

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#318 September/October 2022

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Labour stand with unions

Paul Nowak

Cost of living strikes

Jean Seaton

Defending BBC

Pete Duncan

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Ukraine

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18 >



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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 in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Andrew Coates, Peter Chalk, Patricia d'Ardenne, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, Hassan Hoque, Peter Kenyon, Dave Lister, Sheila Osmanovic, Patrick Mulcahy, Julie Ward, Karen Constantine, Robbie Scott, Steve Carver (Website Editor), Mary Southcott and Victor Anderson. Production: Ferdousur Rehman

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New Generation Young Writers Competition

How Politics Should Change

Chartist magazine is hosting a competition to seek out the best of young writers who can write informed, creative, readable and incisive political journalism relevant for the 21st century.

We live in an age of growing threats to life on earth. The major challenges are the growing menace of human-made climate change; right wing nationalist populism; growing poverty and north-south inequality; wars and nuclear annihilation; global capitalism intensifying exploitation and social divisions.

At the same time we experience the development of modern technologies, robotics, artificial intelligence, improved education and literacy which can make huge advances for human life reducing physical toil, improving health and wellbeing and promoting solidarity.

Our societies remain scarred by social inequalities particularly the oppression of women and people of colour. Gendered discrimination, racism, disablism, and classism to name a few prominent divisions, continue to divide societies.

What forms could human liberation take? What could be the politics to move our societies forward and shake off the bonds of inequality, discrimination and exploitation?

Chartist believes democratic socialism holds the answers. But we need to interrogate the meaning of the concept. What needs to change in western democratic capitalist regimes? How can communities empower themselves to overcome the

inequalities and harms of modern day societies? What kind of electoral systems, what kind of government could move us forward? What should be the relationship between state and civil society organisations? How can democracy be developed to become the lifeblood of a new society?

We will be inviting contributions on these themes and more to widen the debate on the left. Every issue of the print magazine will devote several pages to printing a selection of articles varying in length from 400 to 1500 words. We will also be publishing submitted articles on our website.

Chartist has been publishing for over 50 years as a democratic left journal. We have a wide range of contributors mainly from the Labour, trade union, green and radical left movements. From academics to activists, MPs, councillors, trade unionists and professional journalists.

The competition will be launched at Labour Party conference.

A range of judges will assess the contributions submitted over a six month period.

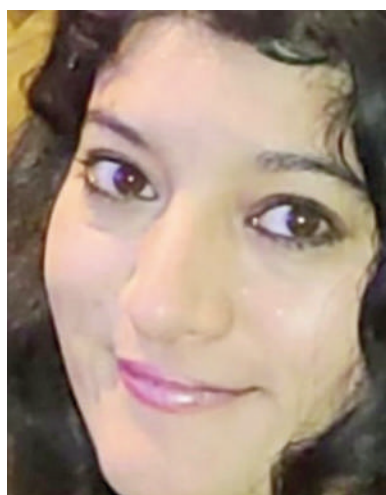
There will be prizes in addition to the publication of writing. We will be looking for prose writing with an emphasis on clarity of argument and reporting. Pieces should be well researched and readable. They can be polemical or reportage, analysis or comment.

Judges will shortlist and select the winning contributions. Contributions from young people under 26 should be emailed to editor@chartist.org.uk

FEATURES



Solidarity with strikers – Page 8



Ending misogyny – Page 13



Ukraine resists under fire – Page 18

8

SOLIDARITY WITH UNIONS

Paul Nowak on why we should all back striking workers

9

ACTIONS AGAINST INFLATION

Paul Teasdale on a plan to protect against cost of living rises

10

WHERE'S THE POLICY?

Duncan Bowie bemoans the lack of serious policy from Starmer

11

FORDE REPORT

Glyn Ford on Labour HQ skulduggery revealed

12

BY-ELECTION REALITY CHECK

Rory O'Kelly says no room for optimism on recent results

13

CHALLENGING MISOGYNY

Sabia Kamali says Zara Aleena's murder must mean action

14

ABORTION UNDER THREAT

Marge Berer reports on the implications of Roe v Wade fall

16

DEFENDING THE BBC

Jean Seaton outlines the Tory attack plans

18

UKRAINE SOLIDARITY

Pete Duncan updates on Putin's war

20

STOP THE WAR COALITION

Mike Phipps on how STWC has lost its way over Ukraine

22

BRITISH EMPIRE

Dave Lister on not forgetting the recent imperial legacy

23

LABOUR FORTUNES

Bryn Jones reviews two studies with cautionary messages

25

US MID-TERM ELECTIONS

Paul Garver on the menace of Trumpism

CHARTIST INTERNATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

Don Flynn, Denis MacShane, Glyn Ford, Mary Kaldor, Lijia Zhang, Nigel Doggett, Julie Ward & John Palmer on socialist internationalism in the new world order



Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST

FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Number 318

September/October 2022

REGULARS

4

BRUCE KENT

Patricia D'Ardenne on Bruce Kent

4

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Margaret Owen on Tory attacks

5

EDITORIAL

Is Labour up for the challenge

6

POINTS & CROSSINGS

Paul Salvesson on not levelling up

7

GREENWATCH

Dave Toke on energy efficiency

26

BOOK REVIEWS

Glyn Ford on Perry Anderson; Mike Davis on Glyn Ford; John Puntis on saving NHS; Daphne Symon on Palestinian women; Duncan Bowie on global revolutionaries; Andrew Coates on Mike Phipps and Michael Chessum on Labour's future

32

YOUTH VIEW

Caitlin Barr on abortion rights under fire

CHARTIST AGM

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Turbulent priest and prolific campaigner

Patricia D'Ardenne on Bruce Kent, 1929-2022

Bruce Kent died at home, after a short illness last June, aged nearly 93, active to the end of his long life, maintaining a leading role in the CND, the Movement for the Abolition of War, Pax Christi, and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. To many of us Bruce was also a delightful friend and companion, kind, compassionate, and never as harsh in judgement as his political and ecclesiastical opponents.

Born in London to Canadian parents, Bruce spent three years of WW2 in Canada, followed by Stonyhurst College, two years National Service and Brasenose, Oxford, whence he graduated with a law degree in 1956, and finally ordination to the priesthood in 1958.

He rose fast, as assistant to Cardinal John Heenan, and then as Chaplain to the University of London (1966-74), where students strongly influenced him. The intransigence of the Church on many topics further radicalised Bruce, who was strongly attached to War on Want, and the



Campaign against Arms Trade. Bruce always showed that compassion was more important than rules. His energy and optimism gave others hope.

He became even more controversial when he adopted a high profile in CND in the 1980s, whilst maintaining membership of a Church that still accepted the argument for nuclear deterrence. At that time the UK government pledged £5bn to replace Polaris with Trident and host Cruise at Greenham. Those of us at the Peace Camp recall his inspirational speeches, protesting against the deployment of US Cruise missiles, showing a radical approach to

the Gospels and faith as a social and political reality. Bruce was a skilled orator and leader- indeed Dennis Healey said he achieved the most impressive victory for single issue politics on record.

He opposed Trident and Thatcher's defence policies, and stood (unsuccessfully) as Labour candidate for Oxford West and Abingdon, against John Paten in 1992. And it was at this time that Bruce was compelled to retire from the priesthood, though he remained faithful always to the Catholic community.

At his funeral in Haringey- were placed on his coffin, a chalice from his ordination, a well-thumbed book of Psalms, a list of prisoners he wrote to, and a copy of the UN Charter.

We shall miss his zest for life, his kindness and his compassion. He wrote to us all and was especially interested in all young people and their futures. In the wonderful parting words by Valerie Flessati, his wife,

"What a Man; What a Voice; What a Friend; What a Lot of Love for which we give profound thanks" **C**

For further tributes, see www.bruce-kent.com

Time for 'good men and women' to act

Margaret Owen says UK women and girls are betrayed not just by Tories as they scrap the UN anti-discrimination convention and the Human Rights Act, but by their own NGO

John Stuart Mill, in his inaugural address in 1867 to the University of St Andrews declared that "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". We should add, in 2022, "good women" to this quote.

Silence in the face of human rights violation should never pacify the consciences of those who allow injustices in their name. If they remain silent, then they are complicit in the human rights abuses perpetrated by their governments, whom they elected to represent them.

Alas, today, many UK women and girls are not even aware of how appalling is the impact of this government's policies on women's lives here and overseas. The CEDAW (UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), along with the Human Rights Act are being scrapped, without any consultation with women's NGOs. This

betrayal has been made possible due to the Coalition's 2010 abolition of the world-renowned WNC (Women's National Commission), which had given UK women a powerful voice since its foundation in 1969.

Women's NGOs were devastated and so together they set up an alternative consortium, calling itself the UK CIVIL SOCIETY WOMEN'S ALLIANCE. This body represents some 180 women's NGOs across the United Kingdom and has attempted to take the place of the old WNC, but is without the essential legislative backing that it would need to command the attention of government.

The UK ratified the CEDAW, an international bill of rights for women, in 1986 and reports to its 26-member committee every four years. By ratification it committed to eliminate discrimination against women in all aspect of their lives, and implement the recommendations made by the committee following its reports. Evidence sub-

mitted by hundreds of UK women's NGOs exposed a series of significant violations of the CEDAW articles, particularly in regard to the abuse of minority, migrant, refugee women, asylum seekers, the disabled, elderly, prisoners, and women's access to legal aid, the justice system, education and health care. Among the several recommendations made by CEDAW in 2017 and 2021, HMG was told to fill the gap left by the abolition of the WNC, establish a proper Institutional Mechanism as defined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, domesticate the 26 CEDAW articles and analyse the impact of austerity cuts and Brexit on women and girls. It has done none of these things.

If the UKCSWA had any respect for the Rule of Law it should be lobbying for its own demise, and demanding the resurrection of a proper Institutional Mechanism for Women that could empower its women citizens to be heard. Else it is complicit in these violations of international law. **C**



Margaret Owen
OBE is a human rights barrister

Will Starmer pick up the gauntlet?

Finally, after partying and holidaying his way through the summer Boris Johnson is gone and his successor entering number 10, promising more of the same. Johnson's legacy is one of deeper social, economic and regional division, rising poverty, collapsing underfunded public services, growing British isolation, alongside a reversal of commitments to tackle the climate emergency.

Worst of all, millions of Britons in the sixth richest country in the world are facing the spectre of huge cuts in living standards and the choice of heating or eating. Inflation is currently running at 10% and economists predict further increases to 15 or even 20%. Yet the government insist that workers, who have seen the value of their earnings shrink by over £1000 on average over the last ten years, should accept 2% to 5% wage rises. The usual nonsense about wages driving prices becomes the newspeak of ministers and their media mouthpieces. But as retail and hospitality businesses, barely recovered from the pandemic, face collapse, thousands of bankruptcies and a recession loom.

Truss, along with most Tories, offers tax cuts which will mostly benefit the rich and further impoverish already cash starved public services, particularly the NHS. While workers are told to tighten their belts the High Pay Centre reports that the average pay of FTSE 100 chiefs rose by 39% last year. Further, with pledges to cut Corporation tax, companies like Amazon, already enjoying virtual tax holidays, look set to receive super-deduction handouts worth £27bn, rivalling the cost of Labour's pledge to freeze the energy price cap at £2000.

The same profits bonanza is seen with privatised water companies busy spilling tons of raw sewage into our rivers and coastal waters, big oil and gas companies, like Shell and BP, rail franchises and the rest. The case for democratic public ownership of our utilities is popular and unanswerable.

With the energy price caps rising to £3,549 in October and above £5000 early in the new year, millions will see the terrible twins of personal debt and poverty mushroom. This is a crisis made in Britain, the result of 12 years of Tory misrule with austerity policies slashing our public services, suppressing wages and reducing the social security safety net.

Enough is Enough was recently launched by thousands of trade unionists and activists to say just that. Action is needed now. Trade unions are taking the lead in striking to protect incomes and working conditions. The railway unions-ASLEF, RMT and TSSA, and recently postal staff, barristers and dockers are in the vanguard with many more to follow. **Paul Nowak**, TUC general secretary elect, explains the importance of solidarity and how success for unions will benefit all. **Paul Teasdale** sets out a five point plan to deal with soaring inflation and energy bills while **Duncan Bowie** echoes Ann Black in our last issue in lamenting the policy vacuum in Labour. At a minimum this

should involve standing with workers on picket lines, not sacking shadow ministers expressing solidarity. If Labour is not for workers protecting livelihoods, what is it for? Wages should at least be tied to inflation, with regular updates, along with price controls. The pledge to freeze energy bills is welcome, as was the windfall tax proposal on energy companies half-heartedly adopted by Sunak. However, much wider policy ideas should be nurtured from the bottom up.

Paul Salveson shows that 'levelling up' is proving to be a spiv's sales gimmick with regional divisions growing. **Dave Toke** explains why energy efficiency measures, including home insulation grants and investment in renewables should be at the heart of any plan. If we have learnt anything from the war in Ukraine it is that fossil fuels are the wrong way to go.

Some around the Starmer camp are advocating a return to Blairism. **Bryn Jones** reviews two recent studies of Labour, concluding this would be a dead end. **Rory O'Kelly** reveals through a study of byelection results that Labour optimism is misplaced.

Glyn Ford reports on the belatedly published Forde report revealing the skulduggery at Labour HQ that blighted the Corbyn years. Starmer needs to acknowledge the damage and end the unfounded attacks on the left. Labour is a broad church. A re-forged unity would send a powerful signal to voters that Labour is ready for government in place of a Tory party that spent the summer tearing itself apart.

Culture wars are likely to be at the heart of a Truss government. **Jean Seaton** outlines the dangers to the BBC and public service broadcasting looming ahead. **Caitlin Barr** and **Marge Berer** highlight the threats to women's right to abortion in the aftershocks from the overturning of Roe V Wade and **Margaret Owen** highlights wider threats to women's rights while **Sabia Kamali** reports on continuing misogynistic crimes. **Paul Garver** surveys the scene in the US in the lead-in to the mid-term elections with Trumpist Republican populism raging.

Internationalism and a recognition that political solutions lie in cooperation across borders should be at the heart of Labour's alternative. This is the theme of our bumper special supplement, including an updated analysis of Putin's war in Ukraine by **Pete Duncan** and **Mike Phipps** finding the Stop the War Coalition losing its way. **Dave Lister** highlights British imperialism's outrageous oppression to maintain the empire in living memory; yet the new Tory leadership seeks to whitewash these crimes in its forlorn bid to make Britain great again.

The gauntlet is now thrown down for Starmer to pick up. Will Labour champion workers' rights, women's rights, human and democratic rights? The crisis demands bold action and democratic socialist alternatives with wealth redistribution, international cooperation and democratic reform at their heart. Will Labour provide an answer?

**Internationalism
and cooperation
across borders should
be at the heart of
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alternative**

Top down re-balancing won't work

Has Levelling-up been flattened asks **Paul Salvesson**

There are growing concerns 'up North' that the Government's 'Levelling-Up' agenda will be abandoned, whoever wins the Tory leadership race. Several Northern newspapers published a joint statement addressed to Truss and Sunak calling on them to commit themselves to continuing with the policy, which has seen some new investment going into projects 'north of Watford'.

Last month they put a number of questions to Sunak and Truss, urging them 'Don't Turn Your Backs on the North'. They asked:

- What will you do to make sure the commitments made to the North by your predecessors as prime minister are kept?

- The average worker in the North is 50 per cent less productive than one in London. What will you do to address this widening gap?

- What will you do to address spiralling rates of child poverty in parts of Northern England?

- How far will you go to give Northern leaders control over education and skills, transport and health budgets currently held by Westminster, and will you give them more powers to raise or lower taxes to boost local economies?

- Will you retain a government department responsible for tackling regional inequalities with a Cabinet-level Minister for whom this is their main job?

The two contenders responded quickly and reassuringly. How could they not do? Yet the questions reflect growing unease across the North among business leaders, local authorities and even Tory MPs that the 'levelling-up' agenda was going to be a casualty of the leadership change. Things were not helped by Michael Gove having ministerial responsibility for 'levelling-up'. For some reason, nobody seems to like him.

Despite Sunak's protestations, he was filmed in that well-known deprived town, Tunbridge Wells, telling a slightly different story. He told party members how he had shifted money from 'deprived urban areas' to fund projects in the Kent commuter belt. The FT reported that the "former UK

chancellor's comments, made in a sun-drenched garden, appeared to cut across the government's rhetoric about 'levelling up' Britain and spreading wealth beyond the south-east. Sunak said he had changed Treasury funding formulas to ensure areas such as Tunbridge Wells received 'the funding that they deserve', in a video clip obtained by the New Statesman magazine that quickly went viral."

He went on to say that "We inherited a bunch of formulas from the Labour party that shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas...that needed to be undone. I started the work of undoing that."

Jake Berry, chair of the Northern Research Group of Tory MPs and a supporter of Sunak's rival, Liz Truss, said he was not impressed. He commented that "in public Sunak claims he wants to level up the North, but here he boasts about trying to funnel vital investment away from deprived areas."

Liz Truss has had the sense to be more careful about what she says, playing on her younger days in Leeds, despite slagging off the school which managed to get her despatched to Oxford to read PPE.

What all this really demonstrates is how regional re-balancing will never work if it is just about top-down largesse from central government that can be given, and just as quickly taken away, on a political whim.

Truss and Sunak have both said they want to see more powers devolved to cities and communities. But what are they planning to devolve to in practice? In England we do not have functioning regional government. What we have got is a half-baked system of mayoral authorities in which one person is elected, with precious little accountability. This contrasts with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which have well-established devolved governments elected by PR. Until the English regions have something like this, devolution is meaningless.

Clearly, there are big opportunities for Labour here. As the party edges closer to an accommodation with the Liberal



Sunak showing off a Levelling Up initiative in Yarm – newspapers 'up North' unconvinced

Democrats, who traditionally have been far more open to democratic devolution than Labour, perhaps there is a possibility that change might be on the agenda. I'm not holding my breath. If Starmer thinks that all he needs to do is hand a bit more money and power to Andy Burnham and other city mayors, he is much mistaken. What is needed is a much more deep-seated shift from our centralised state and an under-funded mish-mash that is local government to a new regionalism that can work with empowered local government. It needs new regional assemblies that build on the city regions but take in a wider area, with members elected on a proportional system. If we took Greater Manchester as an example, it could extend northwards to take in Lancashire and west to include Warrington. Call it 'Lancastria' – regionalism should reflect people's historic identities rather than a planners' idea of what works. A region the size of 'Lancastria' makes sense in terms of a viable regional economy and a sustainable transport network. **C**



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

Britain's nuclear choice

David Toke says in the face of sustained price rises energy efficiency has got to be the option for Britain and Labour

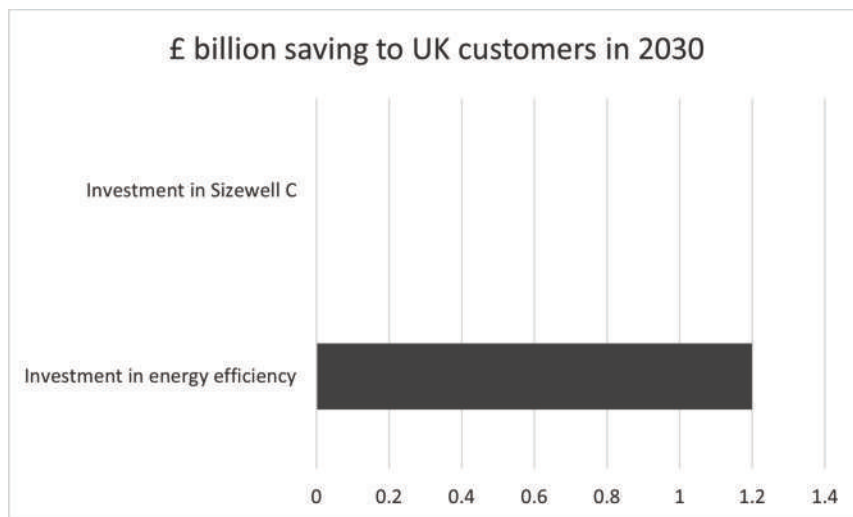
As the cost of energy crisis tightens its vice-like grip on the UK and Britain is forced, perhaps by the terms of an IMF bailout, to cut down on public spending, it faces a choice on whether to throw away money on more nuclear power or spend it on energy efficiency.

In terms of the financial returns for the British public, there is no choice really. By 2030, with an energy efficiency programme the size of that which the Brown Government put in place from 2008 to 2012, in 2030 British people could earn around 1.2 billion pounds. But if investment is being put into the bottomless pit of nuclear power, they would earn precisely nothing. That's because the new, much pushed for (by Keir Starmer) Sizewell C plant, would not be completed by then. But even if it is started by the end of this decade, though it will be costing billions a year to build, it will not be generating until the late 2030s (if then).

While the modest costs of the initial energy efficiency programme would already be paid off by 2030 and generating large savings for energy consumers, Sizewell C would carry on costing the consumer billions of pounds a year until the late 2030s. And even then it would generate power for large amounts per kWh in order to pay profits to its 'investors'. We can see the comparison between the energy efficiency and new nuclear options in this graph.

This dilemma – energy efficiency or nuclear power spending – will put Keir Starmer in a bad place. Is he going to displease the GMB who are bankrolling Labour in favour of building nuclear power stations? Or is he going to save the nation a lot of money with an energy efficiency programme? He may not have a choice, as the vultures from the IMF circulate above a Britain humbled by the coming crisis and unable to borrow more on financial markets. They will demand cuts in spending. Nuclear power or energy efficiency?

All the talk about energy crisis in Europe hinges on the effects of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, but what is less understood is that a lot of the problems affecting



An energy efficiency programme would be paid off by 2030, Sizewell C would carry on costing the consumer billions

European energy markets would exist anyway regardless of the war. Gas prices were already heading upwards before Putin started his war, and domestic price increases were being delayed by the price cap policy. Demand for liquified natural gas (LNG) is surging in China and other parts of the East and developing countries. A lack of supply means that Russia (Gazprom) would be cleaning up by tightening its piped gas supplies without a war anyway.

There's another key element to the European energy crisis that is not much talked about in pro-nuclear dominated Britain, and that is the collapse of the French nuclear power fleet. Half of France's nuclear power stations are offline as they degenerate with age. France is unable to replace them because building the nuclear plant in a decent time frame or cost is no longer possible. Modern health and safety regulations for construction plant and a lack of industrial labour and skills in a modern western economy are reasons why nuclear power is now a dated, even dinosaur technology.

The fallout from this French nuclear disaster is that France is importing massive quantities of electricity from the continental grid. This dramatically increases the demand for natural gas from power stations to fill the gap making the natural gas crisis worse for Europe. It is also massively increasing the costs of electricity in France, something from which con-

sumers are so far protected because President Macron has instructed the state owned EDF to soak up massive losses – losses that the French taxpayers will have to pay later.

Yet the truth about nuclear power's so-called reliability – or lack of it, has yet to seep through to British political minds who are beguiled by the stories spun by EDF about their power plant. Of course, there is no problem building windfarms or solar farms by comparison. All, practically, the Government has to do is issue long term contracts promising to pay low prices for the electricity generated by renewable energy projects and we shall get lots of them. Unless of course we decide to ban wind and solar farms in lots of places, as this Government is doing.

Meanwhile this Government is incapable of organising a programme that provides us with the most reliable source of energy of all – energy efficiency. This Government completely ignored the careful work done under the Blair and especially Brown Governments to build up the energy efficiency programme. That was done by careful listening to the industries and trades involved about what works and what needs to be done. Instead, the Government prefers to hire expensive business consultants who propose schemes that do not work in practice or are cancelled quickly anyway. Or both. **C**

Dr David Toke, is Reader in Energy Politics, University of Aberdeen. His latest book is *Nuclear Power in Stagnation A Cultural Approach to Failed Expansion*

Tories draw on 1980s playbook to demonise unions

Paul Nowak says the UK's cost of living crisis is really a crisis of depressed wages and we need to get behind unions taking action for a better deal

Something is stirring in Britain's workplaces. For those who lived through the disputes of the late 70's and early 80's it's an opportunity to dust off references to a summer/autumn/season of your choice of discontent. For the TikTok generation its #hotstrike-summer. Whatever label you put on it, it's clear we are seeing an upsurge in industrial action across both the public and private sector.

In many ways, this is not surprising. Our cost of living crisis is – in large part – a wages crisis. If wages in the UK had grown in line with the OECD average since 2007, the typical worker's pay packet would be worth an extra £4,000 today. Instead, the average real wage has fallen by £950 in that same period. Year after year of public sector pay restraint, the rise of insecure and precarious employment and a government intent on attacking trade unions have taken their toll on peoples' pay packets. Set that continued squeeze on wages against the rising cost of everything from fuel to food, and it helps explain why many workers are deciding they have no alternative but to take action.

As I write RMT, TSSA and ASLEF are in the midst of national action on our railways. Over a hundred thousand CWU members in BT & Royal Mail have taken or are about to take strike action. UCU is balloting its members in higher education, and unions in health, education, the civil service and beyond are weighing up their industrial response to yet another real terms pay cut. Amazon workers in the GMB have spontaneously walked out in response to a derisory offer to up their pay by 35p an hour.

It goes without saying that no union member decides to take strike action lightly. People lose pay. They aren't able to deliver the services they are proud of. And of course, strike action is not an end in itself. It's a means to

get an employer to listen to the concerns of their staff. To get movement at the bargaining table and to get a fair deal at work. That's why each and every group of workers who have taken that difficult decision to take strike action have had the wholehearted support of the TUC. And that support has not just been about standing on picket lines. Our campaigns team have been helping unions meet the ballot thresholds. Our regional teams have organised support and solidarity from across the trade union movement. And we've helped unions to win the public arguments as well – securing a legal opinion, for example, that rubbished Grant Shapp's claim that industrial relations in the rail industry weren't any of his responsibility. The TUC's new solidarity hub will take this support to the next level, creating a 'one stop' gateway for support for unions taking action.

All of this hasn't gone unnoticed by the government. The politicians who a year ago were talking up the need to make Britain a high wage economy, and who expressed outrage when P & O sacked 800 staff with no notice and replaced them with agency workers, are now threatening to hit workers and their unions with even more stringent restrictions on the right to strike. This comes on top of the government's divisive decision to allow employers to use agency workers to replace those on strike, a move condemned by both the TUC and the industry body representing employment agencies.

Of course, Conservative leaders under pressure and out of ideas have often indulged in a spot of union bashing to give their backbenchers something to cheer about. But there is no evidence yet that their efforts to demonise unions have resonated with the public. Dusting off Margaret Thatcher's 1980's playbook is unlikely to win hearts and minds in the so-called red wall. While most people won't welcome the



inconvenience a strike can bring, they also know that in the face of rising prices it's not unreasonable for workers to want a fair deal on pay.

The wave of industrial action we have seen has also raised wider questions about who pays the price when the going gets tough. It's hard to argue that rail workers shouldn't get a real terms pay increase when the train operating companies paid out £500m in dividends during the pandemic, or that our posties shouldn't get a fair deal when Royal Mail has just handed out £400m to its shareholders.

As we go into the party conference season, the TUC will continue to make the argument that Britain's workers need a pay rise. We also need a renewal of collective bargaining and new machinery in sectors like social care to boost pay, something Labour has promised as part of its new deal for workers.

A stronger trade union movement can play its part as well. Unionised workplaces are better, more productive and fairer. We challenge employers to take the high road on skills. We boost wages. We tackle discrimination and harassment. And we keep people safe at work. That's a record and a role to be proud of and one we need to take to more workers and more workplaces. **C**



Paul Nowak is TUC general secretary-designate

Shrinking cake means rich must pay more

Paul Teasdale presents a “to-do” list of measures to respond to the crisis

Now might be a good time for a Chancellor to be honest and frank. Any positive words are likely to be exposed as false very quickly.

The difficult message right now is that the UK as a whole is poorer than it was, there is less to go around (between 5 and 10% less). There is nothing the government can do about that in the short term so it cannot protect living standards of everyone. The best government can do is to influence who bears the loss. In the unguided market those who already have better paying jobs are likely to get rises that protect them and the burden will fall on the poorest. Government can act to protect those less able to bear a loss (aiming to protect, say, those with income below £31,000 pa which is the median salary of full-time employees) but then we have to accept that the consequence of that is that there must be a drop in the standard of living for those on higher incomes.

Both Labour and Conservative politicians have backed away from this fact. Normally politicians can avoid such choices because the size of the cake is usually growing. However, the UK economy is near full employment and productivity growth is and will be negligible for the next year or two. That is the real economic crisis for the UK. In this situation stimuli using tax cuts or spending would add to inflation not output. If we aim to help those on the lowest income the emphasis must be on maintaining their real incomes rather than subsidising prices. Subsidies (e.g., on fuel costs) are very poorly targeted; they benefit mainly people who spend the most.

We are in an unusual situation. Inflation is usually due to demand expanding faster than supply. However, this year we have a fall in supply on a world scale - meaning demand cannot be met. Although the UK economy is not producing any less, there is less to go around UK households because of the higher cost of imports. This is the opposite to the effect of cheap imports from China in the 1990s that enabled real incomes in the UK to



rise faster than productivity. Furthermore, inflation is higher in the UK because of devaluation of sterling, while leaving the single market has added costs to imports.

We have five strands of policy to shape our response.

One. The government already has a range of tools to help the most vulnerable. It can commit to rises in line with inflation for pensions, benefits (universal or means tested), and minimum wage. This might be timed to coincide with rises in the energy price cap. In the public sector it could have a flat rate increase of, say, £3,000 pa across all pay levels (reminiscent of the Social Contract of the seventies), or rises that match inflation for those earning under £15.85 per hour (the median for full-time employees) but less for people earning more. More generally the government can use lump sums to all households, such as Sunak's credits to households in lower council tax bands, but these are blunt so we

need discretionary funds.

Two. For those in the upper part of the income distribution real incomes must fall. There are several steps available to raise taxes: freezing the threshold for higher tax rates (currently set at £50,270 which catches just one in seven workers); raising the upper limit on NI contributions; raising tax on types of income not subject to NIC (dividends, rent, pensions, capital gains). The revenue raised from such taxes would be of the size required to fund transfers to lower income households.

Three. Government could freeze prices that it controls: rail fares, passports, prescriptions etc, MOT, fees associated with birth, death and marriage etc. However, these are not substantial parts of household budgets so this is mainly a political gesture to show the Government is not adding to inflation. Similarly, the government can freeze sales taxes (alcohol, tobacco, fuel, insurance) import duties, and stamp duty.

Four. Government should avoid subsidies except those that reduce demand for energy: for example, support for electric cars, home insulation, domestic solar panels, etc. These would appeal mostly to people on relatively higher incomes – so the government can be seen as helping them cope with the squeeze on incomes. Living costs could be significantly reduced by extending entitlement to school meals to more people and to holiday periods, and more public transport especially buses.

Five. Beyond this crisis, there are things that can be done to reduce the cost of living focusing on larger items of expenditure – building land-based wind turbines (to reduce electricity prices), home insulation (to reduce demand), extending the infrastructure for electric cars. These could have results within a couple of years.

Finally, two actions that could give a speedy (though small) boost to economic growth: relax constraints on recruiting abroad to remove bottlenecks in production and alignment of standards with the Single Market to reduce trade frictions. **G**

Paul Teasdale is a member of Exeter CLP

A time to be brave-but where are the signs?

Duncan Bowie bemoans another wasted opportunity from Labour's leadership to promote new ideas in face of Tory divisions

Ann Black, writing in the last issue of *Chartist*, was right to complain about the lack of vision and policy development in the Labour Party. Ann should know – a member of the NEC for twenty years and currently chair of the National Policy Forum. The Labour leadership appears to have been asleep over the summer, letting the Tory leadership candidates come up with new policy ideas and leaving the candidates to attack each other.

Starmer has said little on economic policy, taxation or the cost of living crisis. We now know that BREXIT is for good yet we do not have any policy on future relationships with Europe or on trade. Labour seems to have accepted that the UK is now marginalised in terms of international policy, other than being supportive of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss's gung-ho position on the war in Ukraine and the expansion of NATO. Labour Party members not only cannot discuss Palestine but cannot discuss the negative consequences of NATO expansion. I do remember a certain Robin Cook suggesting that NATO as an anti-Soviet military alliance (as it then was) perhaps was not a good idea. Now NATO seems not just to be anti-Russian but anti-China as well.

We need to ask where these positions are coming from? They are not from Labour Party members. Nor does the Party seem to have a network of progressive experts to brief them on key policy areas. It certainly has no policy staff on the party payroll in the way that was the case thirty and forty years ago, when I remember working with a series of full-time party housing policy officers. Now when a shadow minister wants to develop policy ideas – they don't know where to go. Most shadow ministers are given jobs based on their loyalty to the leadership, not on their expertise or interests. MPs speaking in the Commons or Commons committees are often making it up as they go along. Some colleagues of mine were given 24 hours to draft amendments to the

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, without any agreed policy basis for determining which clauses Labour supported and which we opposed – never mind what Labour would do instead – a question Government ministers and other Tory MPs understandably ask every time we criticise them. It is no good saying that we will have our policies ready for the next general election, assuming it is two years away. When Johnson was forced out, Starmer said Labour was ready for a general election. We were not then and we are not now. Our response to the cost of living crisis, the hike in energy costs and the financial collapse of the public transport system has been to talk about a higher windfall tax than the Tories are going for (no specifics mentioned) and increased assistance to lower income households (again no specifics) although the crisis is not waiting for the next general election – it is with us now.

Starmer's energy policy announcement was another example of a stop-gap response – a very expensive but temporary fix, which bails out the energy providers without targeting assistance to lower income households and small businesses, which like government initiatives raises the obvious question as to what happens after six months – is the cap frozen again? There is now popular support for bringing the energy providers, the water companies and the rail companies back in to some form of public ownership in the current crisis. What are we waiting for?

Starmer says that the Government could not afford to nationalise the energy sector as they would have to compensate shareholders, but this ignores the whole question as to what would be the basis of any buy-back. Shareholders should not be compensated at current share value – what about fixing compensation at the original purchase price, then netting off dividends received by shareholders, and then upping the net figure by RPI? This would be a fair approach – no shareholder would lose out on the money they



had paid originally – they just would not have profited from the increased charges to consumers over the years. Clearly under a nationalised system, this problem does not occur – government bears the costs of investment and the benefits of investment are shared by the public and the public purse. Isn't that what socialism is about?

Why are we not arguing for public ownership of utilities, a more progressive tax system and re-funding the welfare state, including local government. Starmer should not be sacking members of his shadow team for floating progressive ideas – that is what they should be doing. Each shadow minister should be building up their own networks of advisors and there needs to be a systematic process for assessing new (and old) ideas – whether they would achieve specific objectives, how they relate to Labour values, how they would be paid for, and most importantly who would benefit. This is the time to be brave but also to be more thoughtful and to be better informed and better prepared. **C**

Duncan Bowie is Chartist Reviews Editor and a member of Dulwich CLP

Forde Prefect

Glyn Ford on inconvenient truths finally revealed by the Forde Report into internal party misdemeanours

Two years after commission by the NEC, the Forde Report - initially promised in six weeks - has finally hove into Party view. It is ugly, fetid and explosive, with neither the Party staff nor Corbyn's Leaders Office escaping censure. Commissioned to counter the exposure of the toxic joint enterprise by a rogue group of senior Party staff to compromise and sabotage the Party leader, brought into the open when a report prepared as part of the Party's submission to the Equality and Human Rights Commission - but blocked by Party lawyers - saw more than eight hundred pages of WhatsApp exchanges between a two dozen strong clique of Party staff leaked. It exposed both a loathsome culture of racism, sexism and bigotry, and the conspiracy against Corbyn. Diane Abbot 'literally makes me sick' and is 'truly repulsive', while WhatsApp hoped others were 'run over by a train' or 'deserved to die in a fire'.

One might have imagined an immediate reaction to suspend the subversive staff with swift disciplinary hearings to follow. After all that's the custom and practice for Party members. No, instead the hunt was on for the whistleblower(s) for exposing an inconvenient truth that shamed the Party and should have produced an apology to members. Belatedly, Forde has nailed the prime culprits, the hateful culture and the necessity to ensure 'never again'. For despite being couched in the most careful legalise and giving the benefit of the doubt to every smoking gun and scavenging for the most mealy-mouthed apologies and excuses, it is the most shattering indictment of the Party's 'civil servants' and the Leader of the Opposition's Office it is possible to imagine.

One of the prime objectives of Forde was to settle the question of the July 2019 Panorama's partisan programme 'Is Labour Anti-semitic?' Actually, the question mark was redundant. Panorama had long made up its mind having been briefed by the 'clique'. Forde dissents. There was anti-semitism in the Party, and the Party's disciplinary procedure was not fit for



Martin Forde's report found a 'loathsome culture of bigotry' at Labour HQ – Corbyn's sin was to miss it

purpose structurally or operationally, while the Leader's Office should have refused to engage in the process despite requests from the Party's Governance and Legal Unit. Allegations of anti-semitism were overstated for political reasons and weaponised. Many of the claims about anti-semitism that were made public did not in fact even concern Party members.

Dissembling was all part of a pattern. The same was true of disciplinary procedures, administrative suspensions and the validation of membership. The excuse for the last was purportedly to prevent Tories joining, but it was used to 'hunt Trots'. There was the ringing of bells and cheering in HQ every time a suspension or expulsion was agreed. In contrast after the 2019 defeat there were no impediments to Change UK candidates in that year's European Elections slipping seamlessly back into the Party.

The most egregious was fear and loathing on the campaign trail with the expropriation of Party funds during the 2017 General Election to run a parallel key seats operation out of Ergon House in support of Corbyn's critics in the PLP to the tune of £225,000. The embezzlement's justification was to stop the leadership spending the money instead on more Corbyn rallies or 'seats like Canterbury' - which despite the sabotage was won by 187. Yet Forde's contention is that

it is highly unlikely these antics cost the Party the election. In the literal sense Forde is self-evidently right if talking of a Labour majority Government. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine it didn't alter the outcome? With Corbyn's enthusiasm for targeting the more difficult marginals and Southampton Itchen lost by 31, Preseli 314, Pudsey 331, Thurrock 345, Hastings and Rye 346 and Chipping Barnet 353, even an additional 1720 votes would have slashed the Tory majority by 12. Then May could not have formed a Government propped up by the DUP. Even a couple more Labour MPs would have delivered her version of soft Brexit and forestalled Johnson's ambitions. The conspirators at HQ - Remainers one suspects to a man and woman - have earned themselves a rightful place in Brexit's pantheon of heroes. One hopes they are justly proud of the perverse consequences of their villainy.

Rather like the PLP, and with even less basis, Party HQ decided it neither wanted a quarter of a million new members, nor Jeremy Corbyn nor electoral success while he was leader. Their heinous sin of commission should see them banished in perpetuity. Corbyn's was a sin of omission. He neither appreciated the full traitorous nature of the 'stay behind' team in Party HQ, nor was able to deal with it when he finally did. **C**

Glyn Ford is ex Labour Group leader in the European parliament. His autobiography, *Riding Two Horses*, is reviewed in this Chartist

Self-harm as a competitive sport?

Labour versus Tories - **Rory O'Kelly** looks at the figures from recent by-elections

We have reached the point where the immediate consequences of the 2019 election have played themselves out. While the post-Johnson Tory party has fundamental but fairly clear-cut choices, the position of the Labour Party is more complex. There have been recent claims of a major breakthrough. The record of the eight by-elections in this parliament provides hard evidence on actual voting behaviour. What light do they throw on trends?

Caution is always needed in handling by-elections. Turnout is lower than General Elections and protest votes are easy. The Lib Dems frequently scare the Tories but typically their three by-election victories this last year helped undermine Boris Johnson but did not resolve the Lib Dems' identity problem. Minority groups can express discontent and the Batley and Spen by-election nearly saw George Galloway and a Muslim protest vote deliver a Tory victory. With all their limitations, however, by-elections, unlike opinion polls, show people actually voting. Watching what people do is more generally reliable than listening to what they say. The table shows the actual figures for the Labour Party.

In eight attempts Labour improved on its 2019 vote share three times and on its 2017 share once. It is significant that the three best results for Labour were those with the lowest turnouts.

Labour leadership's claim that it has made progress in recovering from the 2019 election relies heavily on Wakefield. David Lammy told Sky news "12.7% swing from Tories to Labour, if that was replicated across the country we would be forming the next government". This is fundamentally misleading. The idea of a 'swing' between two parties makes no sense when both are losing votes, and vote share.

The belief that Labour is gaining support is widespread, and has appeared slightly better evidenced over the last few months. A closer look however suggests that the only real change has been accelerated self-destruction by the Conservatives. Certainly the idea that replacing Corbyn by Starmer as leader benefited the Labour Party conflicts with the evidence. The best that can be said for Starmer is that he is alienating Labour supporters less rapidly than Johnson alienated Tories.

This leads on to a wider point: the need to test perceptions against facts. An objective evaluation of Corbyn's leadership would start by saying that Corbyn became leader in 2015 after a General Election in which Labour secured 9,347,275 votes; a 30.4% vote share. He resigned in 2019 after a General Election in which its vote was 10,269,051 and its vote share 32.1%. The Labour Party also had a vastly higher membership in 2019 than in 2015 and much sounder finances. Undoubtedly the 2019 result was disappointing, particularly by comparison with 2017, and there is plenty of room for argument as to whether the blame lies with Corbyn, or with the parts of the Labour Party which refused to support him, or both, or neither. A dispassionate observer, however, could simply look at the figures and conclude that the Party was in better shape at the end of Corbyn's leadership than at the beginning.

How would such an observer explain the widespread conviction that Corbyn's leadership was an unmitigated catastrophe for the Party? Essentially it relies on rejecting figures in favour of anecdote. We hear for example many stories of people who would not vote Labour because Corbyn was leader, and no doubt they existed. Equally, however, there were some who did vote Labour for that reason. The second group receive less media attention than the first but the figures suggest that there must have been more of them.

The best advice for the Party leadership in preparing for the next General Election would therefore be to study the figures and to be sceptical about anecdotes, particularly those which confirm

what they want to believe. Unfortunately, the leadership seems to be going in precisely the opposite direction. It relies increasingly on focus groups which, by their nature, confirm the assumptions of the person setting them up. In essence the focus group represents the sacralisation of anecdote. **C**

Hartlepool				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	21,969	52.5	1	59.2%
2019	15,464	37.7	1	57.9%
2021	8,589	28.7	2	42.7%
Chesham and Amersham				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	11,374	20.6	2	77.1
2019	7,166	12.9	3	76.8%
2021	622	1.6	4	52.1%
Batley and Spen				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	29,844	55.5	1	67.1%
2019	22,594	42.7	1	66.5%
2021	13,296	35.27	1	47.5%
Old Bexley and Sidcup				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	14,079	29.3	2	72.8%
2019	10,834	23.5	2	69.8%
2021	6,711	30.9	2	33.5%
North Shropshire				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	17,287	31.1	2	72.8%
2019	12,495	22.1	2	67.9%
2021	3,686	9.68	3	46.3%.
Birmingham Erdington:				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	21,571	58.0	1	57.2%
2019	17,720	50.3	1	53.3%
2022	9,413	55.5	1	27.0%.
Wakefield				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	22,987	49.7	1	66%
2019	17,925	39.8	2	64.1%
2022	13,166	47.9	1	39.1%
Tiverton and Honiton				
Year	Vote	% share	place	Turnout
2017	15,670	27.1	2	71.5%
2019	11,654	19.5	2	71.9%
2022	1,512	3.2	3	52.3%

Table: 2021-2022 Labour by-election results

Rory O'Kelly is a member of West Lewisham and Penge CLP

Femicide epidemic

While protesters against Sarah Everard's murder have had charges **Sabia Kamali** says the epidemic of femicide needs action now

Author and activist Diana Russell first defined the term 'Femicide' in 1976, as "the intentional killing of women or girls because they are female". She publicised the term at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Belgium. At the Tribunal, she stated, "We must realise that a lot of homicide is femicide. We must recognize the sexual politics of murder. From the burning of witches in the past, to the more recent widespread custom of female infanticide in many societies, to the killing of women for 'honor,' we realize that femicide has been going on a long time."

Nearly 50 years after the Tribunal, it appears nothing has changed. We have a grim statistic in the United Kingdom: every three days there is a woman who is killed by a man. The figure was collated by the Femicide Census, a data source that collates information about women killed in the UK.

The murder of Sarah Everard once again brought attention to all the issues of femicide in our society. The murder of Sabina Nessa highlighted the additional aggravating features of class and race when it came to the issue of violence against women.

Disparities were highlighted in the different treatment by the media of each murder. When Sarah Everard, 33, was kidnapped and murdered by a former police officer, there was an outpouring of mainstream media coverage. It rightly made front page news for many publications. Unfortunately, when Sabina Nessa, a 28-year-old school teacher was tragically killed by Koci Selamaj, her story took slightly longer to reach the public.

Yvonne Jewkes, Professor of Criminology at the University of Bath and author of *Media and Crime*, said she thought that the reason the mainstream media took longer to report Sabina's story could have been "underlying issues around racism and misogyny". Sabina's sister, Jebina Yasmin Islam, speaking on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, also expressed a similar view and suggested: "if we were a normal white family we would have been treated equally, I

guess".

Both murders are on the extreme end of a continuum of anti-female terror, which includes mental, verbal and physical abuse against women. We come across terror aimed at women because they are women on a daily basis at Sisters Forum. Violence against women, aggravated by the socio-economic inequalities of East London, is some of the highest in the country.

Barely a year after we held a vigil for Sabina Nessa, Sisters Forum organised another candlelit vigil in Newham in a renewed protest against violence against women. This time it was for Zara Aleena, a 35-year-old law graduate who was brutally murdered minutes away from her home in Ilford on 26th June 2022. Jordon McSweeney was later charged with her murder as well as attempted rape and robbery. This latest vigil was organised to create an awareness that violence against women and girls isn't a women's safety issue but a male violence issue. We keep focusing on women's behaviour because the focus has always been on what women should do to keep themselves safe. But we don't focus on the perpetrators who happen to be men!

Sisters Forum has been campaigning to create a safe space for women since Sarah Everard's murder and this has been reinforced by those of Sabina Nessa and now Zara Aleena. It feels like nothing has changed. Women are still unsafe and it feels as though our lives have no value. We need to make misogyny a hate crime. Women should also expect the same outcry from the media and the public regardless of their ethnicity or class. We should expect equal mobilisation from all sections of society.

Violence against women, which has increased in the last couple of years, is bound up with misogyny and power. Gender-based violence has been ingrained in our social norms and attitudes towards women, producing systemic structural domination. This is why when we see women being murdered, we see society making excuses for male perpetrators whilst blaming the victims. This has to be tackled. Regardless of how many times we



Credit: Tim Dennell/Flickr

call for men to stop being violent towards women, the very serious epidemic of anti-female violence continues to spread in our society.

Femicide needs to be taken seriously as an issue by public bodies and institutions in the United Kingdom. In Latin America, for example, many new laws have been created to label the murders of women as femicide. These changes have been made due to global human rights norms, like the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention and the Eradication of Violence against Women, which states that gender violence is the state's responsibility.

We need to move away from mere gestures of public sympathy and make the eradication of femicide and anti-women terror a public sector duty, similar to the Public Sector Equalities Duty under the Equalities Act. This means forcing public institutions to adopt the eradication of anti-women terror in their strategic plans and annual implementation strategies. The vigils we've seen in the past year were all sparked by the deaths of women killed in public spaces. We must bring these murders to an end! **C**



Sabia Kamali is a Newham councillor, member of Labour's London Regional Executive & CEO of Sisters Forum

Overthrow of Roe v Wade and the fallout

Leading abortion rights campaigner **Marge Berer** explains how the US Supreme Court's decision could encourage others to turn back the clock on abortion rights, including in the UK

On 2 May 2022, a headline in US magazine Politico said: "Supreme Court has voted to overturn abortion rights, draft opinion shows". It was as if a bomb had been dropped, not by an enemy, but from another planet. The most publicly expressed reactions were of gloom and doom, panic and hysteria. The worst had happened. Unbelievably, many hadn't expected it.

As in the 1935 dystopian novel *It Can't Happen Here* by American author Sinclair Lewis, the US has often seen itself as a place where nothing seriously bad can happen -- the richest, most democratic, important country in the world! In 1935, Lewis predicted Hitler. In 2016, Donald Trump was elected US president. A man who did not support human rights. A man who saw women as beneath him, in more ways than one. Looking for troops to follow him, he saw that the right-wing anti-abortion movement, like him, rejected human rights, which he could co-opt for his own ends. Together they took control of much of the Republican Party. Trump also created an international religious freedom alliance and one on "unalienable rights" to rewrite human rights conventions, whose vision of "woman" was only as "mother". Following three Trump appointments to the Supreme Court, the end of *Roe v. Wade* should not have been a surprise to anyone.

Post-Trump, in the first four months of 2021, Republican lawmakers restricted both voting rights (360 bills) and abortion rights (536 bills) at state level. In April alone, 28 new restrictions were signed into law in seven states, including bans challenging *Roe v Wade*: bans after 6, 15, 20 weeks of pregnancy, a ban on abortion for non-lethal genetic anomalies, and restrictions on access to abortion pills. This has rightly been described as a civil war about abortion. With laws banning abortions in Republican-controlled states, and laws protecting abortion being passed in Democrat-controlled states. The



courts are also busy hearing challenges from all sides. Great for lawyers! Absolutely insane if the end point is public health and human rights law, protecting women's autonomy.

In August, in Republican-controlled Kansas, a referendum to amend the Kansas constitution voted to maintain protection of abortion rights by a 60-40 majority. With state-level elections across the country in November, this has shocked Republicans. Reflecting pro-choice majority opinion across the US, this result says that killing *Roe v. Wade* is not the end of the story. "We, the people," include a lot of women who have needed abortions and even more who know why. What a difference a day makes!

Fallout in the UK?

In Northern Ireland, the DUP's refusal to accept international and national human rights judgments and UK law requiring they provide legal abortions is old news. At Westminster, however, Boris Johnson's government is "suddenly" showing serious anti-abortion tendencies:

In relation to an amendment to

the Health and Social Care Bill in March 2022, Johnson came out against making telemedical consultation for early medical abortion permanent, instructing Tory MPs to vote against it. He had to withdraw the instruction because abortion is a conscience issue, allowing a free vote. The amendment passed, possibly because so many Tory MPs stayed away on the day. Public Health Minister Maggie Throup, also apparently anti-abortion, who ran a public consultation on whether to make telemedical abortion permanent, opposed the pro-choice outcome of the consultation on very spurious grounds. (Berer Blog, 13 May 2022)

Most importantly, in July 2022, Liz Truss, who chaired an inter-governmental, inter-ministerial conference of more than 22 countries' representatives and others on Freedom of Religion or Belief, altered the agreed text of one of the eight agreed policy statements, on gender equality. Fiona Bruce MP, longstanding anti-abortion advocate, was made the "Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief", and was closely involved



Marge Berer is Coordinator (retiring), International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion, and Member, Westminster and Cities of London CLP

in preparing the conference. The change of text removed the mention of support for sexual and reproductive health and rights and bodily autonomy. When asked why by the Guardian (27 July), Truss said the meaning of the words was ambiguous. Johnson himself couldn't have lied better. The explanation was later changed to say they sought to achieve more consensus. This failed. From 22 signatory countries, the number dropped to 8.

The extent of anti-abortion participation in the conference only emerged in mid-August (Guardian). The act of altering the statement appeared to be the FCDO's, but as head of the FCDO and chair/convenor of the conference, the responsibility is Liz Truss's.

Johnson, Bruce, Throup have come out as anti-abortion. Is Truss anti-abortion too? Will the UK be shocked to find out after she becomes PM? Caroline Nokes, Tory MP, Chair, Women and Equalities Committee, and a number of pro-choice conference participants, called Truss to account for this. But Truss has failed to reply. A Letter to Truss

by 25 UK NGOs on 22 July demanding that the original wording be reinstated also got no reply.

Fallout globally?

Abortion is mostly or completely illegal in many countries. Why get more upset in sympathy with the US than with so many other countries? Some have said: "But the US is a referent for others – If they condemn abortion, it encourages others to do the same." There are grounds for scepticism. Abortion has been legal in the US since 1973. If the US is such a referent, why is abortion still mostly illegal in so many countries? And don't forget that every Republican President has imposed the Global Gag Rule on the rest of the world since 1975, only recently rescinded by President Biden. To conclude:

"In June 2022, a majority of justices on the United States Supreme Court egregiously denied that there is a constitutional right to access safe & legal abortion. But this was not a unique act of violence against women. In October 2021, China who for many years forced women

to have abortions after only one child, imposed a new law to force them to have more children by restricting abortion for "non-medical purposes". Indeed, violations of women's rights... are enshrined in many unjust laws and are widespread in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, and Europe too....

The unprecedented attack on women's abortion rights in the United States, as in every country where such attacks occur, denies us our rights as citizens, discriminates against us on grounds of sex, removes our right to privacy and bodily autonomy, violates the separation of church and state, and destroys the rule of law. Most importantly, it allows states to force women to carry unwanted pregnancies to term, with lifelong consequences. This is a form of involuntary servitude based entirely in biology. It criminalizes one in four women globally for refusing to have children we do not want and cannot care for...."

From: Second Call to Action on 1 July 2022 to celebrate International Safe Abortion Day on 28 September 2022. 

Sometimes only the original will do...

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Hydra-headed attack

Jean Seaton explains the mortal threat to the BBC and public service broadcasting being planned by the Tories and why it must be stopped



The Lionesses' glorious, jolly, sweater-waving victory could only be cheered on by vast audiences because it was broadcast free to air by public service broadcasters. And, similarly, the Commonwealth Games were a tremendous and reinvigorated success for the BBC. They brought 'us' together in fun, (a refreshing novelty) helped mend our tattered international image, put Birmingham centre stage, and could only inspire the more disadvantaged parts of our, and indeed international, society because, as one disabled athlete pointed out, 'everyone could see them'. Public service broadcasting with the BBC at the heart of it really does work magic.

Yet the BBC, Channel 4 (C4), impartial news on Sky, ITN, and the role of the regulator Ofcom, the whole delicate ecology of public service entertainment news and information which has kept us rooted in a common reality is under a ferocious, planned, successful hydra-headed attack. There is a new White Paper, rushed out before the circus of the leadership election, which aims to destroy the very fab-

ric of public service communication. Repeated, partisan, dis-inhibited, flagrantly inaccurate accusations about the BBC and C4—and that is just the Secretary of State—have been normalised. The commercially self-interested Murdoch and Mail press with added ideological bile amplify and hunt the public service broadcasters day in day out.

You might have thought that after Covid, when audiences for the BBC soared, and during a real-time international war in the Ukraine, when dis-, mis- and mal-information is deliberately targeted at undermining our values, institutions and trust in the political process, that any sane government would want some really creative communicators in the public interest to find ways of accurately informing us. But instead of promoting this shared resource it is out to destroy it as we face an economic and political crisis around inflation with the added burden of the fallout from Brexit.

Balanced and accurate news and information, across output, and sometimes in comedy shows, keeps societies and their publics tethered

to some shared vision of what is wrong. Local UK content airs UK problems, holds UK power to account and makes the UK economy grow. Without some common set of agreements about problems, there can be no political solutions.

America discarded impartial news and information in 1987 when Ronald Reagan scrapped the 'Fairness Doctrine' that had obliged broadcasters to be 'fair and balanced' in matters of information and politics.

BBC funds have already been cut by 30% since 2010. These will be cut by another searing 20% by 2027. This is a considered attempt to dismember the Corporation. But there is more. By proposing to sell C4 despite there being no economic or industrial argument to support doing so, it wants to attack another prop of the successful public service communication ecology. And of course, by a surreptitious and staggeringly dangerous interference and undermining of the rules and protocols that keep the institutions protected from political interference, it has sought to undermine the independence of all these industries. Meanwhile the BBC is



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being 'regulated' to help foreign competition as OFCOM is forced to 'balance' between the interests of the British public and those of the corporation's, mainly US-owned, competitors.

This is an extreme example of a non-tariff barrier that systematically disadvantages a significant domestic player against foreign competitors. Perhaps when we finally 'Take back control' and 'Make Britain great again' we can remedy this egregious accident? Long established legal constraints about the independence of public companies have been broken by the Secretary of State demanding changes in the C4 annual report. The government has broken the rules of public appointments procedures to get the Chair of Ofcom it wanted, by behind the scenes changing the public service obligations of Ofcom policies and so throttling fairness and impartiality, by attack, attack, wearying attack.

None of this is normal. But be clear it is planned. A blog by Dominic Cummings in 2004 said: "There are three structural things that the right needs to happen in terms of communications... 1) the undermining of the BBC's credibility; 2) the creation of a Fox News equivalent/talk radio shows/bloggers etc to shift the centre of gravity; 3) the end of the ban on TV political advertising." This has nearly all come to pass. Of course, all of the campaigns against the BBC are well funded. So, there is a strategy and it is working.

It is part of the petty dictator's tool kit and it is successful. Call people you don't like an elite. Make institutions into 'the enemy of the people,' hollow them out and frighten them, put place people into positions of power. Then institutions crumble from within. So far the British system has shown some resilience. But the pressure is intense.

Then there is the Midas effect. Everything the mythic monster touched turned to gold – even his food and drink. We face a ghastly version of his effect in our public life. In the face of crises for which the answers are complex and need us to understand each other and pull together, the Midas strategy turns every issue into 'politics', never solves any issue but rather transmutes it into a polarised political battle. Recklessly throwing any public good, politically complicated thing, into this fire as a distraction. The BBC makes good front page attack material.

Just to remind us what is at

stake. The Public Service Broadcasters, (PSBs - the BBC, ITV/STV, C4, C5, S4C) are – unlike most news and entertainment media – universally available and free at the point of use. They are a big part of everyone's life in the UK used by 99% of the public each week. But even more so for older and poorer people, especially those without pay TV and broadband. As the cost of living escalates catastrophically more people will be dependent on them.

The UK's 'due impartiality' broadcasting rules ensure that political debate in Britain is largely based on shared facts, helping us avoid the extreme divisions we've seen in the US and elsewhere. It is one of the main reasons why we have the lowest level of Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy in the developed world.

The British public trusts broadcast news far more than other news media. This is because the BBC and other PSBs make programmes about us, imbued with our mores and humour, and they make programmes that become world-wide successes. Largely thanks to commissioning by the

The BBC needs to be big enough to hold government to account

PSBs, the UK is the world's second biggest exporter of TV programmes after the US, and the biggest exporter of TV formats, contributing significantly to the country's high global soft power ranking.

Through the BBC World Service the UK's soft power is further reinforced, with a global weekly reach of 468 million, and growing, outside the UK – more than any other international news service. This reflects its high trust level around the world. Because it provides impartial information to people in countries with little or no independent journalism, authoritarian governments actively harass it and seek to prevent their citizens from accessing it.

The PSBs have driven the growth of the UK's world-class independent production sector and are at the heart of many of our successful wider creative industries. And this is spread throughout the UK – there is undoubtedly a company working in some way for BBC or C4 near you.

The left has historically been in

favour of public service broadcasting and indeed the BBC. Of course, it has had rows with it. No longer. The BBC has certainly not been perfect: not about Brexit when a kind of false equivalence trumped proper impartiality. But in a slightly self-indulgent way the left largely and simplistically argues that somehow all news is 'subjective.' It depends on how the news is made and without journalists and editing we know nothing. The Media Reform coalition wants to devolve and break up the BBC. There is a left-wing distrust of impartiality (which suggests it is just a mask for power). But Tom Mills, a very acute thinker who argued that the BBC had never been 'independent' or indeed 'impartial', that it was as it were finally taken over in the 1980s, (despite programme evidence to the contrary) understands full well that saving the BBC matters.

Actually BBC local and regional needs to grow not be diminished. There are news vacuums all over the UK. The BBC needs to be big enough to hold government to account (and power wherever it lies), it has one of the last reporting forces left standing and has reported fairly, bravely and ingeniously from the Ukraine. As the Union cracks asunder, we need the BBC as a balance against one party rule in Scotland, Wales and England. In Northern Ireland the BBC braced after decades of tension holds all sides to account in the tightest circumstances. To do this there needs to be a bigger BBC, reasonably and securely funded.

The British Broadcasting Challenge, We Own it, The Voice of the Listener and Viewer, the IPPR, are all trying; but we need a coalition of campaigning. If we lose the BBC, we will lose public interest broadcasting and what it could be in the future. You can reform the BBC. But we need to understand what we will lose if it goes.

Recently Ali Fowle – fleeing Myanmar in danger of her life for her reporting, and Polina Ivanova, the FT reporter who had to leave her home in Russia at little notice because of the danger she was in, both appeared on an Orwell Panel. They spoke of the relief, the ease, the joy really of returning to the Britain where you could report and where public service values – in their eyes – were uniquely still alive.

So perhaps we need to focus on what matters right now to save what is precious. **C**

Support Ukraine's People!

This is a 1939 moment says **Pete Duncan** in surveying Ukraine's continuing agony as Putin's war crimes mount



We may not see as much on television of the destruction and loss of life as we did in February, when Putin invaded Ukraine from north, east and south and tried to march on Kyiv. But the suffering of the people of Ukraine continues.

We do not see as many attacks by precision missiles on civilian targets – hospitals, theatres, blocks of flats, nursery schools. But they still go on. If there are fewer missile attacks, it's not because the Russian military are feeling guilty, but because they're running short of missiles. If Russia doesn't cut off all the gas to Europe, it's not because Putin feels sorry for German consumers; it's because he wants Gazprom to carry on making some money.

If Putin allows Ukraine to export some of its grain, it's not because he's worried about world famine. It's because he's concerned about Russia's reputation in countries in Africa and Asia. In

the Central African Republic, Mali and Libya, one of Putin's favourite oligarchs, Evgenii Prigozhin, has been using his private army to prop up corrupt governments in exchange for access to minerals. Further, Russia wants to be able to export grain it has stolen from Ukraine and avoid Western sanctions on Russian agriculture.

As well as war crimes such as the wanton destruction of civilian targets and the stealing of Ukrainian property, the Russian puppet regimes in the Donbas have begun illegally to sentence prisoners of war to death. Fifty have already been killed in an explosion in a prison in Russian-occupied Donetsk carried out by Russian forces, trying to cover up their tortures and murders of Ukrainian PoWs. Russia's claim that Ukraine shelled their own prisoners repeats the claims made since the start of the war that the Ukrainians have been attacking their own civilians, in order to blame the Russians. On this occa-

sion, the Russians seem to be suggesting that the Ukrainians managed to separate the defenders of Azovstal from other PoWs, even while the territory was under Russian control.

We know less about other war crimes in the occupied territories, because Western journalists (other than those working for the Kremlin) do not have access. After Kherson was occupied in February, open protests continued for several months but, after repression and disappearances, resistance has been forced underground.

In the parts of the Donbas which have been occupied for eight years, there seems to be little internal resistance now. The Federation of Trade Unions of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic has been incorporated into the Russian trade union Sotsprof. The Russian occupiers have forced thousands of local people to move to the Russian Federation, particularly to the Far East, where the population has declined since the collapse of

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the USSR, and to places like Nizhni Tagil in the Urals where there is a major weapons factory. Where parents are suspected of disloyalty, their children have been removed and sent for 're-education'. As well as this kidnapping, a further war crime is the conscription of inhabitants of the occupied territories into the Russian Army or those of the local puppet regimes.

Inside the Russian Federation, ordinary people are suffering a spike in inflation and shortages of goods. Hundreds of thousands, possibly a million, people have left the country to get away from the war and the shortages. The idea that Russia could produce its own substitutes for all imports is an illusion, as Western boycotts affect what inputs Russia can buy abroad and especially the necessary technology. Workers are being forced to work overtime to meet the needs of war, even though Putin has so far not dared to declare a full military mobilization. To do so would give the lie to his continuing claim that there is no war, only a 'special military operation'. The possibility that veterans could be called up might lead to a new round of protests, such as there was in February.

The closure of all critical media inside Russia has made it harder for Russians to access reliable information, though it is still possible to connect with international news sources via virtual private networks.

Aleksei Gorinov, a member of a district council in Moscow, told a council meeting that Russia was fighting a war of aggression in Ukraine. For this he was sentenced in July to seven years in prison, supposedly for 'discrediting the Russian army', under the law passed earlier this year which makes it illegal to describe Russia's actions in Ukraine as a 'war'.

Russian oil and gas companies appear to have been benefitting from higher prices, as in the West. This means that the government has received more in taxes from them than previously. In the longer run, however, Russian firms are being shut out of Western markets. China is not an alternative for Russia. The market for Russian oil and gas is limited; new pipelines will take years to build. Significantly, many Chinese private companies have, in practice, joined in Western sanctions on Russia, because they fear themselves being sanctioned by Western

countries.

So far, the EU, NATO states and other democracies have shown an unexpected degree of solidarity in support of Ukraine. The British government has been at the forefront of these efforts. We must nevertheless expose any backsliding on sanctions by the Conservative government for the benefit of their rich backers. Labour should support the proposals of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report in June, which called for strengthening the capacity to investigate illicit finance and money laundering through London.

Much credit is due to the Greens in Germany for their contribution in changing public opinion there, and persuading the

Our support for Ukraine should not mean uncritical support for the present government

SPD-led coalition government to begin the process of weaning the country off Russian oil and gas. This winter will undoubtedly be a test as the sanctions will be blamed for the high, possibly cripplingly high, prices of gas and electricity. After that, it will be easier to source alternative sources of oil and gas. Labour must use this crisis to demand a lasting shift to greener sources of energy. Linked with this, our front bench must reassert the manifesto policy of the social ownership of the major energy suppliers.

Our support for Ukraine should not mean uncritical support for the present government. In July, the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) passed two laws restricting workers' rights, under cover of the war, removing gains made in the Soviet period. Zero-hours contracts have been legalized and the eight-hour day abolished.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, representing 70% of the workforce, are now exempt from the labour code. Trade unions have lost their right to veto sackings. Workers have to bargain individually with their bosses. It is clear that these laws are not intended to be limited to the peri-

od of the war. Rather, their advocates represent them as representing a break from Communism.

It is unfortunate that the 'Stop the War Coalition', Jeremy Corbyn and the Morning Star refuse to commit themselves to the victory of Ukraine, the defeat of Russia and the return to the frontiers which Russia recognized in 1991. Putin will claim any agreement which permits further seizure of Ukraine's territory, beyond Crimea, as a victory. If Putin is not defeated, he will have time to develop his war economy and train more soldiers. When he's ready, he will launch further attacks on Ukraine. If he succeeds in his aim of installing a puppet government in Kyiv, he will seek to conquer the whole of Ukraine and Moldova. If he's allowed to do that, then he will consider that NATO is not a serious alliance after all. Next, he will attack the Baltic States, and then Poland. Making an agreement with him that sacrifices Ukraine's interests would amount to appeasement.

It is vital to understand that we are not in a situation like that at the beginning of the First World War. The 1907 International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart rightly feared that Europe was moving towards a war between imperialist powers, and called on the labour movements to stop the war. We are in a situation more akin to 1939, when socialists around the world united with liberals and conservatives to stop Nazism. Stalin betrayed this movement, and did his deal with Hitler, which lasted until Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

We cannot fail to notice that some of the people, and the Morning Star itself, who previously justified the Stalinist system, are now in effect apologists for Putin.

Fortunately, Putin's victory is far from guaranteed. At the moment, Putin is slowly running out of men and weapons. Ukraine is preparing a counter-offensive in the south, even though it has been ceding territory in the Donbas to Russia. The aim of this counter-offensive will be to raise morale in Kherson, and to force Russia to move troops away from the Donbas. Labour, and socialist parties internationally, should call for the delivery to Ukraine of all the weapons that it needs to end Russian aggression and defeat Putin. **G**

Don't debate the war!

Mike Phipps laments the decline of the Stop the War Coalition as a broad united front



As previously reported on Labour Hub, at the start of Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine, I went on a Stop the War Coalition demonstration on Sunday March 6th. Concerned about the small size of the march and the tiny number of Ukrainians on it, and following some discussion with other activists, I circulated an appeal for building the broadest possible movement around three central demands: Russian troops out of Ukraine; no to war; and refugees welcome here.

The appeal was sent to the Stop the War Coalition. They rejected it and said it could not "support any demonstration called on the basis of the demands outlined".

This was because "these demands do not address central features of the crisis", namely NATO expansion; nor do they "suggest any criticism of British diplomacy during the crisis, including the wish of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss to fight

Putin to the last drop of Ukrainian blood".

This was an astonishing reply. A sovereign country is invaded by an imperialist neighbour that has a long history of denying Ukraine its national rights. It commits the vilest war crimes, including the deliberate targeting of civilians and hospitals, mass looting, rape and cultural destruction. Yet for the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition, the key issue is to criticise British Government diplomacy.

I responded to Stop the War's response to our appeal as follows:

"You say that it is clear that NATO's expansion has 'contributed to the war', but this is not clear at all. It could equally be argued that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was an act of unprovoked imperialist aggression, designed simply to seize the land and resources of a sovereign people. During the war on Iraq, Stop the War quite rightly did not claim that any action by the Saddam Hussein regime contributed to Iraq being

invaded."

Stop the War leaders continue to push the line that NATO is centrally responsible for this conflict and that Ukraine must be denied the right to defend itself against Russian aggression as this would escalate the conflict. It's not surprising that few Ukrainians, including on the left, support Stop the War's stance.

Dr Yuliya Yurchenko, author of *Ukraine and the Empire of Capital: From Marketisation to Armed Conflict* (Pluto, 2018) and a senior lecturer in Political Economy at the University of Greenwich, said in a recent interview: "Reducing this war to [a] conflict between the West and Russia overlooks Ukraine and treats it as a mere pawn between powers. That analysis denies Ukrainians our subjectivity and our agency in the conflict. It also suppresses discussion of our right to self-determination and our fight for national liberation."

She underlined the character of the invading power: "In this con-

flict, Russia can in no way be considered a different project than the US and the rest of the capitalist powers. Just like them, Russia is a neoliberal capitalist state fighting for more land, resources, and profit. Its rulers don't care about improving the lives of everyday Russians who are exploited and oppressed."

"I think some people still get their vision clouded by a one-dimensional opposition to US imperialism alone. But the US is not the aggressor in this situation. Russia is. Of course, NATO is a factor, but not the determinant one..."

"The international left must be in solidarity with Ukraine as an oppressed nation and our fight for self-determination. That includes our right to secure arms for our fighters and volunteers to win our freedom..."

"If anybody from the UK Stop the War Coalition or some sort of hardcore pacifist organisation wants to propose a practicable plan [for] how to resolve this without fighting back, I would be genuinely interested. But I think the discussions proposed so far are frankly callous, delusional crap."

I quote this at length because supporters of Ukrainian self-determination have, in some circles, been smeared as NATO supporters who wish to escalate the conflict. This is not the case. But to deny the right of Ukraine to defend itself in current circumstances is effectively to permit Russian forces to overrun and loot the country and terrorise its people. This is not acceptable.

Even if you don't believe Ukraine has the right to defend itself, there are many things Stop the War could be doing to solidarise with the plight of

Ukrainians. I helped launch an appeal, for example, to highlight the position of mayors and elected officials in Ukraine who have been abducted and disappeared. Stop the War showed no interest. Equally a campaign to cancel Ukraine's foreign debt would be worthy of support.

It's clear that many on the international left view the world in terms of two camps – allies of the USA and opponents of the USA. One is bad and the other is, if not good, well, less bad. This outlook wasn't acceptable while the Soviet Union existed, and it is even less acceptable now.

The problem with this campist outlook is that it ignores the kleptocratic, dictatorial and expansionist character of the Russian state which has sought to destroy all internal opposition and is now unleashing on Ukraine what it has previously exported to Chechnya, Syria, and more recently Belarus and Kazakhstan: armed destruction of the democratic aspirations of the people.

This outlook, in my view, infects the Stop the War Coalition leadership. Tariq Ali, for example, who frequently speaks from Stop the War platforms, mocked the rumours of an alleged massive attack by Russia on Ukraine just eight days before the invasion began.

Andrew Murray, another leading Stop the War figure and newly re-elected to its steering committee, also mocked the Russian build-up of troops ahead of the conflict. He dismissed the 100,000 Russian troops stationed on the Ukrainian border as "allegations" and "media speculation".

I was a founder member of Brent Stop the War in 2001 and chaired the local group for many

years. I was a bit reluctant to be involved recently in organising a local meeting that showcased the wrong line of the national Stop the War Coalition if it were unopposed, but agreed to find a speaker who would present the Ukrainian viewpoint. Simon Pirani, an honorary professor at the University of Durham who has written extensively on Russia and campaigns in solidarity with Ukraine, agreed at short notice to speak, debating Stop the War convenor Lindsey German.

Less than a week before the meeting was due to take place, Lindsey German suddenly discovered she had a previous commitment. No other Stop the War speaker was willing to take part. Asking around, I found there was a history of this – a refusal to debate viewpoints that challenged the official Stop the War line on Ukraine.

It's a sad end for Brent Stop the War, which has a long history of well-attended public meetings on Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, civil liberties, military recruitment and much more, as well as an exemplary fundraising record.

Meanwhile, the efforts of the Stop the War Coalition nationally to sideline alternative viewpoints goes on regardless. Its most recent London rally on June 25th did not bother to schedule a single Ukrainian speaker. This self-inflicted damage will be costly. It's doubtful whether the organisation will recover from both this kind of anti-democratic behaviour and its fundamentally wrong approach to the war in Ukraine. Its attitude in recent months has been an act of self-marginalisation, setting back our ability to mobilise against future wars – a fact that makes it all the more shameful. **C**

Mike Phipps is a member of Brent Central CLP. This is an edited version of an article that originally appeared at <https://labourhub.org.uk/2022/06/30/dont-debate-the-war/>. His new book is *Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow* (OR Books), available at <https://www.orbooks.com/catalog/dont-stop-thinking-about-tomorrow/>

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The glory that was the British Empire exposed

While condemning Russia over Ukraine **Dave Lister** highlights some uncomfortable truths about Britain's recent colonialism

Sections of the hard Left appear to be more interested in attacking NATO than in criticising Russia over the invasion of Ukraine. Blaming NATO for Putin's war crimes is a bit like blaming the invasion of the Sudetenland on the Allies in World War Two because of the harsh measures inflicted on Germany by the Versailles Treaty. There is a connection but it is not the prime cause of either aggression. However, condemning the mass murder, rape and wanton destruction in Ukraine should not stop us from recognising that there are clearly some pretty dreadful stories that can be told about UK imperial history.

The Tories would like to airbrush these stories from our past. One feature of the culture wars has been an attack on teachers who want to tell the truth about them. Clearly there are many things in Britain's history that people can be proud of but equally there are others of which we ought to be ashamed. It should also be recalled that one of the stated aims of Brexit was to 'make Britain great again', as if working people really benefited from the Empire.

Here we'll focus on a few incidents in the late history of the British Empire, which occurred within the lifetime of our older readers.

We start with the recent release of some pamphlets from Britain's National Archives written secretly by British agents to foment mass murder in Indonesia in the period 1965-66. This confirmed known events that occurred when Harold Wilson's Labour Government was in power. Were any Labour ministers aware of what was being done covertly in Britain's name?

President Sukarno of Indonesia was concerned about Britain's plans for its Malaysian colony and there had been some incursions over the border into Malaya. There had also been a failed coup by some left-wing army officers. Also of concern to the British authorities was the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), with about three million members, regarded as a greater

threat by Britain and the US in terms of the 'domino theory' than even Vietnam. There is no evidence though of any involvement by the PKI in the attempted left-wing coup.

A British agent Ed Wynne was sent to Singapore by the Foreign Office to coordinate a campaign of misinformation. Newsletters were sent to about 1500 prominent Indonesians in the army and elsewhere who were potential opponents of Sukarno, purporting to be written by Indonesians in exile, advocating the elimination of the Communist 'cancer'. A later pamphlet stated that "the work started by the army must be carried out and intensified". The propaganda included invented stories of atrocities by rebel women. The result was the mass murder of perhaps 500,000 Communists and other



The Rhodes Colossus, 1892 Artist: Edward Linley Sambourne

leftists and a coup by General Suharto, which removed Sukarno from power. Its legacy was a reactionary military dictatorship that lasted for 32 years. The head of the Indonesian Institute for the Study of the 1965-66 Massacre has demanded an apology and full explanation from the UK Government. However, the British Government has always denied any involvement in or responsibility for the right-wing coup.

Kenya was under the direct rule of the British in the 1950s. There was an uprising by the Kikuyu people, known as the Mau Mau uprising, although there is no such phrase in the Kikuyu language. The British response was brutal. Large numbers of people were arrested, detained, tortured in the most horrific way, appallingly mutilated and murdered. George

**Dave Lister,
Brent Central CLP
and Chartist EB**

Monbiot wrote in the Guardian in 2012: "Interrogation under torture was widespread. The majority of the men were anally raped... Women were gang-raped by guards. People were mauled by dogs and electrocuted." Men were also castrated, others were tied to Land Rovers and pulverised to death.

This information was not entirely unknown at the time. Barbara Castle wrote in Tribune about the mistreatment of prisoners in Kenyan detention camps: "Murder, rape and torture of Africans by Europeans goes unpunished and the authorities connive at the violation (of the rule of law) ..."

It is estimated that around 300,000 people were either killed or unaccounted for at this time. For many years all this was covered up. Thousands of documents about this and similar repression in other British colonies were destroyed by Foreign Office officials. Other documents were illegally concealed, finally to be published in 2012. Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod had directed that post-independence governments should not be handed on any material that might embarrass Her Majesty's Government. In the end the British Government paid out nearly £20 million in costs and compensation to over 5000 victims of colonial rule in Kenya.

Similar events occurred in British-ruled Cyprus, although perhaps on a smaller scale, in response to the EOKA uprising against British rule. A case came to the High Court in London in 2018 brought by 34 Greek Cypriots who had been tortured by the British, including a 16-year-old girl who had been repeatedly raped by British troops. There is also direct evidence of at least 14 people being tortured to death. Many people were held in detention camps and the colonial authorities blocked visits to them requested by MPs and journalists. In 2019 the British Government finally paid damages to some victims of British mistreatment.

We could also reference French crimes in Algeria, the Belgian monarchy's appalling history of mass murder in the Congo, German genocide in South West Africa, etc, all within the modern era. In our struggle for a better world we need also to honour the countless victims of man's inhumanity to man (women were of course rarely guilty of these crimes). We can hardly look forward to a greater focus on truth and justice under a new premier. **C**

History lessons for Starmer's Labour?

Bryn Jones looks at two recent publications* which indicate today's centre-left histories need to widen their lens on past Labour radicalism, from Attlee through Wilson to Corbyn

Keir Starmer's accession as Labour leader was heralded as a fresh start, preserving the best of the Corbyn era (Starmer's ten pledges – see Chartists passim) – but recovering the power-winning focus of Blairism. There has, instead, been a return to the New Labour style of central dictation of 'the party line' and a pro-business and media-friendly rhetoric. Yet, despite dropping or deep-freezing his ten pledges – to the disappointment of both left and right in and around the party – there is little of the flair or eye-catching policies of early New Labour. These books provide a glimpse of how centre-left commentators view past Labour highs and lows that might be relevant to the present regime. Can these diverse histories answer the dominant complaint about Starmer's Labour and show what Labour should actually stand for?

For Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves in her foreword to Nathan Yeowell's collection, we can learn from 1945, 1964 and 1997 "how Labour leaders brought the party back into power". For Reeves, the flipside – historic electoral failures – occur when Labour lacked a "deep understanding of how society has changed, the big economic challenges... and what people want from their lives". However, few of Yeowell's contributors examine the changing external socio-economic factors and demands that shaped Labour's politics and policies since its fall in 2010. They focus mainly on party screenplays: its dominant ideas, policies and personalities. Blair, Crosland, Kinnock, Wilson – each has his own chapter. A crucial weakness is the near exclusion of the upsurge of radical socialist ideas from 2016. The editor's introduction admits the collection omits big and recent politico-economic forces like Corbynism, trade unions and Brexit, but argues that such developments are too recent to permit proper analysis. More critically, none ask how Labour could use government powers to curb the hostile

forces of City finance, business and mass media hostility, and Conservative breeding grounds in the public schools. Some acknowledge both the Attlee government's neglect of these and Wilson's spasmodic attempts to tackle them. Arguably, Blair made common cause with them – which leads Diamond to say that Labour invariably seeks to govern through the existing centralised state, rather than reforming it.

Moreover, the recent Forde report confirms another crucial omission: Labour's dysfunctional internal democracy. This underlies the structural conflicts that repeatedly pit membership movements for 'voice' and recognition against the leader's command centre and the general secretary's bureaucratic power to discipline and punish. Some contributions cover these dynamics. Bunce and Linton's chapter, on the 'Story of Black Sections', shows how the party establishment bitterly resisted Black representation. The refreshing history of local politics and successive feminist movements by Kirsta Cowman reports another dimension of wider movements becoming engaged in intra-party struggles. Similar frictions, over the politics of community engagement, are narrated in Nick Garland's chapter. He suggests the history of competing right vs left attempts to 'own' community identities and issues illustrates the failure of state-centric, top-down social democrats to "engage seriously with the ideas, though not necessarily precise policies, underpinning the left's strategy". This was "a missed opportunity to find common ground [which]... contributed to their political marginalisation". This refusal continues under Starmer. His new adviser, Deborah Mattinson, previously documented the centrality of local communities to lost Red Wall voters (reviewed in *Chartist* December 2021). Yet Starmer closed the community organising unit set up by Corbyn.

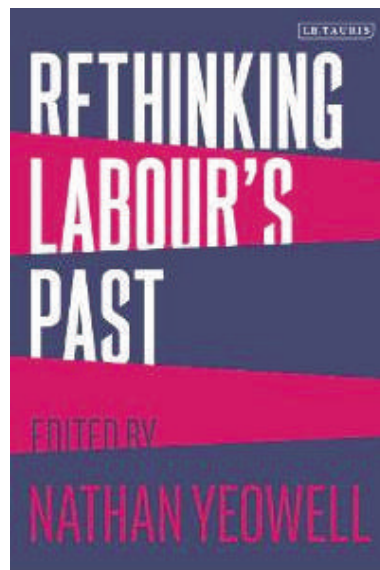
Diamond's book, like Jeremy Nuttall's piece in Yeowell's, gives the Blair regime qualified approval

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for Blair's electoral nous and willingness to milk market cows to nourish public spending. However, Nuttall goes further, arguing that the key to recreating such past success - Reeves's "what people want from their lives" - is to update Blair's focus on their "aspirations". Elections are said to be won by satisfying "aspirational" voters who want affluent lifestyles and to get on in the world. A sceptic might add that if such an emphasis did win votes, it was also accompanied, after 1997, by a continuous decline in support from Labour's working-class base. Aspirational social mobility seems to have had limited appeal to them. Since the 2008 financial crash, austerity, and now poverty-inducing inflation, are intensifying a crisis that might make many voters more likely to 'aspire' to reliable public and health services, decent civic infrastructures, more affordable energy bills and fairer employers.

Since its linked rise with trade unionism, Labour has usually been the electoral conduit for social movements. Jackson's chapter interprets this as the need now to combine social and environmental justice campaigns with the populism of 'place and nation'. Unfortunately, the Corbyn upsurge apart, it is the institutions and ideologies of globalisation and neoliberalism that have most influenced recent party perspectives, discussion of which Yeowell's contributors largely avoid. Diamond considers New Labour's record here, but claims it "hardly amounted to collusion with neoliberalism". Yet he admits that New Labour's attempt to moderate rising social inequality by improving the social mobility of individuals meant turning higher education into a market in which "the burden of paying" was shifted onto individuals. He also complains that New Labour replaced Old Labour's top-down statism with equally centralised managerialism. Contra Reeves's assertion, he describes "technocratic problem solvers" replacing "crusaders for moral values".

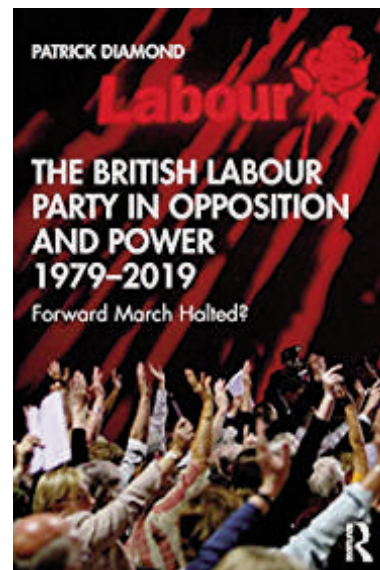
From his experiences as senior policy adviser to Tony Blair and later as head of policy planning, Diamond denounces that government's "painfully slow progress" and its refusal "to define a bold social democratic agenda". This is exemplified by the leadership's dismissal of the idea of 'stakeholding' reforms to business governance: proposals championed in the late 1990s by, amongst others, a young policy wonk called Ed Miliband. Unlike the 1930s, complains



Diamond, as the New Labour paradigm disintegrated with the 2008 financial crash, "no compelling ideological position was forthcoming from the British centre-left". If so, what of the more recent paradigms of the wider left, including the Corbyn-McDonnell versions of stakeholding: making key businesses more accountable and removing them from the grip of global finance?

Unlike Yeowell's agenda, Diamond dutifully devotes 31 pages to the renaissance of left and anti-neoliberal ideas, tepidly under Ed Miliband, and then full throttle under Corbyn; though he concludes weakly. The 2019 disaster was dictated, allegedly, not by intra-party subversion by its right wing, nor by the disastrous Starmer-backed anti-Brexit line (treated as merely symptoms of incoherence), nor by a blanket media assault; nor even by Corbyn's poor campaign strategies. Rather, the cause is ascribed to a failure to recognise the worldwide "alterations in capitalism, class and representative democracy that has disabled most left parties" - a statement some might read as a justification of Blair's self-professed deference to the inexorable 'tides' of (neoliberal) globalisation, forces that, according to Blair, preclude transformative reforms. Diamond's ambivalence on Blairism may stem partly from his interviews, almost exclusively from great and good New Labour figures: Adonis, Birt, Blunkett, Clarke, Mandelson, etc. Useful, but surely one-sided?

Several Corbynist policies were innovative and ingredients for a new paradigm, not merely Old Labour nostalgia nor an idealisation of '1945'. But their electoral eclipse in 2019 seems to taboo such recognition. Stephen Fielding's chapter on changing perceptions of



'1945' roundly dismisses Corbynite ideas as blindly mythologising the Attlee government. By romanticising its achievements, Ken Loach's "visceral" film, *The Spirit of 1945*, is said to have concealed Corbynism's flaws. For Fielding, the 2019 manifesto was over-extravagant: "even more radical" than that of 1945. Really? Can Corbyn's promises of partial renationalisation of energy, railways and Royal Mail (less than 3% of UK GDP), de-privatising some NHS services, and a new National Care Service (now orthodox Scottish and Welsh government policy) be regarded as more radical than the '45 policies? These included wholesale nationalisation of the then core industries of iron and steel, rail, coal and electricity, and the creation, from scratch, of the NHS. Diamond's cautious but more meticulous chronicle apart, several of these centre-left analyses seem as blinkered as the clichés of 'hard left/far left' politics that they dismiss. Faced with an imploding global economy and resurgent extreme nationalism, such histories might do better to widen their lens and ask: how has Labour lost the capacity to exploit electorally the intensifying trends towards financial power, impoverishment, and ecological chaos? Closer study of the '45 and Wilson governments might help. Through working through establishment institutions, they achieved some empowerment of workers and socialisation of industries and health services in the teeth of business and establishment opposition. Please copy Sir Keir into any findings. **C**

***Patrick Diamond, *The British Labour Party in Opposition and Power 1979-2019*, Routledge, 2021. Nathan Yeowell (editor) *Rethinking Labour's Past*, I.B. Taurus, 2022**

Can Democrats stop a return to nationalist white nativism?

As the US approach the mid-term elections **Paul Garver** assesses the dangerous machinations of Trumpist Republicans

The hullabaloo around the failed January 2021 insurrection and claims of election fraud from the dominant Trump wing of the Republicans were based on political geography. Over 60% of white voters nationwide support the Republicans, and are heavily concentrated in rural areas, small towns, and some suburban neighborhoods. Democrats receive the votes of most African Americans, Latino and Asian-American communities, as well as younger, more-educated voters of all races in larger cities and university towns. However, in non-presidential election years, Republican turnout exceeds that of Democrats. As a result Republicans now control 30 of the 50 state legislatures, while winning a disproportionate share of mandates in the national House and Senate.

Most states' legislatures decide how the national and state legislative districts are allocated. In some, the Republican majority crams most voters of color into a few districts, allowing Republicans to win more seats than their overall popular vote justifies. The ultra-right majority on the Supreme Court refuses to consider this as depriving anyone of their constitutional right to representation. Another advantage for Republicans is that all 50 states, irrespective of population, elect two Senators. The electoral vote allocation also follows a formula favoring smaller, more rural states. Democrats often win the national vote by amassing millions of 'wasted' votes in California, New York and Massachusetts, while losing the election based on receiving fewer electoral votes elsewhere. What usually happens in presidential elections is that early reports from rural areas and small towns usually favor Republicans, while votes from larger cities with a denser multiracial electorate get counted more slowly and are registered later. Hence the outraged cries from conspiracy theorists that the big cities have stolen the election through fraud from decent

[white] people by [over-] counting the votes of African-American and immigrant communities.

Republican strategists laid the basis for minority white Republican control over the last two decades by focusing on state races, allowing them to control much of the electoral process. Trump still failed to win in 2020 because local non-partisan electoral officials remained uncorrupted and even Republican secretaries of state defended the true results. Trump and his supporters are now using the primary process to purge such officials and the handful of Republicans in Congress who refused to endorse the coup. Currently about 50% of contested Republican primaries are being won by Trump-supported candidates promising to guarantee right-wing victories in 2022 and 2024 regardless of the actual count of votes.

This is an extremely dangerous time for American democracy. Trump strategists claim that state legislatures have the legal right to overturn majority votes in their states and submit their own electors to the Electoral College. Trump supporters tried but failed to persuade Republican officials to do this in 2020-21. But with the ongoing purges of the few remaining genuine conservatives in the Party, coupled with the willingness of the 6-3 right-wing Supreme Court majority to permit voter suppression and other anti-democratic measures, we can have little confidence that the Republicans will defend democratic institutions in the USA. While the Trump-controlled Party is working hard to install a racist, nativist white nationalist, even neo-Fascist regime on the country, the Democrats have not decided how to counter that threat. One disturbing sign of confusion is that political action committees linked with the official Party have contributed to the most right-wing challengers in Republican primaries, those endorsed by Trump. The rationale for this seems to be based on the belief that such candidates will be

easier to defeat in this November's midterm elections. This is playing with fire, but is consistent with other political interventions from the official Democratic Party.

Recently, voters in Kansas decisively defeated a referendum vote to totally abolish abortion. Republican-controlled state legislatures around the country are waging all-out cultural warfare against women's reproductive rights and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in the wake of the recent Supreme Court decision overturning decades of legal precedent. The same legislatures are passing laws to restrict voters' rights for communities of color, again with a positive nod from the 6-3 right-wing majority on the Supreme Court. These maneuvers feed red meat to the rabid Republican base, but there is evidence that more independently-minded Republicans and Independents are not following along. Normally lower voter turnout than in presidential years favors Republicans, as does the abysmally low popularity of the Biden presidency. A generic nationwide poll shows some recent shifts towards Democrats, though probably not enough to avoid a Republican sweep. Still the internecine war launched by Trump and his supporters against traditional law-abiding Republicans may backfire, and the Democrats may recover just enough credibility to encourage parts of their base support, youth, suburban women, immigrants and African-Americans, to vote in the November elections.

Finally, climate, health care and tax legislation in the 'Inflation Reduction Act' narrowly passed the Senate in August, opposed by all 50 Republicans. The two Democrats who had torpedoed the original proposals, Manchin and Sinema, were placated by continued subsidies for fossil fuel industries and tax breaks for fund managers respectively. Cynical politics, but necessitated by the razor-thin Democratic majority and total Republican blockade on anything that could benefit Biden. **C**

Paul Garver is a member of Democratic Socialists for America. A fuller version of this article will be on www.chartist.org.uk

Peregrine misses the point

Glyn Ford
on a
contrarian
history

Ever Closer Union? Europe in the West
Perry Anderson
Verso £16.99

Anderson's writing takes no prisoners. Opening in tackling the Atlantic Order, he shuffles the history of the first half of the twentieth century as a thirty-year war (1917-45) between Washington and Berlin over who was to succeed Britain after London's loss of global dominance. America's late coming to war transformed Imperial War into crusade and a useful preemptive strike against an emergent rival. In the re-match Hitler's mistake was Barbarossa, with 'religious warfare' favoured over economic. It was shadow-boxing while the real enemy was across the Atlantic, not in the Urals. Now eighty years on Washington must not make the same mistake and is forced to face off with Beijing as China emerges from the shadows of the US Cold War victory over Moscow.

All so far, so good. But the section on the European Union (EU) is dangerous dereliction of duty. For Anderson the EU is a football team absent supporters. Its future is reflected in Luuk van Middelaar's conservative manifesto *The Passage to Europe* where his Dutch rival celebrates the emergence of member statism as the Council of Ministers emerge triumphant as first amongst equals in the battle with Commission and Parliament. For Anderson the Union's benefits are dammed with faint praise, free movement and twenty-five flavours of toothpaste.

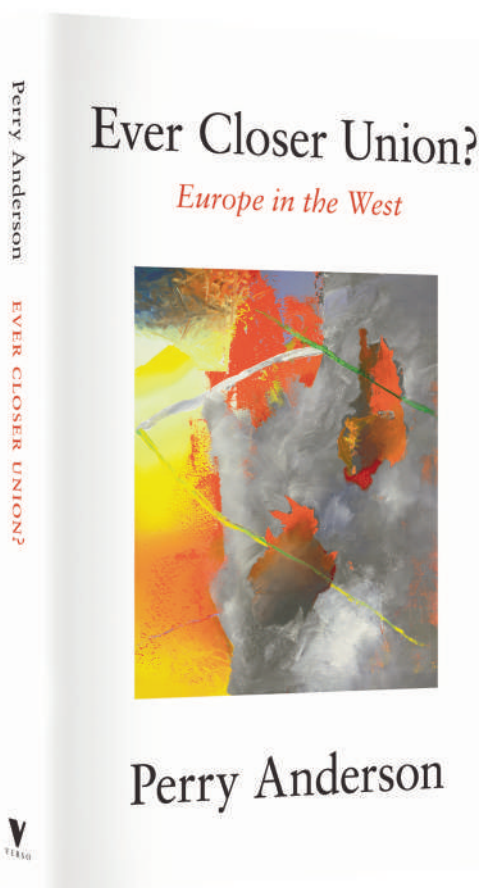
Far from alone in being beguiled by van Middelaar's EU travelogue, the political failure in *Ever Closer Union?* is not to address - let alone attempt to answer - the question 'What is to be done?' Anderson should get out more and visit Highgate and his mentor's grave where the epitaph reads 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways - the point however is to change it'. There is an emerging opposition to the tyrann

ny of the Council and a fight to create a Union that is more than symbols and cheap benefits, where democratisation brings popular control over and support for a new direction of travel. This insurrection is rooted in the European Parliament's (EP) drive to take back control. The structural change needed for the EU to have the capacity to look to its own interests, to step away from being pressed into a second Cold War with China, only happens if member statism is broken on the wheel of democratisation. But instead of enlisting for that fight Anderson carelessly dismisses it.

than rally to their cause. Yet despite successive European Elections seeing both a slow drift to populism and the right - not the same thing - Parliament has grown its fight in democracy's corner. The EP have taken their new powers from the Lisbon Treaty and stretched them to the limit as launchpad to challenge the Council caucus and threaten its cosy nepotism in staffing the EU Institutions with friends and family.

While Anderson quibbles, battle will be engaged for the third time in the run up to 2024 Elections when the European Parties - including the Party of European Socialists of which Labour remains a part - select their candidates for President of the Commission. In 2014 the EP successfully imposed Juncker against the wishes of the Council as Commission President. Five years later Merkel gained a wafer-thin victory for a favourite daughter parachuted in to subvert the process. If the promise of transnational lists is delivered, the EU's voters could even find themselves in 2024 casting direct ballots for the next Commission President. There should be no question which side progressives are on in this fight! Anderson contends that the Council will never again appoint a Jacques Delors. Exactly, but the European Parties and the EP just might.

Even on Brexit Anderson is unstuck in time, blaming Jeremy Corbyn for failing to deliver his promised Labour campaign to remain. Britain's bags were long packed by the failures of Blair and complicity of Brown, while any last-minute reprieve was sabotaged by the self-same individuals at Labour HQ who played the starring roles in the Forde Report. He's right that it was not in the Union's interest for things to go well for Britain; on the contrary one can only marvel how Europe's punishment beating pales in comparison to the pain of Britain's disciplined self-flagellation.



For some reason Anderson is as venomously contemptuous of the EP as UKIP deploying in argument hackneyed factoids. He claims an attendance rate of 49% amongst MEPs while the independent VoteWatch Europe had an attendance touching 90% in the 2014-19 Parliament. His contention that MEPs vote more frequently together as nations than with their European political parties is equally counterfeit. Yet both serve to discredit and disarm the mutineers' prospects rather

Holding the reins of internationalism

Mike Davis
on a global campaigner

Riding Two Horses - Labour in Europe
Glyn Ford
Spokesman £14.99

The title comes from James Maxton, ex Independent Labour Party leader, who quipped if you can't ride two horses you shouldn't be in the circus. Ford certainly manages this skill on his own account recording his experiences both as a Labour councillor in greater Manchester in the 1980s then as a member of the European Parliament and leader of the Labour Group from 1989.

Ford, a passionate federalist and long-time contributor to this journal, held the reins securely and moved the Labour Party forward across the continent, often against domestic Labour opinion. His internationalist commitment, humanist socialism and huge range of interests shines through every chapter. Internationalism and the need for supra-national solutions to global capitalism infuses the story from boyhood in the Forest of Dean coal mining area via Reading university, councillor activity in Manchester to European Labour parliamentary leader alongside globetrotting researcher or seeker of alliances from South East Asia, China, Iran, Afghanistan, North Korea, India, Japan, Libya (where learning 'the cat sat on the mat' in Arabic got him fast-tracked entry) and beyond.

Although he opposed Britain joining the Common Market, like most on the left, he was an early convert to 'another Europe' through the European institutions. He took Tony Benn's 1975 Alternative Economic Strategy, left mercantilism writ large, transforming it from kingdom to continent, prioritising saving and creating jobs, investment into research, development and demonstration alongside controls on imports, exports and capital—a temporary ducking behind walls amidst the economic turmoil of the 1970. He was an early backer of the euro while Kinnock gets a good press as Labour's only serious pro-European leader.

He recognised that in a tri-polar world (US, Japan and the EU) simultaneous competition and cooperation was not a zero-sum game. There was no future for socialism in one country and

the Atlanticism of the right was redundant and remains so. 'We have to create the means of control, the levers we need no longer have a fulcrum, if they ever did, in small and medium sized nation states'.

The opening chapters explain how Britain came to drive itself off a political and economic cliff. There are no simple answers and Ford is forensic in unpicking the mistakes and own-goals of pro-Europe Tories as well as mealy-mouthed support for a European socialist transformation from Blair and particularly Brown. He cites as a critical example insular attitudes to the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the European Parliament. Few in the Labour party were aware it existed, born as a bureaucratic body but needing to be animated as an organic part of the Labour movement. Downplayed during the New Labour years Ford early on endorsed the three demands of the Delors Foundation Notre Europe: European parties should allow individual membership; members as a whole should vote on the programme and manifesto in secret ballot and parties should designate a candidate for president of the Commission on the basis of primaries. Instead, Brown endorsed the right-wing candidate Baroso, in spite of the PES congress agreeing to have a 'socialist candidate'.

The theme of nationalism versus internationalism permeates the story. Ford's writing is rich, full of allusions and anecdotes. Post-war Tories bought nationalism wholesale, while Labour retail. He dubs Labour a chauvinist party with internationalists in it. Brown's 'British jobs for British workers' particularly wrangled with Ford—aimed as it was at Italian and Portuguese workers. Ford has an Italian son. His adhesion to a United Socialist States of Europe he identifies as a flag flown by the 1930s ILP and Commonwealth Party, sustained by Fenner Brockway and Bill Edwards, after the war but sidelined by old LP chauvinism. Tribune failed to publish Orwell's appeal for European unity.

He sees the origins of Brexit in the abandonment of manufacturing, the embrace of finance capital and minimum wage zero-hours services economy. Eurosceptics were not about 'take back control'

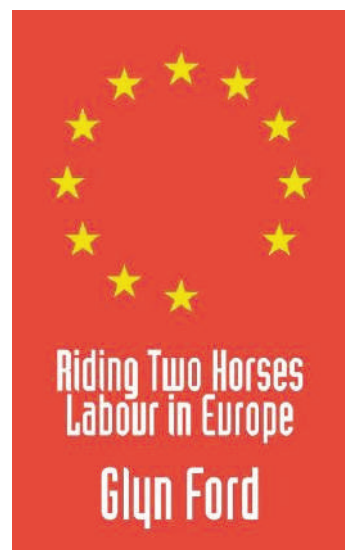
but moving to a difference dependency, to the casino economic on the other side of the Atlantic. Labour's 2016 campaign was desultory: no leadership, no message. Leave captured 68% of the Tory vote and 32% of Labour—enough to win.

Within and beyond Europe Ford's Science and Technology degrees from Reading and Manchester served him well with research on manganese module mining amongst other international studies.

A further chapter is dedicated the fighting racism and fascism over fifty years with accounts of demonstrations, rallies and occasional heavy-duty actions against the National Front and its successor the British National Party. His car was found tyre-less on bricks one morning while, on other occasions, threatening graffiti including 'Kill Ford' was daubed on walls. He was a regular speaker on Anti-Nazi League and Stand up to Racism platforms as well as *SOS Racisme* in France and other campaigns in Europe. He worked with the Black Panthers and has been prominent in challenging Labour collusion in institutional racism.

Other chapters cover his scientific endeavours, his campaign to support the Tobin (Robin Hood) tax on currency transactions, solidarity with Gibraltarian workers, and many other campaigns.

This is a standout autobiography ranking alongside those of Fenner Brockway and Bertrand Russell in its global reach, its passion and its depth of political experience.



Defending and rebuilding the NHS

John Puntis
on a manual
for
campaigners

NHS Under Siege
John Lister and Jacky Davis (eds.)
Merlin Press £9.99

Like Woody Guthrie's guitar (a 'machine for killing fascists'), 'NHS Under Siege' is intended not just to educate, but as a weapon to inform and strengthen the fight for the NHS. Edited by two veteran campaigners who also wrote the first two thirds of the book, it has contributions from, trade unionists, academics, public and child health experts, health policy analysts and covid bereaved relatives. Among these, Michael Marmot reminds readers that while the NHS must be defended, there is also a need to focus on the conditions that make people sick in the first place – the social determinants of health and health equity.

Before the pandemic life expectancy increase had slowed dramatically, health inequalities were increasing and life expectancy for the poorest was getting worse. This was the direct result of fiscal policies that led to massive decreases in public expenditure and increases in child poverty. A major section of the book draws on the People's Covid Inquiry, elegantly summarised by Jacky Davis, exposing lack of preparedness, sluggish response, failure to protect workers and vulnerable, preference for the private sector, cronyism and corruption, and lack of accountability for tens of thousands of Covid deaths.

The adverse effects of austerity policies are explored in detail together with the misleading spin from government. For example, £34bn funding marking the 2018 NHS 70th birthday was in fact only £20bn in real terms and the decade ended with 9000 acute and general beds closed, 22% of mental health beds lost, a waiting list increased from 2m to 4.5m, lies about the prospect of 40 new hospitals, and unacknowledged needs related to a four million increase in population. The NHS now faces an existential crisis both from ten years of auster-

ty that wiped out the growth of the previous decade and the huge challenge, while ill-prepared and under resourced, of dealing with the Covid pandemic.

The authors argue that the 'besieging forces' (right wing politicians, private health care corporations, etc.) don't want to replace the tax funded system, but to exploit it more fully by ensuring the greatest flow of profitable activity to private providers, while also maximising the numbers of patients who will opt to pay for elective treatment rather than face long delays. A core NHS would be maintained to treat emergencies, provide care for maternity, complex and chron-

health' were not met, while service providers have been overwhelmed by a slew of undeliverable objectives, lacking the investment and workforce required to make them feasible. Policies, decisions and circumstances that have brought us to this situation, actual and real term cuts in spending, fragmentation, privatisation, so-called reforms, reorganisation and plans that have weakened the NHS and made it more dependent on the private sector, including the most recent reorganisation into Integrated Care Systems, are documented and deconstructed.

In the context of its worst ever staffing crisis, health policy analyst Roy Lilley concludes the book by pointing out that with government consistently rejecting the need to produce a workforce plan the NHS will fail, leading to a poor service for poor people. While he also opines that 'no one plans to fail, they simply fail to plan', it is difficult to read this book and not conclude that government policy does indeed amount to planned failure. The authors stress that the siege of the NHS has been vigorously opposed, and their intention is to arm and fuel the resistance. Immediate demands should be for new money, above inflation pay rises for staff, and all investment being channelled into building NHS capacity rather than squandered on private providers.

This book should be read by anyone interested in both defending and rebuilding the NHS and

in addressing health inequity as a matter of social justice. It should also be read by anyone with any pretension to wanting to examine critically the claim by the Conservative government that it cares for and has been generous to the NHS. There is a long history of campaigners fighting to defend and improve services. This book should help inspire new generations of activists as well as stimulate the development of novel strategy and tactics. Read the book and join the fight.



ic cases, train staff and foot the bill for the poor, sick and elderly. Ministers continue to claim they are 'spending more than ever before' on health when the truth is quite the reverse. Each year since 2010, the health budget has grown less than the previous average increase in spending, bringing real terms cuts as resources lag behind rising costs.

Key expectations in the 2014 Five Year Forward View for NHS that there would be a 'national upgrade in prevention and public

Global Revolutionaries

**Duncan
Bowie**
on the
assault on
Empire



Underground Asia
Tim Harper
Allen Lane £35

This is an important book. At 650 pages (plus 150pp of notes), this may seem long but persisting to the end is well worth it. Harper has previously co-written two books on South East Asia, which covered the Second World War and the subsequent years. This new work focuses on an earlier period – 1905 to 1927. The range of archives and sources used is staggering. Harper has traced the wanderings and conspiracies of South East Asian radicals both in Europe and in the sub-continent. This is transnational history as it

should be. What I found most fascinating is that Harper not only covers the various groups of Indian and Chinese nationalists, but also Indochina, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaya. The early chapters deal with a wide variety of nationalists, social democrats, anarchists and freedom fighters, while the latter chapters set out in great detail the impact of the Russian revolution, and the interaction between soviet emissaries and indigenous communists throughout South east Asia. Paris, Berlin and Moscow feature strongly as locations of interaction, as well as Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

The book cover is an image of the

young Ho Chi Minh by the Eiffel Tower, but the images within the book are also extraordinary- one image from 1922 shows Ho Chi Minh, with the Indian nationalist communist, M N Roy, the Indonesian, Tan Malaka, with Grigory Zinoviev of the Comintern. So many books on the successes and failures of communism focus on Western Europe, while there is also an increasing literature on Indian and Chinese nationalism and the origins of indigenous communism, but South East Asia is generally a region left to specialists, with many of the original sources not available in English. Harper has done a great service by providing such a readable synthesis.

Palestinian Testimonies

**Daphne
Symon**
on stories of
exile

Making Palestine's History
Jehan Helou
Spokesman £14.99

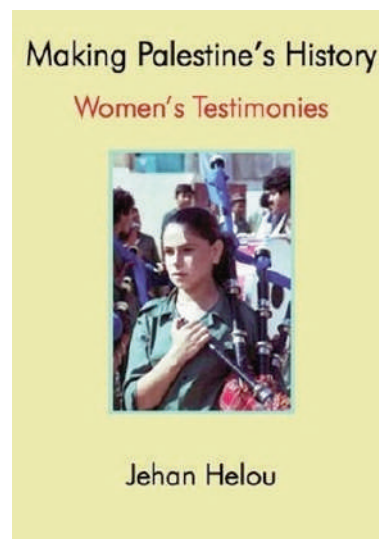
This is a book which deserves to be read by anyone who is interested in the history and life stories of Palestinian women whose families were displaced from Palestine in 1948. An expulsion known as The Nakba or Catastrophe. Some of the women who feature in the book are still living as refugees in different countries in the Middle East, mostly in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Some have attained citizenship in different countries. All the women share a common desire to see an end to girls growing up under patriarchal systems. They have successfully campaigned for women to have improved early educational opportunities and access to higher education, which had previously been denied to them. Theirs was also a fight to gain equal participation with men in leadership roles. The book gives a fascinating insight into their plight and the extraordinary and courageous ways they resisted and opposed regimes which suppressed the rights and freedoms of women. These activities they combined with opposition to the continued occupation by Israel of their family's homeland of Palestine.

The book was originally published in Arabic in 2009.

Unfortunately, it has taken until now for it to be published in English, with an updated introduction by the author.

Jehan Helou introduces the personal histories of seventeen different women and one solitary man. This is followed by each person writing in their own words about their background and fight for justice. The era in question (1969-1982) covers the history of the Palestine Revolution in Lebanon. The majority of the book's contributors were living in abject conditions in Lebanese refugee camps. Their misery was compounded by the brutal and lengthy Lebanese civil war. Their stories tell of how as young women they joined protest groups, went on rallies, some took up arms and fought at great personal risk. Some became active in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, and afterwards attended wounded people and bereaved families. Often they had to participate surreptitiously without the acquiescence of their parents. There is no holding back in describing the fierce disagreements and internal conflicts arising from the fractured relationships between the different Palestinian political factions.

Beautifully written and accompanied with drawings and photographs each woman tells her story, interwoven with poignant details of the political events and daily struggles. The testimonies



describe their determination to keep the Palestinian story alive. Some women hope one day to be able to exercise their "right of return" to their homeland. But because of the passage of time and the advanced age that most of the women in the book have now reached, very few of them will ever fulfil their hope of "return". This adds to a sense of realism and sadness when reading their stories.

Underlying several of the accounts is their fear that the next generation will forget the history and the struggle. The women expressing this fear could in part be reassured by being told about the Palestine History Tapestry project.

Continued on page 30 >>

Neither demon or saint

Andrew Coates
on what
socialists
should do
now

**Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow:
the Labour Party after Jeremy Corbyn**
Mike Phipps
OR Books £12

Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow is an in-depth account of the reasons for Labour's defeat in 2019 and what the author thinks socialists should do now under Keir Starmer's leadership. The author, an activist and writer, a founder member of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), launched by John McDonnell, underlines an experience that has marked the left for nearly three years, 'the defeat of the UK Labour Party in the December 2019 general election'. This was not just a 'numerical calamity'. 'It was life-changing for thousands of people who has, from 2015 believed in the prospect of real, radical change, and who had spent four years working for that possibility.'

How had so many people come to support the project of a transformative, reforming, Labour inspired by socialist ideals? Committed left-wingers had streamed into the Party many from the mass campaign against austerity launched by the People's Assembly. There was talk of Labour becoming a 'social movement,' and being part of a new 'left populist' wave, like Podemos in Spain, or La France insoumise. Phipps' LRC failed to grow, but a new left body, Momentum, formed to back Corbyn at the grass-roots, gained country-wide support.

The 'new way of doing politics' faced formidable obstacles inside the party. Before and after the 2017 contest Phipps notes the 'anti-Corbyn factionalism at Labour's administrative HQ' and the hugely obstructive behaviour of some Party staff – the stimulus for the Forde inquiry. There was a "process of delegitimisation" and "demonisation"

of Corbyn in the media. Above all there were the accusations of anti-Semitism against the Leader of the Opposition that still cause rancour.

For Phipps, the Islington North MP would have been exceptional had he measured up to of these qualities for the job of Labour leader, 'vision, principle, integrity, decisiveness, word power, collegiality, popularity, electability, ability to compromise, courage, administrative and managerial skills, strong media image, capacity for hard work...' In 2019 those good qualities he had had been hidden by media attacks, and 'hostility and obstruction from all wings of the establishment'.

Some, on political or other grounds, were not convinced that Corbyn was either demon or saint. Critics might point to the problematic managerial skills in the running of the Leader's Office (LOTO) and more than a few "mistakes" influenced by key advisers, appointed by Corbyn, that included key figures from a factional background on what might be called the Morning Star left. In September 2019 the left winger Andrew Fisher resigned. Fisher wrote a memo to colleagues, the Sunday Times reports, saying members of Corbyn's team had a "lack of professionalism, competence and human decency".

Some of the most thought-provoking sections in Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow are about rebuilding Labour. Dealing with the long-term undermining of the left vote by changes in the class structure and culture. Red Wall and other sources of support for Boris Johnson's brand of conservatism have often been treated in terms of what Joe Kennedy has called "authentocrats" – those tub-thumping a picture of the 'real' working-class embedded in community and nation. The Blue Labour current has used this image of 'somewhere' folk to attack a 'root-

less' left made up of 'anywhere' people.

Phipps draws on studies to indicate there is equally a younger more cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, working class, often urban (though out-of-town commuting is not a middle-class privilege) with socially liberal attitudes. Phipps notes an alternative 'municipal socialist revival' – local government initiatives, from the Preston model to others drawn by the author from London experience (such as indicated by the work of John Cruddas) and books like Owen Hatherley's Red Metropolis: Socialism and the Government of London.

Mike Phipps is not short of criticisms of Keir Starmer, a person he sees as 'not naturally of the left' and his 'naïve flirting with the Flag'. Patriotism and the nationalism that brought about the Brexit dead-end, are not political cultures that, at present, in the UK (including the more borders Scottish nationalists), are naturally 'progressive'. The last thing we need in this area are gesture politics of any stripe. It is hard not to agree that in this domain such vague ideas, and others about the hard-working families, from Labour Together, signal a policy void at the heart of present-moment Labour that needs filling. While we may be sceptical that bodies like Novara Media, or the present-day Momentum, can fulfil the role of new left policy forums, there is a need for the left to find serious strategic vehicles.

We cannot rely on the aftermath of Boris Johnson's departure alone to carry us forward. Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow is an important contribution in that direction, to help the left to get 'some of its energy and focus back'. This is what we need to help us climb the 'electoral mountain' we face to defeat the Conservatives.



>>Continued from page 29

Founded recently in the UK this project has revived interest in the traditional Palestinian skills and artistic accomplishments of weaving and embroidery. More than a hundred colourful and stunning embroidered panels in the style of the Bayeux Tapestry have been designed and produced by Palestinian women. These depict the history of their land from Neolithic times up to the present day. The panels have all been

stitched by groups of women in refugee camps, as well as those living in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The tapestries will serve as a constant reminder of the history of the Palestinian people.

Making Palestine's History reads as an authentic and previously untold account of a particular time in Middle Eastern history. The resilience of Palestinian women is well-known, as is their determination to retain their traditional culture. However, do not

expect in this book to read about the significance of cooking and mealtimes in the Palestinian way of life. For example, there is no reference to the traditional dishes and the handing down of recipes from one generation to the next, nor of the importance of food in celebrating family life. Another missing topic is the part that traditional clothes and colourful dress has always played in the identity of Palestinian women. A heartily recommended well produced book.

Politics from below?

Andrew Coates
on the left revival

This is only the beginning : the making of a new left, from anti-austerity to the fall of Corbyn and the future of mass politics

Michael Chessum
Bloomsbury Academic £20

It's only a Beginning, Let us Continue the Combat. The title of Michael Chessum's account of 'how the left came back to life in the 2010s' echoes a celebrated declaration of the French Mouvement du 22 mars in 1968. The story of the rise of a new left in British politics, from a leading figure in the anti-Brexit Another Europe is Possible (AEIP), is not a Court History of the Corbyn Project. It offers a picture of the movements and 'politics from below' that propelled the left to leadership of the Labour Party.

Chessum came of political age after the 2008 financial crash during the student movement of 2010. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition had announced big rises in tuition fees, the abolition of maintenance allowances for 16- to 19-year-olds in England, and cuts. There were campus occupations and demonstrations, and a tumultuous occupation of the Tories' Milbank HQ. Anger mixed with left politics. General Assemblies used 'consensus decision making'. Critics in the Occupy! Movements would call it the 'tyranny of the individual'. They argued that it stifles democratic disagreement.

Students were amongst the first to react to politics of austerity. David Cameron and Nick Clegg extended their measures across the public sector. The Coalition of Resistance held a founding conference in 2010. This brought together community anti-cuts groups, many not just 'broad non-sectarian and action-orientated' but co-ordinated by the pre 'new social movement' local bodies of the TUC, Trades Councils. When these campaigns took off with the People's Assembly Against Austerity in 2013, the small SWP breakaway Counterfire played a role. Union support, from UNITE onwards, and backing from Labour councillors,

giving the Assembly greater weight than loosely organised campaigns.

Were veterans of these social movements at the heart of the 'Corbyn surge' of 2015? UNITE and other unions had encouraged anti-austerity activists to become registered supporters of the Labour Party. This boosted the numbers backing Jeremy Corbyn. But the 59.5% victory came from the existing left, 'keeping the flame alive' and, backing from a wider section of the party. A popular leader, plucked from the back-

that opened between the pro-Corbyn membership and the apparatus led, to 'tub-thumping' loyalty, activists willing to defend the 'leadership against its internal opponents at all costs'. It 'was all about Jeremy - expecting him to deliver everything that everybody wanted'. Unable to agree with this take, visible from the start, some on the left stayed away from Momentum.

This is Only the Beginning, speaks about Brexit. Momentum showed 'relative apathy' during the 2016 Referendum, the Party leadership, despite formal commitment to Remain, and appearance at a few rallies, took 'little interest in shaping a radical case against Brexit'. When Leave won it was an 'inconvenience' to be worked around. Corbyn's close advisers, Andrew Murray and Seamus Mine were pro-Leave. The left campaign for a People's Vote, Another Europe, put forward a programme for a transformed EU, seen as a threat to the 'iron discipline' of the Corbyn wing. Successful motions on the issue to local parties and a left bloc on People's Vote marches, met with hostility. At the 2019 Conference speakers bellowed "back your leader." The Leader decided on a 'New Brexit deal', a 'credible Leave option' or 'Remain' to be put to popular vote.

The Brexit policy fudge neither appealed to the sovereigntist pro-Brexit wing, nor the internationalists of Another Europe, and failed to convince the voters. Michael Chessum argues that Labour's politics of bureaucracy and triangulation had won out over promises to democratise the party. The opposite of the social movement politics he engaged with this stifling politics of top-down decision-making has grown worse under Keir Starmer,

It's only a Beginning, concludes, that Labour needs to split, and to find a new way of doing politics. He floats the idea that this requires the end to the First Past the Post Electoral system. Does this mean yet another New left party? That reminds us that the radical left in France also had high hopes after the May events.

**THIS IS ONLY THE
BEGINNING**
**THE MAKING OF A
NEW LEFT, FROM
ANTI-AUSTERITY
TO THE FALL OF
CORBYN** **MICHAEL
CHESSUM**

BLOOMSBURY

benches, who spoke at mass rallies across the country, offered the prospect of winning elections. Left social movements that supported Corbyn and campaigns like the People's Assembly got involved. Many would say that this offered a better prospect for change than tents on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral.

Aware of the hostility of the Parliamentary Party to this result, and recalling the weakness of previous lefts, Momentum launched as the grassroots wing of the Corbyn movement. Concern about the potential influence of left factions led founder Jon Lansman closing its structures to potential division. The machine and most MPs stayed hostile. The gulf

Gateway to attacks on civil rights



Caitlin Barr is a recent graduate and activist, Exeter University

Caitlin Barr on the fight for reproductive justice everywhere in the wake of the US Supreme Court decision

We are now several months on from the US Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v Wade*, taking the right to safe, legal abortions away from women and trans and non-binary people all over the nation. Here in the UK, the issue has more or less departed front pages – but it would be foolish to imagine that the landmark ruling won't have any effect on our own rights. It stands as testament to the fact that we now live in a time when decisions like this can be made by the few (in this case, eight unelected Supreme Court justices) on behalf of the many.

Any country which claims to promote the rights of women and marginalised genders should be demonstrating their dedication to protecting our rights. Yet here in the UK, Dominic Raab has claimed that there is no need to enshrine abortion rights in UK law, stating, "I don't think there's a strong case for change." In fact, there has never been a better time for change – we are in a cost-of-living crisis, emerging from the wreckage of a pandemic. Many people and families are struggling to care for themselves; and, with a forced birth, here, as it is in the US following the Supreme Court's ruling, deep-rooted inequalities would rear their heads all the more insistently. Our sisters in Northern Ireland have been left unable to access legal abortions in their home nation, despite abortion bans being historically repealed in 2018, because Stormont is at an impasse. Abortion is a necessary right in every country, and we must never assume that just because we are able to access abortions here in the UK, this is guaranteed in perpetuity.

In August, the Indiana senate voted to restrict abortion access



except in instances when the pregnancy puts the carrier's life or physical health at risk, or if the pregnancy is as a result of rape or incest. However, even with these exceptions, the abortion must be performed no later than ten weeks into the pregnancy – usually around the time people find out they are expecting – making the ban essentially total. Indiana is the first state to sign a change like this into law since the ruling, but it seems many other states are set to follow. These bans have intersectional impacts. Black women in the US are two to three times more likely to die in childbirth than their white counterparts. Black women have also typically had more abortions than white women, so bans on safe abortions carry even more impact for them. The ban is also showing up how technology can work against us, in a context of many people being told it is better to delete period tracking apps in case the data is used to prove a pregnancy which has been terminated. In Nebraska, a teenager is facing criminal charges after her Facebook activity revealed that she had had a self-guided abortion after 20 weeks (illegal in her state), constituting one of the first times Facebook data has been used as evidence in a trial of this nature.

The repeal of *Roe v Wade* in the

USA is undoubtedly a gateway for other civil rights being taken away. Justice Clarence Thomas has stated that the court should reassess other cases, like those which uphold the right to same-sex marriage and intercourse, and the right to contraception.

However, there have been signs of hope, too: 60% of Kansas voters ensured that the right to abortion would remain in the state's constitution in the first electoral test of abortion support in the nation since the Supreme Court ruling. Turnout in the primary which included a referendum on abortion access was higher than the state has seen for general elections in previous years, demonstrating the strength of feeling behind the issue. In the UK, buffer zones around abortion clinics, ensuring that anti-abortion protestors cannot intimidate those entering facilities for procedures, are being floated in many towns and cities including Bournemouth. Protesters worldwide are loudly insisting that a person's right to choose is fundamental. When people make clear their dedication to protecting human rights in the face of oppression from judicial bodies and extremists, we can win. We can, and should, ensure we keep fighting for bodily autonomy, both here and for our sisters in other nations. **C**

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