfer so much territory to the Free State to make the Northern Ireland administration non-viable, while Craig was opposed to any loss of territory. The Commission did not report until 1925, at which point both sides accepted that transfer of any territory would only produce further strife. While Lloyd George's UK government has come under much criticism for being responsible for partition, it is difficult to see what else the British government could have done which would have avoided further violence. Achieving such a compromise between two antagonistic parties was in many ways a considerable achievement.

While Townshend's focus is mainly on high politics, Parkinson's study focuses on the conflict on the ground in Northern Ireland. Much of the book is extremely grim, providing a narrative of killings and revenge killings – from the driving out of Catholics from the Harland and Wolf shipyard and the burning and killing of Catholic pubs and shops and their owners by Unionists militants, to the targeted killing of protestants and their families by the IRA.

Parkinson gives an analysis of unionist organisation in Belfast and the different traditions within unionism but also of the different perspectives within nationalism – the traditionalist republicans led by Jo Devlin, who was the MP for West Belfast, and the militant republicans of Sinn Fein and the IRA. Devlin and the republicans were persuaded by Sinn Fein and De Valera to boycott the new Northern Ireland administration, which led to the first Northern Ireland government and parliament being an entirely unionist body. This was despite proportional representation guaranteeing minority catholic representation, with not only Devlin and other republicans being elected but also Irish Free State based Sinn Feiners – Michael Collins, De Valera and Arthur Griffith. De Valera was also to boycott the initial Irish Free State government together with other colleagues who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Parkinson also makes the significant point that although the Northern Ireland government was in effect under siege from republicans, notably as the Irish Free State introduced a boycott of goods produced in Northern Ireland (which possibly damaged the interests of Northern Ireland's Catholics more than protestant interests and was soon abandoned under an agreement between Craig and Collins), that the communal violence in the North was less severe than in the south. There some 300-400 were killed in the Irish civil war between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces, or the much larger number – 3,600, killed in the Northern Irish ' troubles' of the 1960's and 1970's . One of the reasons that communal violence lessened from 1922 was that IRA militants moved south to focus on the civil war there, where republicans killed fellow republicans rather than Unionist protestants.

In a final chapter, Parkinson draws out the parallels between the two periods. The antagonism between the two communities has not gone away, and given demographic changes, the Unionists again feel isolated and abandoned by the Westminster government. Whether Northern Ireland will survive much beyond its centenary year is now an open question.

Ted Knight's experiment

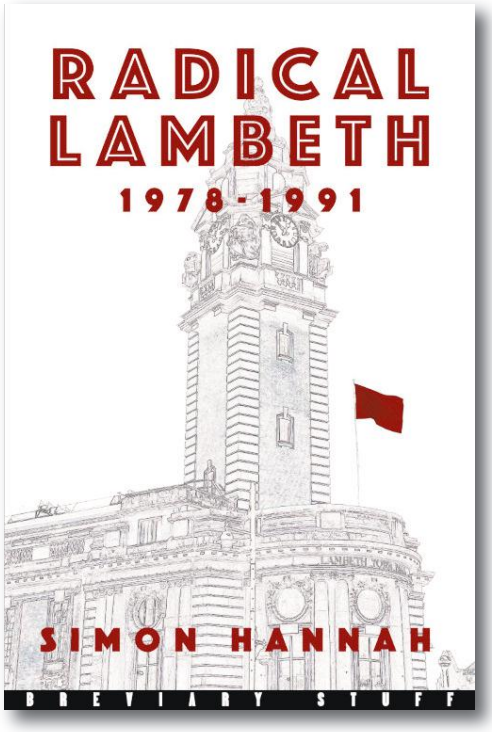
Duncan Bowie on Trotskyism in one borough

Radical Lambeth 1978-1991
Simon Hannah
Breviary Stuff £16

I need to declare an interest. I worked for Lambeth Council between 1979 and 1986. I wrote my Masters dissertation on corporate planning and management within the council, which was a response to Cynthia Cockburn's study of the borough, The Local State and actually wrote a feature on Lambeth for Chartist in 1986. Hannah currently works for Lambeth and is an active trade unionist, who was not there in the 1980's, his book being based on interviews with some of the now ageing participants in the narrative and researching the documentation of the period in sources such as London Labour Briefing and NALGO bulletins.

Reading the book brought back memories, as most of the political activists, council officers and trade unionists featured in the book were well known to me. The book, which originated in a website, is well written, and though not surprisingly from a sympathetic viewpoint, is accurate and fair. I had expected a somewhat hagiographical uncritical polemic – the cult of the recently deceased Ted Knight is still strong in left-wing circles in the area among both the surviving militants and their younger followers, but Hannah's volume has moved beyond a crude hero-worship. He accurately describes the toxic nature of politics in the period where Knight and his colleagues sought to use Lambeth as a platform for their revolutionary politics, both of resistance to the Thatcherite attack on local government and local services, but also for their struggle within the Labour Party.

Hannah's book focuses on the Labour politicians and the militant trade unionists within the council. The trade union leaders often intervened in the policy making process which was actually the role councillors were elected to carry out. There were a number of occasions in which trade unions actually tried to block the politicians from making decisions of which they disapproved, sometimes using intimidatory methods against individual councillors or by interrupting council meetings. While Knight and some of his councillor colleagues had a background in Trotskyist politics, the leading shop stewards were members of the SWP, IMG or Militant. My own full-time shop steward, mentioned in the book, was a Maoist. The trade union leaders believed with the council leadership that protest and non-compliance with government policy would bring down the Tory government with the Labour Party being led to revolutionary socialism.



Hannah provides a detailed study of revolutionary socialists in local power and their approach to running a local authority, the inter-relationship of protest and governing, and the difficulty of pursuing a two-track strategy. Councillors who sought to adopt a more pragmatic approach to running the council and recognising the reality of the context in which they operated of cuts in central government grant and subsidy, rate caping, reactionary legislation and eventually penal sanctions, were abused of betrayal by the purists – an experience of Ken Livingstone at the Greater London Council in its final year, shared later by Ted Knight, and his successors as Lambeth leader, Linda Bellos and Joan Twelves. Knight and his colleagues were nevertheless surcharged after an investigation by the Auditor and debarred from office, with a memorial to the martyrs set up in the 'Red Room' next to the bar in the Town Hall basement.

What Hannah's book does not reflect is the degree of chaos within the council at the level of delivering services. Whether the militants really believed that in making services even worse through repeated strike action and boycotts of specific council functions, the residents of the borough would revolt against the Thatcher government rather than against the council is perhaps debateable, but the Knight regime certainly involved a gross mismanagement of the council and waste of resources. Hannah refers to corruption and fraud within the Direct Labour Organisation, but the council was riddled with corruption, certainly this was the case within the Housing directorate, and clearly from more recent revelations about Lambeth's children's homes, abuse of clients as well.

There was little focus on service delivery. Trade union shop stewards, many paid out of the rates as full-time trade unionists who did not actually contribute to services to the borough's residents, thought they were running the council or at least should be, rather than the councillors or the Department heads. Senior council officers were unable to actually manage, as management decisions were in practice decided by leading councillors and trade unionists, who were often in the same revolutionary socialist faction. Political cronyism was rife. At one point, the husband of a surcharged councillor was appointed to the well-paid post of Housing director, a post for which he had no qualifications whatsoever to help pay off his wife's surcharge.

Hannah's book is nevertheless worth reading as it provides not just a detailed narrative of what could be called an interesting experiment in a revolutionary form of municipal socialism, but one that provides lessons for today's municipal socialists.

Transitional Socialism: Learning from the past

Don Flynn
on Yugoslav self-management

Decolonial Communism, Democracy and the Commons
Catherine Samary and Fred Leplat (eds)
Merlin, £17.99

The view that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism has hung over the left for several decades past as a clever aphorism which induces deep pessimism.

It has acquired force over this time because of the collapse of the vision of what a socialism capable of dragging itself into actual existence might look like. The experiences both of countries that followed the party-state route and the more gradualist 'pink tide' seen in Latin America seems to be equally gloomy. Time to call time on the project?

The collection of essays gathered in this book, burdened though it might be in such an unwieldy and puzzling title, encourage us to think otherwise. Their starting point is the fact that some of the most fundamental contradictions which capitalism represented in their national societies were faced up to by radicals bent on achieving fundamental change. The experiences of these efforts need to be closely examined to find out whether they were doomed to failure from the outset, or steps could have been taken that would have moved the transition from capitalism to socialism at least a few steps further in that direction.

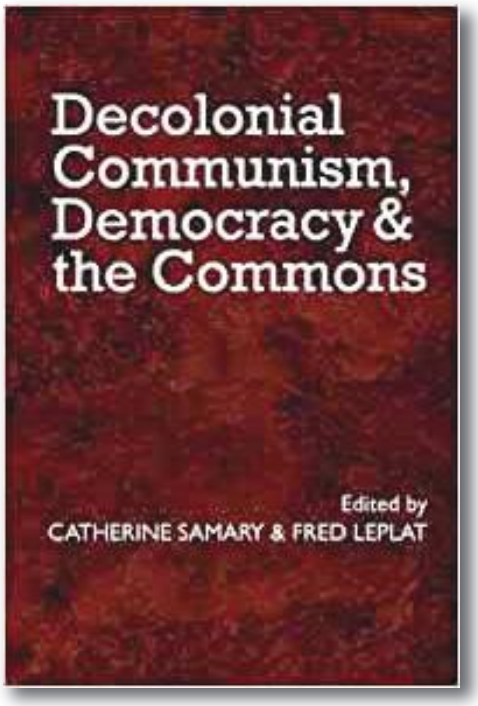
The volume is obviously inspired by the writings of Catherine Samary whose work as an academic and a political activist has centred on researching the experiences of post-capitalist societies, and in particular the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Her long chapter entitled 'Plan, market and democracy' covers the main theme of the book, which is that the possibility of advance towards a stable socialist system was stymied by the role of bureaucracy in the countries that followed the model decreed by the Soviet Union. This much is unsurprising but Samary goes on the make her argument through the lens of the Yugoslav experience which she sees as having produced a sizeable fraction of state officials, party activists and, most importantly, rank-and-file worker activists, who attempted to confront the problems the bureaucrats were creating by advocating for the self-management of industrial enterprises and worker democracy.

A rich set of lessons emerged from the debates across these layers of Yugoslav society and the innovations they introduced, particularly during the period 1950-65 when self-management extended to public factories and communes, and then after 1965 to services and the cultural sector. Economic growth was consistently higher than the rates achieved in Western Europe across this period and the country began to emerge as a modern industrial society. But its stance on self-management, as well as other points of fundamental difference, put it at odds with the Stalinist leadership of the Soviet Union and undermined the benefits of solidarity that might have come from closer alignment with a post-capitalist economy across Eastern and Central Europe. Having inherited a low level of accumulated capital from the predecessor regime, the Federal government became increasingly reliant on loans from the IMF to bring in the investment it needed to continue its growth.

The price that had to be paid for this compromise was a level of competition with better-endowed capitalist states for market share. The self-management system came under strain as the demand of competitiveness was interpreted as a need to increase the rate of labour exploitation. The late-60s and 70s saw waves of protest surging across the country, with the student revolt of 1968 demanding a return to more vigorously applied self-management and democratic principles. The tolerance of the party at federal level was pushed too far by this development, leading to the repression of the student movement and intellectual critics such as those gathered around the journal Praxis. By 1971 dissent against the centre was increasingly expressed as a revival of nationalism, with Croatia leading the way.

Samary and her co-contributors are clear that the scope for pushing the democratisation of the Yugoslav economy would have been the better alternative the reversion to bureaucratic state planning. She argues cogently that this would have had to proceed beyond the self-management of enterprises and sectors and extend to include political structures at the level of the republics and the federal government. In short, a political model which, despite the formal break with Moscow in 1948 still lent heavily on the Stalinist mode of operation, would have had to be overturned in what would amount to a new political revolution.

The book also contains very informative chapters on the challenges to capitalism that issued out from Cuba, Chile and other Latin American countries across a span which includes the 'pink tide' of recent years, and the Portuguese Carnation Revolution during the period 1974-5. This is an important book for all students of socialist theory which embraces the problem of the transition from capitalism to a society that works for the many.



Keeping a Memory Alive

Andrew Coates on a pioneering socialist feminist

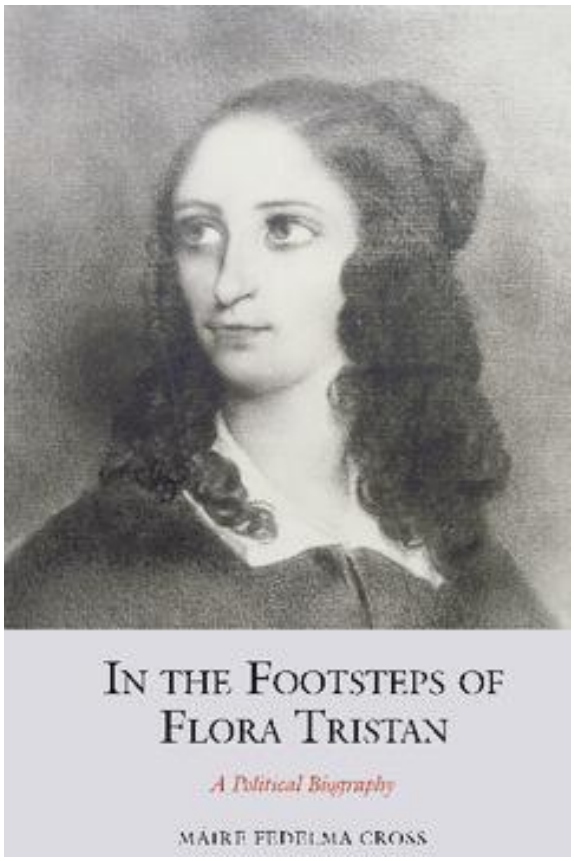
In the Footsteps of Flora Tristan. A Political Biography
Máire Fedelma Cross
Liverpool University Press £90

Flora Tristan (1803-1804) has, writes Máire Cross, "has achieved as much literary and political renown since her death as during her tumultuous life." She "became a conduit for a certain kind of socialism and feminism…a symbolic figure in militancy". Denied a part in the inheritance from her wealthy Peruvian family her first work was Périegirintions d'une paria (1838). An unhappy marriage to an abusive husband ended with him attempting to kill her in a public shooting in 1838. Tristan's feminism kept alive and developed the declarations of women's rights by Olympe de Gouge (executed on the Guillotine during the Reign of Terror) and Mary Wollstonecraft (a writer Tristan admired), during the time of the French Revolution.

At the age of 41, shortly before her death, her last work was a call to create a universal workers' union, the Union couriered (1843). The call to 'organise' labour to be was said by Marx and Engels to anticipate "Critical Criticism" (The Holy Family. 1844). In 1890 the theorist of reformism and "socialisme intègrale" Benoît Malon, celebrated its role in promoting the "international dimension" to workers' interests and class struggle. The French socialist academic Charles Andler, in 1907 generously (the text itself, does not only move in this direction) saw in her initiative an outline of the "frame of the Workers' International". Yet the First International did not itself acknowledge the woman who had cried Workers of the World Unite! - four years before the Communist Manifesto.

In the Footsteps does not just trace the path of Tristan's life, or her reception and interpretation, academic and political It is the story of two political legacies, "My contention is that the political legacies of Flora Tristan and Jules-Louis Puech beyond their graves are completely intertwined", Their works, are, Cross argues, best seen in a 'double biography.' Above all, Puech kept her memory alive for new audiences in the 20th century.

Puech wrote prolifically on Proudhon, socialism and utopianism. He embarked on the "trail of Flora Tristan" before the Great War, in which he fought despite his pacificist sympathies. His biography, La Vie et Oeuvre de Flora Tristan appeared, finally, in 1925. A "bourgeois", married to the "suffragette and feminist" Marie-Louise Puech, (women had to wait till 1944 to get the vote in France) he was not a card-carrying socialist but had empathy for the left individuals and movements he wrote about. He was, Cross suggests, both a "spectator" and engaged.



Máire Cross convincingly argues that his work portraying 'forgotten lives' was a forerunner of the "new social history".

In this respect Tristan Puech paid due attention to the on-the-ground campaign for the workers' union in 1843 and 1844, from her diary, meeting reports, and, more than 200 letters sent to workers. This is the background to Flora Tristan's Diary: *The Tour of France 1843–1844*. This, Cross contrasts – rightly – with the approach taken in books such as G.D.H.Cole's five volume *The History of Socialist Thought* in the 1950s which concentrated on governments, conferences, the broad sweep of the socialist movement rather than the "little people".

Puech helped create the "Association of friends of Proudhon". The theorist of 'mutualism' was probably the most anti-feminist thinker on the 19th century left. His followers continued to oppose women's rights in the 1st International. It is a paradox that somebody who warmed to a man, hostile to any role for women "outside the home" could be sympathetic to Flora Tristan.

Perhaps one of the best introductions to Flora Tristan is her *Promenades dans Londres*, published in 1840. (*The London Journal of Flora Tristan*,). This lucid outsider's view of London in the late 1830s includes scenes of great poverty, aristocratic richness, hypocrisy, and her meetings with London radicals, Chartists and democrats. In that respect it covers a world different from the proletarian and industrial North of the *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844). The scenes described in *Outcast London* by Gareth Stedman Jones (1971) suggest that class structures had far from simplified into bourgeois and proletarians by that time, even without the presence of the "aristocracy". The issue of what Tristan meant by 'working class', and what kind of 'union' and future she offered, in these conditions, may not be what a 21st century reader would be thinking of.

In the Footsteps of Flora Tristan is in some respects a specialist work. Yet it contains such a wealth of research and analysis that Máire Cross illuminates whole areas of socialist, feminist and labour history. It should shape all future studies on Flora Tristan and, one hopes, Jules Puech.

Beyond face-saving greenwash

Nigel Doggett is a member of Chartist EB

It wasn't meant to be like this reports **Nigel Doggett** on failure to secure international commitments

COP26 in Glasgow, billed as the crunch point for climate action, is starting as Chartist is published. With the ongoing Covid pandemic, participation of small, poorer nations and NGOs is likely to be limited, carrying the risk that negotiation will be on the terms of the G7 or G20. Some environmental organisations even called for it to be postponed, but it is hard to see how this would help.

The 2015 Paris Agreement was only secured at the last moment at COP21, where feelings of relief at the declaration of aims and general principles was tempered by disappointment at the meagre specifics. This time the political price of perceived failure would again be high, so a ringing face-saving declaration of intent will no doubt emerge at the end.

Writing in late-October, it is already clear that the limited groundwork laid by the UK government will fail to secure the necessary commitments. It wasn't supposed to be like this: 2020 was scheduled as the year that ambitious detailed plans were agreed but even after a year's delay, many key countries have yet to submit an up to date Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) plan for carbon reductions.

Yet global popular concern and appetite for action have never been greater. The need to stabilise the climate is overwhelmingly accepted by institutions of government at all levels, business and civil society. The key questions are how fast this can be achieved and by what means. The demand for a just transition and climate justice, offering viable choices for those on the front lines of climate impacts and employment, is now mainstream too.

Transition Towns movement has spread to over 300 places in the UK

Far from a zero-sum game whereby my contribution incurs a price somewhere else, these do not merely add up: they can produce a multiplier effect. So government raising regulatory standards spurs business innovation and consumer enthusiasm, while civil society campaigns galvanise local people and councils as well. Of the many exciting initiatives that have sprung up, the Rapid Transition Alliance brings together academics, campaigners and organisations seeking to make the change to share knowledge and exemplars. Most remarkably, in 15 years the Transition Towns movement has spread beyond leaders such as Totnes, Stroud and Lewes to over 300 diverse places in the UK alone, including urban Brixton, London and most recently Crowborough, East Sussex.

Meanwhile the COP26 Coalition has made a virtue out of necessity in organising local events on Saturday 6th November, to assemble a diverse spectrum of civil society organisations ranging beyond the usual political and environmental groups. As well as calling on the COP to match words with actions commensurate with the climate emergency we face, this aims to provide a springboard for continuing campaigning on the ground and pressure on local and national government. Doubtless Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain activists will be part of direct action to highlight the necessity of immediate change to meet net zero by 2030 targets.

In 2014 Naomi Klein counterposed 'Capitalism vs The Climate', citing the primacy of the profit motive and growth imperative, a lack of accountability to employees and communities alike, focusing on the malign influence of Big Oil in the USA. But the potential of financial institutions was highlighted in 2010 by Peter Newell and Matthew Paterson's book Climate Capitalism, which draws on neo-Gramscian political economy to identify a potential 'climate coalition', including business sectors such as insurance with long-term perspectives, joined by a growing number of firms with business models predicated on the green transition.

The UK government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener published on 19th October places major reliance on business to achieve the transition on the basis of market forces. This simplistic view is often counterposed by suspicion on the left: no one ever got a standing ovation at Party Conference for praising business. Clearly many firms do 'greenwash' their image - consumer products from mineral water to domestic aviation now claim to be carbon neutral. For every Exxon or BP, there are many small local or family firms and corporations embedded in their communities where management, unions and employees promote good environmental practice, as those in the Quaker tradition have, for people and the planet as a whole.

This year The Guardian reported a risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft warning of a disorderly shift to the low carbon economy due to G20 nations falling behind their ambitions (26 May) and asset managers calling for cuts to support for fossil fuels (10 June). On 11th October, 11 leading UK companies called for robust government action on biodiversity, stating "there is no business on a dead planet", an echo of the green trade unionists' slogan "there are no jobs on a dead planet".

Whatever the outcome of COP26, there will be no final victory in the lifetimes of anyone on earth today. A marathon is made up of many steps.