

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## Lords of Misrule

A general election is upon the British people. General elections in Britain are theatrical affairs that rely on the generation of enthusiasm through manufactured differences in policy and outlook. By doing so continuity is achieved through the semblance of genuine controversy and the myth of liberal democracy is preserved. That myth rests on the idea that there are two substantial views of how the country should be run that are in contention and that the electorate is free to choose between the two.

The one genuine exception to this account, where substantial and genuine differences were in play between the Conservative and Labour parties, took place in the summer of 1945. The Labour Party had a programme in the working class interest that it was determined to enact. It had the solid backing of the trade union movement which had played a key part in mobilising the country during the war, many soldiers and ex-soldiers supported the programme and civil society, after years of war and the experience of collective sacrifice and collective action, was also ready for change.

Seventy eight years later those conditions have long ceased to apply. Civil society is despondent, the optimism generated by shared collective hardship has disappeared and the trade union movement has ceased to regard itself as a dominant social partner in the renewal of politics and society. Between 2015 and 2019 there appeared to be a chance that the Labour Party would represent the working class interest. This danger was rapidly and ruthlessly dealt with by the use of a smearing technique against the then party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who was too mild in personality to put up effective resistance. His lack of clarity about what exactly constitutes 'anti-semitism' was also a handicap. He should never have accepted that criticism of Israel could be construed as anti-

semitism. The ICC and the ICJ are now as 'anti-semitic' as so many expelled Labour members (many of them Jewish) ever were. His political career and the mildly social democratic turn that he represented have been extinguished.

The two main political parties are dominated by career politicians with an interest only in being useful and congenial to large corporations. The Labour Party still relies heavily on funding from the majority of trade unions but gives virtually nothing to them in return, which they accept. In addition the Labour Party is heavily subject to the covert influence of two foreign powers, Israel and the United States. The Conservative Party is also under the domination of these two foreign powers, together with extremely rich individuals with their own agendas who provide the finance for its operations. It should be noted that much of this finance originates from overseas. There are no differences, even in appearance between the two parties on foreign and trade policy, and there are a few differences of detail on domestic policy, which will not necessarily manifest as differences in substance should Labour come to government. This despite the fact that the country faces enormous problems that require close political attention, substantial funding and a considerable degree of patience. In this issue of Labour Affairs we reprint an article by Nikola Bryce of the Workers' Party of Britain that illustrates just how dishonestly the issue of national renewal is treated.

Even were the electorate inclined to do some critical thinking, the BBC and the private media, who effectively control information, make that difficult if not impossible to do. You cannot think critically if you have no access to reliable information about which to think coherently. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the UK is in practice a one party state which maintains a clever

theatrical illusion that this is not the case, in which all the players know their part and play it to the best of their ability. A big problem for the ruling elite (career politicians, their funders, their media organisations and the clubs and think tanks through which they operate) would be an independent civil society with an independent trade union movement at its core. Fortunately for them, this does not exist and what dissent exists is confined to a few independent-minded trade unions like the RMT and aspirational political parties, by far the most promising of which is the Workers' Party of Britain. The WPB has identified the problems that the UK faces and has achieved some success against the odds.

The UK works on the basis of a two party system. This would be the case even were there genuine differences between the parties. If follows that the Labour Party, which is probably too corrupt to reform, will have to be eventually displaced. No-one should underestimate the magnitude of such a task. It will take many years to achieve from a standing start. The focus on parliament is important, but so also is a focus on the institutions that sustain working class life,

first and foremost the trade union movement. It is a dilemma for any political party as to where it should most productively direct its resources. But if the Workers' Party is in business for the long haul, the renewal of civil society in the locations where it is strong has to be a priority. We recommend that our readers vote for the Workers' Party or like-minded independents where an opportunity offers itself in their constituencies and hope that it will develop as a mature and coherent national organisation with strong roots in local communities.

Jeremy Corbyn is standing as an independent in his own constituency. Unfortunately his political destruction has already been completed. He now has an opportunity to point to the external forces that destroyed him, to alert the British people as to how their political system is abused and manipulated. We doubt that he will take that opportunity, partly because he is too heavily invested in some of the assumptions about 'anti-semitism' that helped to destroy him. If he cannot tear away the veil that hides the operation of liberal democracy then it must fall to someone else to do so.

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### Labour Affairs

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## News from Germany. The new party steps cautiously forward.

### Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter May 2024

*'Labour Affairs' is pleased to publish the European manifesto and an extract from the party manifesto for the Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW), the new left party in Germany led by Sahra Wagenknecht. In both documents the key points are clearly stated and it is evident that BSW deputies would be a breath of fresh air into the Bundestag and the European Parliament. The BSW advocate an independent Europe based on national sovereignty and co-operation for common national interests. National states should retain their economic and financial independence and should be able to resist the work of shadowy lobbyists for corporate interests who work behind the scenes in Brussels to undermine national interests. A pragmatic attitude to climate change, that does not damage the interests of the European working class is advocated, together with a policy on migration that prevents 'social dumping' and the undermining of labour markets within the EU.*

*A major positive is that they advocate collective security arrangements for the wider European space beginning with a resolution of the war in Ukraine. In other words, a vision of a Europe based on national co-operation, the defence of national interests and the promotion of Europe-wide collective security is promoted.*

*In the face of a hostile interviewer on a Bavarian television channel recently Wagenknecht made several key points about the way in which the party deals with the challenges of growth. Taxed with having only 40 members in Bavaria, Wagenknecht made the point that many more wish to join but the new party has to be careful to accept members who abide by its programme, are capable of working constructively with others and do not flit from political organisation to political organisation on a whim. In other words, serious people who wish to co-operate. They do not intend to become 'Die Linke 2.0'. The implication is clearly that the new party does not want to be identified with the traditional left, i.e. the left that is thoroughly corrupted by neoliberal thinking. The problems that the AfD are now experiencing result from lack of care in accepting members, resulting in the party as it now is being far from the intentions of its founders. Asked if she was worried about an influx of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) supporters she made the point that many voters are angry about being patronised by Greens, about economic insecurity and excessive migration and their concerns are to*

*be taken seriously. In principle there is no problem about accepting ex AfD members.*

*Pressed on whether the BSW was 'letting down' the Ukrainians by calling for an end to shipping weapons and money to them and for negotiations to begin, she was steadfast and pointed out that the best way of securing the interests of the Ukrainian people was by ending war and restoring peace through meaningful negotiations.*

*The formation of a new political party is a difficult and hazardous business and the pitfalls are many. BSW intends to avoid these through a policy that combines cautious growth, care in accepting new members and the prioritisation of a culture of co-operation within the party. In the view of Labour Affairs, this is probably a wise policy that will avoid some of the problems that inevitably arise from rapid and uncontrolled growth.*

*Here follows the BSW's European manifesto.*

### **For economic common sense, social justice, peace, freedom of expression and democracy.**

#### **Diplomatic foreign and security policy**

Europe must refocus its foreign and security policy on the principles of diplomacy, conflict prevention and good neighbourliness. As a first step, we want the war in Ukraine to end as quickly as possible with a ceasefire and the start of peace negotiations.

#### **An Independent Europe**

Europe must become an independent player on the world stage instead of being a pawn in the conflict between the major powers. A new bloc confrontation with escalating economic sanctions is damaging to Europe. Europe must also stop being a digital colony of the United States, but must build an independent digital infrastructure that protects citizens from surveillance and manipulation.

#### **Economic common sense**

We want a strong, innovative and socially responsible European economy. The EU should secure its economic and industrial base through good framework conditions and joint projects for the future, guarantee national states' budgetary, social and economic sovereignty, limit the power of Big Tech, Big Pharma and Big Finance and protect SMEs from ruinous tax competition and

pointless regulations and reporting obligations.

### **Social Justice**

We need an EU that protects efficient public services of general interest and high social standards. Collective agreements and local wages must be defended against low-cost competition in all EU countries. To combat growing poverty and inequality, we are campaigning against tax dumping and for fair taxation of the super-rich.

### **Innovative climate policy**

We want to advance climate policy and environmental protection through technological innovation, public funding and sensible incentives and not by making people's lives more expensive or driving key industries out of Europe. Longer warranty periods to prevent products with deliberately short life cycles (an end to built-in obsolescence) are more beneficial to the environment and climate than high CO2 taxes, which are simply passed on to consumers in the absence of competition. Instead of banning combustion cars, the far more sensible strategy would be to impose requirements for the development of more fuel-efficient models.

### **Less migration**

We want to stop uncontrolled migration to the EU, put a stop to the smuggling gangs and create better prospects in the countries from which migrants come. Asylum and examination procedures for protection status should take place at the EU's external borders or in third countries. Those who do not receive protection status there are also not entitled to access to the EU, a work permit or social benefits in an EU member state.

### **Freedom and democracy**

Europe must no longer be the Eldorado of lobbyists who make backroom deals with an ever-growing EU bureaucracy. We want to stop the flood of bureaucratic encroachments on companies and citizens, prevent encroachments on the interests of member states and roll back encroachments on freedom of expression, especially on social platforms.

*Here is an extract from the Party Manifesto about the economy and innovation.*

## **Economic common sense**

Our country still has a solid industry and a successful, innovative SME sector. But the framework conditions have deteriorated dramatically in recent years. Our public infrastructure is a disgrace for a leading industrialized country. Hardly a train runs on time, patients wait months for an appointment with a specialist, tens of thousands of teachers, daycare places and housing are lacking. Dilapidated roads and bridges, slow Internet, overburdened administrations and unnecessary regulations make life difficult and it is particularly difficult for small

and medium-sized companies.

The German school system with 16 different regional different curricula, classes that are far too large and premature selection for secondary school denies educational and life opportunities to the children of less well-off families and at the same time fails to provide urgently needed skilled workers. Since the sanctions imposed on Russia and so-called climate policy have also made energy suddenly more expensive, our country is threatened, facing the loss of important industries and hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs. Many companies are considering relocating their production abroad. Others are threatened in their very existence.

Corporate capture and the failure of antitrust authorities have created a market economy in which many markets no longer function. Dominant large corporations, overpowering financial groups such as Blackrock and encroaching digital monopolies such as Amazon, Alphabet, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple have emerged, taking their toll on all other market participants, undermining competition and destroying democracy. To a considerable extent, the current inflation is also the result of market failure caused by excessive economic power. We strive for an innovative economy with fair competition, well-paid secure jobs, a high proportion of industrial value creation, a fair tax system and a strong middle class. To achieve this, we want to limit market power and unbundle dominant corporations. Where monopolies are unavoidable, tasks must be transferred to non-profit providers. German industry is the backbone of our prosperity and must be preserved. We need more future technologies made in Germany again, more emerging champions, not fewer.

### **Future technologies made in Germany**

Massive investment in our education system, our public infrastructure and in competent, effective administrations is necessary to prevent our country from falling into economic decline. We need investment funds to promote innovative domestic companies and start-ups and not billions in subsidies for corporations from overseas. As a country that is strong in exports and poor in raw materials, Germany needs a foreign trade policy that focuses on stable trade relations with as many partners as possible instead of creating new blocs and promoting escalating sanctions. We need a foreign trade policy that secures our supply of raw materials and cheap energy.

The change in the global climate and the destruction of our natural resources are serious challenges that politicians must not ignore. However, a serious climate and environmental policy requires honesty: Germany's energy supply cannot be secured by renewable energies alone within the framework of current technologies. Blind activism and ill-considered measures do not help the climate, but they do endanger our economic substance, make people's lives more expensive and undermine public acceptance of sensible climate protection measures. The most important contribution that a country like Germany can make to combating climate change and environmental destruction is the development of innovative key technologies for a climate-neutral and environmentally friendly economy of the future.

## Starmer Against Workers Rights

*Unite the Union protests at Labour not pledging to reinstate Workers Rights if elected*

*Labour's draft New Deal for Workers now "unrecognisable"*

*Wednesday 8 May 2024*

*Responding to the recent New Deal documents sent to the trade unions by the Labour Party, the leader of Unite Sharon Graham said:*

"It looks like all the warnings Unite made earlier about the dangers of Labour rowing back on its pledges for the New Deal for Workers have been proved right. This new Labour document on the New Deal, issued to the unions on Monday, is a row back on a row back. It is totally unrecognisable from the original proposals produced with the unions. Unrecognisable. Workers will see through this and mark this retreat after retreat as a betrayal.

"This new document is turning what was a real new deal for workers into a charter for bad bosses. Labour don't want a law against fire and rehire and they are effectively ripping up the promise of legislation on a new deal for workers in its first 100 days. Instead, we have codes of conduct and pledges of consultation with big business. Likewise, the proposal to legislate against zero hours contracts is watered down to almost nothing.

"In truth this new document is not worthy of discussion. All unions must now demand that Labour changes course and puts the original New Deal for Workers back on the table."

## The Slow-Motion Execution of Julian Assange Continues

**By Chris Hedges**

The ruling by the High Court in London permitting Julian Assange to appeal his extradition order leaves him languishing in precarious health in a high-security prison. That is the point.

The decision by the High Court in London to grant Julian Assange the right to appeal the order to extradite him to the United States may prove to be a Pyrrhic victory. It does not mean Julian will elude extradition. It does not mean the court has ruled, as it should, that he is a journalist whose only "crime" was providing evidence of war crimes and lies by the U.S. government to the public. It does not mean he will be released from the high-security HMS Belmarsh prison where, as Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, after visiting Julian there, said he was undergoing a "slow motion execution."

It does not mean that journalism is any less imperilled. Editors and publishers of five international media outlets — The New York Times, the Guardian, Le Monde, El Pais and DER SPIEGEL — which published stories based on documents released by WikiLeaks, have urged that the U.S. charges be dropped and Julian be released. None of these media executives were charged with espionage. It does not dismiss the ludicrous ploy by the U.S. government to extradite an Australian citizen whose publication is not based in the U.S. and charge him under the Espionage Act. It continues the long Dickensian farce that mocks the most basic concepts of due process.

Yes. He can file an appeal. But this means another year, perhaps longer, in harsh prison conditions as his physical and psychological health deteriorates. He has spent over five years in HMS Belmarsh without being charged. He spent seven years in the Ecuadorian Embassy because the U.K. and Swedish governments refused to guarantee that he wouldn't be extradited to the U.S., even though

he agreed to return to Sweden to aid a preliminary investigation that was eventually dropped.

The extradition request is based on the 2010 release by WikiLeaks of the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs — hundreds of thousands of classified documents, leaked to the site by Chelsea Manning then an Army intelligence analyst, which exposed numerous U.S. war crimes including video images of the gunning down of two Reuters journalists and 10 other unarmed civilians in the Collateral Murder video, the routine torture of Iraqi prisoners, the covering up of thousands of civilian deaths and the killing of nearly 700 civilians that had approached too closely to U.S. checkpoints.

Free speech is a key issue. If Julian is granted First Amendment rights in a U.S. court it will be very difficult for the U.S. to build a criminal case against him, since other news organizations, including The New York Times and The Guardian, published the material he released.

The extradition request is based on the contention that Julian is not a journalist and not protected under the First Amendment. Julian's attorneys and those representing the U.S. government have until May 24 to submit a draft order, which will determine when the appeal will be heard.

Julian committed the empire's greatest sin — he exposed it as a criminal enterprise. He documented its lies, routine violation of human rights, wanton killing of innocent civilians, rampant corruption and war crimes.

Republican or Democrat, Conservative or Labour, Trump or Biden — it does not matter. Those who manage the empire use the same dirty playbook. The publication of classified documents is not a crime in the United States, but if Julian is extradited and convicted, it will become one.

# Military Brutality as a General Principle in Western Thinking

"In a roundtable discussion Wednesday [8 May], former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley and Palantir CEO Alex Karp defended Israel's massacre of Palestinian civilians by advocating military brutality as a general principle. ....

"Before we all get self-righteous about what Israel is doing, we shouldn't forget that the United States killed a lot of innocent people in Mosul and Raqqa,"

Milley said, referring to the US attacks on the Iraqi cities in 2016 and 2017, notorious for indiscriminate bombing that led to thousands, or tens of thousands, of civilian casualties.

Milley then turned to the US war in the Pacific during World War II, declaring, "We destroyed 69 Japanese cities, not including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we slaughtered people in massive numbers, innocent people who had nothing to do with their government, men, women, and children.

"War is a terrible thing. But if it's going to have meaning, if it's going to have any sense of morality, there has to be a political purpose, and it must be achieved rapidly with the least cost, and that is done by speed."

At this point, Karp jumped in, declaring, "The peace activists are actually the pro-war activists, and we're the peace activists. So if you don't want war, you better be strong. You have to scare your adversary."

This discussion took place at the Ash Carter Exchange, a conference sponsored by the Special Competitive Studies

Project, a US think tank founded by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt. David Cohen, the Deputy Director of the CIA, and Schmidt himself also participated in the discussion. Both Google and Palantir are major contractors for both the United States and Israeli militaries and intelligence agencies.

The transcript of the discussion was not made public, and no official video recording is available. However, clips began to immediately circulate on social media revealing excerpts from what was discussed behind closed doors.

A major focus of the discussion was the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, which all participants vociferously defended. Strikingly, Milley and Karp argued in defense of Israel's actions not on the basis of particular expedencies or exceptions, but by asserting the claim that war crimes are a positive good and a means to achieve "peace."

Milley, in agreement, added,

"They're out there supporting a terrorist organization."

It is worth carefully considering these statements. What does it mean to say that the means to achieve "peace" is for an army to be "fierce," and to "scare your enemy"? The logical conclusion is that those armies that are the most violent, who do not fight in accordance with the laws of war, are most effective, and therefore, the most moral and peace-loving.

By this logic, the most peaceful army in history was the German Wehrmacht under Adolf Hitler, which dispensed with the law of war entirely, illegally killing tens of millions of people—civilians and

captured soldiers alike.

The remarks by Milley and Karp are unique only in that they express with particular bluntness, in a semi-public sphere, the general conceptions that have come to dominate US war planning. Dominant sections of the US political establishment are adopting as their mantra the first slogan of the party in George Orwell's 1984: "War is peace."

Milley, in particular, has repeated this argument on numerous occasions.

"Preparation for war and deterrence is extraordinarily expensive, but it's not as expensive as fighting a war,"

Milley said in congressional testimony last year.

"This budget prevents war and prepares us to fight it if necessary."

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/05/10/nghi-m10.html>

John Minahane commented:

*"This is one of the rare truthful references to what happened in Mosul and Raqqa. They were carpet-bombed. Raqqa looked like Gaza City does now, or worse. But because ISIS was so very awful, no one expressed any qualms about it.*

*"If I remember rightly, Mosul and Raqqa were not among the historical examples chosen by Israeli propagandists at the beginning of this conflict, to justify what they proposed to do to Gaza. They said: you did Dresden, you did Hiroshima, you did the firebombing of Japan, you did the German blockade. They didn't say: you did Mosul, you did Raqqa."*

## Ursula von der Leyen 'guilty of war crimes'

PRESS RELEASE, May 22, 2024

**Today the International Criminal Court has been officially called to investigate Ursula von der Leyen for complicity.**

Reasonable grounds exist to believe that the unconditional support of the President of the European Commission to Israel—military, economic, diplomatic and political—has enabled war crimes and the ongoing genocide in Gaza

*The Hague (The Netherlands), 22 May 2024*

— A communication is submitted today to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), setting forth in detail, through facts and evidence, that there are reasonable

grounds to believe that the current president of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, a national of Germany, is complicit in a number of violations of international humanitarian law, amounting to crimes within the jurisdiction of the ICC, committed by the Israeli armed forces (IDF) against Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including the Gaza Strip.

This communication, endorsed by various human rights groups and prominent academics and experts in international criminal law, calls the Prosecutor to initiate investigations on the basis of the information provided against Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen.

The communication documents in

detail the fact that Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen personally is criminally responsible and liable for punishment for some of the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide having been committed (and still being committed) by the Israeli armed forces in the OPT, to the extent that she has aided, abetted and otherwise assisted in the commission or attempted commission of such crimes, including providing the means for its commission, in the meaning of Article 25(3)(c) of the Rome Statute of the ICC. Mrs. von der Leyen enjoys no functional immunity before the ICC by virtue of article 27 of the Rome Statute.

# Levelling Up will never happen under the Uniparty

## The Scandal of Northern Inequality

By Nikola Bryce

*“Inequalities between our regions are not inevitable. They are a product of policy choices in the design of our economy and democracy...”* [State of the North](#) – Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Report 2024

### By Nikola Bryce (Workers Party GB Writers Group)

In February 2022 the Tories published their [Levelling Up White Paper](#). However 2 years later, according to a recently published IPPR Report, the situation couldn't be worse as it is revealed living outside London and the South East is bad for your health, wealth and opportunities, with the gap only set to widen.

### HMS flagship Useless

The Tories flagship policy promised to 'level up' the country by reducing regional disparities by 2030. Purported to transform local communities by rectifying much of Britain's regional economic divide, it has done nothing to stem the widening gap of the country's inequality.

### Councils working against the odds

Council budgets have been increasingly stretched since the Tories came into power in 2010. Austerity (an ideology not a panacea), the cost of living crisis and inflation, have all contributed to the immense pressure local authority budgets are under. 800 libraries and 1,086 swimming pools across the country have been closed, replaced with a pandemic of potholes and privatisation.

The core spending power in 2024 for councils across the UK is now 18.1% lower in real terms than 2010 levels. In June 2023 a survey was [published](#) by SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities), representing 47 urban authorities, 36 of which are in the North and are amongst some of the most deprived communities in England. The [survey revealed](#): “On average, each SIGOMA council will be forced to make £15m of savings this year, amounting to £700 million across the 47 councils.” Half the respondents to the survey feared that to stay within their annual budget there was a “risk to the future standards of service in Adults or Children's Care as a result of the cuts.”

Since 2018, twelve councils have effectively declared bankruptcy, another fourteen are expected to declare bankruptcy within the next twelve months, their budgets hammered over the last 13 years.

Levelling Up has been given the sobriquet “[Hunger Games](#)” by some media and cynical participants. Against this bleak backdrop, councils are pitted against each other, jostling for desperately needed funding. Nationally, local councils are estimated to have spent £23.4 million from their hard pressed budgets on expensive consultants to give them a competitive edge over councils in a similar position. However, as a surprise to no one, Levelling Up funding appears to be [rigged](#), with millions funnelled into the constituencies of Tory MPs, Ministers and the City of London.

### Eeny meeny miney mo

YorkshireLive [reported](#) their local authorities spent £3.1 million on Levelling Up bid consultants. West Yorkshire lost 17 out of 18 bids. Bradford lost all four regeneration schemes bids, costing them £610,000 in consultants fees. County Durham spent £1.2 million on their unsuccessful 2022 bids which included social housing, improving public transport and bringing Stanley town centre back to life.

In 2021 out of 305 bids only 105 were successful. In 2023 out of 525 bids only 111 bids were successful. The “Hunger Games”, have reduced local authorities to gambling away tens of thousands of pounds they can't afford to lose, in a process where the odds are stacked against them, in what appears to be a completely random selection process.

Hillary Clinton, once famously described millions of working class Americans, Trump supporters, as “a basket of deplorables”. This description seems apt when describing the Tory Party in their treatment of many of Britain's vulnerable communities.

### Failed mission

Areas earmarked for levelling up are categorised in terms of ‘Priority Groups’ one to three. ‘Priority one’

have “the highest level of identified need” and so their funding bids are more likely to succeed. “Need” as well as income and health are identified as areas that are considered most deprived.

Levelling Up minister Michael Gove [specified](#) 12 national ‘missions’: eliminating illiteracy, reducing the gap in pay, employment and productivity, narrowing the gap in life expectancy, 40% increase in research and development investment, reduce serious crime rates, improvement in well-being, more first time buyers in every area, increased access to high speed 4G and 5G coverage across the country by 2030, devolution for every area in England that wants it and improved local public transport connectivity across the country bringing standards closer to London.

According to the IPPR report the Tories have failed miserably on many of these missions in the North. There is a direct correlation between health and prosperity, with regional inequality having a direct impact on longevity. The best example of this being the playground of the rich, Monaco, which enjoys one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Currently life expectancy in UK is “[amongst the worst of advanced economies...](#)” This statistic is compounded for those living outside of the South East. On “current trend”, the regional life [expectancy gap](#) is not expected to close until 2080. Mortality rates in Blackpool, Manchester and Hull resemble “those in Turkey.” Those living in the “bottom quartile of local authorities can expect to live 10 fewer years in good health than those in the top quartile...”

Far from reducing the pay gap by 2030, the report finds regional inequalities in wealth have almost doubled from £37,000 in 2010 to £71,000 in 2020. Even the wealthier are affected, with a current wealth gap of £195,400, reaching £228,800 per head by the end of the decade.

The IPPR report is a little more optimistic showing employment faring a bit better, with an overall rise in regional employment rates. However well paid, secure work has not been “evenly regionally distributed or accessible,” with job creation concentrated in

London and the South East. The gap is set to widen by the beginning of the next decade on present trends, with London's employment rate at 66%, whilst the North East's will barely reach 56%, symbolising an entrenched 'opportunity gap' between North and South.

### Northern transport cheated

Transport is key when it comes to Levelling Up the North. Following the scrapping of HS2's Northern leg from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds, "[Network North](#)" was created. Injecting £36 billion from HS2 costs, it was described by the government as a "tidal wave of new investment" connecting parts of the North of England with road and rail schemes. In the first wave of Network North projects, it was announced £235 million was to be allocated to improve roads in London. Described as "good news" by Greg Hands Minister for London, it was described as #\*\*\*\*%!!!! by [others](#).

In a case of giving with one hand whilst taking away with the other, the IPPR report of 2021 revealed that, "Over the past decade, if regions of the North had received the same per person [as London] transport spend they would have received £86 billion more."

### Confused... you won't be

The acceptance or rejection of bids, despite clear aims and criteria seem completely arbitrary. For instance, part of Labour controlled Blackpool council's bid was a success, receiving £40 million for a new carbon-neutral university, but their bid to help with hotel and transport plans, with tourism contributing more than £1.7 billion to the local economy along with over 22,000 jobs, was [rejected](#). Meanwhile North Tyneside Council's bid in the North East, considered the most deprived region in the country, was [rejected](#).

### Levelling Up imbalance or bias

The Guardian [reported](#) in September 2022 that: "Projects in the South East benefited from £9.2m from the fund in the year to 31 March 2022. By comparison, the North East only received £4.9m, despite being the poorest region in Britain by disposable household income."

Morecambe's Eden Project and Cardiff's new rail line are touted as examples of northern Levelling Up funding success stories. However again the Guardian, in their February 2022 [analyses](#), revealed: "Some of the wealthiest parts of England, including areas represented by government ministers, have so far been allocated 10

times more money per capita than the poorest..." FT research [found that](#): "11 areas in England represented solely by MPs from the Conservative party that are in the lower half of national deprivation rankings have been put in the fund's highest category... while some of the most deprived places in the country have been classed as 'priority two'".

### In plain sight

There seems to be no limit in how low levelling up Tories will go. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's recent budget bung of £242 million from the Levelling Up fund to Canary Wharf and Barking Riverside was met by many with [anger and incredulity](#). Amongst other things, the funds will go towards building 8,000 houses. 800 of these will be in Canary Wharf, where the cost of a new build 2 bed flat will set you back anywhere from the low end of the market at £600,000 to £5 million, a high price tag for Michael Gove's first time buyers in a housing shortage crisis. It seems somewhat apt, that this hub for global finance and commerce is where the Tory Levelling Up mask finally slips. The criteria of "need, income and health", rendered meaningless.

### Even winners are losers

The North East, a region that has seen [children in care](#) rise by 77% since 2009 in comparison to London which has experienced a reduction of 25% over the same period, was given £100 million in the same budget. Whilst grateful, Newcastle City Council [pointed out](#) the funding: "...still doesn't come close to reversing the damage of nearly 15 years of austerity in terms of the public funding our region has seen stripped away, which stands at almost £370m in Newcastle alone."

### In the service of one's self

Rishi Sunak, when [addressing](#) the good Tories of Tunbridge Wells in 2022 said: "We inherited a bunch of formulas from Labour that shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas and that needed to be undone. I started the work of undoing that." He has been true to his word.

The unelected PM's North Yorkshire constituency of Richmond has been allocated the highest Levelling Up ranking of '[priority one](#)'. Described in a tourist guide as "one of Britain's most beautiful and vibrant market towns. With its iconic castle, fine historic buildings, sweeping cobbled market place and leafy riverside vistas..." However such was its "need", one concerned resident, in response to their £19 million Levelling Up windfall was [reported](#) by iNews as saying, "...Richmond needs tidying up a bit..." She thought, along with some

fellow residents, other parts of the country were more in need of the cash.

Barrow-in-Furness also comes within the 'priority one' category. Falling within the 20% most deprived nationally in terms of income deprivation, Central Barrow is at 3%, with an average income £100 lower than the region's average. According to the [Office of National Statistics](#), Barrow also has the lowest life expectancy for girls across "the three nations". Barrow received the lesser sum of £16 million, obviously not meeting the same criteria of "need" as the PM's constituency.

### All aboard the gravy train

Other Tory MPs and Ministers were aboard the Levelling Up gravy train. Sajid Javid's constituency of [Bromsgrove](#) received £14.5 million when he was health secretary. Fellow traveller Mark Harper's [Forest of Dean](#) and Sherwood constituency received £20 million. [Central Bedfordshire](#), partly represented by Nadine Dorries from 2005 – 2023 received a whopping £26.7 million when she was culture secretary. Sarah Dines Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding October 2022 to November 2023 received [£13.3 million](#).

Meanwhile Sunak announced at the Tory Party conference in October 2023 that £20 million in Levelling Up funds would be distributed to, as reported by [The Evening Standard](#): "55 of the most "overlooked" towns across the UK in the next 10 years... Of these 55 selected towns, 34 are constituencies that are represented by the Conservatives, which equates to 62 per cent."

### Tinkering at the edges of inequality

The IPPR report has identified an inequality in tax as one of the main drivers in the UK's regional divide stating: "Our laws, regulations and tax system support the growth of wealth over income from work." Capital Gains Tax, derived from assets such as stocks, bonds, property etc. is subject to a substantially lower tax rate than ordinary income tax. IPPR revealed, "One neighbourhood of 6,400 people in Kensington had as much in the capital gains as Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle combined..."

Working class people are not only disadvantaged by the disparity of tax that substantially favours the rich but also by the disadvantages this tax disparity brings to their regions and communities. Meanwhile Labour has [no plans](#) to increase capital gains tax (CGT) but rather tinkering at the edges by possibly looking to change CGT exemptions.

Northern industry saw George Stephenson's first steam locomotive, the

Rocket, revolutionise the British railway system and the way people travelled, ironically not a facility Northern train travellers enjoy today. The North was the home of heavy industries such as coal mining, steel and shipbuilding and a key driver in the nation's wealth creation. Decimated in the 1980s and 1990s, it has now all but disappeared.

The emergence of a post-industrial Britain saw the North with its face pressed up against the window for decades, looking in on the concentration of wealth in London and the South East. Fed up of being treated as if on the periphery of the second richest country in Europe, they helped land the Westminster Uniparty a [bloody nose](#) in the EU referendum. George Galloway's by-election victory in Rochdale shows it can be done again at the next general election.

### Let them eat Blackpool rock

Scott Benton former MP for Blackpool South, resigned following a [Times newspaper](#) sting. The Times was investigating allegations the gambling industry was securing support from MPs in return for financial reward in an effort to protect their profits from possible tougher government regulations. [The Guardian](#) reported the MP: "...reportedly offered to lobby ministers on behalf of the gambling industry and leak a confidential policy document for up to £4,000 a month." The average full time wage in Blackpool is lower than the majority of towns and cities, and the average [life expectancy](#) is 10.3 years lower than the rest of England.

The Uniparty do not work in the best interests of the British people. A vote for Labour or Conservative in the next general election, is a guarantee of more austerity and a deepening regional divide. Depending on where you live, you will experience higher unemployment, lack of opportunity, lower quality of life and an earlier death.

### Building a better Britain

The Workers Party of Britain see the engagement of the British people in the North and left-behind communities all over the country as integral to the solution of Britain's regional disparity, participating in building a strong socialist economy that will see a "redistribution of wealth and power in favour of working people," as laid out in our manifesto. This coming year is our opportunity to send a resounding message to the Uni party that we've had enough.

# Workers Party of Britain Manifesto —July 2024 Elections

## The Workers Party of Britain:

is committed to the redistribution of wealth and power in favour of working people.

is committed to a reversal of policies aimed at deindustrialisation & to exploring innovative demands for workers control and participation in the future of industry through our trade unions.

supports the call for a Net Zero Referendum as soon as possible to create a national debate on who profits from these targets and on what terms. We will oppose ULEZ initiatives because of the costs they impose on working households and small businesses.

promises to undertake a major review of pensions policy with the ultimate aim of restoring a life-long commitment through earnings to adequate pension provision with all workers having the option of retiring at 60.

will legislate to support workers and managers in the acquisition of productive enterprises and their assets that otherwise would be closed or distributed to shareholders where the company is either intended to be sold to a foreign owner or to be closed in order to export production overseas.

supports campaigning to preserve the right to use cash. We are not Luddites when it comes to digital currency and fintech – our demand, however, is that this and other technologies, including blockchain and artificial intelligence, are under sufficient community control to ensure positive social and economic outcomes for the working class and the vulnerable.

will immediately increase the personal tax threshold for the poorest paid, removing tax entirely from the first £21,200 of wages for two million low-paid workers, and at the same time we commit to a one-off wealth tax on all estates valued fairly at over £10 million to make a start on redressing the colossal gap between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population.

will ensure working class representation throughout the governance of the Bank of England.

will fully renationalise the NHS and commit to significant spending on social and economic infrastructure and implement major efficiency savings.

will take a decisive role in the pharmaceuticals industry on which our NHS depends. An entirely private pharmaceuticals industry is inimical alongside a public health system. Without close monitoring and significant control, it offers a recipe for profiteering at best and dangerous malpractice at worst.

will support Britain's children by committing to free public travel arrangements, mirroring those that currently exist for children in London by offering them to the rest of the country. Furthermore, we will support the provision of free good quality and nutritious breakfast and lunch meals during term time to all children in school without means testing.

by committing to a review of policing priorities, will support a refocus on street safety and estate crime as an antidote to policing by Twitter and criminalising speech and thought.

makes no apology for our support for Palestine and the people of Gaza during the current brutal onslaught which has been enabled by Labour and Tories alike. We call for a single state in which all those born in Palestine-Israel can live in peace with equal rights.

is committed to offering a long term and well organised socialist alternative to the corrupt Labour Party, which is now nothing more than a wolf in sheep's clothing.

will undertake a thoroughgoing review of our defence and foreign policy.

is calling for a referendum on membership of NATO with a view to a national debate on all our collective security arrangements. Our own position is clear – under current circumstances, we will continue to campaign for Britain to leave NATO as a clear and present danger to the security of the British population and seek new collective security arrangements centred on the protection of peoples and not of states or industries.

Read the Manifesto in detail at <https://workerspartybritain.org/manifesto-britain-deserves-better/>

## George Galloway in Parliament

Below is a selection of George Galloway's work in the House of Commons; we have omitted votes and most questions. All contributions available at [https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/10218/george\\_galloway/rochdale](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/10218/george_galloway/rochdale)

[8/5/24 David Lammy (Urgent Question): To ask the [Deputy Foreign Secretary](#) to make a statement on the war in Gaza.]

[...]

### George Galloway

The [Deputy Foreign Secretary](#)'s answers today are virtually identical to those he gave, including to me, last Tuesday. The situation has escalated, but the Government's response remains the same. There are 600,000 child hostages in Rafah alone. There is no proof of life from them, but millions of our people are watching on their phones today the proof of death and mutilation of many of them. The Government say they are doing everything they can, but they are not. You could now stop sending weapons to the people who are raining down this death and misery, and the Labour party could ask you to do that, but did not.

### 9/5/24. Topical Question to the minister in charge of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Steve Barclay)

GG

I am so old that I grew up in a land without plastic; a better Britain wrapped in brown paper and string. Last year, our households on this small island handled 90,000 million tonnes of plastic. It is indestructible—it cannot be burned and we cannot get rid of it. Will the [Minister](#) support the global plastics treaty campaigned for by Greenpeace and others?

### 9/5/24 Business of the House

[Addressing Penny Mordaunt

(Leader of the House) on arms sales to Israel]

I have always said that the [Conservatives](#) made a mistake in overlooking the right hon. Lady, and she has shown that again today. In that regard, can she help me with what I think is a narrow but important problem? Both Front-Bench teams support the continuation of arms sales to Israel, but the great [majority](#) of [Back Benchers](#), even on the Conservative side, would like the opportunity to vote otherwise. That has been stopped—stymied—in the past. I hope that she can find a way for the House to freely express its attitude to this question. The Government, and the Labour Front Benchers, might get a rude awakening and a big surprise.

### Substandard Housing

13 May 2024

I hope it is duly noted that I was the one-vote majority. I dedicate this debate to a two-year-old boy. His name was Awaab Ishak, and he was the boy who died of damp. Awaab died because he lived in a house so affected by dampness and the mould that ineluctably...

Britain is a rich country that can gaily increase its defence budget, that can boast of its wealth on international league tables, yet millions of its citizens are living in inadequate housing and, in Awaab's case, dying in inadequate accommodation. It is a national disgrace, and I am grateful to the Members who have stayed for this debate, which affects everyone's constituency, or almost...

As I omitted to mention in response to the previous intervention by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), we have a situation where rents go up and services go down. That is true in Labour authorities all over the country. I call them "so-called housing associations"; I

was always opposed to them and I never supported the arm's length management organisation. Please, I prefer...

### Palestinians: Visa Scheme -

13 May 2024

Debate following an e-petition calling for a visa scheme for Gaza Palestinians.

[Most contributors to the debate asked why there was a Visa scheme for Ukrainians but not for Palestinians.]

**George Galloway:** I am going to leave aside the fact that this is all entirely hypothetical at this point, because Israel has seized the Rafah crossing in absolute breach of the [Camp David](#) accords, which have the power of international law, having been adopted by the Security Council. The Philadelphi corridor is completely sealed, and this is the fourth day in a row on which exactly no food or medical aid—none—has entered Gaza. Therefore, even if the [British Government](#) move their show to the border, no Palestinian would be able to get [biometric](#) tests anyway.

I congratulate [Cat Smith](#) on securing the debate and commiserate with the [Minister](#), who will have to try to answer the literally unanswerable to defend the literally indefensible. Sometimes one detests a Government policy but can understand why they are doing it, but it is impossible to fathom why the Government are resisting the entirely inexpensive demand that this debate and petition ask for. Hundreds of the signatories—391 of them—are my constituents in Rochdale, who are always looking for ways to demonstrate their support for the Palestinian cause, as you will know, Mr Vickers. I declare an interest: one of my parliamentary staff is one of those trying to get their family out of Gaza to no avail.

The attendance at this debate is evidence of the massive support that there is in the country for the plight of the Palestinian people to be at least palliated by our Government, and that could be done so inexpensively that I literally cannot fathom why the Minister is going to rise and resist the demands made by the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood. Leaving aside all the historical reasons why they should, there is the fact that it was in this very building that the entire Palestinian tragedy was authored, when on behalf of one people our Government promised to a second people the land that belonged to a third people. You would think that that was a matter of historical guilt for our Government that they might want to mitigate in some way, leaving aside the fact that hundreds of our soldiers, police officers, civil servants and staff of this very House were murdered in the [King David](#) hotel. Our soldiers were left hanging by piano wire in the orange groves of Jaffa, booby-trapped. Should the Government not have a scintilla of guilt and responsibility for what has happened to the Palestinian people in the past and in the last seven months?

It is not true that our military aid to Israel is minuscule. If we define it by completed pieces of ordnance, it may be, but our components are in most of Israel's bombs and rockets that are falling down on the poor people in Gaza, who are defenceless prisoners in what the then [Prime Minister](#), now Foreign Secretary David Cameron described as the largest open-air prison in the world. He went on to say that it must not be allowed to remain so, and that was in 2010. Now that he is the Foreign Secretary in 2024, he turns his face away from the people in that prison camp that he said must not be allowed to remain so.

It is not just ordnance: we have flown 200 missions from our sovereign base in Akrotiri in Cyprus. Who knew that we had a sovereign base in independent Cyprus, a European Union and allied country? We have the right

to fly whatever we like out of that sovereign base, and 200 times we have flown spying missions over Gaza for the edification of Netanyahu and his gang in power in [Tel Aviv](#).

Our contribution to this massacre is very significant, both historically and contemporaneously. What are people from all sides asking here, some of them actually capital-F friends of Israel? They are all asking for one small thing: that you at least allow people who are citizens here and contributing here to get their old mother out of Gaza, rather than see her, perhaps on their telephone, being torn to shreds by a bomb that would not have been as effective if it were not for the components being given from British factories and targets being assisted by [RAF](#) jets flying out of Akrotiri.

For goodness' sake, Minister, have some political nous. Millions of people in Britain want you to do something. This you can do with the stroke of a pen, and it would not cost you anything in your popularity stakes with Netanyahu in Tel Aviv.

**Written Answers - Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission: Political Parties: Registration**

13 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, if she will hold discussions with the Electoral Commission on the reasons for which it rejected the application from (a) Kingston Independent Residents Group and (b) Workers Party Britain on registering a description that included the leaders of those parties.

**Written Answers - Ministry of Defence: Yemen: Military Intervention**

15 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence,

what the cost to the public purse has been of the UK's (a) participation in Operation Prosperity Guardian and (b) military air strikes on Yemen.

**Written Answers - Department for Work and Pensions: Child Benefit**

16 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the two-child limit for benefits.

**Written Answers - Department for Education: Schools: Rochdale**

17 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the reduction in the level of real-terms funding since 2010 on schools in Rochdale constituency; and if she will make it her policy to increase the level of real-term funding for schools in Rochdale constituency to 2010 levels.

**Written Answers - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Plastics: Recycling**

20 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a circular economy strategy for plastics which sets (a) targets and (b) measures for the (i) elimination and (ii) recycling of single-use plastics.

**Written Answers - Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Homelessness: Young People**

20 May 2024

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a strategy to tackle youth homelessness.

## An Open Letter to Jeremy Corbyn

I began this letter to urge you to stand in your current seat. I've now updated it to give reasons why you were right.

On the issue of left-wingers standing against top-down-chosen Labour candidates: there is no danger of letting in a Tory or Liberal Democrat in North Islington. The Labour majority has been larger than the total vote for the second candidate in every election since 2010. And polls show not just a collapse in Tory support, but a general feeling that Liberal-Democrats don't represent very much. Meriting the mocking '*keep politics out of politics*' slogan that was thrown at the Social Democrat break-away. And which they merited by letting the corrupt old Liberal party swallow and erase them.

In your case, I am sure you found it a painful issue of loyalty, in a way most of today's politicians do not. And were right about who had first claim. You defy a party machine that grabbed power using Starmer's false promise of sharing your values. You showed respect for the 34,000 who voted for you in the bad year of 2019.

Look carefully at numbers. They and the 40,000 in 2017 were well above the Labour norm. The constituency has been Labour since 1937, but never so decisively as when you led Labour.

Four decades of Thatcherism have made some decent housing almost worthless, while numbers of families without regular secure places to live are abnormally high for a rich country. The USA has more people sleeping in the streets, but post-Thatcher Britain has more people without secure rented homes.

The promise of a property-owning democracy was phoney. When I was in my 20s, most people like me could buy their own home. That was when council housing kept a balance, but most voters never saw the connection. Buying one's home is now almost impossible even for skilled workers and middle-class professionals, unless their parents are rich enough to help them.

\*

I was born in 1950, and in the 1970s

began a rather poor poem calling myself '*half century child, expecting the millennium*'. What we got was an unexpected mix of good and bad. Personal computers and instant global communication, way ahead of most science fiction dreams for the near future. No humans beyond Earth's backyard, after the brief venture to the EarthMoon, but robotic probes have shown us unexpected wonders. And a lot of unexpected gains from a left viewpoint – you mentioned what you'd done for your part of London. But much has been blighted by the horrible economics and anti-welfare policies of Thatcher. And by Tony Blair's willing endorsement of these, after John Major briefly sounded like a return to a more authentic Toryism.

Your later leadership also nudged the Conservatives back to something saner. Your main problem was that Cameron had not just promised a Brexit referendum, but accepted that it could be won by a simple majority. There was no need for that: super-majorities are a normal part of democracy. The tiny margin must have included people who vote mindlessly for anything that lets them vent their general frustrations.

Then Parliament disgraced itself by repeatedly voting down all practical solutions, after the Tories lost their slim parliamentary majority by mistakenly thinking that Labour would be crushed under your leadership in 2017.

People voted Tory for the first time in 2019, because they knew that a strong Tory majority would settle an issue that was hugely damaging when left hanging. And because Brexit voters felt they had been swindled, with Labour the main culprit. It was not your leadership, since there was no such trend in 2017. A record overall Labour vote, in fact, though the Tory vote also increased from the 2015 total.<sup>1</sup>

And who was the supposedly brilliant organiser of Labour's Brexit tactics, at a time when one option was to accept Theresa May's much milder scheme? Starmer!

Lost Labour seats were mostly

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_United_Kingdom_general_election)

seats with a strong Brexit vote.<sup>2</sup> I did a detailed study showing this, available on-line,<sup>3</sup> and also as a PDF.<sup>4</sup> But you were too nice, and accepted blame.

What happened with Starmer as leader was a return to the willing endorsement of Thatcherism. He did this even though the whole New Right project was visibly failing for most people.

The Thatcher / Reagan promises of low taxes, a small state, and fewer regulations were never met. Only the multi-millionaires and big corporations pay lower taxes. Privatising the state industries has failed for British Rail, and failed much more clearly and disgustingly for water. There are far more regulations, including more options for police to enter private homes without first convincing a judge that a warrant is justified. If they were ever sincere, they were seriously ineffective.

They relied on the dogma that whatever benefits the selfish interests of the rich will eventually benefit everyone. Trickle-down. An idea invented by Adam Smith, who talked as if things that made a commercial profit were the same as things that increased real material wealth.<sup>5</sup> But he slipped in the concept with no supporting evidence.

The raw facts are that the Mixed Economy that the West has run from the 1940s grew faster than Classical Capitalism ever had.<sup>6</sup> And what we've had from the 1980s has been a twisted version of the Mixed Economy system that developed in the 1930s and 1940s. Called capitalism, but actually The System that Dare Not Speak Its Name.

<sup>2</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/editorials-from-labour-affairs/the-brexiteer-defeat/labours-lost-seats-causes/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/why-labour-lost-in-december-2019/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/problems-41-labour-coolhearts.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading-adam-smith-faked-his-most-famous-claim/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

Corporatism, but giving most of its rewards to a multi-millionaire class who have done nothing that wasn't just as likely without the New Right.

The internet and advanced electronics were products of a Military-Industrial Complex that allowed basic research in the hope of getting something useful militarily. Applying the socialist idea of Production for Use, not Profit, but only if the use might be military. But a lot of it was then applied to things people needed, and might never have had if all research and development was tied to an immediate hope of profit.

Much cleaner was the World Wide Web, a hypertext system running on the internet and imagined separately, before there were effective ways to run it. This was given its first useful form by English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee. He did this while working at CERN, where subatomic research has no obvious benefit beyond the joy of discovering new truths. If faster-than-light travel or anti-gravity are possible then they are almost certain to be discovered via such 'impractical' research: but it's just as likely they never will be possible. Very unlikely to be feasible within the lifetimes of anyone now alive. But that's also true of most astronomy, archaeology etc. Most people accept that knowledge for its own sake is excellent, with gains for consumers an occasional bonus.

What was done by Bill Gates, Elon Musk etc. would have been done by someone else had they been missing. Plenty were motivated, often without thought of profit. Their gigantic fortunes distort everything.

\*

Claiming merits for business people that far exceed what they've done in the real world, the New Right privately scorn the merits of the rest of us. They hide this, of course, especially those needing to be elected by people they see as ignorant and try to make even more ignorant.

And talk rubbish about the past. Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries made the basis for the modern world, but that included some of its worse aspects. Government was intrusive, but not democratic till the 1880s. Till the 1830s it ran a race-based slavery in the New World that was much worse than other systems of slavery. In most places, including the brutal Spanish and Portuguese settlements, a slave was a member of a lower class that individuals could rise out of.

Our rulers – what I call Upper London – drained wealth out of the Indian subcontinent, and stamped out the early

pattern of Britons marrying and merging with the regional elites. It became strictly racist, which the rival Spanish and Portuguese and French systems were not. It forced farmers to grow opium that was then used to force open Imperial China.

Ironclad warships did not begin with the romantic duel of the *Virginia* and the *Monitor* in the US Civil War: they began decades earlier with an East India Company ship called the *Nemesis*, an armed paddle-steamer that was decisive in the First Opium War.<sup>7</sup>

There has never been a shortage of money for warfare. And there was plenty for the rich, when the rich as a class stood to lose a chunk of their fortunes in the 2008 crash. Austerity was then imposed, not because government debt could not be sustained, but because financial speculators felt better if government debts were kept small.

People gaining from this twisted version of a Mixed Economy made by the New Right include MPs and powerful officials in the Tory Party. And similar people in the Liberal Democrats, where the socialist aspects from the Social Democrats have vanished without trace.

And sadly, this also applies to most of the MPs and powerful officials in the Labour Party. Amidst all the other quotas – excellent in themselves – Labour had nothing about class origin or type of work. Student radicals from the 1960s and early 1970s – people much like myself – got an absurdly large proportion of the winnable seats when older MPs retired or died. And far too many came from media, academia, or permanent political work in administrations or think tanks. You could call these the Opinions Industry, where truth can seem to be whatever you say it is.

While some remained sincere leftists, with yourself as one, far too many defected.

It's about class, and some human groups grabbing more than their share.

Radicals should not however use the 99% against 1% argument. There is a comfortable Next Nine who are a mix of small winners and minor losers. Who can hope to rise into the elite, though mostly unrealistically.

There are also more people who think they are part of the 1% than are actually in it. A US survey found that 19% of them thought they qualified, and many more expected to get there. Britons are less gullible when it comes to social mobility; but everyone should be clearer if one talks about a multi-millionaire

class. It is possible nowadays to have net wealth of a million dollars or equivalents and still not quite qualify for the richest 1%.

There are millions of this elite. It is also good to speak of them and not just the billionaires. Motives and ideas are similar, and the billionaires could not flourish without the lesser super-rich supporting them. And millions beyond them, who hope to end up in the elite.

But with all that, the West's total economy does not grow as fast as it did before the New Right. And they are losing influence in the Global South. Often losing to ideas that all of us in the West are sorry to see spreading.<sup>8</sup>

The whole Thatcher / Reagan experiment has demonstrated in a most costly manner that libertarian ideas were junk.

\*

You were good for the Labour Party. Blair and Starmer were bad for it. My own experience reinforced what I'd seen from national politics.

While living in Peterborough, I joined a local Labour Party that initially had a good atmosphere. And decayed into a few people bitching about how bad the local Labour Party was: part of a general malaise.

I also found the pro-Labour region I was living in had been detached from Peterborough constituency and drowned in a sea of rural Tory voters. It was suspected that this was to save the redefined Peterborough for Brian Mawhinney, then a leading Tory. In fact he switched to the safe rural seat, and Labour won Peterborough in 1997.

But it was never my sort of place. Coventry I feel more in tune with.

After being eventually disappointed with my local constituency branch in Peterborough, I found it barely existing in my part of Coventry. Called to meetings where the officials had no interest in us except as an audience for their cleverness. Except it changed when you became leader, and Labour was revitalised for a few good years.

And now de-vitalised. Sad.

My constituency remains Labour. I thought it good that our current MP had been working as a pharmacist at a cancer unit. Taiwo Owatemi is one of the few MPs from outside the Opinions Industry. She has so far backed Starmer, but I assume she will take a strong stand on NHS futures.

<sup>8</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis\\_\(1839\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_(1839))

To my regret, I thought it needless to help campaign for her in 2019. The election was sure to be lost, but the seat seemed safe Labour. She actually won by the smallest majority in the seat's history, a mere 208.<sup>9</sup>

The same thing happened in Coventry South, with Zarah Sultana scraping home with a majority of 401.<sup>10</sup>

2019 was mostly about Brexit, but two normally-safe seats were nearly lost after switching from white men to non-white women. Much still to do, clearly. But I'm assuming they are safe this time round. At age 73, I plan to live long and spend most of my time making broader studies of what's gone wrong and how we can fix it.

Back in the year 2000, I did what seems to be the only left-wing study of Adam Smith. Hardly anyone took an interest. I suppose denouncing capitalism as if it were unchanging is more emotionally satisfying than explaining that New Right claims are a cover for a twisted Mixed Economy

Even without an abolition of

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coventry\\_North\\_West\\_\(UK\\_Parliament\\_constituency\)#Elections\\_in\\_the\\_2020s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coventry_North_West_(UK_Parliament_constituency)#Elections_in_the_2020s)

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coventry\\_South\\_\(UK\\_Parliament\\_constituency\)#Elections\\_in\\_the\\_2020s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coventry_South_(UK_Parliament_constituency)#Elections_in_the_2020s)

capitalism, which I see as a long-term aim, the system could be run much better. You could cite real-world examples: much of Continental Europe, and especially Scandinavia. With the best being Finland, and there is a book with hard facts called *Finntopia*, which people should read.

You could sensibly say that your own work made North Islington less distant from 'Finntopia' than it might have been, but there is a long way to go.

In the modern world, new divisions open up. And the denunciations of peace demonstrators as anti-Semites reminds me of how just the same trickery was used against you. And which you were too nice about.

At the time, I tried to shift the debate by pointing out that surveys showed just as much anti-semitism among Tories and Liberal Democrats. I compared it to people making lurid headlines claiming Tunbridge Wells had a drugs and murder problem.<sup>11</sup> The place is not free of those things, but has less of them than the British average.

No one important wanted to slander Tunbridge Wells. They were out to

<sup>11</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/2018-labour-affairs/2018-05-magazine/2018-05-fewer-anti-semites-in-labour-than-tories/>

sabotage a Labour Party that threatened to give voters what the voters actually wanted.

If you take up the issue again, you might remind everyone about assassinated Israeli Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Killed by an extremist who saw him as a traitor to Zionism. And though it's agreed the assassin was a lone fanatic, it's not so far from what the current Israeli government is now saying. Their attitude to Jewish protestors who want any concessions at all to Palestinians.

Your immediate strategy seems to be to remind the voters of North Islington that you have been good for them. You are not calling Starmer a traitor while he still has the option not to be.

While he might notice that the New Right is a sinking ship. Not just the Tories: everyone who has stuck to the twisted version of the Mixed Economy that has been harming us since the 1980s.

Left-wing moderation is what comes naturally to you. I hope and expect that you succeed in it.

Yours sincerely,

Gwydion. M. Williams

## Palestine Links

[Surveillance and interference: Israel's covert war on the ICC exposed \(Yuval Abraham & Meron Rapoport, 28 May 2024\)](#)

[German foreign minister says she saw non-existent 7 Oct. rape video \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 27 May 2024\)](#)

[Can Palestinians imagine a future with Israelis after this war? \(Mahmoud Mushtaha, +972, 27 May 2024\)](#)

[Doctor, teacher and children killed by Israel in Jenin \(Tamara Nassar, Electronic Intifada, 23 May 2024\)](#)

[Memories that haunt \(Hadeel al-Barrawi, Electronic Intifada, 22 May 2024\)](#)

[Cementing its military footprint, Israel is transforming Gaza's geography \(Ruwaida Kamal Amer, +972, 21 May 2024\)](#)

[The Dead End of Liberal American Zionism \(Abba Solomon & Norman Solomon, Counterpunch, 21 May 2024\)](#)

[ICC has no evidence for 7 October rapes, documents indicate \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 21 May 2024\)](#)

[Gazans 'shackled and blindfolded' at Israel hospital \(BBC, 21 May 2024\)](#)

[Netanyahu responds to 'outrageous decision' by ICC prosecutor to seek arrest warrants against him and Gallant \(All Israel News, 20 May 2024\)](#)

[ICC warrants both historic and cynical \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 20 May 2024\)](#)

[Israeli rights group admits it helped spread false claims about 7 October rapes \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 19 May 2024\)](#)

[Court overturns German ban on surgeon who witnessed Gaza war crimes \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 15 May 2024\)](#)

[Israel astroturfed Eurovision vote but lost anyway, govt admits \(Wyatt Reed, Grayzone, 14 May 2024\)](#)

[Gaza: Israelis Attacking Known Aid Worker Locations \(Human Rights Watch, 14 May 2024\)](#)

[Israel's war on Gaza: Ben Gvir urges 'emigration' of Palestinians at Gaza settler rally \(Middle East Eye, 14 May 2024\)](#)

[Strapped down, blindfolded, held in diapers: Israeli whistleblowers detail abuse of Palestinians in shadowy detention center \(CNN, 11 May 2024\)](#)

[Debunking "Screams Before Silence." Sheryl Sandberg's 7 Oct. "mass rape" film \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 4 May 2024\)](#)

[To Israel's horror, Hamas brings 'two-state solution' back into focus \(The Cradle, 2 May 2024\)](#)

[Israeli Minister Ben Gvir said to ask IDF chief why so many Gaza gunmen arrested: 'Can't you kill some?' \(Times of Israel, 27 April 2024\)](#)

['Brutal' Is a Word Mostly Reserved for Palestinian Violence \(Luca Goldmansour, Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, 17 April 2024\)](#)

[The truth about October 7: Filmmaker Richard Sanders discusses his Al Jazeera film with Peter Osborne \(Middle East Eye, 2 April 2024\)](#)

## The fate of Labour's early land tax legislation

By Eamon Dyas

The previous article in this series explained the circumstances in which the second minority Labour administration found itself when it came to power in 1929. Despite the unfavourable political and economic situation that administration managed to pass the 1930 Housing Act which, although unambitious in nature, did succeed in advancing the housing issue on a modest scale. The article also described the aspects of that legislation which attempted to address the intractable problem where council housing had remained largely affordable only for the more affluent sections of the working-class. We will now look in more detail at the fate of the last piece of Labour legislation that had the potential to be beneficial to council house provision before the Second World War. That was the proposal for a land values tax introduced by the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden to the House of Commons between May and July 1931 and which was part of his Finance Bill (budget) that was later passed by the First National Government administration in September 1931.

### The Land Values Tax of 1931

During the recession of the early 1930s at a time when hundreds of factories were facing bankruptcy and companies couldn't pay dividends the growth in urbanisation, transport and utility infrastructure created a situation where land was dramatically increasing in value. It was a paradox of the recession that while the economy floundered the property market was vibrant. In his speech introducing his Land Values Tax Snowden recounted how the creation of new districts and town extensions in suburban areas had brought the question of land and its value to the forefront of the public's mind. He pointed to the fact that sites had recently been sold in the centre of Liverpool at the rate of more than one million pounds an acre. In referring to the building boom he quoted a recent article in the *Sunday Express* which pointed out that

"owners of derelict estates, farmers on the verge of ruin, business men with unimposing country seats, middle class speculators, even butchers with grazing lands – all have silently profited by the building boom. Their profits run into tens of millions." According to the estimate of a leading estate agent at the time £120,000,000 had already changed hands.

Snowden also explained that the idea of such a tax had been part of the programme of the Liberal Party for around 40 years and had also been part of the Labour Party programme since its inception. He further stated that:

"Measures embodying it in the Conservative Parliaments have on six occasions passed a Second Reading: 600 municipalities in the country, mainly Conservative, have petitioned Parliament to deal with the matter; and conferences of local authorities are regularly held to impress upon Parliament its importance. Eminent economists have given support to the proposals: Select Committees and Royal Commissions have been appointed by Parliament to inquire into this question. Indeed, so widespread is the demand for legislation of this description, that it might almost be said that it is a question which transcends all political differences." (Chancellor of the Exchequer, House of Commons debates, 4 May 1931).

As Snowden indicated, the idea of a land tax had a long pedigree. It was shown in part 8 of this series, how in 1909 Churchill and Lloyd George had been active in support of such an idea. Similarly, as had been argued in 1909, Snowden in 1931 asserted the principle that:

"If private individuals continue to possess a nominal claim to the land, they must pay a rent to the community for the enjoyment of it, and they cannot be permitted to enjoy that privilege to the detriment of the welfare of the community.

"Land differs from all other commodities in several respects.

The land was given by the Creator, not for the use of dukes but for the equal use of all His people. A restriction in the freedom to use land is a restriction on human liberty and freedom. Land, I said, is unlike other commodities in several respects. To restrict the use of land by arbitrary will of its owner, enhances its price, raises rents, hampers industry, and prevents municipal development and the promotion of social amenities. Every increase in population, every expansion of industry, every scientific development, every improvement in transport, all expenditure of public money, indeed, every child born, adds to the rent of land. Rent enters into the price of every article produced, and into every public service." (Ibid.)

It was felt that the owners of a commodity that possessed this unique feature should therefore contribute to the needs of the community "by whose existence the value of the land has been so largely created". Snowden saw the land values tax as the means by which that contribution was to be made.

However, before such a tax could be imposed it was necessary to complete a record of the ownership of the land to which it would be applied. This required the creation of a governmental body charged with the task. Snowden's proposal called for the establishment of such a body that would be composed of "a large staff" with the capacity of recording the land valuation details of "between 10,000,000 and 12,000,000 separate hereditaments". The cost of establishing this body was estimated at between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000 but that cost was to be spread across three financial years.

Snowden's land values tax proposal received its Second Reading on 19 May and its Third Reading on 3 July 1931. However it seems that the Third Reading on 3 July 1931 merely established the principle with the funding to put that principle into effect being dependent on the passing of his Finance Bill (Budget). As such, its potential application had to await the later endorsement

of the Budget. But even then, if the funding was to be passed as part of that Budget, given the logistics of the listing and collation of those land holdings that would be subject to the tax, there would be an inevitable delay before the time came for the application of the tax (which was to be levied annually at the rate of one penny in the pound) which was due to take place from 1933-34 onwards. Snowden envisaged that his Budget would be endorsed by Parliament by 1 August 1931 at which time the initial recording process would be initiated. The valuations thus applied to the recorded land would remain in place for the purpose of the tax until a period of five years by which time a renewed valuation would be undertaken from 1 August 1936, "and so on at intervals of five years." He further stated that although the benefits from the tax would take a time to accrue to Exchequer there was, in his opinion, a more important and immediate advantage. That was because the existence of such a tax would incentivise the owners of vacant and inactive land to bring it into use on pain of having to pay an annual tax on it. This in turn would lead to a drop in the price of land.

As things turned out Snowden's Budget proposals including the land values tax was not passed by the Labour Government but rather by the impromptu National Government that emerged on 25 August 1931 in the aftermath of the leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald, dissolving the minority Labour administration the evening before.

### **The intervention of the Gold Standard**

By August 1931 the forces building up in the British economy were such that any further advance of the housing issue along lines previously laid down by Labour was to hit the buffers. These forces had been developing since the end of the First World War but their full implications for housing only became clear with the 1933 Housing Act introduced by Ramsay MacDonald's National Government. That Housing Act was briefly mentioned in the previous article in this series and will be gone into in the next instalment. A year earlier Ramsay MacDonald had

decided to put the "national interest" ahead of class politics by dissolving the Labour Government on 24 August for its failure to agree to the type of deflationary budget demanded by the City of London and the opposition. The demand for such a budget was the inevitable result of Britain's adherence to the gold standard which had been re-established in 1925 during Stanley Baldwin's second administration (November 1924-June 1929). At that time, the terms under which Britain returned to the gold standard were unique among all other nations which took such action. As *The Times* subsequently explained:

"Every Continental nation which was engaged in the War scaled down its obligations by devaluing its currency, France to the extent of four-fifths of the former gold value of the franc. This country alone returned to the pre-War gold parity of its currency." ("The Gold Standard", editorial in *The Times*, 21 September 1931).

The reason for this was that Britain was anxious to restore its pre-War position as a leading global financial centre. However, as Ernest Bevin observed at the time, it was to have disastrous results on its industry and the wider interests of the economy. Speaking at the annual conference of the tinsmith workers in Swansea in May 1925 he said:

"The restoration of the gold standard will, in my judgment, only result in an intensification of the unemployment problem . . . The bankers have too much power; The Cunliffe Committee [which had recommended a return to the gold standard – ED] paid too little regard to trade; and the Government adopted the view that finance must take first place."

(The speech was subsequently printed as a pamphlet: *A Review of Trade Conditions and their Effects upon Unemployment*, published by the T.G.W.U., July 1925. See: *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, by Alan Bullock. Volume 1. Published by Heinemann, London, 1967, p.268).

It was in order to sustain sterling's relationship to the gold standard

in the face of a run on gold in the summer of 1931 that MacDonald's financially orthodox Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, had consciously designed his budget in August 1931. In compiling his budget Snowden relied upon the findings of the Committee on National Expenditure which published its report (known as the May Report) in July 1931 and which recommended drastic and unprecedented cutbacks in public expenditure.

Both MacDonald and Snowden dismissed any counter-proposals from Ernest Bevin and Walter Citrine of the T.U.C. which involved either an exit from the gold standard or a devaluation of sterling and expressed their determination to push through with the deflationary budget claiming that was what was required for restoring the confidence of the financial markets in sterling. Those budget proposals were put to the Labour Cabinet on 24 August, which endorsed them by a vote of 11 to 9. But although the cabinet had narrowly endorsed Snowden's proposals the fact that many of the cabinet dissenters included some of the most popular personalities in the wider Party, together with the opposition T.U.C. General Council, led MacDonald to dissolve the cabinet and, together with the Conservatives and the Liberals immediately formed a National Government. In this manner he secured what he felt would be a stronger foundation for an endorsement of Snowden's budget as a means of sending a message of government unity to the financial markets. As part of this effort the cabinet of the new National Government initiated a vote of confidence on itself on 8 September, which it won with the support of the twelve Labour members who now occupied positions on the ministerial benches. Then, two days later on 10 September the House passed Snowden's deflationary budget (the Finance Act) which included the land tax proposals that for the most part had been separately debated in Parliament the previous May-July.

However, all the actions on MacDonald's part and Snowden's deflationary Budget failed to placate the markets and on 20 September

1931, with the City of London continuing to hemorrhage gold, Snowden did what only a few weeks earlier he had refused to do at the behest of the T.U.C., and withdrew Britain from the gold standard. This was followed by MacDonald announcing a General Election for 16 October 1931. That election was, to all intents and purposes, fought on the basis of the Conservatives and the Liberals (together with MacDonald's ex-Labour supporters) forming a united National Government front against the Labour Party. It resulted in a dramatic drop in Labour Party parliamentary representation from its 289 MPs in 1929 to 46 plus five Independent Labour Party MPs and Josiah Wedgwood who stood as an Independent. (It also resulted in the loss of the seat of the new Labour Party leader, Arthur Henderson).

Although the Labour vote declined by around one-fifth that loss translated into the Party losing four-fifths of its seats. The main reason for the disparity between the fall in votes and the loss in terms of Labour seats was the existence of anti-Labour local pacts between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

"Type-of-contest comparisons with 1929 offer some indication of the widespread incidence of pacts among the National parties. The pattern of the 1929 election had been one of genuine three-way competition for the vote. Then, 447 Labour candidates had contested seats against Conservative and Liberal opponents. In 1931 only 79 did so, and of those only 14 were defending their seats. Despite the dissensions within the constituent parties of the National government and the incidence of notorious 'dogfights', accommodation was the rule in seats where Labour was the target. It was in these where straight fights were overwhelmingly achieved. There were 434 constituency contests in which a sole National candidate had a 'free-run' against Labour. Conversely, there were only 93 instances of more than one National candidate contesting the same seat."

(*The National Government, 1931-40*, by Nick Smart. Published by Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999, p.33).

This meant that the candidates supporting a renewal of the National Government held 554 seats in the new parliament with the Conservative component consisting of 473 of those seats making it the most unbalanced Parliament since the Great Reform Act. However, despite the Conservative Party

holding the whip hand, no doubt aware of the prospect of the Government needing to implement what was to be the unsavory substance of Snowden's budget, felt it would be best if the new government was seen to be led by someone who was not one of theirs. Consequently, they endorsed MacDonald in the role of continuing Prime Minister with the power to nominate his own cabinet. At the same time, MacDonald was compelled to maintain the credentials of the National basis on which he and the Conservatives as well as the Liberals had contested the election and went on to fill nine of the 20 posts in the Cabinet with non-conservatives. Among them the most important was the appointment of Neville Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer as a replacement for Philip Snowden who, after losing his seat in the October election was elevated to the peerage and appointed Lord Privy Seal in the new government. Chamberlain's appointment as Chancellor was indicative of the change in emphasis of the new government from Snowden's Free Trade perspective to Chamberlain's protectionist position.

The new orientation of the National Government soon began to find its legislative expression with the Abnormal Importations Bill of November 1931 followed by the Import Duties Bill of January 1932.

### **The fate of the Land Values Tax under the National Government**

In the meantime, the fate of Snowden's Land Values Tax was being determined by his replacement as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain. Since the General Election of 16 October the Conservative press and the landed interests had mounted a high intensity campaign for the repeal of Part III of the Finance Act – the part that contained the land values tax. In response to this campaign, on 8 December 1931, Neville Chamberlain made the following statement to the House of Commons:

"The Government have given careful consideration to the question of proceeding with the valuation provided for in Part III of the Finance Act, 1931. As the House knows it was estimated that the total cost of the valuation would be from £1,000,000 to £1,500,000. A certain amount of money has already been spent but the great bulk of the expenditure is still to come. In the meantime the need for economy has become paramount and the Government feels that, in present financial conditions, they would

not be justified in incurring further expenditure upon an object which, in any case, could not produce any return for a considerable time.

"Without prejudice therefore to the merits of the plan, which have not been under consideration, the Government propose to suspend the work upon the valuation and to disperse the temporary staff which has been engaged in connection with it. The necessary legislation will be included in next year's Finance Bill." (House of Commons Debates, 8 December 1931).

Clement Attlee for Labour responded immediately to this statement. He reminded the Chancellor that the requirements of the Land Values Tax had been an order of the House of Commons as per its passing a vote by the House as part of the Budget (Finance Act) just three months earlier and that the Chancellor in refusing to comply with that order was acting as a dictator. While technically, Attlee's charge (backed by Aneurin Bevan) was correct the Parliament that had passed the Finance Bill (Budget) which had included the proposal for the Land Values Tax three months earlier had been dramatically altered as a result of the General Election of 16 October. That election had left the Conservative Party in complete domination of Parliament as a result of its overwhelming majority. Yet, despite holding that overwhelming majority, the Conservatives under Baldwin were compelled to maintain the "National" character of the Government as it had contested the election on that basis. As such it was inhibited from introducing a new Finance Bill (Budget) so soon after that election and so was compelled to adopt a more devious route when it came to neutralizing any prospect for the implementation of the Land Values Tax.

In doing what he did Chamberlain could then claim that he was not attempting to defy Part III of the Finance Act but rather simply, in the interest of economy, not to authorise the expenditure that was necessary to establish the basis on which the Land Values Tax could be implemented. This enabled him to claim:

"There is no breach of the law here at all. The operative part of the Act is that which prescribes that the tax, according to Section 10, is to be levied for the year ending the 31st March, 1934. The tax is to be collectable on the 1st July

1934, provided that the valuation is complete in time to allow the tax to be collected on that date, and provided that in the meantime this House does not alter the Act so that the tax shall not be collectable on the 1st July 1934. Therefore, it does not matter whether the valuation is completed or not or whether it is completed at some time in the future, so long as it is completed in time to enable the tax to be collected on 1st July 1934. Obviously, this valuation cannot proceed unless there is money to pay for those who are engaged in the valuation. That money will not be forthcoming unless the House votes the money, and that money will not be voted by the House unless the Government ask the House to vote it. The Government informed the House this afternoon that it does not propose to ask the House to vote that money." (Ibid.)

By this means the tax was effectively hobbled within a few months of it being endorsed by the House of Commons. As to the promise from Chamberlain that "the necessary legislation will be included in next year's Finance Bill" subsequent events reveal that the implied meaning was not the meaning that was actually applied. The necessary legislation was indeed included in the 1932 Finance Act but it simply amounted to a suspension of the Land Values Tax. A situation that prompted one arch-Conservative, Sir Gilbert John Ackland-Troyte, to propose an amendment which would repeal rather than suspend the working of the tax. In making his case for its repeal he said:

"Everyone thought that as soon as the election took place and a new Government was returned the Land Tax would immediately be abolished. The Lord President of the Council, speaking on 13th June, said: 'I can say one thing about it – that if we get back to power, that tax will never see the daylight.' Speaking on 18th June, he said: 'I am not alarmed about the Land Value Tax, because I do not believe that tax will ever come into existence. If we come in, it certainly will not.'

"The present Government, instead of fulfilling expectations we all held, have tried to fob us off by simply postponing the operation of this tax. If they think they can satisfy us with that, I say that we are by no means satisfied, and will not be satisfied until these provisions are removed from the Statute Book. If not successful

this year, we shall try again next year, when, I hope, we shall be successful. As long as these taxes remain on the Statute Book, they can be put into force in a very short time and with practically no Debate. They are causing a great uncertainty and difficulties with regard to mortgages and things of that sort." (House of Commons debate on the Finance Bill, 26 May 1932.)

With regards the impact of the tax on housing provision he reminded the current Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, what he had originally said about the tax when it was being given its Second Reading in May 1931:

"On 19th May last year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was talking about the damage done by the tax. He said: 'No one knows how much that depreciation is going to be, and I am perfectly certain that the doubts, the uncertainties and the anxieties that people will feel about what the effect of these proposals is going to be, will have just the same effect upon housing development as the disastrous proposals of the right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs in 1909-10 [reference here to Lloyd George's proposals], when the increase in new houses was brought down from an annual average of 119,000 to only 72,000.'" (Ibid.)

Chamberlain fails to supply a source for his figures but it appears to be an annual average which embraced the years of the war – something that obviously had an adverse impact on house building at that time. It also fails to take account of the political obstruction from Conservative and land interest dominated local councils to Lloyd George's plans nor the fact that the type of housing constructed under those arrangements were of a higher specification to what went before.

It should be noted that the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald saved himself the embarrassment of being present during the debate by being elsewhere. As for the leader of the Conservative Party, Stanley Baldwin, his contribution to the debate included an explanation of why there was no need for a Conservative-dominated Parliament to repeal the land tax part of the 1931 Finance Act at that time:

"With regard to this Act, we all remember what took place in the House of Commons. In the National Government there are five Members

who were Members of the Labour Cabinet when this Act became law. The matter has been considered and discussed among us. Members of the National Government, fully conscious of the importance of the cause for which they were returned by the country to serve, are anxious, so far as is practicable, without sacrifice of principles, to hold together; give and take. What is the present effect of this Statute? It is a Statute in coma. For this Parliament there can be no prospect at all of there being a land tax or land valuation, so that apprehension ought to be removed." (Ibid.)

The amendment for a repeal of the Land Values Tax failed and it was retained on the Statute Book for the time being. But as one M.P. described it at the time, it had effectively been "put into hibernation." It remained in a Conservative imposed "hibernation" until 1934 when it was finally repealed on 5 June of that year. In the course of the debate on its repeal the Red Clydesider and Labour M.P., Neil Maclean, in the course of his contribution to the debate said:

"The Land Tax provisions of the Budget passed by the Labour Government have been allowed to fall into disuse. Indeed they have never been put into operation. Last year the valuation provisions passed away and this year the power to tax disappears also. The attention given by the Government to this question seems to have been of a rather cavalier character. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made practically no mention in his Budget speech of the repudiation of the Land Tax. The Prime Minister who in the past has been one of the strongest propagandists of the taxation of land, is not in his place tonight and was not in his place during earlier Budget discussions when this matter was raised by several Members. I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has a reason, justifiable to him, for being absent tonight in that he has a dinner appointment. I should have imagined that having, in his past political life, spent considerable time and energy in advocating this principle of land taxation to the public, and having fought to get it made part of the legislation of Parliament, the right hon. Gentleman would have considered this occasion of sufficient importance to forego even such an appointment and come here and tell us exactly what has happened behind the scenes to justify this transformation.

Continued On Page 19

# Britain Preparing for War

By Brendan Clifford

“Britain should be preparing for war—instead we’re fretting over fiscal rules”.—so says Paul Mason in *City AM* (9th April).

Under his many disguises Mason has always remained a British patriot. British patriotism carries many things of the moment along with it on its erratic journey. These things are discarded in a moment when the opportunity arises for Britain to do the thing which distinguishes it from all other states, except its offspring, the United States—altruistic law-making. Making war on the world for the sole purpose of improving the world.

Tony Blair’s farewell message to his party on his retirement was that it should never forget that Britain was a *war-fighting state*. It makes war for peace, of course, but it is never so much at peace with itself as when it is making war.

Between wars it frets over things like “*fiscal rules*”, from which there is no escape. But these rules do not apply in war. War is, in that regard, the realm of freedom. It sets all law aside and engages in communal action in the cause of freedom.

Freedom means winning. No other sensible meaning can be

found for it.

The thing that makes Britain’s wars so special is that for five hundred years they have all been wars of choice. It has fought no necessary wars: in the sense of wars of defence against an invader. It has fought wars of ambition, freely undertaken.

Its last really great war was the *Second World War*. It brought about this war by its diplomacy without have any serious intention of doing the fighting in it. It brought its Army home after less than a year, while refusing to negotiate a peace. It left Europe in a state of war and left others to fight it.

Communist Russia won that War, and in the course of doing so it extended its power into central Europe, while the United States salvaged Western Europe for a system of subordinate capitalism and democracy.

We have Churchill’s word for it that the Second World War brought about by Britain was an unnecessary war. Europe has felt guilty about it ever since, largely because of what happened to the Jews during it. It blames itself for it, and it is disabled by that guilt. But Churchill described it as *The Unnecessary War*, brought about by British diplomacy.

He uses those very words in the

sub-title of his history of it. He was the hero of it, but he shows as a historian that it should never have come about. It was the wrong war.

It came to be called the Anti-Fascist War. Churchill, the hero of the Anti-Fascist War, was a supporter of Fascism. He went to Rome to praise Mussolini. He wrote that, if Britain was ever put in the position in which it put Germany in 1919, he hoped that a man like Hitler would emerge to liberate it. He saw Fascism as the force that saved Western civilisation from Communism in the 1920s and 1930s. He saw the “*Anti-Fascist war*” as being essentially a distraction from the necessary war against the real enemy, Communism.

But he was a practising politician, as well as a historian, and he ended up in 1941 relying on Communism to defeat the Fascism that had saved Europe from Communism. Fascism had been made the enemy by the bungling of others. It had become necessary that it should be defeated in order to clear the way for making war on the main enemy—who had become the ally of the moment.

But, when Germany surrendered, Communism had made itself so strong by defeating it that Churchill could not see his way to making war on it without strengthening it further.

Paul Mason says Britain is now back again in the 1930s situation. He is well advised not to know very much about the 1930s. But he could of course plead Churchill’s maxim in support of his wilful ignorance: Truth is too valuable to be allowed to travel without a bodyguard of lies!

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This legislation passed by a previous Government was not, we were told, to be touched by a National Government. It is now being scrapped by this Government which has evidently ceased to be national, and has become solely Tory and landlord in outlook.” (House of Commons debates, 5 June 1934).

There was a certain symmetry in the way in which the earlier legislation involving a land tax introduced by Lloyd George in 1909 had been repealed by a Conservative-dominated Coalition Government in 1920 after its application had been hindered by the obstruction of landlord influenced local authorities and the First World War, and a similarly Conservative-dominated Coalition Government was later, in 1934, to repeal the 1931 Labour proposals for a land tax. Thus was ended the last measure by a Labour Government that would have been of assistance to local authorities in the area of social housing provision until after the Second World War.

# An Army Like No Other—Book Review

By John Clayden

*An Army Like No Other: How the Israel Defence Force Made a Nation. By Haim Bresheeth-Zabner*

Not long ago some of us went to demonstrate outside Hackney Police Station when we learnt the police were receiving training from the Israeli security services. Our MP Dianne Abbott turned up thereby no doubt sealing her own fate as far as the Labour Party is concerned.

It is after reading this book I have begun to get the much bigger picture of the phenomenon of the state that is Israel.

For example, without considering the nature of the training given, consider how many other police stations throughout the country and world-wide have been and still are being so trained. All of them have to pay for this so the amount paid to the Israeli government must be vast and this is only a small part of military systems, equipment and weapons they sell throughout the world. This amounts to a Military Industrial Complex (MIC) which as Haim Bresheeth-Zabner shows forms the basis of the Israeli economy and warded off economic decline.

Because a majority of countries worldwide are dependent on this industry it makes them dependent. In India until recently Russia provided most of India's weapons now the majority of India's military spending is to Israel.

Israel started developing surveillance and other systems to combat the PLO. These proved effective and were purchased by countries facing similar threats. These were followed by high tech weapons systems which were first developed by qualified Russian technologists. Its MIC grew as the Israeli state set up educational institutions and universities. These Israeli institutions set up research departments in many foreign universities, which have agreements with Israel which supplies lucrative grants to do their work.

So you can see that when students oppose Israeli genocide it is often seen by their universities, not just in political terms but as a possible financial loss to the Universities themselves. This vastly influential Israeli Military Industrial Complex is economically crucial, it is also the only activity which keeps the Israeli state economical alive.

Bresheeth-Zabner says that Israel failed to produce a working class because religious and ethnic divisions even among Jews were stronger than class.

Palestinians before they were excluded were paid much lower rates than Jews for the same work. (An ex-miner I knew in Ashington who had worked down the pit in South Africa told me the blacks working alongside him were paid much less than white miners like himself.) Bresheeth doesn't think there is any likelihood of class consciousness developing.

After the first Intifada when much to the surprise of the even the PLO the Palestinians rose up spontaneously, the Israelis decided the Palestinians were no longer sufficiently subservient, so they were excluded even from manual work and labourers were enticed in from countries with high unemployment, but on arrival they quickly discovered they were reduced to being indentured labourers, coolies. (Much as was the case with Indian and Chinese labour in the West Indies after the freed slaves refused to work in the plantations.)

The various non-Ashkenazi waves of Jewish immigrants failed to adapt to manual work or farming and were and still are poor and excluded although their political influence has grown as has that of the settlers. The gap between rich and poor in Israel is among the highest in the world, this is without taking into consideration the Palestinian population who have no control over their conditions and are in extreme poverty.

Furthermore there is no politics of any socialist nature which would seek to remedy these vast inequalities within the Jewish population. The only thing which unites and gives Israeli national identity to the various Jewish ethnic and religious groups is that they all have to serve in the IDF where they are trained in the most brutal methods to suppress the Palestinians; a mind-set which is inculcated from an early age even before school, and this induces a collective irrational paranoid fear of the Palestinians and the rest of the world. Bresheeth-Zabner says there are even posters depicting foetuses wearing military gear.

He says a long perceived Jewish threat from the goys is what motivated Zionism in the first place, and it was very real in parts of Europe but it never existed in the Ottoman empire of which Palestine was a part.

Although Zionism sought a safe haven for the Jews, it is ironic it largely shared the contemptuous view of The Jew held by European anti-Semites and for this reason Jews on entering parts

of Palestine controlled by the Zionists and later Israel were forced to abandon their Yiddish culture and had to speak Hebrew. As these historic Ashkenazi links were broken, there was presented to the Zionist founders like Ben-Gurion a problem; namely on what was the nation's self-awareness and national identity to be founded?

Ben-Gurion and others decided that the only way this could be accomplished was to elevate the experience of universal service in the Israeli military forces so it would determine what it was or is to be an Israeli. This presents a problem for those from outside the state trying to gain an insight into the nature of what the Israeli state is. The almost universal conception that most people from other national perspectives have as to what a nation is and how its citizens see themselves, makes the almost unique Israeli situation difficult to grasp.

Ben-Gurion's solution also presents another problem for it excludes the Palestinian People. This has been the case since the beginning of the Zionist project. In the original Israeli state the Palestinians comprised according to Bresheeth-Zabner at least 22% of the population and once the occupied territories were included they are in the majority. The military has made the brutal treatment of the Palestinians, since its inception a normality, with merciless killing and destruction of the homes of the Palestinian population considered normal and even enjoyable. Today of course in the wider world, more and more especially young people are becoming aware of the genocide in Gaza, thanks to mobile phones and the internet etc. This book was written before the latest genocide. I have attempted to give what I think are some of the main points of the book but there is much more valuable information therein.

I have found Bresheeth-Zabner's book very thought provoking. As Sun-Tzu advises "Know your enemy". Bresheeth-Zabner has made a great contribution to that.

The lesson of the book is in my opinion that equal rights for all in Palestine can only exist beyond the Jewish exclusivity of Zionist ideology just as a true South African nation and national identity does now exist beyond the white superior ideology of the Apartheid state.

I highly recommend Haim Bresheeth-Zabner's book and his undogmatic Marxist approach.

# Reflections on questions concerning global warming

By Richard Jones

## Part 2: What must we do?

In the service of a multi-billion pound industry

In my introduction, I explained that I accepted the premises of climatists (a term that I will adopt, coined by people responding to being called denialists) when I set down to write about the project of saving the world from climate emergency being hijacked by commercial interests—but that my acceptance of those premises was shattered as I prepared to write.

To be clear, I accepted the climate emergency agenda in these terms:

1. Global climate is warming.
2. This is due primarily to human input, specifically the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide due to burning fossil fuels. (I never took seriously other inputs such as methane.)
3. Without drastic changes to the human input, global warming will continue with catastrophic consequences.

While writing, I became agnostic on those claims. Since then, I have come close to rejecting them. However, for the purpose of this article, I write as if they are valid. (“For the sake of the argument”, if you please.) I hope this works for the reader. It works for me, because it was in that frame of mind that I conceived the idea of describing how utterly fraudulent and venal are the solutions promoted for citizens, but mainly because to refute a solution it helps to provisionally endorse the problem.

The human input to the climate emergency is supposedly carbon dioxide. Methane gets a mention, for a laugh, but mostly it's CO<sub>2</sub>. CO<sub>2</sub> is one of the things, like water, that has a cycle in the biosphere. It is produced by respiration, consumed in photosynthesis, absorbed and released by oceans, brick, mortar, etc. (The mortar is just re-absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> released during production of the lime ingredient, from limestone.)

If global climate is warming due to human input, the input is primarily CO<sub>2</sub> derived from burning fossil fuels, and this is the focus for most of the doctrine on what has to be done. Even the commercial media tend to get the methane question right, using it for entertainment and joking about cow farts. Methane is the simplest

hydrocarbon, one carbon and four hydrogen atoms. The doctrine that it is a much more powerful ‘greenhouse gas’ than carbon dioxide is just a tease from compulsive manipulators. They still talk about ‘carbon’ meaning carbon dioxide.

## What is to be done?

There are two scripts for climate change action. One is for individuals. As it is essential marketing, with no bearing on climate, I can look at it here before examining the evidence for a climate emergency. The other script, for governments (and alliances, international organisations, etc.) is better considered after attempting to assess the claims about climate change.

Putting aside bit parts like methane and nitrous oxide, we are exhorted to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> contribution in two ways: direct, by burning less fossil fuel, and indirect, by using less energy derived industrially from fossil fuels.

There are two kinds of reductions to burning less. There are the trivial ones, and then the ones that are accompanied by an—increase—in industrial input.

Politicians favour the trivial ones, as mindless exhortation is cheaper and easier than actually doing their job, which if they believe in the climate emergency would mean taking emergency action in areas such as power generation and expanding and modernising public transport. China, one of those rare countries with responsible government, is doing those things.

One apparently substantial reduction is the use of electric vehicles. As climatist propaganda routinely adds a mix of generalised environmentalism, it is reasonable to point out that lithium batteries pose a serious pollution threat. However the main issue is that batteries are temporary storage, not a primary energy source. Most of them are recharged from the grid, with the energy coming from fossil fuels. Some people charge their cars at home from rooftop solar panels. That small real reduction has to be weighed against the energy input to producing the batteries, charging stations, and solar installations. I wouldn't attempt to construct the balance sheet, but it is plain that if there is a net reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> output, it is a tiny proportion

of total CO<sub>2</sub> output, the majority of which is from power stations instead of vehicles.

An attempt at a cleaner solution is the hydrogen powered vehicle. The problem with this is that to burn hydrogen in air, making water A(steam) to power a car means first making hydrogen from water, using more energy than the mechanical energy available from burning the hydrogen. To distract from the resulting need to burn fossil fuels, the idea is marketed in conjunction with “green hydrogen”. This is hydrogen made using energy from a renewable energy source. The benefit is illusory. The renewable energy source, if it were not used to make hydrogen, could be delivering energy for factories or homes in place of a fossil fuel power station. The reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> is 100% due to the renewable energy source. None of it is from the hydrogen powered vehicle. The same can be said of electric cars: even the person using their solar installation, instead of charging the vehicle, could be supplying energy to the grid in place of fossil fuel burning at a power station. The CO<sub>2</sub> reduction is due to the rooftop solar bank, not the electric car.

## Nuclear Winter

While I have said that I had accepted uncritically the existence of a climate emergency, I should add that I always had misgivings as to whether the emergency was actually global warming rather than ice age. The US has been continually tightening the nooses around China and Russia, with enough nuclear warheads that a fraction of them detonating would plunge us into a long nuclear winter. This climate emergency has never been more acute than now, with the US moving from recklessly risking nuclear catastrophe through its proxy war in Ukraine, to apparently trying to bait Russia to use ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons.

I don't believe for a moment that either side actually intends nuclear escalation, but with this kind of brinkmanship the risks must be greater than ever. Failsafe is a fiction. We know of one instance when catastrophe was averted by an American missile crew arresting their commander when he ordered them to fire. There may have been other near misses.

# The Slovak Assassin and the Riots in Georgia

By Gwydion. M. Williams

\* *Georgia Defending its Sovereignty*

\* *Slovakia Condemned for Disagreement*

## Georgia Defending its Sovereignty

If it is wrong for foreign powers to meddle in the politics of sovereign nations, surely it is sensible to make a law exposing those who have been meddled with?

To insist that those who get more than 20% foreign money are honest about it?

That's been the issue in the former Soviet state of Georgia. But for the Western media, asking their Georgian friends to be honest about who pays them is a threat to democracy.

This comes from media owned by people who've done nicely out of four decades of New Right dominance. Rival ways of life threaten to weaken this cosy set up. So in their view, the West interfering with the rest of the world inhabits a different moral universe from them possibly interfering with us.

That's the classical imperialist attitude. The former imperial powers regained enthusiasm for global bullying when the Soviets weakened. When the Chinese were wrongly thought to have capitulated. When it appeared that China was swallowing Western values in the way Japan did after World War Two.

I was strongly doubting this from the mid-1990s, after correctly predicting in 1989 that the Tiananmen tragedy would do nothing to undermine Communist Party power.<sup>1</sup> And then Chang and Halliday's silly book about Mao provoked me to look further.<sup>2</sup> I discovered that far less had changed than outsiders thought.<sup>3</sup>

Western experts may be wrong even about Japan. Japan is suspicious of both China and Russia, and has border disputes with both. But I recently saw a Japanese live-action series called *The Silent Service*, which has a Japanese submarine captain heroically confronting the US Navy in a bid for world peace.<sup>4</sup> A story based on a controversial but popular comic series.<sup>5</sup> Japan might suddenly switch in the next few years.

China might be wise to abandon some small islands near Japan that it has no need for, but which Japan is obsessed with. Different from the South China Sea, where all claims other than those by Vietnam are recent inventions.

And Chinese can defend their politics as a system that gives Chinese most of the functional freedoms they seek.

My view – and I've not seen the Chinese put it quite like that – is that it is meaningless to talk about 'Freedom' without a social context. All human society involves limits on freedom. It is tempting to deny this when you approve of that particular freedom being curbed. But temptations are things that should be resisted, unless you decide that the rules on the undesirable or the forbidden should be changed.

It is all about what we class as Legitimate Freedoms. Which changed a lot in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain: smoking is de-legitimised, and so is wife-beating. Many aspects of sex are now legitimised, with male homosexuality only the most notable case. There was no law against lesbianism, but plenty of discrimination. But when some people tried extending this to under-age sex,

1 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-012/what-tiananmen-1989-was-really-about/>

2 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/42-1-chinese-politics/a-review-of-mao-the-unknown-story/>

3 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/how-mao-greatly-strengthened-china/>

4 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2645263/>

5 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Silent\\_Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silent_Service)

there was a very strong reaction against.

But for our mainstream Western media, and for many of their critics, Freedom is always Absolute, but only some of the time. Two different moral universes, and they commute between the two without noticing the contradiction.

For the main Western media, riots and fist-fights in Georgia's parliament are a grand defence of democracy. A bold stand against pro-Russian laws.

There are no pro-Russian Georgians, or at least none with significant power. For me, the current government are the proper Georgian nationalists, choosing not to trust the West after the West was untrustworthy in their hour of need. They got no serious support when they tried to suppress the separatism of South Ossetia.<sup>6</sup> They must have noticed that Western policies were different with separatist Kosovo, which had a war fought for it by NATO. Which has been awarded recognition as a sovereign state, though many UN members still reject the claim. And which was allowed to keep majority-Serb areas in the north, even though they wanted to stay with Serbia.

Personally, I sympathise with the South Ossetian wish to be sovereign. Or to join with North Ossetia and be safe as part of the Russian Republic. I'm also aware that the United Nations almost always rejects the right of regional majorities to secede from sovereign states. I wrote about it in the May issue of this magazine: *Secession and Ineffective Law*.<sup>7</sup> My gloomy conclusion is that 'international law' was never more than a sham. The USA chose to keep it a sham in the 1990s, when they were briefly dominant. When they would have been wiser to have established binding rules that could have been strongly biased towards their own world-view.

But shysterism is basic and traditional in US politics, though called something else when the shyster is powerful.

Continuous disrespect for the United Nations seemed tough and clever at the time. But just look at the result!

## Slovakia Condemned for Disagreement

I doubt there was any direct connection between the Georgian riots and the lone assassin who tried to kill the recently re-elected Prime Minister of Slovakia.

Western leaders have voiced the expected shock and outrage. But there had also been great offence at the man's failure to support the idea that the Ukraine War must continue until Kiev has captured Crimea:

"In February as the world marked the conflict's second anniversary, Mr Fico reiterated his opposition to the west's policy of arming Kyiv.

"There was no military solution to the conflict, he said, and sending weapons to Ukraine would only fill more graves in the country's cemeteries.

"Russia would never relinquish Crimea, or the parts of the eastern Donbas region it has taken, and instead Kyiv should lay down its arms and sue for peace, he said.

"Vladimir Putin, Mr Fico said, had been 'wrongly demonised' by the west."<sup>8</sup>

Crimea includes the Russian naval base of Sevastopol. Without it, Russia would lose most of its power in the Black

6 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Ossetia\\_war\\_\(1991%E2%80%931992\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Ossetia_war_(1991%E2%80%931992))

7 <https://labouraffairs.com/2024/05/01/secession-and-ineffective-law/>

8 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cqene5z41y0o>

Sea, and in the Mediterranean beyond. Without it, they might not have been able to keep Assad in power in most of Syria. Syria might have dissolved into the same complete chaos as Somalia and Libya, which the West has found very acceptable.

The assassin's own belief may be a complex mix of feelings. But everything in Slovakia is complex. The government is a coalition with 42 seats from a left and pro-Russian party, 27 seats from a left and pro-EU party, and 10 from a right-wing and pro-Russian party. 79 seats, a working majority in the 150-member parliament.<sup>9</sup>

It gets mentioned that Fico had resigned as Prime Minister in 2018 over the murder of Jan Kuciak, who had been investigating corruption. Investigating links with the Italian organized crime syndicate 'Ndrangheta, widely reckoned to have replaced the Camorra and the Sicilian Mafia as the most dangerous and influential Italian mobsters.

A Slovak businessman widely accused of being the moving spirit has been twice acquitted of organising it.<sup>10</sup> He was convicted of financial fraud, but only some less-powerful people were actually convicted of the murder. It hardly seems reasonable to accuse Fico, operating at a much higher level, of actually wanting the murder.

Fico may have been too tolerant of corruption, but that has been a universal feature of what the former Soviet Bloc became under Western influence and a

9 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023\\_Slovak\\_parliamentary\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_Slovak_parliamentary_election)  
10 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mari%C3%A1n\\_Ko%C4%8Dner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mari%C3%A1n_Ko%C4%8Dner)

## Continued From Page 24

The Rail Delivery Group, an umbrella organisation representing the TOCs, is currently lobbying Starmer's Labour party to maintain these provisions.

The piecemeal nationalisation the Labour party has outlined, may, over time, bring some benefits to the travelling public, but it certainly won't be quick. It almost certainly won't be a transformative process. Significant parts of our rail network will remain in private hands and maintain the ability to derive extortionate profits from the tax payer. Even within those areas that are to be re-nationalised the commercial emphasis will probably be maintained allowing private companies to extract profits with no real benefits to the travelling public. What our rail network really needs is a return to investment and development on the basis that it is a public service. Analysis constantly shows that investment in our rail network yields very real economic and social benefits for all. The current proposals go nowhere near this objective.

mania for privatisation. In Russia, Yeltsin allowed oligarchs to become legal owners of enterprises through shares that were given to workers in those enterprises, but with no protection against them selling the unwanted shares for ready cash.<sup>11</sup> There was also a strong criminal element: you could not be rich without a criminal 'roof' to protect you.

Russia's 'capitalist revolution' turned into a clear demonstration that New Right visions of capitalism were a total fantasy. But somehow that lesson was not learned even by their critics.

The actual history of Britain's industrial revolution involved a strong state enforcing property laws, and taking an increasing share of the growing national income. Adam Smith believed that success had happened *despite* the actual process, rather than because of it. But all later industrialisations followed a similar pattern. All except Stalin's Russia and Mao's China, where it was entirely state-run.

The awkward fact of vast economic growth up until the 1960s by the Soviet Union and Soviet-ruled Middle-Europe is evaded by the New Right. Likewise the unwelcome fact that China under Mao grew faster than the USA or UK, despite the much-publicised errors of the Great Leap Forward.<sup>12,13</sup> Of course the pro-Moscow Communists after 1956 were reluctant to admit that their darling Khrushchev made a total mess of what he'd inherited from Stalin. And Trotskyists are offended that any anti-Trotsky Leninists should have achieved anything. They prefer to badmouth all achievements by other brands of socialism.

We could talk briefly about Trotskyist achievements. Very briefly: it you count it as something that re-emerged in the 1920s after being absorbed into Bolshevism in 1917. With that definition, there have been absolutely no positive achievements by any of the diversity of Trotskyist movements. Useful individuals like Ken Loach might have celebrated the leftists who had a possibility of winning in the Spanish Civil War,<sup>14</sup> rather than the quarrelsome POUM who made defeat more likely.<sup>15</sup>

In Russia, Putin got the changes under control, rather than cause a fresh wave of chaos by denying that any of the shifts of ownership had been legal. He did

11 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazines-020-to-029/magazine-030-not-yet-placed/kleptocracy-in-yeltsins-russia/>

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

13 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/china-three-bitter-years-1959-to-1961/>

14 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/isolated-labour-affairs-pages-before-2015/why-the-left-lost-the-spanish-civil-war/>

15 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land\\_and\\_Freedom\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_and_Freedom_(film))

this to stop a possible return to power in open elections by the refounded Russian Communists, which at the time seemed very possible. They were the largest opposition party: they remain strong, peaking at 24% in 1999 and getting nearly 19% in 2021.<sup>16</sup> Yabloko, the largest of the pro-Western parties, was never strong and is now insignificant.<sup>17</sup> Falling from 7.86 in 1993 to 1.34 in 2021.

Only in the propaganda of Western media can such people seem a serious alternative to Putin. I've long tried explaining that any replacement would almost certainly be harder-line.<sup>18</sup>

For the attempt to kill Fico, there have been plenty of suspicious assassinations blamed on Western secret services. And a freely admitted CIA campaign to assassinate Fidel Castro, which got nowhere and has been presented as a joke.

I'd also suppose that some profitable killings must have been achieved just by stoking up the heat. By assuming that this would cause some overstressed individual to act.

One final point about Slovakia. For me, the peaceful separation of Czechs and Slovaks is a model for what should have happened in Yugoslavia and in Ukraine. Thankfully, no one tried spreading panic about the process. I don't know if this influences the Slovak view of Ukraine, but it seems possible.

Trust in the West has declined since the New Right took over. Masked by the Soviet collapse. But a Russia dominated by Russian nationalism is not a threat, except to countries with significant regional majorities of Russians within their borders. And even there, only Ukraine has counted. NATO membership should keep the Baltic States safe, however discriminatory they get against their Russian population.

I'm not sure quite how it will fall apart, or how many decent people will get hurt in the process. But the New Right project is clearly failing.

There's an old joke about there being one reliable way to go gambling in Las Vegas and return with a small fortune. You go there with a large fortune.

The New Right in the 1980s was the equivalent of someone gambling in Las Vegas with an initial large fortune. They had vast freedom of action, at a time when Russia was pro-US and China was being very modest. But their creed was very far from the truth, and has repeatedly misled them.

Nasty hard facts have a habit of asserting themselves.

16 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist\\_Party\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation#Parliamentary\\_elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Russian_Federation#Parliamentary_elections)

17 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yabloko#State\\_Duma\\_elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yabloko#State_Duma_elections)

18 <https://mrgrwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Russia-A-Fate-Worse-Than-Putin>

# Rail Re-nationalisation, well, maybe.

By Pete Stevens

With the rail network being front and centre of national debate over the past year due to the ongoing industrial action, Labour finally published its response to reform in April, "Getting Britain Moving". The document promises to "usher in a decade of growth, innovation and service improvement". The headline improvement is rail renationalisation. Not really that surprising from a party that has shown itself to be driven by opinion polls. Renationalisation has been consistently popular with the public, even Tories.

But what do Labour's plans really amount to? One could reasonably expect that all sections of the rail industry that were part of the original 1994 to 1997 privatisation, would be reconstituted into one, efficient, organisation. This is far from what is being proposed. In fact, much of the structure of the privatised rail structure is being maintained.

Privatisation essentially split the railways into various sections. Railtrack owned the infrastructure and was entrusted with both its maintenance and improvements. The rolling stock companies, of which there are now 3, provided the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) with their rolling stock. The Train Operating Companies are the companies that run the passenger services. Currently there are 28 TOCs providing rail services.

This whole system is governed by a series of highly complex and expensive contracts. Railtrack, the owners of the rail infrastructure, were brought back into public ownership in 2002 due to the dire state of rail maintenance leading to the Hatfield rail disaster.

Breaking the rail network into various operating companies was supposed to bring a level of competition to the rail network. Each rail company would bid for franchise to run services on a particular route. The franchise would enable the holder to run services for a specified period while paying the government for that right. Each rail company would have to compete for passengers, and this would entail a more efficient rail

network and bring reduced travel cost to the travelling public. The idea was that, as passenger numbers increased and rail companies became increasingly efficient, the subsidies provided would be reduced.

This system was supposed to reduce the exposure of the public purse to the cost of running the rail system. The private sector would be responsible for the risk associated with running the rail network.

This was never the case. The franchises were never long enough to ensure the private sector would commit long term. But even if this were to be the case it has always been seen by the public that it is a government responsibility to see that our railways function. Consequently, strategic planning and overall responsibility for the running of the rail network always rested with the Government.

Prior the emergence of Covid the system of franchising was already in a state of collapse, and a number of rail routes had been handed back to the DfT (Department for Transport). As a result of Covid all rail franchises were transformed into management contracts. TOCs now managed the rail services on the basis that they were paid a fee for doing so with no risk to their profits. All these contracts are due to run out over the next 5 years.

Even the current Tory government recognised that the fragmentation within our rail system was unsustainable, and a solution was needed. So, the Tories proposed a "Bold New Vision", Great British Railways.

The White Paper places control of both infrastructure and services into an arm's length body. Great British Railways, it is envisaged, will run and plan the rail network, sell tickets and provide compensation to passengers. It is hoped this approach will reduce the cost of running the railways by removing a complex series of internal, friction, costs, that exist because of the complex nature of the contracts and franchising system. This it is hoped will ensure we have a far more efficient rail system.

Currently the Bill has not been passed into law, this will have to wait until after the General Election. This will likely fall to a new Labour Government to implement. Labour under Keir Starmer seem intent on simply following the trajectory laid out by their Tory predecessors. Labour will now have to pass the Bill to create Great British Railways. As Network Rail is already nationalised Labour are only committed to bring the TOCs into a new GBR when the contracts end. Labour is simply implementing a Tory policy.

It is clear this is a very limited view of renationalisation and begs the question what we mean by it. Under the old British Rail all aspects of rail travel operated under its banner. British Rail was not simply responsible for providing rail services. It had its own research and development departments. It designed and manufactured its own rollingstock. Maintenance and engineering were all in house.

It was one of the most efficient rail networks in Europe and provided services at a far lower cost than our current system. Labour's plan is to maintain a significant component of the current fragmented system. Rail freight and the rolling stock companies will remain outside any renationalised system. And there appears to be no plan to curtail the outsourcing of critical engineering functions. Network rail is already planning to outsource most of its rail maintenance to private companies.

It is entirely possible that much of the current system of outsourcing with private companies being able to maximise profit through contracts with Great British Rail will be maintained. The RMT has calculated over many years the exorbitant profits the rolling stock companies have extracted from the taxpayer while minimising their exposure to any risk. Currently the Bill forming Great British Railways still contains numerous provisions for the commercialisation of our rail network.

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