

Labour Affairs

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Labour, Palestine and Imperialism

The massive marches against Israel's genocide that have taken place in London and other parts of the country since October have been met with hostility by Labour, putting the party at odds with some of its core electorate. In a recent speech to the Jewish Labour Movement Starmer came close to Suella Braverman's claim that these were 'hate marches'. He has even felt confident enough to withdraw recognition for a future Palestinian state given when Miliband was party leader. Doing so at the height of a massacre of the population of Gaza shows how seriously a 'human rights lawyer' takes the rhetoric of human rights and how little concerned the Labour party membership is when a serious violation arises. Senior Labour politicians have also attacked South Africa's submission against Israel at the ICJ, which makes a very strong case that genocide is underway in Gaza.

Labour has always been an imperialist party despite containing verbal anti-imperialists. That is part of its historic identity. The Labour movement and the Labour Party grew up during the high noon of the British Empire. The British working class, despite its oppression, benefitted from the plundering activities of the British Empire: cheap food and materials and the elimination of rival industries such as textile manufacture in India, all worked to its advantage. This posed an uncomfortable problem for Labour which any working class movement would have struggled to deal with. How can you call for the abolition of empire when such prosperity as the working class possessed depended in part on imperial exploitation?

In any case overnight abolition of the British

Empire was not a practical possibility and any incoming Labour government would in practice have to administer the Empire. In 1945, the Empire had been discredited by Britain's humiliations in the war and the Americans were intent on dismantling it. Labour acquiesced in the beginnings of its dissolution and, it has to be said, did not make a very good job of it.

America took over the job of world imperialist and Britain joined as a junior member (rather like Scotland joined England as a junior plunderer in the glory days of the British Empire). It seems though that Labour never had any real problem in fitting into the role of junior imperialist. The Attlee government sent troops to fight North Korea in 1950, Harold Wilson kept us out of the Vietnam War, but probably at the expense of the Chagos Islanders, whose country was given to the US as an airbase and its inhabitants expelled. Labour acquiesced in the atrocities in Kenya in the 1950s, suppressed Malayan independence fighters in the 1950s and connived in the coup against Suharto in Indonesia in the 1960s. Since then Labour's record has been consistently shameful: taking part in the attack on Iraq in 2003, supporting the destruction of Libya in 2011 and supporting and even egging on the US's proxy attack on Russia. Refusal to support an attack on Syria in 2013 is one of the very few creditable episodes in Labour's record.

While the British Empire conferred an economic advantage on the British working class, the same cannot be said of Britain's role as an imperial skivvy for the Americans. One of the aims of the US in launching a proxy war on Russia was to decouple Europe from mutually beneficial trade

relationships between Europe and Russia. This succeeded brilliantly and we can now see how the loss of cheap energy has seriously damaged the European economy and this has impacted on the price of energy in the UK, much to the detriment of the working class. Finally, we can see that Labour resolutely supports the massacre and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza and turns a blind eye to the atrocities committed there, even acting against Labour Party members who so much as dare to raise the issue. Being an imperialist country now counts against the interests of working people, but Labour's support for imperialism is as enthusiastic as ever.

Why has it been so easy to co-opt Labour into the American imperial enterprise? We have already noted that Labour has a long imperial history stretching back into the early Twentieth Century which made it difficult to detach itself from administering the Empire to the advantage of the working class. It gave the party racist and imperialist attitudes and reflexes which it has proved impossible to shake off. Already in the 1940s and 50s Britain under Labour attached itself with enthusiasm to America's proxy war on the Soviet Union and China on the Korean peninsula, thus rejoicing in the role of junior imperial partner to a country that had done more to destroy the British Empire than the Third Reich. Since then two factors have embedded Labour even more strongly within the American imperial fold. The

first of these is the atrophying of working class politics, leading to a Labour party dominated by a middle class elite whose main interest is in the furtherance of their careers. It is particularly important to look carefully at the background of these leaders. The Americans are aware that if they can 'turn' a foreign politician at the beginning of their career they can probably control him or her for the rest of their political life. Labour members should look carefully at the American contacts of their leaders and note for example, extended sojourns in the US on scholarships, grants, or other forms of financial or educational support. The answer might surprise those who take such a look. Similar considerations apply to Labour politicians with links to Israel. Labour members have to take seriously the possibility that some of their most senior politicians are not prioritising Britain's interests but those of a foreign power. Their actions undoubtedly suggest that this is the case, but the possibility cannot be excluded that the links are actually more sinister than that.

The second point is that the idea of 'human rights' has been increasingly weaponised by American imperialism. It is useful in two ways: first to attack the social structures of societies that do not wish to subordinate themselves to imperialism; second to mobilise left thinking people into antagonism against countries and societies that America wishes to attack. Similar points can be made against

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the 'woke' agenda particularly relating to the attempted destruction of traditional relationships between men and women. This approach has been very successful in recruiting 'progressives' into campaigns against Russia and certain African countries, not to mention gathering support for the proxy war on Russia in Ukraine. It backfired somewhat in the case of the Israeli support for Gaza, when people started to take the human rights rhetoric seriously. No matter, the Labour leadership were able to ignore a massive attack on the most fundamental human right, the right to existence, and the Labour membership meekly complied.

Labour supporters need to ask themselves this awkward question. If the party has for over a century acted like an imperialist, talked like an imperialist and cosied up to an imperialist power is it not an imperialist party itself? And then they should ask themselves, given this history will it ever be otherwise?

Campaign for fan-owned Football

Restoring Football to the Community

Part of the Workers Party of Britain programme <https://workerspartybritain.org>

Football, with its roots firmly in working class Britain, should become the "people's game" once again. In recent years external predatory capitalist forces have stolen the game from the people. We see ever-increasing commercialisation and exploitative merchandising.

Financial institutions, particularly from overseas, leach billions out of our proud football clubs and exploit the traditions that uphold this beautiful game to make ever increasing profits. In addition to pricing working class fans out of the game profit driven owners are exploiting football clubs in a fashion that is unsustainable in the long term, often leaving our clubs burdened with debt backed by the land assets that really interest foreign investors.

We believe that a fan owned model would provide the best safeguard to prevent a situation where parasitical entities suck the blood out of the game.

A model of club ownership that is more in tune with the fanbase would tend to be more successful and sustainable than one that runs counter to it.

The success of the club would be prioritised by fan-owned clubs rather than emphasis given to predatory profiteers lining their own pockets. The aim of fan owned clubs would be to make the club sustainable and re-invest money for its further development. This would have an additional benefit of creating a more democratic, transparent and accountable structure that would deliver greater social value for the local communities in which they operate.

We already have numerous successful examples of fan owned clubs throughout the world. In Germany, under current licensing arrangements operated by the Deutsche Fussball Liga, football clubs are obliged under law to be at least 51% fan owned. Memorably, the 2012/13 Champions League was contested by FC Bayern (which is 75% fan owned) and Borussia Dortmund, two clubs owned by their members.

We already have 17 clubs in the English pyramid that are wholly owned by supporters – including Telford United, Wycombe Wanderers, and FC United of Manchester and these need our protection. We will also encourage local community engagement to discover new sports talent (and not only in football) and restore playing fields to local communities.

Editorials and articles at our website, by subject, at

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Also <https://labouraffairs.com/>

Check what we were saying in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which still reads well. Web pages and PDFs at

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/>

Or by subject at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/m-articles-by-topic/>

Sahra Wagenknecht January 2024 Newsletter

The federal government has no plan for our country. One bad political decision follows another. This is demonstrated once again by the policy of cuts in the agricultural sector. The justified protests of the farmers show how far politics has moved away from the reality of life and people's problems, and how high the potential for frustration in Germany has become. Many people now feel politically homeless. But we have a government whose arrogance, dogmatism and lack of planning are driving people further and further into the arms of the AfD. In the programme with Markus Lanz, I discuss the dangers posed by the AfD and its far-right wing, and why I still think it is wrong to discuss banning the party now, as this will only benefit the AfD in the end. I also talk about what an end to the war in Ukraine might look like, why I think it is wrong for the EU to blindly subordinate itself to the interests of the US, and what my vision is for the future of Europe.

50 billion for social housing!

Our country is not in a good state: hardly a train runs on time, there is a shortage of teachers, nursery places and carers and the housing shortage is getting worse and worse. As the "Social Housing" alliance announced, there is a shortage of 910,000 social housing units in Germany and the number of completed flats and social housing units is even falling - despite the fact that the traffic light government had promised to build 400,000 flats, including 100,000 new social housing units per year. Germany urgently needs a change in policy: instead of special funds for rearmament and more and more weapons in the pointless Ukraine war, it urgently needs more money for social housing! The "Social Housing" alliance, which includes industry associations as well as the tenants' association, construction trade unions and social organisations, is calling for

50 billion euros by the end of the legislative period. However, it is not just more money that is needed, but a rethink of housing policy with a new non-profit housing sector at long last, so that public money does not end up subsidising private profits, but rather homes are permanently withdrawn from speculation. The alliance estimates that expenditure on housing benefit and housing costs will have reached at least €20 billion by 2023 - public expenditure that could have been saved in part if more had been invested in social and non-profit housing construction. But Lindner [the Finance Minister] has no idea about sustainable financial policy. In my opinion, the government's inaction on housing policy, from which millions of families and households are suffering, must finally come to an end!

Merz [leader of CDU] speaks out in favour of escalation

"If you want peace, you have to be ready for war" - with these words, CDU leader Merz once again called for the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine on Monday. "These cruise missiles could destroy the Kerch Bridge to the Crimean peninsula, the most important supply route for the Russian invasion forces," Merz said verbatim. I find such statements irresponsible. Destroying the Crimean bridge with cruise missiles from Germany would further increase the risk of a world war and make our country a target for possible counterattacks. I am very grateful that a clear majority in the Bundestag rejected a CDU motion to supply Taurus cruise missiles. We do not need further escalation and more readiness for war, but a willingness to finally negotiate a ceasefire and peace agreement!

Lindner [Finance Minister]: Arrogant and condescending

On Monday, numerous farmers

once again protested against the policies of the "traffic light" Coalition government and I support this. In contrast, I found Finance Minister Lindner's speech to the farmers to be extremely arrogant and condescending. The fact that he only offered the farmers a reduction in paperwork is a slap in the face for farmers. I think that if the government does not withdraw the cuts to the subsidy for agricultural diesel, the farmers should extend their protests.

Preparation for first Congress 27 January:

More and more people are worried about democracy and many are now taking to the streets. However, I find it more than hypocritical that politicians from the Ampel parties are also taking part in these demonstrations; they are basically demonstrating against themselves, against the fruits of their own policies. The AfD is not so strong because there are suddenly so many people with right-wing extremist views. The AfD is so strong because the policies in Berlin are so disastrous. In order to set the course for a new political beginning, the "Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance - Reason and Justice" has been founded and will be holding its first party conference next Saturday. I sense a spirit of optimism in many places and am confident that we can become even stronger and change our country for the better! Would you like to support us and get to know other BSW members and supporters in your region? Then fill out our supporter form so that we can get in touch with you. Please understand that it will take some time for us to get in touch with you due to the difficult party-building phase and our limited resources. As we are facing a major effort not only in terms of organisation but also financially, we would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to support us with a regular donation. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, we were

only able to invite very few of you to our first party conference - but you can follow everything here in the livestream.

The countryside:

For years, people in rural areas in particular have been forgotten by politicians who only live in their metropolitan bubble: first the doctor's surgery disappeared, then there was no more bus, then the letterbox was removed ... And then people are patronisingly told that their car is bad and that they should install a heat pump. It can't go on like this. In an interview in the *Berliner Morgenpost*, I talk about the great popularity of the new party, the planned entry in the state elections in Thuringia and our differences in programme with the AfD, which stands for blind faith in the market and has a strong far-right wing, especially in eastern Germany.

Railway strike

End railway strike, replace incompetent railway board

Many train drivers and train attendants have been on strike again since yesterday [25/1/24]. This is a huge burden for everyone who has to travel to work by train or S-Bahn. I find it unreasonable that millions of rail customers are once again being left out in the cold simply because the federal government, as the owner of the railway, is apparently incapable of mediating in the conflict. The fact that Transport Minister Wissing is now unilaterally blaming the train drivers' union GDL is a slap in the face for the employees, 97 per cent of whom voted in favour of extending the industrial action in a ballot. Chancellor Scholz must now intervene and end the strike. To do this, he should instruct the railway board to finally negotiate constructively on the train drivers' demands. Perhaps the highly paid railway board should also be completely replaced, as it clearly does not sufficiently appreciate the hard shift work that train drivers and

train attendants do every day on the trains. In any case, it is unacceptable for the railway board to allow the wage dispute to escalate further on the backs of railway customers - instead of reaching a collective agreement with the GDL, as this union has already concluded with 18 other railway companies.

Peace for Gaza - diplomacy instead of weapons!

More than 25,000 people are said to have been killed in the Gaza war, millions of people are living in fear or are on the run, hundreds of thousands are suffering from hunger as urgently needed food cannot be distributed due to the ongoing fighting. Instead of finally putting an end to this madness, Israeli President Netanyahu apparently wants the fighting to continue unabated and has once again clearly rejected calls for the Palestinians to have their own state. While this policy is causing horror and protests not only in the Arab world, the USA and Great Britain are bombing Houthi positions in Yemen, the EU has agreed on a so-called "military mission" in the Red Sea, in which Germany intends to participate with the frigate "Hessen", and the German government is apparently preparing to supply Israel with tank ammunition. What kind of appalling and stupid policy is this? Why is the Coalition dragging our country into the next incalculable conflict instead of standing up resolutely for a ceasefire and peace? In my opinion, supporting the uncompromising war policy of an extremely right-wing Israeli government with arms deliveries has nothing to do with solidarity, but is a slap in the face for all those Israelis and Palestinians who are campaigning for a life in security, a ceasefire and negotiations to end the ongoing conflict!

Don't abandon children and the elderly

Around 80 per cent of youth welfare offices in this country are overburdened and, according to

a recent survey, this repeatedly puts children and young people at risk. I find it shocking how children and young people who urgently need help because they are exposed to violence or abuse have been abandoned by politicians for years. I also find the ongoing staff shortage in the care sector irresponsible, where every third job is now unfilled due to poor working conditions. The Federal Statistical Office estimates that we could be short of up to 690,000 carers by 2049. To ensure that people can grow up unharmed and receive humane care in old age, we finally need more respect, more money and better conditions for all those who actually care for people in need - in youth welfare offices, hospitals and care homes as well as in families.

Our party in the news

What foreign policy are we aiming for and what is our position on the EU, NATO and Russia? This is what *Der Spiegel* wanted to know from our candidates for the European elections, Fabio de Masi and Michael von der Schulenburg. The *Tagesschau* and *MDR* [public service regional TV], among others, have reported on the switch of the mayor of Eisenach, Katja Wolf, to our party and her planned candidacy in the state elections in Thuringia. In the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Sabine Zimmermann talks about the spirit of optimism in Saxony and the establishment of structures for the new party. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also reports on the great potential for the BSW in Brandenburg and the hopes of state representative Stefan Roth to offer voters a good alternative to the Coalition, CDU and AfD. On *MDR*, John Lucas Dittrich and former Left Party member of state parliament Bianca Görke comment on the party's formation and its planned participation in local elections in Saxony-Anhalt.

Assange: Day X is here

Julian Assange has been imprisoned for 1742 days Free Assange January Newsletter

Day X is here: The last chance in the British courts to stop Julian Assange's extradition.

The UK High Court has confirmed that a public hearing will take place on Tuesday 20 February and Wednesday 21 February 2024. The two-day hearing may be the final chance for Julian Assange to prevent his extradition to the United States. If extradited, Julian faces a sentence of 175 years for exposing war crimes committed by the United States in the Afghan and Iraq wars.

Time: 8.30am

Place: Royal Courts of Justice, the Strand, London WC2A 2LL

Campaign groups immediately call for protest outside court and globally Campaign groups immediately call for protest outside court and globally on those days.

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Immediately after the court date was announced, protestors responded by calling for a mass protest at the court on the days of the hearing at 8:30am. They welcome all those who support press freedom to join them in London and around the world.

Assange has been confined in the high-security Belmarsh Prison since he was arrested on a US extradition request on 11

April 2019. This will be his fifth Christmas in Belmarsh.

The upcoming public hearing will be held before a panel of two judges who will review an earlier High Court decision taken by a single judge on 6 June 2023 which refused Mr Assange permission to appeal.

This decisive stage in Mr Assange's appeals will determine one of two outcomes: whether Mr. Assange will have further opportunities to argue his case before the domestic (UK) courts, or whether he will have exhausted all appeals without a possibility for further appeal in the UK and thus enter the process of extradition. An application before the European Court of Human Rights remains a possibility.

Assange's campaign for freedom is supported by Amnesty International, the National Union of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and virtually every civil rights, press freedom, and journalists' union in the world. More than 70 Australian federal politicians have called on the US to drop the prosecution. In the United States, the Congressional representatives calling for the case to be dropped grows steadily, currently H. Res 934 sponsored by Paul Gosar is gathering signatures from all sides of politics.

John Rees of the Free Assange campaign, said: "The US is attempting to convict Julian Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act. If they get away with it, they will have succeeded in redefining journalism as spying. Every journalist will be intimidated. Every newspaper and broadcaster will look at material critical of the government and feel significant pressure not to publish for fear of prosecution and imprisonment. This is the

most important press freedom case of the 21st century and we need to ensure we don't lose any hard-won freedoms."

Stella Assange, Julian's wife, who he married while in prison, and who has been campaigning relentlessly for his freedom, said, "The last four and a half years have taken the most considerable toll on Julian and his family, including our two young sons. His mental health and physical state have deteriorated significantly. With the myriad of evidence that has come to light since the original hearing in 2019, such as the violation of legal privilege and reports that senior US officials were involved in formulating assassination plots against my husband, there is no denying that a fair trial, let alone Julian's safety on US soil, is an impossibility were he to be extradited. The persecution of this innocent journalist and publisher must end."

WikiLeaks has also supported their founder throughout this whole process, stressing the importance of this case for press freedom. Kristinn Hrafnsson, Editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, said, "There is no press without the protection to operate freely. Julian's case is a landmark moment; the UK needs to decide if it wishes to be a haven for free press or if it wishes to be complicit in the degradation of a core value of our democracy. This is the last chance for judges in the UK to halt this un-just extradition of an innocent man."

For more information about the court hearing and subsequent protest, scheduled to commence at 8.30am, and how to participate, please visit <https://freeassange.org/>

South Africa and the World's Conscience

The world has been witnessing, powerless or complicit, the destruction of the people of Gaza through bombing, starvation and disease for the past three months. Israel has said it will continue perhaps for another year.

South Africa has taken a step to call what is happening by its proper name: genocide, and to demand provisional measures to stop it by calling on the International Court of Justice. It is doubly dismal that the country now called to account is Israel, the Jewish State, Jews being the people whose near total genocide in Europe brought forth that very Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. The Court has no power to compel any state to desist from genocide, but the Court will set permanently the record of what happened. Israel is in the dock.

This is the definition of genocide according to the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide (THE CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE (1948))

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Genocide%20Convention-FactSheet-ENG.pdf>

DEFINITION OF GENOCIDE IN THE CONVENTION:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

To this must be added intent to commit genocide and this is specified in the Convention:

“The definition of Genocide is made up of two elements, the physical element — the acts committed; and the mental element — the intent. Intent is the most difficult element to determine. To constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on the part of perpetrators to physically destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Cultural destruction does not suffice, nor does an intention to simply disperse a group, though this may constitute a crime against humanity as set out in the Rome Statute. “

This is the definition used by the International Court of Justice in the present case.

The court case brought by South Africa against Israel is not just to condemn Israel's acts of genocide, but also to stop Israel continuing its acts of genocide by calling for 'provisional measures'. We reprint extracts from depositions by two lawyers for South Africa, and end with the introductory remarks by the President of the Court, followed by the case to prove intent.

This is the link to the complete record, for those who would like to read it and to check the references:

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240111-ora-01-00-bi.pdf>

Part of the deposition of Mme Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh

31. The international community continues to fail the Palestinian people, despite the overt dehumanizing genocidal rhetoric by Israeli governmental and military officials, matched by the Israeli army's actions on the ground; despite the horror of the genocide against the Palestinian people being livestreamed from Gaza to our mobile phones, computers and television screens — the first genocide in history where its victims are broadcasting their own destruction in real time in the desperate — so far

vain — hope that the world might do something. Gaza represents nothing short of a “moral failure”, as described by the usually circumspect International Committee of the Red Cross. As underscored by United Nations chiefs, that failure has “repercussions not just for the people of Gaza . . . but for the generations to come who will never forget these [over] 90 days of hell and of assaults on the most basic precepts of humanity”. As stated by a United Nations spokesperson in Gaza last week, at the site of a hospital clearly marked with the symbol of the Red Crescent, where five Palestinians — including a five-day-old baby — had just been killed: “The world should be absolutely horrified. The world should be absolutely outraged . . . There is no safe space in Gaza and the world should be ashamed”.

Conclusion

32. Madam President, Members of the Court, in conclusion I share with you two photographs. The first is of a whiteboard at a hospital — in northern Gaza — one of the many Palestinian hospitals targeted, besieged and bombed by Israel over the course of the past three brutal months. The whiteboard is wiped clean of no longer possible surgical cases, leaving only a hand-written message by a Médecins Sans Frontières

doctor which reads: “We did what we could. Remember us.”

33. The second photograph is of the same whiteboard, after an Israeli strike on the hospital on 21 November that killed the author of the message, Dr Mahmoud Abu Nujaila, along with two of his colleagues.

34. Just over a month later, in a powerful sermon, delivered from a church in Bethlehem on Christmas Day — the same day Israel had killed 250 Palestinians, including at least 86 people, many from the same family, massacred in a single strike on Maghazi refugee camp— Palestinian Pastor Munther Isaac addressed his congregation and the world. And he said:

“Gaza as we know it no longer exists. This is an annihilation. This is a genocide.

“We will rise. We will stand up again from the midst of destruction, as we have always done as Palestinians, although this is by far maybe the biggest blow we have received.”

But he said:

“No apologies will be accepted after the genocide . . . What has been done has been done. I want you to look at the mirror and ask, ‘where was I when Gaza was going through a genocide’.”

35. South Africa is here

before this Court, in the Peace Palace. It has done what it could. It is doing what it can, by initiating these proceedings, by seeking interim measures against itself as well as against Israel.

36. South Africa now respectfully and humbly calls on this honourable Court to do what is in its power to do, to indicate the provisional measures that are so urgently required to prevent further irreparable harm to the Palestinian people in Gaza, whose hopes — including for their very survival — are now vested in this Court.

37. Madame la présidente, Mesdames et Messieurs les juges, je vous remercie de votre bienveillante attention. Je vous invite à demander au professeur Lowe, KC, de prendre le podium pour décrire les mesures conservatoires revendiquées par l’Afrique du Sud de la part du peuple palestinien.

Professor Vaughan Lowe

31. [The main point] is that no matter how monstrous or appalling an attack or provocation, genocide is never a permitted response. Every use of force, whether used in self-defence, or in enforcing an occupation, or in policing operations, or otherwise, must stay within the limits set by international law, including the explicit duty in Article I of the Convention to prevent genocide.

Gaza in Parliament, January 2024

Gaza debated in the House of Lords, 16 January 2024

Baroness Janke

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs what steps he is taking to secure a lasting ceasefire arrangement between Israel and Gaza.

A brief debate followed, during which David Cameron the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said: "Right now, as we speak, nine out of 10 people in Gaza are living on less than one meal a day. It is that serious."

But Cameron fully supported Israel's actions in his concluding remarks:

"[...] Hamas could end this tomorrow by saying that it was going to lay down its weapons or leave. Everyone is aware that we want a sustainable ceasefire. That means Hamas not in power and not able to launch rockets and terror, and we have said we want to see an immediate pause so we can get aid in and hostages out. However, in many ways, the very best outcome would be to see whether we could convert that immediate pause for aid and hostages into a sustainable ceasefire without further hostilities. But for that to happen, a series of other things would have to happen: there would have to be immediate negotiations to release all the hostages, the Hamas leadership would have to leave Gaza, and we would have to be clear that there was no more danger of rocket and terror attacks on Israel. We would have to put together something based on the Palestinian Authority, backed by other Palestinians, going back into Gaza. In many ways, that would be the best outcome, but

if we call now for an immediate ceasefire with no further fighting when Hamas is still in power, still launching rockets and still capable of launching terror attacks, not only would we not have a sustainable ceasefire and peace but we would have no hope of the thing that I think many in this House would like to see, which is a two-state solution."

This is what the phrase 'sustainable ceasefire' means, in the documents in the House of Commons library which state:

"In December 2023 the UK Foreign Secretary, writing alongside the German Foreign Minister, said both countries ["must do all we can to pave the way to a sustainable ceasefire"](#), which would result in a "sustainable peace". The Government says [a sustainable ceasefire would include](#) the release of hostages, delivery of aid, and for Israel to no longer be threatened by Hamas.

In December, [the Labour Party](#) also backed Government calls for a "sustainable ceasefire" and humanitarian pauses. A 'sustainable ceasefire' means 'ceasefire, but not before the destruction of the enemy'. The SNP has [continued to call for an immediate ceasefire](#), while the Liberal Democrats have called for [an "immediate bilateral ceasefire"](#) between Israel and Hamas."

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9874/>

On 17th January Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Green) asked a Question to the Prime Minister about an immediate ceasefire:

Mr Speaker,

"Until the UK Government calls for an immediate ceasefire, it is complicit in the horrors...in Gaza."

Those are not my words but those of the head of Oxfam who, like every single agency trying to operate on the ground, is clear that aid cannot be effectively delivered while fighting continues. More UK aid is of course welcome but even when it does get through, it can result in what one Palestinian aid worker calls "bombing us on full stomachs."

Some 24,000 people have already been killed so what will it take for the Prime Minister to back a permanent bilateral ceasefire?

The Prime Minister

Of course we want to see a peaceful resolution to this conflict as soon as possible. A sustainable permanent ceasefire with an end to the destruction, fighting and loss of life, the release of hostages and no resumption of hostilities would of course be the best way forward, but in order to achieve that a number of things need to happen: Hamas would have to agree to release all the hostages; Hamas would have to no longer be in charge of Gaza; the threat of more rocket attacks from Hamas into Israel would have to end; and the Palestinian Authority, boosted with assistance, would need to return to Gaza in order to provide governance and aid. That is a sustainable ceasefire that we will work very hard to bring about.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

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Wars of the Chickenhawks

Both world wars were begun by leaders who felt a war was better than a compromise that could have avoided that war. Even Hitler only attacked Poland after Poland refused to allow ethnic-German Danzig to join the rest of Germany. In the case of WW1, The war could have been delayed by insisting that Serbia allow Austria-Hungary to investigate Serbian secret service involvement in the assassination of the Archduke. Britain's rulers wanted a war, but not definitely then. Germany might also have told the Austrians that the limited Serbian offer should be accepted.

Whatever else we think of those choices, all of them lost more than what they might have lost with even the nastiest available compromise.

All except Serbia: Serbia was after Bosnia; and for Britains they were 'gallant little Serbia' until history was suddenly re-written. Britain's own commercialised Ministry of Truth switched, because Thatcher wanted to please Germany when Yugoslavia began coming apart. Along with the USA, they made the West absurdly biased in favour of a Croat state that was proud of its pro-Nazi past.

Not so different from Ukraine 2014. The respectable Orange Revolution of 2004 moved a bit too fast in squeezing ordinary people for the benefit of the rich. The very man they displaced in 2004 won an entirely

democratic election in 2010. So in 2014, the USA brought in Ukrainians inspired by the pro-Nazi exiled whom they had kept safe in Canada for future use. And decided that their case was so overwhelmingly virtuous that there was no need to hold a new election before having an intimidated Parliament pass a range of viciously anti-Russian measures.

This was a gamble, but a small one for the US government. No one used armed force when Crimea's democratically elected regional government seceded, and then asked Russia to annex them. Democratic Secession is normally rejected in principle by the United Nations, but mostly then tolerated and allowed to become a human reality, as with Northern Cyprus. And the USA had already broken that rule for Kosovo, and also required that the entire administrative region be separated from Serbia, including regions with an ethnic Serb majority.

The US elite probably didn't believe the lies fed to the general public: they sneered at the Crimean referendum, but never suggested a second vote. They must have known that anti-Russian elements were a minority.

The USA might have seen it as Win-Win. If an anti-Russian Ukraine included Crimea – not part of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine until Khrushchev added it in 1954 – they would certainly squeeze the vital Russian naval base at Sevastopol. But if Putin moved to back the Democratic Secessionists, most of Europe could be persuaded that he was resuming Brezhnev's policies of unlimited expansion into regions with no significant Russian-speaking populations.

Putin, put into power by Yeltsin after Yeltsin finally realised he was wrecking post-Soviet Russia by trusting Western advice, was initially careful. The Donbass might have been overrun by far-right militias who hated everything Russian and the entire Soviet heritage. I doubt that Putin cared much about

the clear Donbass majority who had voted for anti- Orange political parties. But the want-to-be Nazis of Ukraine were little more than armed louts. They did die bravely, but achieved little when up against armed enemies.

There was even an agreement by Kiev to hold a vote on autonomy for the Donbass.¹ But Kiev reneged, with the full support of the 'pro-democracy' West.

When Putin invaded, he had every reason to fear that an army trained by the West would otherwise overrun the Donbass. Just as Croats overran and ethnically cleansed majority-Serb portions of the version of Croatia defined by Tito, who was half Slovene and half Croat. Who had left-wing Serbian supporters, but monarchist Serbs were his main rivals in the anti-German resistance.

Putin probably guessed that there would be no NATO response. Simply a bunch of cultural and economic sanctions that actually helped his quest to reduce a cultural dependence on Western values: a decay that had actually begun under Brezhnev. He most likely got assurances from both China and India that they would do no more than utter the empty words that almost all UN members prefer on such matters.

Lots of people worried that the tussle between Kiev and Moscow might escalate into a Third World War. I was always certain that it would not.

During the US wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, there

were many jokes about Chickenhawks, Senior advisors who had dodged the Vietnam War when young, but were keen to deploy today's young soldiers.

This magazine strongly criticized those wars when they were floated: you can find PDF copies at our Archive Site.²

I am glad they don't have more warmongers like Colin Powell: people very willing to risk their own lives. I assume that the Chickenhawks would remain too chicken to start a process that might lead on to a World War. Even the bold ones are individuals who accepted danger in the hope of glorious careers from foreign wars. They could always be sure that their own families were safe, and that's quite different from escalating conflict with a nuclear power.

Possibly they learned lessons from 20th century wars, though I have never seen them say it.

The two World Wars were successes for those not involved at the start. The USA and the Bolsheviks in World War One, and ambitious nationalists like the Czechs and Poles. In World War Two, the USA again and World Leninism led by the Soviet Union. But it also created Leninist states that had liberated themselves and could disobey Moscow. Who were as much Nationalists as Leninists – but also Leninist enough to accept sensible limits and not expecting the world to agree with them.

The Vietnamese won their American War by fighting only in Indochina, just as they had previously won against the

French. Americans knew that it would be over for them once they dumped their Indochinese allies.

Palestinians in the 1970s made a massive blunder by waging a globalised war. Spectacular aircraft hijackings that destabilised the existing Mixed Economy world order. Radicals at the time had not expected this semi-socialist system to be replaced by an enthusiasm for more capitalism: yet that was what happened.

Palestinians and others are finally doing what the Algerians had advised them to do back in the 1960s: fight a war just on land you claim as your own. Or your nearby seas, for Yemenis. But leave the rest alone, and hope to make the foe lose heart.

All Serious Chinese are Heirs of Mao

The Soviet Union denounced Stalin in 1956, and had a spiral of decline through to the 1980s.

Then in 1991 they rejected the entire Soviet heritage. Under Yeltsin they swallowed the nonsense of Neo-Liberal economics, and their wealth was plundered by corrupt oligarchs.³ Shrank overall, and the refounded Russian Communists came close to winning the Presidency in 1997.⁴

China meantime took business advice from Japan and Singapore, both of which retained faith in the Mixed

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk_agreements

² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

³ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazines-037-to-048/magazine-039-not-yet-scanned/russia-the-incompetent-capitalist-revolution-in-1994/>

⁴ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/1473-2/>

Economy.⁵ And did not apologise for their own past:

“Socialism is a completely new cause in the history of humanity, and since China is carrying out socialist revolution and construction on an extremely backward basis, there is no ready-made experience to draw on, and it is difficult to completely avoid twists and turns and mistakes of one kind or another on the road ahead... It cannot be denied that Comrade Mao Zedong made detours in the exploration of the road of socialist construction, especially the serious mistake of launching and leading the ‘Cultural Revolution’. Our party has made a comprehensive appraisal of Comrade Mao Zedong’s historical merits and demerits, and his achievements are the first, his mistakes are second, and his mistakes are the mistakes made by a great revolutionary and a great Marxist.”⁶

China’s rise began in 1949.⁷ Their official media now remind everyone of this:

“Li makes the oft-overlooked point that China’s poverty alleviation efforts have been a long-term process starting not with the initiation of Reform and Opening Up in the late 1970s but with the land reform and social welfare measures of the 1950s. This is consistent with research showing that, around the world, ‘redistributive land reform, starting with breaking

up land concentration and land monopolies, maximises economic efficiency and social justice and helps to alleviate rural poverty.’

“By 1978, famine had been eradicated, feudal land ownership systems had been dismantled, and education and healthcare services were available throughout the country. This progress ‘provided an important basis for the high economic growth and massive poverty reduction that followed the reform and opening up.’ Further, ‘the 1978 reform and opening-up policy effectively utilised the material and human resource base laid down in the area of agricultural development prior to 1978 and became the second interface of China’s poverty reduction mechanism.’”⁸

This October, China will be celebrating its own survival:

“This year, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. On the new journey ahead, we will be guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era.”⁹

Russian Leninism was in power from November 1917 to August 1991; just under 74 years. And was moribund from the 1980s.

When Russia Went Wrong

Back in 1988, most of the world saw Gorbachev as a brilliant reformer. But I thought otherwise:

“Twenty years is one generation, and the generation of American and West European radicals who were young in 1968 have naturally chosen this year to remember their past. Dozens of programmes have been made about what it was like to be a student radical in Western Europe or the USA.

“But other things happened in 1968. It was also the year of the Tet offensive in Vietnam, which persuaded a majority of Americans that the war was unwinnable. And it was the year in which the ‘Prague Spring’ was crushed.

“History since 1968 has been dominated by the outcomes of these three events. America’s failure and final defeat in Vietnam, plus the student uprising, forced a big re-think and shift of values in the West. The crushing of the Prague Spring led to a freezing-up in Eastern Europe. What Gorbachev is promising to do in 1988 is far less radical than what Czechoslovakia was actually doing in 1968.

“During the 1970s, the left in Western Europe had an immense opportunity – and largely wasted it. Socialism was divided between ‘idealists’ who phrase-mongered about revolution and ‘pragmatists’ who were content to run the existing capitalist system, and in fact ran it rather badly. The middle ground – those who could devise practical reforms, and push them through – was too weak numerically to put its ideas into practice. In Britain, the best opportunity was Workers’ Control, in particular the Bullock proposals. But

5 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

6 <https://socialistchina.org/2024/01/14/xi-jinping-speech-at-the-symposium-com-memorating-the-130th-anniversary-of-the-birth-of-mao-zedong>

7 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>

8 <https://socialistchina.org/2024/01/19/pro-poor-development-how-china-eradicated-poverty/>

9 https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202401/t20240102_11216007.html

Workers' Control was blocked by an alliance of Labour Left and Labour Right. This failure to do anything coherent with the massive trade union power of the 1970s tarnished the image of West European Socialism. Soviet-style Communism had lost the last of its credibility in 1968. Vietnam, dear to our hearts in the 1960s and early 1970s, got involved in an invasion of Kampuchea and a senseless border war with China. Thatcherism triumphed almost by default!"¹⁰

Thirty-six years on, it should be clear that the Neo-Liberal values that Gorbachev and Yeltsin trusted were an abysmal failure. But most people fail to see that the Soviet Union was a positive influence up until 1968.

Hindus Hard-Liners Do It Their Way

My morning viewing includes a rather good Indian news channel.¹¹ So I was well aware of the importance of the new Hindu temple at Ayodhya dedicated to Lord Ram.¹² A supernatural being whose best friend is a talking chariot-driving monkey. I had read it as a child as a charming legend with some nice moral values.

The *Ramayana* is one of two popular epics that also define Hindu deities. But the *Mahabharata* has ethical oddities. The Pandavas have a polyandrous marriage – probably an ancient Hindu custom, but long rejected. And

Krishna is an unscrupulous trickster who somehow became a favourite. I am reminded of how the Greeks elevated Odysseus, Ulysses in Latin tradition: he somehow got his own epic. And celebrated his return home by a mass hanging of palace maids who had dared sleep with his enemies: but thankfully we do not try to take ethics from Odysseus.

The values of the *Ramayana* are unfamiliar, but also acceptable. Now hard-line Hindus are weaponising them against the Muslim minority.

The Hindu temple was built over a mosque that was probably built over a place sacred to Lord Ram. Over the place he was traditionally viewed as being born. Congress closed the mosque but left the site unused. Modi led the campaign to demolish the mosque and build the temple.

It comes at a time of overall economic success:

"In 2013, the year before Modi took power, India was identified by Morgan Stanley among a group of vulnerable emerging-market economies, dubbed the 'Fragile Five' for their reliance on foreign capital to fuel their economies and, in many cases, big current account deficits.

"Ten years later, Modi's India is firmly in the sights of international investors, consultants and trading partners as one of the world's fastest-growing big economies and a critical 'China plus one' destination for companies seeking to reduce their exposure to political currents in Beijing...

"During Modi's two terms in

office, India has on average been one of the fastest-growing large economies...

"But India's growth rate was even higher from 2000 to 2010, at more than 6 per cent on average..."¹³

That's incomplete: Modi now leads a party that also ruled from 1996 to 2001. Western economists mostly praise them for eroding an over-regulated 'Licence Raj'.¹⁴

My own view is that India had been rising from 1947. The raw data on economic growth supports that.¹⁵ Deregulation may have done little beyond boosting the slice of the new wealth that went to the rich, just as has happened in Europe and the USA.

People who are there to tell unpleasant truths to business people can't now deny that post-Soviet history didn't go as expected:

"Donald Trump, Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu have all presided over growth...

"After a decade of Narendra Modi, India has the fifth-largest output in the world, up from 10th. It could dislodge Japan from third place before the 2020s are out. Given India's potential in 2014, a different government might have achieved much the same performance. However, as with Trump, the point is that even if a boom was always due, Modi's alleged authoritarianism didn't stop it. As international watchdogs marked India down from 'free' to 'partly free', its

¹⁰ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-007-july-1988-2/the-1968-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-doomed-the-soviet-union/>

¹¹ <https://www.wionews.com/>

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-68030712>

¹³ <https://www.ft.com/content/8299d318-7c35-49a0-9a9a-b8e5a-beba7be> - pay site.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_liberalisation_in_India

¹⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=IN>

economy soared.

"This is the liberal nightmare: not that populists abolish democracy to remain in power, but that they perform well enough not to have to.

"It is also intellectually confounding. Populism should be bad economics. It tends to set itself against things conducive to growth, such as immigrants (who expand the labour force), judges (who enforce contracts), technocrats (who set interest rates and competition rules) and free trade. Business professes to hate arbitrariness, the defining feature of strongman rule. Better a bad but consistent law than a leader's personal caprice. The autocratic habit of feuding with independent central bank governors should on its own depress the animal spirits of investors.

"Yet here we are. Of the world's most famous populist heads of government, how many have a defining economic failure on their record? ...

"It was awkward enough that China enriched itself without democratising. If existing democracies become authoritarian without getting poorer, even the sunniest liberal will feel night closing in."¹⁶

They resist the idea that the authoritarians succeed because modern liberalism is muddled.

That the liberal left flounder because they let liberal ideas squeeze out socialist viewpoints.

Liberals typically want to strip out national cultural specifics, but also demand conformity to a global culture that the West created. Things like skyscrapers.

¹⁶ <https://www.ft.com/content/31d99405-69b7-4d61-bfe6-3b855f1813b8> - pay site.

Or the meaningless steel spike that replaced the Nelson monument at the heart of Dublin, and which I've heard Irish complaints about.¹⁷

The liberal view is that you are a Nowherelander, and where you are located should be a meaningless postcode. But you are expected to speak English and keep a modified version of Latin-Christian culture. A version gutted of the things that made it humanly attractive to many; yet it is also full of things that came from just our culture and are alien elsewhere.

China revives respect for the genuine heroics of Mao. India gets by with chariot-riding monkeys.

Snippets

The Aden War and the Houthis Rebels

As a teenager, my hopes for the future were boosted by the war in Aden and the rest of what was then South Yemen. Communist rebels briefly looked like changing all South Arabia. But failed, with most of the British left ignoring a war in which British troops played a large role.

They were rated as Maoist at the time, and Trotskyists show considerable malice to anyone who succeeds where they keep failing. But those Yemenis later switched to Moscow, and lost confidence when the Soviet Union collapsed. Accepted unification with North Yemen, which led on to the present mess.

But maybe some of that tradition lives on in radical Arab nationalism:

"How a Ragtag Militia in Yemen Became a Nimble U.S. Foe

"The Iran-backed Houthis perfected the tactics of irregular warfare during years of conflict against a Saudi-led coalition,

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spire_of_Dublin

military officials say."¹⁸

Europe Unifying

Europe has damaged itself by going along with the US desire to get confrontational with Russia and China.

By being willing to 'fight to the last Ukrainian', along with volunteers from all over.

Discouraging them from accepting the secession of territories where a majority feel closer to Russia, when forced to choose.¹⁹

But not all is dark.

The combined effect of Brexit and the secession of the more Russophile parts of Ukraine has been to increase feelings of the European Union as a single entity. One that leaders quarrel over, but only a minority would consider loosening the ties.

Britain is visibly a failing economy. Horrible for us, but maybe good for the wider world.

*

Update on Benedict Arnold

I previously mentioned how he had a better case than most people know.²⁰

But still a traitor. When the American rebels decided to go for independence and rejected a British offer that offered everything they had originally demanded, he could have quit the American forces. Maybe then joined the other side after a decent pause. Instead he remained in command, and tried to surrender West Point. Treachery.

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Old newsnotes at the magazine websites. I also write regular blogs - <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams>

¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/24/us/politics/houthis-red-sea-airstrikes.html>

¹⁹ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/The-Civil-War-in-Ukrainian-Minds>

²⁰ <https://labouraffairs.com/2023/11/01/newsnotes-3/>

Should Socialists Fear Liberalism?

by Christopher Winch

One of the reasons why socialism is struggling is that socialists do not really know who they are and where they came from. Many think that they are a species of liberal. After all, socialism grew up alongside liberalism and both are opponents of conservatism. Both socialists and liberals favour democracy and rights. Surely socialism just means taking liberalism a bit further?

Despite the apparent similarities there are good reasons for thinking that socialists should resist the excessive penetration of liberal ideas into socialist thinking. There are a number of areas of concern.

Liberals tend to believe in three interconnected propositions:

- Absolute individual rights,
- The right to private property
- The unconditional sanctity of the market.

Each of these beliefs support the other.

Socialists, who are capable of seeing that the market can be an efficient way of conveying some information about preferences and availability, only see it as having conditional value. It is good as long as it delivers the goods *and can only do so when kept under control*.

Individual rights:

It is impossible for socialists to avoid talking about rights if they want their claims on behalf of people's vital interests to be taken seriously. So rights arise from vital interests. But different groups of people may have somewhat different interests. Liberals prefer to ignore the fact that we may often also have collective interests so there can be collective rights.

However, many if not most liberals think that rights are a kind of fundamental, irreversible

gift that every individual has. According to the late Robert Nozick, individual rights are so powerful that it is questionable whether the state can do anything to override them. This way of thinking means that the individual comes first and must always be deferred to even in the face of powerful collective interests. This view of the individual right to private property explains partly why property rights, especially in the United States, appear so extreme. The left has often been badly led astray by rights rhetoric. Having bought into the individual rights agenda, it has allowed itself to be distracted by various forms of special interest politics that should really be the province of liberals and which are not particularly congenial to the goals of socialists, which are to do with the development and promotion of the interests of wage-earners and their dependents in the broadest sense. In this context questions about the interests of women, the family, minorities and the environment can have a proper place as the broad mainstream sort out their priorities as part of the development of a political programme that has to cater for diversity.

One major problem with putting special interest politics first and then dealing with socialist ideas later is that radical liberals, and socialists influenced by liberal ideas, have mistakenly bought the idea of strong autonomy, as a political ideal, which involves the claim that any individual can choose what they wish to do in life so long as it does not harm other people. So it is quite ok to be a drug addict or surfer so long as you do not interfere with the rights of others to do as they like.

It is easy for socialists to be tempted by this doctrine because

we all live in a society that values a wide range of individual choice about how one lives one's life and because socialists, as well as liberals, tend to value this ability. What the liberal often ignores, however, is the existence of a common good and the closely associated idea of a public interest which is affected by the actions of everyone, whether or not they wish or do not wish to harm other people.

Once one takes into account the impact of one's actions, both intended and unintended, indirect as well as direct, then it becomes much more difficult to maintain that we should enjoy autonomy in a strong sense. Rather, we should be autonomists who believe that people should be able to make life choices that take account of the common good. This does not mean that citizens should not be able to evaluate what counts as the common good, but it does entail that this should continue to be a reference point for individual choices. Individual rights need to be exercised in the context of collective ones. Private property: Most liberals hold this to be inviolate. Yet the claims of the supporters of private property are extreme. Private property gives its holders exclusive control over assets, even if their control of those assets adversely affects the interests of other people. Yet the theoretical justification for private property, which comes from Locke, is very weak. Locke also admits that one should only own enough for use and that one's ownership of private property should not derogate from the rights of those who already enjoy benefits which are part of that property. Yet these provisos are ignored as a matter of routine.

Liberals seem happy with the institution of private property as

it is currently constituted, rather than as liberal ideology would have it. Even Nozick admitted that past injustices in the appropriation of property need to be rectified, making for example the continued holding of land in Zimbabwe by white farmers difficult to justify on liberal grounds. Hegel argued that people needed private property as a means of self-realisation. But you don't need the extreme liberal version of private property in order to enjoy enough assets in order to realise yourself.

Socialists need have no problem with the possession of personal property nor with the possession of some forms of private property. They can even agree with Hegel to some extent that the possession of private property is an important condition of self-fulfilment. There is no reason, though, for them to give assent to the extreme and unreasonable notions of private property that have legal sanction within our own society. Liberals are particularly vulnerable on this question since they have failed to develop a satisfactory philosophical or ethical justification for absolutist notions of private property.

Socialist have not done enough to challenge them on their own ground on this question. In fact it is not difficult to give Locke's arguments a socialist twist. If we take self-sufficiency seriously, together with the need not to take away from people's enjoyment of a previously commonly held asset, then private property need not look so unshakeable. Locke's argument that private property results from mixing the land with one's labour formed one of the elements of Marx's labour theory of value and of exploitation. But one can simply argue that if ownership arises from labouring on natural materials, then employees must be entitled to a large component of the production of any economy, in particular the

value that they have themselves added to a natural asset. One can argue this on good liberal grounds and undermine liberal ideas about property from within.

The market:

Liberals have a thing about the market. Even those, like Mill, who considered himself to be a socialist, thought that the market was the best way to ensure economic efficiency. This is also true of modern welfare-oriented liberals like John Rawls. This belief ties in well with their beliefs in property and individual rights. The market presupposes a strong form of property right so that assets can be traded unconditionally, and also strong individual rights to buy and sell. In addition, the market is thought to be the best way of allowing individual choices to make themselves known and to provide the widest possible scope for individual choice.

Socialists, who are capable of seeing that the market can be an efficient way of conveying some information about preferences and availability, only see it as having conditional value. It is good as long as it delivers the goods and can only do so when kept under control. The liberal, however, often sees the market as the guarantor of rights, including property rights. Take away the market and it is difficult to exercise these rights. Although most liberals make out the case for markets in terms of efficiency it is not unusual to hear the market described as something that is good in itself. There don't seem to be any circumstances in which most liberals would be prepared to entertain giving up the market as the main mechanism for allocating resources. To a socialist, such an idea is absurd since the market is only as useful as the results it produces.

Conclusion

There is no reason for socialists to believe in unconditional individual rights. Rights arise from interests and are defined by social institutions. Property rights are not absolute and the market's value is conditional only. These beliefs are opposed to those of fundamentalist liberals. Because socialists believe in self-realisation, democracy and political freedom., this does not mean that they have to buy the liberal agenda. Adopting a more critical attitude towards it would help socialists to be less deferential to ideas that are hostile to their own and to be more self-confident about their own ideas and values.

Reprinted from the March 2003 edition of our magazine. The whole of which is available as a PDF at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2024/01/ltur-126-march-2003.pdf>.

Comment by Eamon Dyas:

"In the almost 21 intervening years in the context of the ascendancy of absolute individual rights we have had the development of transgenderism that has taken the whole philosophy of individual rights to the absurd level where it actually comes into conflict with the idea of women and men as biologically based."

Comment by Chris Winch:

"We all underestimated the nihilistic tendencies in liberalism, which can no longer be ignored. The dissolution of society poses no problem for these liberals. What should worry us is that much of the left has subscribed to this agenda and it takes precedence over whatever socialist sentiments they may still have."

Introduction to “Fiat Socialism” by Carlos Garcia Hernandez.

Published by Lola Books, 2023

Review by John Clayden.

Worker's Money

I remember well over thirty years ago standing outside one of the biggest halls in Newcastle upon Tyne with a group of unemployed workers lead by a great unsung hero of the working class - Andy Robertson an oil rig worker who had organised his fellow North Sea oil rig workers into their own union, and had founded and led the organisation we were now in The Unemployed Action Group.

Inside the hall there were all the MPs and council leaders of the whole of the North Eastern area, they had been gathered to be lectured by Eddie George the governor of the Bank of England who was there to inform them of the future fate of the region. Every so often the leader of Ashington Council, John McCormack would come out to brief us as to what was going on inside. Steady Eddie, as he was known was there to tell them that the days of heavy industry, the shipyards and coal mines were over and the future was to be service industries and so it was to be.

Actually I think the excuse was that British industry was no longer competitive but with hindsight could we not have nationalised it under workers control and direction if this was the case and made it so. (This was long after the Bullock proposals had been swept under the carpet) The idiots running the Labour Party then and still today had bought into a revival of a long discredited economic market theory reintroduced by Thatcher which played out in the economic crash in 2008.

Whatever the excuses it always struck me as odd that we were being told our fate by the Governor of the Bank of England.

We tend to think of workers' money as that which we receive as wages and if you are a socialist you know that it is your labour and that of your fellow workers which keep the country going and that your wage is less than the value of your work. So here was the governor of the Bank of England telling us our fate and whatever the reason it was clearly in the interests

of the Bank of England and whatever it stood for and not of us. We were going to have our working lives disrupted and our skills thrown on the scrapheap.

But why the Bank of England and from where comes it's power? The bank, as recently one of its governors or was it a vice governor informed us is able to issue money out of thin air and this was for all to see in plain sight when the banks were subsequently bailed out in 2008 and more recently during the Pandemic when vast sums were found to pay for the furloughs and clearly there is no shortage of cash when it comes to military spending.

As Humpty Dumpty said it comes down to who has the power. When the power was with the workers' who elected overwhelming the Labour Government in 1945. Thanks to the understanding of Ernest Bevin after he had been tutored by J M Keynes, money was made available to employ those returning from the war. Money was found to provide wages training and materials to build a NHS, a free education system, to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy and to build council housing. (All this was outlined in the Beveridge Report the government published earlier in the war)

Money is not the problem the question is who has the power to command the issuance of money. Clearly we the workers of the UK once we understand this truth can take measures to ensure its issuance is for our own ends. This is the simple essence of this book “Fiat Socialism” by Carlos Gacia Hernandez with a forward by Chris Williamson.

Further thoughts on Workers' Money

MMT forms the basis of the book; in my opinion MMT is more of an observation on a state of affairs than a theory. Where you have a state or jurisdiction which has a monopoly of issuance of money or the means of accounting for and managing debt

it can issue money or cancel debts at will. This is what happened in Sumer and Babylon for thousands of years (see the writings of Michael Hudson) in fact it is a fallacy to believe we have to raise taxes before we can spend money to do what we deem important or borrow it from some private source, before we can eliminate unemployment and build infrastructure and ensure everyone has work is housed and clothed and fed.

The economic development of the Soviet Union did not require first taxing the population which was poor and impoverished. China has been able to vastly improve the standard of living of hundreds of millions of its population to an unprecedented degree through the control of its central bank and by controlling foreign finance capital. (Although it does have gross inequality of income and no universal welfare as far as I can make out.)

Measures will always have to be taken to control inflation but not at the expense of full employment. But as far as the internal economy is concerned, although it seems counterintuitive, there is no way a national autonomous state bank can go bankrupt as long as there is no dependence on foreign capital. However it is another matter when dealing with the rest of the world. This is because trading among states requires a confidence that the currency used can be used for trading. Ever since the Bretton Woods conference during the war the USA, much to its advantage, ensured that the dollar was the only world trading currency. This is backed by military force. This state of affairs is breaking down and alternative ways of managing balance of payments between nations are being pragmatically developed largely because the West has used its financial power to control the rest of the world and the rest of the world has had enough.

Understandably most people are not aware or care how the world

of finance works except in how it affects them and this is primarily in their dealing with the private sector, credit and thus debt e.g. to get a car to go to work, to pay for a mortgage or for education and credit cards or even just to get by. And it seems logical and ethical even, that it is only through our taxes that money is spent by the government.

Our argument is that our taxes should not be spent on providing bombs to destroy the people of Gaza or support the corrupt regime in Ukraine but should be spent on infrastructure and the health system. This moral socialist argument is not weakened if we are aware that the economy doesn't work quite like that. It is also crucial to alleviate anxiety that a prospective socialist government would have to show the measures it would take to control the private banking and credit system. See below in the measures Michael Hudson advocates to address this problem.

What is most important is that those people who are curious and are opinion-formers start to think about these things because the key question will be who will have the necessary understanding and will, when the time comes, to implement these decisions.

Our opponents will also say that someone who has worked hard should not have their money taken away by the state which is understandably often perceived as a malevolent force. Any socialist government would be accused of wanting to do this. Only when it is understood that the state plays a crucial role will people understand how it will have to be employed in the interest of our class.

Socialists will have to understand and explain these issues that I have only sketched out here. This seems a tall order but what is the alternative? It may become more possible though, as we enter a period where the credibility gap expands between us ordinary people and the political class due to our increasing awareness that our politicians back genocide and war at our expense and are lacking in any moral integrity.

There are many counter arguments we can employ to the household budget analogy and we will have to

make a strong case that shortage of cash is not what is stopping us from realising our socialist aims.

It will take time to build up this understanding among our constituency but I cannot see any alternative.

It is important that we know what we are up against and what measures would have to be taken if we are to succeed.

Michael Hudson (please see p225 "The Destiny of Civilization".) has outlined the following measures which he suggests will be necessary (he puts it in the context of a counter-rentier program.)

1 Public ownership of natural monopolies, especially money and credit creation privileges to prevent their monopolization in private hands and resulting rent seeking.

2 Keep basic infrastructure (in addition to banking) in public hands to provide essential services such as transportation at subsidised prices or free to minimise QA the cost of living. Providing high-quality education and health care as basic human rights will prevent them from being turned into vehicles for rent-seeking and financialization under private ownership and management.

3 National self-sufficiency in money and credit creation to protect against other nations' ability to create credit at will and the political strings that accompany borrowing from the IMF and US centred international banking systems.

4 Consumer and Labour protection against rent-seeking behaviour and exploitative employment conditions.

5 Capital controls to prevent borrowing currencies or denominating debts in foreign currency. Borrowing foreign currency to spend at home requires the central bank to create domestic credit for use in the local economy in any event. In such cases, foreign currency is not needed, but is simply a liability. When governments need foreign credit to stabilise their exchange rates, a principle of international law is needed to ensure that no government should be obliged to pay foreign debts at the cost of having to impose austerity and economic shrinkage..

6 Taxes should fall mainly on

unearned income (economic rent) which is not a necessary cost of production. Taxing economic rent prevents it from becoming an overhead cost.

7 Progressive Taxation of income and wealth to prevent economic polarization and the resulting instability, and to avoid taxing labour costs.

8 A land tax to collect the site value that results from public infrastructure spending general prosperity, not the landlords own investment. This tax will prevent land's rising rental value from being pledged to banks for credit to bid up real estate prices, and will prevent the emergence of a symbiotic Finance, Insurance and Real Estate sector.

9 Use the economic surplus for tangible capital investment to raise productivity and improve living standards, and to achieve economic and environmental resilience, not to create financial wealth in the form of claims on the economy.

10 National self-sufficiency in food and other basic needs so as to protect the economy from foreign coercive Trade and related economic sanctions as well as from adverse movements in world prices for food and other essentials.

11 Fiscal and capital controls to prevent speculative attacks on the domestic currency, and to prevent capital flight and tax avoidance via offshore banking centres.

I would add - self-sufficient national steel production and weapons manufacture.

Also it is necessary for workers to have the right to decide not only how their industries are managed and what forms that would take, private shared schemes, cooperatives, or workers' owned companies . But also not just how but what they produce and what consumers want, except in matters of national security. The mechanisms to do this would have to be worked out but it would avoid alienation.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of course.

Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh “The Making of a Human Rights Lawyer”.

By Michael Murray

Introduction: “An bealach seo atá romham” - my destiny

Over the desk of Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, In the busy London office of Matrix (Barristers’) Chambers, on the Greys’ Inn Road - also of Brussels and Geneva, hangs a framed pamphlet with a photograph on its cover of a smiling twelve year old girl: Majella O’Hare shot in in the back in 1976, at the height of the conflict in northern Ireland, by one of a group of British soldiers.

“I was 12 years old myself when I found the pamphlet about Majella O’Hare in one of my mother’s bookcases. I saw the picture of the young girl on the front, and saw her age, and I read it from cover to cover. I read about how she died in the arms of her father after he heard the shot and went running to her. I think it was her age, the fact that nobody had been held accountable, and the circumstances of the killing – that she had been shot as she walked along a country road with a group of other children, going to Confession at the local chapel – that particularly outraged my convent schoolgirl sensibilities at the time.”

Blinne went to her mother in tears and asked how such a terrible thing could be allowed to happen. Her mother’s response was: “Do something about it”. And she did. By a circuitous route she became a human rights lawyer and known to the wider world through her role in the South Africa legal team which took Israel to the International Court of Justice.

Craig Murray is a former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan who resigned from his post as a protest against western - including UK - support the brutal Uzbek dictatorship. (That was under a Blair government, incidentally) Now a human rights activist, he

was one of the few independent bloggers to gain entrance to the tiny public gallery of the ICJ, to hear the South African “Application.”

He writes:

“Undoubtedly the highlight of the entire morning was the astonishing presentation by Irish KC Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh.

“Her job was to demonstrate that if the Court did not order ‘provisional measures’, then irreparable damage would be done.

“I cannot adequately convey to you the impression she made in that courtroom. Like the rest of the team she eschewed atrocity porn and set out the simple facts plainly but elegantly. She adopted the ploy used by all the South African team, of not using emotional language herself but quoting at length deeply emotional language from senior UN officials. Her outline of daily deaths by type was devastating. I simply urge you to listen to her.”

<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2024/01/your-man-in-the-hague-in-a-good-way/#tc-comment-title>

Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, Human Rights advocate had arrived on the world stage.

“And,’ she says,’ I’ve hung on to that Majella O’Hare pamphlet over all these years. as a reminder of what brought me here.”

An Phalaistín

Her mother, Neasa, whom Blinne acknowledges as a powerful source of her social and cultural and political values - and rearing her with Irish - died in 2011. The funeral arrangements included contributions to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, in place of flowers.

That was two years after

another defining moment in her life: participating in a UN legal observation mission in Gaza following Israel’s military invasion, known as Operation Cast Lead. (My God! What arrogance in that title: what blatancy!)

“The level of devastation and trauma I witnessed in Gaza is hard to put into words. It was one of the experiences of my professional life that has marked me the most,” she said, in an interview to mark an earlier achievement award: Irish Legal News, “Lawyer of the Month.”

A number of cases are mentioned in that interview which illustrate the career of Blinne; they are all of a genre:

“Given what drew me to the law,” Blinne says, “I was never going to do corporate law or anything like that. Human rights law and international law are very much at the core of all the work I do.”

The Colson four

Chief amongst them is the Colson Four case, concerning the toppling and dumping in the dock of the statue of a prominent Bristol slave trader during a Black Lives Matter protest in June 2020.

The points of law raised in the case are a very interesting insight into the workings of the law and, no doubt, intended by Irish Legal News to be instructive for its professional readership as well as demonstrating Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh’s legal nous.

This knowledge may also be welcomed by trade unionists, social and community activists being targeted by legislation coming from both government and opposition (by default) to limit free speech, freedom of association and the right to strike.

“While the Colston Four did not deny toppling the statue” the *Irish*

Legal News says, “they relied on a number of “lawful excuses” to the charge of criminal damage. Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh was able to draw on her previous experience, including acting for anti-arms fair protesters in the case of *Director of Public Prosecutions v Ziegler*. This was a seminal Supreme Court case, which clarified that freedom of speech and freedom of assembly rights could provide a defence to a protest-related criminal charge.”

The Colston Four relied on the same “lawful excuse” defence as in *Ziegler*. Ms Ní Ghrálaigh and other legal representatives argued that a conviction for criminal damage would not be a proportionate restriction of the defendants’ protest-related rights in the context of the case. They also asserted a defence of “belief in consent”, on the basis that they honestly believed that the citizens of Bristol – who had erected the statue, and on whose behalf it was held on trust by Bristol City Council – would have consented to the statue’s removal.

They further relied on the defence of the prevention of crime, on the basis that they honestly believed that the display of the statue of the slaver – responsible for the enslavement of an estimated 84,000 black people and the deaths of 20,000, including many young children – with a plaque celebrating him as one of “the most wise and virtuous sons” of Bristol was criminally offensive, and constituted an “indecent display”.

Other matters the jury had to consider were whether the bronze statue had been damaged in the toppling, and if so, whether the Colston Four had the intention to damage it in removing it.

In a well-publicised verdict – and another victory for Ms Ní Ghrálaigh – the jury in Bristol acquitted the protesters.

Bloody Sunday Inquiry

Blinne was legal observer on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry in Northern Ireland. The inquiry was investigating the events of 30 January 1972, when British soldiers shot dead 14 unarmed civil rights protestors in Derry, in the north of Ireland.

She made the move from London to Derry, spending a year as a legal observer and another year working for a solicitor’s firm representing many of the families of the Bloody Sunday dead and the wounded.

“It was an immense privilege to be part of that historic legal process, and to get to represent and know the families, a number of whom remain friends to this day,” she told *Irish Legal News*. “Their unwavering dignity, resilience and steadfastness in seeking truth and justice over so many years was and remains utterly inspirational.”

The last word

Nimer Sultany is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, and reader in public law at SOAS University, London. He writes:

“For too many men, women and children in Gaza, this (ICJ) intervention will be too little, too late. But as Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, the formidable Irish lawyer representing South Africa, argued in the hearing, what is at stake is saving many more lives. Without a halt to Israeli military activity, there will be no end to the decimation of Gaza and the destruction of Palestinian people.”

“Should the court fail to act,” Sultany says, “it would be departing from its own previous rulings and the reputation of international law will further be tarnished. The court must now rise to that challenge.”

Whether it does “rise” to the challenge we will know shortly.

Attached as an Appendix is a list of the “provisional measures” South Africa is asking for, and to which there should be a response from the ICJ shortly. With it, Labour Affairs readers will be in a position to evaluate the ICJ verdict for themselves. Whatever the outcome of the South African Application to the ICJ, Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh has placed herself on the winning side of yet another case – in the court of public opinion.

Nesrine Malik, is a Guardian contributor of Sudanese origin.

She writes:

“It matters less what the final ruling is than that the case was made in the first place. You can agree or disagree on whether the legal hurdle for genocide has been met (or whether it even matters, if Israel and its allies will disregard it anyway), but in making a submission that recognises the seriousness of events – and that the seriousness of those events may amount to genocide – enough is presented to clearly illustrate that the international response has fallen shockingly short.

“The ICJ case shows how western logic is wearing thin and its persuasive power waning in a multipolar world. The significance of the fact that the country bringing the case is South Africa – an icon of the ravages of colonialism, settlement and apartheid – cannot be lost on anyone. It symbolises a vast racial injustice, too raw and recent to be dismissed as ancient history. In the figure of Nelson Mandela, there lies an evocative example of moral clarity undimmed by persecution. It is no surprise that the support expressed for South Africa is entirely from countries in the global south.” (*Guardian*, 15 January, 2024)

As Craig Murray has said:

"It's the court that is on trial. The whole world has been observing the genocide. It's not a question. The only question is, will the court do the unthinkable and acknowledge reality."

More than the ICJ is on trial.

Before the ICJ has completed its deliberations, leading western powers, led by the US, have intimated they will accept nothing but a rejection of the South African Application.

More than that, even before the Application was heard it was dismissed by the US as "Meritless, counter-productive and completely without any basis in fact." And Netanyahu has reasserted the Zionist goal: Israel "From the River to the Sea," an open admission of genocidal intent - which Israel knows won't endanger the flow of weapons and financial support from the West. Not in the short term anyway. In the longer term?

Biden once said that

"If Israel didn't exist, we'd have to invent an Israel to look after our interests in the middle east." Re-inventing Israel seems like the best option for the US. But that seems a long way off, given the shit-show that is the US polity.

Appendix: List of "provisional measures" sought in South African Application to the ICJ:

(1) The State of Israel shall immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza.

(2) The State of Israel shall ensure that any military or irregular armed units which may be directed, supported or influenced by it, as well as any organisations and persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, take no steps in furtherance of the military operations referred to point (1) above.

(3) The Republic of South Africa

and the State of Israel shall each, in accordance with their obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to the Palestinian people, take all reasonable measures within their power to prevent genocide.

(4) The State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to the Palestinian people as group protected by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, desist from the commission of any and all acts within the scope of Article II of the Convention, in particular:

(a) killing members of the group;

(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to the members of the group;

(c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and

(d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

(5) The State of Israel shall, pursuant to point (4)(c) above, in relation to Palestinians, desist from, and take all measures within its power including the rescinding of relevant orders, of restrictions and/or of prohibitions to prevent:

(a) the expulsion and forced displacement from their homes;

(b) the deprivation of:

(i) access to adequate food and water;

(ii) access to humanitarian assistance, including access to adequate fuel, shelter, clothes, hygiene and sanitation;

(iii) medical supplies and assistance; and

(c) the destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza.

(6) The State of Israel shall,

in relation to Palestinians, ensure that its military, as well as any irregular armed units or individuals which may be directed, supported or otherwise influenced by it and any organizations and persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts described in (4) and (5) above, or engage in direct and public incitement to commit genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, or complicity in genocide, and insofar as they do engage therein, that steps are taken towards their punishment pursuant to Articles I, II, III and IV of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

(7) The State of Israel shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; to that end, the State of Israel shall not act to deny or otherwise restrict access by fact-finding missions, international mandates and other bodies to Gaza to assist in ensuring the preservation and retention of said evidence.

(8) The State of Israel shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one week, as from the date of this Order, and thereafter at such regular intervals as the Court shall order, until a final decision on the case is rendered by the Court.

(9) The State of Israel shall refrain from any action and shall ensure that no action is taken which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve it.

The Apprenticeship Fiasco

By Dave Gardner

Half the young people in Britain do not intend to go to university. Many of those who do, feel that they have no choice, even if they don't particularly wish to. But what other choices do they have? This is where choices for young people become problematic. The main educational destination is a further education college (FEC) which, although they do a great job with the resources available, are acutely underfunded and the qualifications that they offer leave a lot to be desired, largely thanks to 'reforms' made to the qualification system under the Blair Government of 2001-2007. Apprenticeships in Germany are available to around 45% of young people but in England the figure is nearer 6%. Young people who wish to start their working life through enrolling on an apprenticeship face an uphill struggle to get one. To get a high quality one is even more of a struggle. What should be a secure and reliable route into adult life is in fact a path fraught with perils. Why is this so?

What is apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is probably as old as the human race. A young person learns to master an occupation alongside an experienced practitioner, gradually taking on more responsibility until expertise is achieved. The young person is a junior employee who both works and learns. The better they work, the more they earn. Apprenticeship was typically of long duration, around seven years. This was the time that it was thought was needed to become a truly competent worker. This was fine as a way of organising apprenticeship for traditional crafts and artisanal activities. But as the industrial revolution got underway there was an increasing need for formal instruction in the science and technology underlying work processes so that the worker could apply knowledge gained from science to the work process. Concern in Germany among the ruling class about the revolutionary potential of the organised working class also

prompted, alongside formal technical instruction, the introduction of civic education to blunt possible revolutionary ardour.

Apprenticeship in Britain has also moved from the artisanal time serving model to one that includes technical instruction. But the UK has always resisted the development of a mass regulated apprenticeship system with defined standards enforced through social partnership arrangements as is the case in Germany in the now dominant Dual System in which formal study and workplace learning are combined. Neither is it particularly keen on broad well-defined occupations with currency in an occupational labour market, which give workers a kind of property in their labour.

Labour's Legacy and Tory Reforms

By the early 1990s concern about the decline of apprenticeship, in part relating to the decline or disappearance of industrial sectors of the economy led to an attempt by the Tories to revive apprenticeship in a partial and weak imitation of the German Dual System. An attempt during the 1980s to develop purely work-based qualifications failed to address the need for knowledge in effective working practice in skilled occupations and it was acknowledged that something more was needed. Thus were born Modern Apprenticeships. Labour's contribution post 1997 was to undermine the very idea of apprenticeship while keeping the name for political reasons. Apprenticeship was thus extended to include short phase training, training for semi-skilled occupations and adult retraining. This allowed Labour to claim fraudulently that they were presiding over a revival of apprenticeship while in fact presiding over its continuing decline. The introduction of an Apprenticeship Framework in 2009 which was so loose as to be almost meaningless completed the picture of Labour's debauching of what was left of apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship governance

When the Tories took power again in 2010, it looked as if the decline of vocational education under Labour might be halted. Various reports recommended the revival of apprenticeship as a genuine high quality route to a skilled occupation and the government in 2017 introduced what looked like an improved model of apprenticeship based on standards constructed by employers. Off the job learning, minimum length (normally two years) and a set of work-related occupational standards were to be introduced for each apprenticeship qualification. In order to encourage employers to offer more apprenticeships a 0.5% payroll levy on larger employers was introduced. Monies raised by the levy could be recouped by offering various forms of vocational education leading to a recognised qualification. The system was to be overseen by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (*Ifate*).

It is important to recognise that *Ifate* is a government body with little autonomy and no real power to enforce the regulations for apprenticeship that it is tasked with upholding. Although the standards for apprenticeships that were introduced by the Tories were an improvement on previous bad practice, they are in no way comparable to apprenticeship in countries like Germany, Belgium or Switzerland, even on paper. In reality however they are far, far worse.

Rules, Gaming and The Enforcement of Rules.

There are conflicting forces at work within the government in relation to vocational education. On the one hand there is a recognition that it needs to be of high quality if Britain is to increase its productivity. On the other hand there is a visceral dislike, both of regulation and of interfering with employer prerogatives. The result has been that there is a widespread practice of gaming the regulations governing the training

levy so that relatively little of it is used for developing young people rather than providing management courses for relatively senior employees.

Even worse, however, is the fact that the weak regulations that govern apprenticeship are not enforced. *Ifate* does not have the power to do so and there is no apparent inclination to set limits on how employers interpret the apprenticeship regulations. Thus, there is widespread evidence that very often the off the job training essential to occupational expertise is not provided, that the apprenticeship specifications are often for semi-skilled rather than skilled work and that they do not satisfy minimum standards of length nor is there even any meaningful attempt at instruction within the workplace.

There are firms that offer good apprenticeships, particularly in sectors where there has been a long tradition of high-quality apprenticeships. Firms such as BT, BAE Systems and Rolls Royce would all be examples. Competition to obtain these apprenticeships is very fierce because of their scarcity. Such firms expect much of their future senior management to come through this route. Some companies also see apprenticeship as a moral commitment to the next generation. All too often however, the business strategy of many companies is to rely on semi-skilled or unskilled labour and for them apprenticeship in the form envisaged by the government, let alone German style Dual System apprenticeship is irrelevant. Such companies are happy to take the money and not to provide something worthwhile for young people who sign up for an apprenticeship in good faith and are then short-changed.

What a working class party should do.

If trade unions had a role in running the vocational education and training system they would be able, as do German unions, to enforce quality standards. But the unions in Britain have no such role, neither do they have a great interest in claiming it. This is a missed opportunity. Young people entering the workforce are future trade unionists. A young person who enrolls on a substandard apprenticeship is being cheated out of the chance to work in a worthwhile occupation. Trade unions that fought to ensure that young people were not cheated out of their birthright in the workplace are likely to gain committed recruits as well as ensuring good vocational education. It is an

opportunity that they should not miss. Likewise, a political party that took young people's aspirations seriously and fought for their rights is also likely to gain adherents as well as gratitude. The Labour Party is completely incapable of doing this. Who will?

Comments on Dave Gardner's Article, By Arthur Wacker and Sara Hussein, from the Workers Party of Britain

A working class party should address the dilemma that young people face when considering their futures. We could suggest something innovative in addressing alternative and more promising pathways for young people post-16 and post-18 that accord themselves to their interests and goals. A party with the interests of the working class at heart could of course totally reform and transform the current apprenticeship model, learning from countries such as Germany as well as reviving the classical conception of what an apprenticeship should entail - years of training, gaining full-skills rather than semi-skills, not at the profit of a corporation, but at the benefit of the apprentice first, and also the master - whilst in doing so, building a modern, advanced and attractive apprenticeship/post-16/18 skills-based educational scheme for young people. A new and strong apprenticeship scheme also means young people won't be strung up by, or beholden to, the debts of university. Young people are deeply anxious and upset over the fact they are plunged into debt through university, as well as the inability to afford good accommodation. Alternatively, a system where apprenticeships and vocational training offer a free pathway to a career in which a fulfilling, comprehensive skill is acquired, and a well-paying career is pursued, is going to be naturally attractive to young working people.

We both believe a working-class party challenging the over-emphasis and reliance of university education is important. We know most people don't really want to be, or should be at university, yet young people still feel as if it's not only their only choice, but their best choice, when it comes to making a good income. This stereotype is sadly accurate, and therefore, it needs to be challenged. These reformed and transformed apprenticeship schemes need to aim at introducing and integrating young people into the new economy a working-class party hopes to cultivate, where skilled, technical

jobs that feel dignified and fulfilling, are also well paid, through being highly regarded and respected across society. In this respect, apprenticeships are part of a greater socialist picture, giving an attractive and compelling representation of working-class jobs for young people, making their professions as highly paid, regarded and respected as post-university jobs, and importantly, they also have leeway for upwards-mobility, reversing and opposing the way in which New Labour and Tory administrations placed emphasis on anti-working-class jobs being some sort of "virtue." By proving itself through policy and action, a working-class party will defy this modern Blairite status quo. Simply put, young people need to know they have equality of opportunity, and in terms of dignity, equality of outcome too.

Additionally, providing trade schooling and economic schooling through young peoples' mainstream education as part of the school curriculum would help young people be wiser with their money in the future, which would be part of a greater amendment project pertaining to their worries and concerns about the security of their futures. In this security, young people will feel more comfortable and confident in pursuing the skills and jobs they want to have, as well as, if it is in their interests, starting their own businesses. Young people in rural communities tend to be unrepresented in this area: their interests in starting their own businesses or having a place to truly monetise and cultivate their own physical labour skills, often get shunned into mainstream bourgeois education that tries to direct them toward a university degree.

Finally, a working-class party, whose sole aim is to engage with transforming the apprenticeship system beyond what unions are interested in aiming for, needs to be the guiding force for young people. Young people are missing a role model in wider society nowadays, that being the promise they are not only cared for and looked after in their pursuits, that their interests are being represented, but that they shall be assisted in fulfilling these pursuits. In this framework, the party should listen to young people - unlike telling young people what is best for them like New Labour did - but also guide young people in a respectful, mature, and mutualist manner, being both a listener and a mentor.

The Role of Taxation

By Martin Seale

It is clear that the issue of taxation will be important in the coming general election. The Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, will present a tax cutting budget in March and the Conservative Party will present itself as the low tax party. It is worth therefore discussing the role of tax in the UK.

When evaluating a proposed tax, attention should be focused on how that tax will move resources from the private sector to the public sector. How much revenue a tax removes from the private sector is a minor issue.

Governments levy taxes on their citizens. When this happens, money is transferred from a citizen's account to some government account. The citizen has less money to spend. The government has more money to spend.

Or so we are told. It is true that the citizen has less money to spend. But it's not necessarily true that the government has more money to spend.

A Eurozone government, like the Irish government, will have more money to spend if it levies taxes. The Irish government is a currency user. It uses euros as its currency, but it has limited power to create euros. That power resides with the European Central Bank over which the Irish government will have limited influence.

For the UK government, the situation is quite different. The UK government uses the pound sterling as its currency and the UK government is the monopoly issuer of this currency. The UK government has a limitless supply of pounds to spend on expenditure approved by Parliament.

This fact raises an interesting question. Why does a currency creating government levy taxes if it has a limitless supply of pounds at its disposal and does not, therefore, need the money? The answer to this question is important if we are to understand the purpose of taxation and to evaluate any particular tax.

Taxation is required by a currency creating state, like the UK, because it frees up resources and makes them available to be purchased by the state.

To evaluate whether any tax is good or not, don't ask how much money it takes from the private sector. Ask instead what resources a tax will make available so that they can be bought by the state sector.

Let us apply this principle to a specific tax. The Labour Party has stated that it will levy a tax on private schools if it forms the next government. It claims that this tax will raise some £1.7 billion in revenue and that it will then spend this money on state schools, employing more teachers and refurbishing the schools.

How will the Labour Party's proposed tax on private schools move resources from the private to the public sector by making them available to be purchased by the state?

The following argument could be made. The tax would lead to an increase in the fees charged by these private schools. Some current customers would not be able to pay the increased fees and would be forced to stop using the private schools which would in turn need fewer teachers. Teachers, currently employed in private schools, would become unemployed and available to be employed in state schools.

It's an argument that has a certain *prima facie* logic. It would, however, be somewhat fortuitous that imposing VAT on private schools would lead to exactly the right number of teachers becoming redundant as were required to bring the level of education in state schools up to the desired level.

On the matter of refurbishing state schools, the argument that the VAT on private schools, would allow such refurbishment to take place is weak.

If there were no unemployed builders, it would be fortuitous, bordering on miraculous, that an imposition of VAT on private schools would make unemployed the number of builders that would be required to refurbish state schools to the desired standard.

Of course, if there were already unemployed builders with the required expertise, then they could be hired immediately by the state without any imposition of a tax on private schools. Taxes only need to be levied if the resources that the state requires to implement its policies are currently being used by the private sector.

In peacetime, taxes are the preferred method for moving resources (including labour) from the private sector to the public sector. In times of national stress, such as wars and pandemics, taxes will be considered too slow a

tool. More direct methods may be used. For instance during the 2nd world war, it was necessary to guarantee that the state had the resources to feed its armies. Ration books were introduced. These defined exactly how much of various types of food an individual could buy. That left the rest of food produced, available to be purchased by the state.

When evaluating the relevance of any tax proposed by a political party, focus on the resources the tax will release from use by the private sector, rather than the revenue it will remove from the private sector. The Workers Party has proposed a wealth tax in its recently published manifesto. It talks about raising some £17 billion in revenue. The implication is that the state will now have £17 billion to spend that they did not previously have. But a currency issuing state, like the UK, is not financially constrained. It has limitless funds as the monopoly issuer of Sterling. It is, however, resource constrained.

Rather than talking about the spending power that will be removed from the private sector, the Workers Party should explain how the tax will cause resources, including labour, currently used by the private sector to become unemployed and available to be purchased by the state to implement the policies that it considers important.

For instance, they could argue that some of those currently employed in building hi-spec yachts for the wealthy could become unemployed and could then be moved into producing hi-spec scanning devices for the NHS. This raises the issue of how quickly workers in one industry could become productive in another industry. It will take time to retrain yacht makers to become NHS equipment suppliers. Or, to use another example, it will take years to develop competent house insulators so money would need to be fed very carefully into the sector to avoid inflationary effects and it may be necessary to tax property developers to release the requisite labour force.

These are the kind of issues that need to be investigated when evaluating the efficiency of any proposed tax.