

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 350 - July-August 2024

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

## Starmer's Moment of Weakness

Keir Starmer has been a very effective leader of the Labour Party in opposition. At least by the standard that he set himself. Starmer set out to construct a Labour Party that could win an overall majority in the 2024 general election. In this he has succeeded.

Starmer decided that he could only achieve this objective if he managed to get many Conservative voters to abandon the Conservative Party or, even better, to switch their vote to Labour. It was not enough to simply regain the 'Red wall' seats. Starmer had to reduce the fear of Conservative voters of a Labour victory. He did this by adopting foreign and economic policies that are acceptable to these voters.

On foreign policy, Starmer has adopted the position of the current government on the big issues like Ukraine and Gaza.

On economic policy, Labour has adopted a set of fiscal rules that are close to those of the Conservative government. Current expenditure will be financed by taxation. Public investment may be financed by borrowing, subject to the proviso that the national debt to GDP ratio must be falling within 5 years. Additionally, there will be no increase in income tax, National Insurance or VAT.

The results of the general election on 4<sup>th</sup> July show that Starmer's strategy has been very successful. Few Conservative voters switched their votes to Labour. But many felt indifferent enough about a Labour Party victory to abstain or vote for the Reform Party. There was a large drop of 20% in the Conservatives share of the vote but only a very small increase of 1.6% in Labour's share. Despite getting some 3 million votes less than Corbyn got in 2017, Starmer won 412 of the possible 650 Westminster seats. Such is the nature of First Past the Post elections.

This may seem like Starmer's moment of greatest

strength. In fact it is his moment of greatest weakness. Now Starmer has to deliver his much touted 'change'. Yet, the fiscal rules that he has adopted to win the general election have robbed him of the very spend and tax rules that are required to deliver this 'change'. The interesting political question is how will Starmer deal with this problem that he has given himself.

On past performance, there are good reasons to believe that Starmer will not allow earlier commitments to restrict his freedom of action as Prime Minister. In his Labour Party leadership bid, he had made whatever promises he felt would guarantee him victory. Once elected, he reneged on these promises and set out to purge the party of its Corbyn supporters, often relying on false charges of antisemitism. We expect Starmer to behave in a similar manner now that he is Prime Minister.

Having won in 2024, his new objective will be to win a second term in 2029. To achieve this objective he will have to hit the various targets he has set for his government: to reduce waiting lists in the NHS, to build 1.5 million dwellings over the next 5 years, to rebuild national infrastructure and, more generally, to increase the economic growth rate.

We expect the fiscal credibility rules will be ditched or revised once Starmer sees them as a hindrance to achieving the changes that will be essential for him to win a second term in 2029. It will be interesting to see if the new chancellor, Rachel Reeves, will insist on following the substance of her fiscal rules. The first step in Boris Johnson's failure as Prime Minister was when he failed to rid himself of Rishi Sunak, a Chancellor who favoured fiscal rules in preference to Johnson's levelling up agenda. We expect Starmer to be more ruthless than Johnson. If Reeves does not abandon the substance of her fiscal rules, then her tenure as chancellor will be short lived. We suspect, however, that she will also

be amenable to finding some way to ditch the substance if not the form of her fiscal rules. The new National Wealth Fund will likely feature large in avoiding the constraints of her fiscal credibility rules. The spin will be that Labour’s spending will be paid for by the nation’s saving rather than by government borrowing.

Labour’s problem will not be where do they find the money to do the things that they want to do. Rather, it is where do they find the resources. Specifically where do they find the nurses, doctors, teachers, builders etc. that will be required to bring about real change. If the resources were there and unemployed then Labour’s task would be simple, spend the money and hire/buy the resources. When resources don’t exist they will need to be created through apprenticeship and training programs. That will take time. When the resources exist but are being employed by the private sector then Labour will need to devise a strategy to move them from the private sector to the public sector. Taxation and regulation may be the tools to do this. For

example, VAT on private schools will likely force some private schools to become state sector schools

In this context, the new government’s ‘modern industrial strategy’ is advertised as the way forward, with the government ‘shaping’ markets. It remains to be seen whether there will be any substance in this industrial strategy.

In short, if Starmer is to win the 2029 general election, he will have to renege on the fiscal commitments that he made in order to win the 2024 general election. There are good reasons to believe that his ‘will to power’ will allow him to do that. However, abandoning silly fiscal rules will not be enough. It merely removes a false constraint on his freedom of action. His real problems then become evident. Where does he find and how does he mobilise the resources to implement his much touted ‘change’ of British society? It remains to be seen whether he has the ability to address this problem.

## Workers Party’s Good Results

The Workers Party of Britain did a lot better than previous efforts at a Left Alternative. No seats were won, but here are the top ten results.

Constituency	Share %.
Birmingham Yardley	29.3
Rochdale	29.2
Birmingham Hodge Hill & Solihull North	26.6
Blackburn	18.3
Derby South	13.9
Bolton South & Walkden	12.7
Manchester Rusholme	12.6
Peterborough	12.1
Oldham East & Saddleworth	11.6
Gorton & Denton	10.3

<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2024-uk-election-results/parties/workers-party-of-britain/>

# Labour Affairs

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No. 350 - July-Aug. 2024    ISSN 2050-6031  
ISSN 0953-3494

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Labour Affairs

Published by the Ernest Bevin Society  
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Websites: <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>  
and <https://labouraffairs.com/>

Subscription: £20 for one year (10 issues)

Distribution: Dave Fennell  
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## Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht June 2024

Once again we bring Labour Affairs readers news of the developing anti-globalist worker-friendly new left party in Germany. The party did well in the European elections and despite caution about growing too rapidly it is self-confident and optimistic about its future, particularly as it is offering policies that no other German political party wishes to offer, including the so-called Left party 'Die Linke'. Socialist economic policy, collective security and defence of national interests within a European community committed to collective security is clearly popular with many German voters.

As before, when Sahra Wagenknecht mentions the 'traffic light coalition', or just 'the traffic lights' she means the current German coalition government of Social Democrats (red), Free Democrats (yellow) and Greens (green).

### **Extract from the BSW Party Manifesto on Foreign Affairs and Peace.**

#### **For a new approach to foreign policy**

Our foreign policy stands in the tradition of German Chancellor Willy Brandt and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who countered the thinking and actions of the Cold War with a policy of détente, reconciliation of interests and international cooperation. We fundamentally reject the resolution of conflicts by military means. We oppose the fact that more and more resources are flowing into weapons and war equipment instead of into the education of our children, research into environmentally friendly technologies or our health and care facilities. Nuclear armament and escalating conflicts between nuclear powers put the survival of humanity at risk and must be

stopped. We are striving for a new era of détente and new treaties on disarmament and common security. The Bundeswehr has the task of defending our country. It must be adequately equipped for this task. We reject the deployment of German soldiers in international wars as well as their stationing on the Russian border or in the South China Sea.

A military alliance (NATO) whose leading power has invaded five countries in recent years in violation of international law and killed more than 1 million people in these wars, fuels fear and defensive reactions and thus contributes to global instability. Instead of an instrument of power for geopolitical goals, we need a defensive alliance that respects the principles of the UN Charter, strives for disarmament instead of committing to rearmament, and in which the members meet as equals. Europe needs a stable security architecture that should also include Russia in the longer term.

Our country deserves a self-confident policy that focuses on the well-being of its citizens and is based on the understanding that US interests are sometimes very different from our own. Our goal is an independent Europe of sovereign democracies in a

multipolar world and not a new bloc confrontation in which Europe is crushed between the USA and the increasingly self-confident new power bloc around China and Russia.

### **Extracts from June Bulletins.**

#### **We are going to change politics in Germany!**

Our party has only been around for five months. And now we have achieved over six percent from a standing start - leaving the governing Free Democratic Party with its war-loving top candidate Strack-Zimmermann well behind us. All this in an election in which the competition from other parties was so fierce that it was difficult to find us on the long ballot paper. All this despite the fact that, as a young party, we do not have a well-established apparatus, we swim against the tide and had to fight our way through the courts to participate in important pre-election broadcasts. This is simply fantastic and we would like to thank everyone who made it possible!

Together we have made history and from now on we will be a force to be reckoned with, because together we can and will change our country for the better!

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# Workers' Party of Britain Education & Youth Manifesto

## - out for consultation

The WPB recognises that a new young party of the Left needs to mobilise voters and activists from the new generation. The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn seemed to recognise this and published a Youth Manifesto in 2019. There does not seem to have been any significant policy thinking in this area since the fall of Corbyn and the start of the Starmer era. This provides the WPB with an opportunity which it has seized. Below we print the draft Youth Manifesto in full to give our readers a sense of its scope and ambition.

As it is a draft we also make some suggestions below for ways in which it can be improved. The overall emphasis is absolutely right: young people are getting an exceptionally raw deal and the WP is right to draw attention to this. We support most of their draft proposals but would like to make a few constructive suggestions.

*Key points from Labour Affairs.*

1] not to abolish Ofsted completely but to make it a guarantor of minimum standards. Ofsted also has an important role in ensuring that minimum standards in vocational education are maintained. Instead, revive the Assessment of Performance Unit of the Callaghan period to disseminate knowledge about expected performance in schools and ways of achieving it. We support the abolition of tables of performance that distort schools' and colleges' behaviour and encourage gaming.

2] to keep the national curriculum and to ensure that all schools follow it. Local authorities should have responsibility for planning and maintaining local provision but should not be responsible for teaching methods and content.

3] to support an 18+ qualification instead of A levels and other qualifications like BTECs to ensure that there is a mix of

academic, technical and vocational qualifications that all young people can access.

4] To make the provision of high quality apprenticeships a priority through proper targeting of the apprenticeship levy to ensure that a wide range of businesses are supported, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs). To ensure that apprenticeship regulations are properly enforced while at the same time supporting enterprises that are serious about offering apprenticeship opportunities to young people.

4] To support teachers with proper teaching qualifications and opportunities for career development to ensure retention of skilled and experienced teachers. To ensure that initial teacher education equips teachers for a career in teaching in any part of the country.

5] to ensure that FE colleges are properly staffed and remunerated and to work towards ensuring equity of financing for FE and HE to eliminate the gross inequity in per capita funding that now exists.

Continued From Page 3

## Useful idiots of the arms industry

The traffic light ignores the growing problems in our country, it cannot plug its budget holes, while there are apparently unlimited funds for new weapons. The greatest threat is that this policy could lead us step by step into a major European war. In her speech in the Bundestag on 26.6.2024, Sahra Wagenknecht spoke about useful idiots in the arms industry and called on Chancellor Scholz to finally join forces with Brazil and China for a ceasefire and compromise peace.

## State party conference of the BSW in Potsdam

Last weekend, the "Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance - Reason and Justice" in Brandenburg laid important foundations for a successful state election campaign. At a state party conference in Potsdam, the program for the state election on 22 September was unanimously adopted with minimal changes. The members of the youngest BSW state association elected 61-year-old labor judge Robert Crumbach as their top candidate for the state election with 86 percent of the vote.

In her speech, Sahra Wagenknecht emphasized the signal effect of the Brandenburg election on the traffic light coalition in the federal government and opposed the increasingly narrow corridor of opinion: "It must no longer be the case that opinions that deviate from the mainstream, that have a different position, whether that is on the question of war and peace, whether that was then on the Corona question, whether that is on many other topics, that they are defamed and marginalized in this way. We want there to be an open debate again!"

## Workers Party of Britain

An outstanding action from our party congress and the publication earlier this year of our [Manifesto](#), was the drafting of an Education & Youth Manifesto. We now put this before the public for comment.

## Life-Long Education and Working Class Youth

### A Manifesto

### Key Points

Our educational policy is grounded on an improvement in the material conditions of the working class, both as parents and as young persons

We are already committed to an extension of free school travel nationally and to improved and free school meal provision, for all children.

We support the rights of the family unit and the rights of parents to be the best judges of their children's interests.

We will raise the standards of protection and provisions for

children in care; ensure their safety is appropriately managed by multi-disciplinary teams and are regularly scrutinised and monitored.

We will undertake a thorough review of the National Curriculum by engaging the very best educators and innovators to enhance the outcomes of all children.

We will abolish OFSTED and create a system of supervision and coaching of school staff, whilst returning the day-to-day control of education, within a national framework, to officials in our Local Authorities.

We have an absolute commitment, not merely to apprenticeships, but to making free and affordable vocational education central to our national education strategy.

Universities are now private business entities. We will therefore, bring our complex and out-of-control University system back under national scrutiny, whilst scrapping tuition fees and ensuring guarantees for full academic freedom.

We recognise the increasing alienation of our youth under the current, collapsing educational system: we will make efforts to reverse this by building new and better schools, fit for the 21st Century, by bringing back common-sense and inclusive curriculum subjects fit for purpose in a modern Britain.

### **From the Cradle to the Grave – Nurturing the Mind**

The colossal waste of human talent in our country has been the ultimate price we have paid for neo-liberal economics and domination by a corrupt and self-centred elite. But what has been done to us by that elite goes far beyond economics. It has sapped the self-confidence of working people and it has confused class-based education with intelligence and worth.

As John Lennon once put it, “as soon as you’re born, they make you feel small by giving you no time instead of it all” and this despite the enormous and dedicated efforts of tens of thousands of teachers and educators who have to work within a system that is designed to train us to be productive units in systems of profit instead of rounded,

happy, creative and socially useful individuals.

In our main National Manifesto, the Workers Party of Britain dealt with the material conditions that are necessary to improve the minds of our young. These ranged from quality housing through to good nutrition exemplified by one of our flagship policies – free school breakfasts across the country designed to ensure that every child gets what they need to think straight in the class room. Please refer to that Manifesto for a full sense of our ambition.

This mini-manifesto takes our concern further – to adopt a ‘cradle to the grave approach’ to life-long learning, which deals with the need to create a work force that can meet its own aspirations whilst being flexible enough to deal with technological change, social needs and the need to nurture individual talent and self improvement on equal terms.

Pedagogy will shift its emphasis from capital to labour through all forms of education: technical skills, critical thought, knowledge-based, creative and even political, from early years through to secondary, further education and apprenticeships to higher education undertaken well into old age, if desired.

Education providers would work in a partnership between parents, children, adolescents and teachers. Parents need support to give time and resources to the needs of their children. Children and adolescents need to be understood and not entrained and controlled as inconveniences to be managed until fit for a call centre or conscription. And teachers and educators need to be respected and their morale made central to the national education strategy.

### **Recapitulation – What We Said in Our Manifesto**

The material conditions of working-class children are critical to their success although, of course, education is more than this. Nevertheless, adequate housing and social protection are key to meeting working class educational aspirations.

We will ensure that no working

class child is disadvantaged because of their background or locality and that those that want to get on are actively encouraged at any time in their lives to learn and apply their skills. Education is a key social infrastructure.

This means small class sizes, teachers who are trusted to teach without administrative target-driven nonsense, investment in extra-curricular subjects like the arts and music, as well as sports. An atmosphere of equitable encouragement of all, according to their abilities. Comprehensive online safety education and policy development that ensures healthy, protective and age-appropriate online behaviour, and zero tolerance towards bullying and abuse.

Two of our flagship policies are focused on children’s key material needs: first, we are committed to the extension of free public travel arrangements for all children extending the current age restrictions from 11 to 16; second, we support the provision of free, good quality and nutritious breakfast and lunch meals during term time to all children in school without means testing and the introduction of access to low cost, but nutritious meals, out of term time, in targeted areas.

To the Workers Party of Britain, education is a life-long process. We deplore the way that a Labour Government became complicit in turning it into a global capitalist business churning out vast numbers of young people at home and overseas with worsening standards under increasingly stressed academics. Labour has created an indebted intellectual underclass.

We would change this model for education entirely. First, by guaranteeing a right to a free tuition first degree that could be taken at any time during one’s life so as to end the pressure for young people to take on debt before they have any idea what they want to do with their lives. Tuition fees will be a thing of the past and debt for low-income graduates cancelled.

We would financially support vocational education, apprenticeships and trades education that met the aspiration of any worker to get

employment that could allow them to live a better standard of living in an economy that may require frequent changes in skills.

*All this is the very grounding of our policy towards children and youth regardless of class or background. We have a commitment to improving the prospects of British working-class children especially in disadvantaged areas of Britain. This mini manifesto expands on these themes and ensures our seriousness of purpose.*

### **Support for Parents**

No one owns a child. Children are their own people with the potential to become responsible adults with lives of their own, making their own choices. However, no one denies that children are also vulnerable especially in the early years and, for different reasons, during adolescence as they discover their own individuality.

The Workers Party of Britain gives priority of rights of care to parents. It sees the State as only creating the conditions of support for parents, providing the material conditions and services that will allow the working class child to flourish and meet their aspirations, to ensure vulnerable children are protected and to instil an understanding that individual aspiration must be met within a framework of social responsibility.

In other words, the State must not take the place of parents unless absolutely necessary. It is for parents to give their children the appropriate moral and religious, or non-religious framework, within their culture. The child is free to rebel against it or not, in later years, but it is not for society to interfere in that process.

Parents cannot do their job if they are struggling financially in poor housing conditions and forced to work long hours that place stress on relationships and lead to family breakdown. While family structures are a matter for individuals and households, those who want a functional family life, require the material resources to maintain them. It is our firm belief that family breakdown is related to the pressures created by the collapse of the UK's social contract.

We are deeply concerned at the anti-natalist (those who believe it

is wrong or morally unjustifiable to have children) prejudices of the elitist class who have redefined us as units of individual production; who deal with reduced fertility rates with the easy solution of mass uncontrolled immigration, instead of securing the lives of those who live permanently in the country, regardless of background. We continue to support the right to choose, as a personal matter in regard to abortion and contraception, but we abhor the situation where women who want children feel they cannot have a family because of their economic circumstances.

Our approach to this is materialist; to improve material conditions and support young parents with appropriate counselling and practical support, especially during the first seven years of their child's life. We see early-stage nursery education as vital in building the confidence of the working class. We will redirect funding to support it, but not on the grounds of forcing women into the work force if they choose to stay home to raise their own children – the most important job in the world.

### **Child Protection & Vulnerable and SEND Adolescents**

The vast majority of parents must be assumed to know what they are doing. Although mistakes can be made, mistakes are how we learn. There is no place for a "Nanny State" that watches every move of the parent and destroys their confidence with constant interference.

However, a small minority of parents will be destructive of the potential of their children. We have to recognise this. Child abuse within families, religious institutions or private boarding schools can no longer be tolerated. We will invest in multi-disciplinary teams, comprised of social workers, teachers and therapists to maximise child protection.

Social Services has been in crisis for years. It really is shocking when you work with children, how difficult it is to speak with a social worker. Social workers have a lot of time off sick due to workload and the stress of the job. High numbers of social workers leave the profession, and this leads to children falling through

gaps in the system. The only constant that some children have in their lives are school staff so this social services crisis must be addressed. We will invest in training more social workers, tackle the bureaucracy created in the profession and ensure there is fully joined-up multi-disciplinary teams with monitored digital communications.

We are shocked by the institutional arrangements that have been implemented to deal with vulnerable adolescents. The police are not social workers and should not have to fulfil that function, so we need a more co-ordinated approach between police and social services nation wide in order to transfer vulnerable children into a caring system that is fully funded.

In the view of the Workers Party of Britain, children should not be punished for the failures of a broken system. The idea that the care system is just a holding pen for vulnerable individuals to be thrown out on the street when they reach a certain age, is not only cruel, but feeds alternative systems like organised crime and perpetuates the cycle of damage.

We will change the whole national ethos towards these children. We are not naïve about the predatory psychopath in society. Our most vulnerable children and adolescents should be resourced on equal terms to the rest of society, with a duty of care well beyond 16 and through to adult independence (conventionally 21). These should be viewed as 'society's children'.

We must also face the cultural problem of paedophilia and child sexual exploitation. This is an issue that can emerge wherever there is a cowardly refusal to recognise and deal with the matter decisively. We will follow the social science but be resolute in stamping out all non-consensual sexual predation wherever it takes place.

The previous reforms to the SEND system set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 have failed to achieve the goal of improving provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. We seek to complement high quality teaching with carefully selected small-group and one-to-one



interventions, employing well trained and appropriately remunerated teaching staff, who will specialise in bespoke provision for SEND students. Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) should be written by people who have holistic understanding of the needs of the child in conjunction with teaching staff and parents. We will close the gap in SEND funding and clear council deficits to ensure that children have access to the same opportunities as their peers. It is important that all children, no matter their ability, are supported to achieve their maximum potential.

### **The School Curriculum & Child Morale**

The teaching and academic professions have become increasingly demoralised by a culture of managerialism and targets. There is merit in setting some standards and targets for basic skills. We consider these to be numeracy and literacy to which we would add basic training in understanding personal finance, digital skills, gender-specific personal health care and gender-neutral home economics and nutrition which are all essential in navigating adulthood and increasing personal potential.

The Workers Party aims to concentrate equal attention on two separate strands in educational development and then allow children and adults in education to follow the paths most useful to them in terms of character, economic aspiration, social value and opportunity.

The first strand is that of increased respect for vocational work expressed in our policy of apprenticeships (see below) and de-privileging the machinery of mass university education (also see below). The educational system in this respect needs to see more emphasis on practical skills for those children whose aspirations are practical or creative – digital labs, scientific method, hands-on engineering, food preparation, music, art, human biology. Sharing of facilities between schools will build capacity for practical experience in ‘doing’ things that will increase personal confidence but also value to the community.

The second strand is education rather than training – an attitude of mind that helps as many children

as possible to see the world and its structures of power and control for what they are and make informed decisions about how they want to live in the world and how they can contribute to society. This second strand in our education does not require the same type of capacity as in the case of training.

The capacity required in this latter case is high quality well rewarded teachers able to talent spot the best minds able to contribute to society as socially responsible individuals, community leaders and administrators. This is an education based on critical and analytical thinking, the honest study of national and imperial history, questioning of authority and problem-solving. Consequently, we will explore existing research and educational models that eschew examinations at 16, a system that was designed to assess children departing from education at this age and create a provision that gives students more time to develop a range of skills, knowledge and creative endeavours.

### **Community Authority and Educational Localism**

Who governs our schools is a matter of national importance. Power over our children’s education has been taken away from our localities. It has been left in a limbo between national dictation of standards and alleged parental rights that are a figment of the political imagination. In parts of the country, we have formal selection and in other parts informal selection.

Our inner cities and poorest areas get the least attention. There is no appreciation that talented working-class students may want to live in and serve their local communities and not be forced by the market to seek alleged opportunities in ‘global cities’. The middle classes flock to expensive private schools. The upper classes cement their privilege through the public school system which has absurdly been given charitable status. This situation cannot continue. Locality and community matter. Give the young the resources. They will create vibrant economic communities.

The Workers Party of Britain is committed to a national non-selective system of education in

which funding is full but directed more to low-achieving areas than high-achieving areas until we have levelled up outcomes between the classes. We are prejudiced in favour of working-class children.

This means that elite tolerance for private education is no longer acceptable. The charitable status of educational establishments will be ended as a priority. We have no intention of forcing the closure of private schools in the short to medium term because the second stage of our project must prove that the public education system can deliver outcomes as good as if not better than the private system. As with private healthcare, we simply want to make private education irrelevant.

The basic framework for national education will be set along the lines outlined in the previous section. Central authority will have reserve powers to intervene if the general principles behind that framework are breached. The job of our educators is to facilitate learning whilst encouraging children to be critical thinkers. Not to dictate current Governmental fads.

However, our intention is to return the school system to the people through local authorities within that framework. In our view, local people should vote for their representatives on the local education committees on a regular basis under conditions where those representatives can be judged on their outcomes. The WPB will itself seek to build a presence in these authorities.

Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, the Workers Party of Britain has no intention of changing the status of non-private faith-based community schools on the understanding that they maintain the national framework and operate their faith-based aspects in a non-authoritarian way permitting conscientious objection to attendance at religious events at a certain age.

### **Apprenticeships**

The Workers Party of Britain is committed to the advancement of the interests of the working class. In educational terms this means that we want to encourage the social mobility of workers into management and

administration, but without creating the conditions by which those who benefit from education pull the ladder up behind them. The working class will pay for the education of administrators, technologists and scientists on the understanding that their work will benefit the whole of society.

On the other hand, the aspirations of most working class people are to ensure that they can provide for their families and live a good life in long term security. This is often best met by ensuring not merely full employment but the availability of solid and lasting skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the community. The Workers Party will act vigorously to bring back a national culture of apprenticeship.

This commitment is closely linked to our 2024 Manifesto commitment to enhanced workers' control. Worker members on company boards will be expected to promote a skills and training policy distinct from the management control explicit in human resources ideology with proper supervision of workplace learning and apprenticeship.

Approved vocational education training, notably in the emergent new technologies but also in industrial engineering and key service sectors, will be free to all participants up to the age of 29 with close independent regulation of expenditures on training to ensure the apprenticeships are high quality and geared to the economic situation. State support should be specific to the needs of the worker and society and not be used to subsidise the needs of businesses and their shareholders.

We review our critical stance towards Labour's strategy of mass university education below (which is not to be interpreted as negativity towards higher education). In our view, we have a fundamental lack of technical institutes. Some universities in the former polytechnic sector should now be converted into such institutes with a heavy bias towards new technology requirements, export-led industrial expansion and essential services.

Given the level of intellectual attainment and skill required to meet national new technology needs, the highest level of technical education should have the same status as university degrees but should be structured around practical work in industry and government. Similarly, legislation will require all firms above a certain size to have a training policy and smaller firms will be supported in creating such policies.

## **De-Privileging the Academic Business Model – Respecting Academic Values**

The Workers Party of Britain values academic attainment and pure research in higher education. However, we have seen an unfortunate effect of Labour's expansion of the university sector beyond its value to society. Degree inflation has driven our young people into thousands of pounds of debt, without knowing if those degrees will lead to opportunities in employment. Universities are designed to fund an overweight and inefficient academic sector, whose main purpose is to earn foreign currency, through attracting overseas students.

Higher education has turned into yet another global business where the main winners are excessively paid administrators and managers. The academic community has been devalued. Students are often 'ripped off' considering the attention and support they receive.

Our main task is to reduce the sector to a manageable size, but not by reducing opportunity. The two key innovations we would propose, would be the transfer of a proportion of smaller universities (see previous section) to the vocational technical sector designed to accommodate British working class students, largely without tuition fees. These institutions would not be marketed, as is currently the case, to overseas students.

The second task is to extend the life of university education by making it available to all age cohorts of the population at any time in their lives for personal and creative development. This is at the root of one of our flagship 2024 Manifesto policies – the guarantee of a free university first degree for everyone which can be taken at any time in their life, including old age if they so choose.

No longer would young people be driven into university before they are sure about what to do with their lives. They can experiment in the job market or with vocational education and then come to higher education with more maturity and understanding. Naturally, we are mindful of the grave injustice done to the Blairite and post-Blairite generation in being saddled with debt. We will undertake a review of this debt, with a mind to reduce or eliminate it over time.

We will also be bringing all universities under national administrative control. The so-called elite universities such as

Oxford and Cambridge can no longer expect to function as finishing schools for the upper middle classes, cherry picking working class and ethnic minority students, and turning them into second division members of the elite.

None of our reforms will affect the integrity of academic research. On the contrary, we will guarantee freedom to publish and exchange information, without political interference, as part of our policy in support of freedom of speech and against de-platforming. At the highest level we see no problem at all with workers financing the pure research of our greatest minds.

## **Social Commitment and British Youth**

The major debate we want to see is one about priorities. We see education as a process of asking fundamental questions about who has power and how they hold on to it to the detriment of all generations and about why we allow tiny groups of men and women to drive us remorselessly into futile wars and injustices. We also want the young to ask questions about the competence of these people. All this requires an emphasis on an education in critical thinking about our situation.

Teachers and academics are not the only ones demoralised by the current system. As the recent (February 2023) report 'Young Lives, Young Futures' sponsored by the ESCR has demonstrated, our young are alienated by the very educational structures that are supposed to enliven them and give them reasons for engagement and optimism. The curriculum is not working for them. School has become a stressful experience in which social control and management is self-evidently more important than listening to our kids. Bullying is still not being handled adequately.

Most of the preceding measures involve the community reforming a broken system and establishing new standards to benefit the working class and the nation rather than the globally mobile middle class and rootless executives. Many of the latter are on a treadmill and would welcome liberating.

Young people more generally are not there to be manipulated or directed. A degree of generational conflict is useful and creative if it comes up with fresh ways of thinking. The young want and need material improvement in their lives, above all in the reduction of housing costs whether rental or in getting their first family home, in the opportunity to buy a car, in the ability to pay high



service bills and in the avoidance of debt – all the problems faced by the working class as a whole.

Young people believe that the dice has been loaded against them by older generations although all working-class generations are equally victims of the false promise of Thatcherite and Blairite neo-liberal economics. Young people want independence and the Workers Party of Britain recognises that need.

Our strategy for freedom of speech and protest and against de-platforming also includes acceptance of non-violent youthful protest as part of the process of keeping the rest of society alive and on its toes. Any suggestion that the Workers Party of Britain is authoritarian could not be further from the truth.

What we would hope to see is the channelling of youthful idealism and energy into positive social change in the national and working-class interest. As a Party we will encourage that energy. We may not always agree with the direction of travel of some youthful idealism but it has to be heard just as we should listen to the practical needs and experience of mid-generation households and the experience and wisdom of the elderly.

## General Elections July 2024

### Spoiler candidates for the Workers Party

We are aware of several constituencies, and there must be many more, where a pro-Palestinian ‘socialist’ candidate has emerged to rival the candidate of the Workers Party.

In Tottenham where Jennifer Obaseki was standing for the Workers Party, another candidate popped up with points in common with Jennifer (on Palestine and socialism). The difference was that the rival candidate had money to print glossy leaflets and have them distributed door to door.

In Stratford the Workers Party was ‘informed by members of the Bangladeshi community in Stratford and Bow that the Independent candidate Nizam Ali, standing against our candidate Halima Khan is spreading misinformation in his campaign.

He is allegedly telling the community that he is ‘the candidate endorsed by George Galloway.’

Nizam Ali was a member of the Workers Party but has placed himself outside our ranks for standing against our candidate Halima Khan.

George Galloway has been consistently clear that Halima Khan is the official Workers Party candidate and was present at her launch on 17th June 2024 in Newham and at the Rally For Justice last night in Tower Hamlets.’

In Balckburn the Workers Party candidate Craig Murray’s offered to toss a coin with an independent candidate in order to avoid dividing the pro-Palestinian vote. The offer was refused.

This suggests that efforts were made to weaken the Workers Party vote.

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## Palestine Links July 2024

[How Israeli drone strikes are killing journalists in Gaza \(Mariana Abreu, Aida Delpuech, Eloïse Layan & Yuval Abraham, +972, 25 June 2024\)](#)

[Israel’s path to defeat: The implications \(Helena Cobban, 21 June 2024\)](#)

[London Times is first mainstream outlet to debunk Israel’s “mass rapes” hoax \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 16 June 2024\)](#)

[ICC must be allowed to carry out work ‘without intimidation’, say 93 member states \(Guardian, 15 June 2024\)](#)

[The Gaza Pier: A public relations stunt doomed from the start \(Umar A Farooq, Middle East Eye, 14 June 2024\)](#)

[What Gantz’s exit reveals about Israel’s failed Gaza strategy \(Meron Rapoport, +972, 11 June 2024\)](#)

[When Israel Burned Refugees Alive, Establishment Media Called It a ‘Tragic Accident’ \(Robin Andersen, Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, 10 June 2024\)](#)

[Palestinians massacred in “rescue” operation lauded by US \(Maureen Clare Murphy, Electronic Intifada, 8 June 2024\)](#)

[Israel livid as it’s added to UN ‘list of shame’ for wartime children’s rights violations \(Jacob Magid, Times of Israel, 7 June 2024\)](#)

[Israeli bombing kills dozens sheltering at UN school \(Maureen Clare Murphy, Electronic Intifada, 7 June 2024\)](#)

[German leader Olaf Scholz repeats lie about non-existent Hamas “rape videos” \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 6 June 2024\)](#)

[Full text of Israel’s Gaza ceasefire proposal that was announced by Biden \(Middle East Eye, 6 June 2024\)](#)

[Gaza: Civil ICC case against Ursula von der Leyen raises stakes on genocide complicity \(Richard Falk, Middle East Eye, 6 June 2024\)](#)

[42 House Dems Help GOP Pass Bill Targeting ICC Officials Over Israel \(Brett Wilkins, Common Dreams, 4 June 2024\)](#)

[Palestine files ICJ application to intervene in South Africa v. Israel \(Jurist News, 4 June 2024\)](#)

[Teenager’s death highlights infectious disease casualties of genocide \(Tasneem Elholy, Electronic Intifada, 3 June 2024\)](#)

[Aid throttled as Israel takes control over Gaza’s southern border \(Maureen Clare Murphy, Electronic Intifada, 30 May 2024\)](#)

[“You Have Been Warned”: Republican Senators Threaten the ICC Prosecutor over Possible Israel Arrest Warrants \(Zetee, 6 May 2013\)](#)

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Suffering from Freedom, Rather Than Enjoying It

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## Suffering from Freedom, Rather Than Enjoying It

All round the world, a spate of elections have not produced much actual democracy.

A loss of faith in socialism means many ordinary people seeking not to be burdened by the needs of others. But are surprised and puzzled that others treat them likewise.

1960s radicals wanted to change the rules on marriage and sex, and this has largely happened. Also drugs: mostly a bad idea. Only a few mad libertarians think hard drugs should be allowed.

1960s radicals took advantage of the popular lie that the West was the Free World. The real belief, East and West and all over the world, was that freedom was valuable only when most could enjoy it. Only a few suffering from it – ideally none, but realistically there would always be some.

Smoking cigarettes was once pushed by Hollywood films. Most of us now accept limits. Likewise for road safety, and stamping out under-age sex. But few would admit that limits on freedom that you see as necessary are exactly that. Most evade the problem. Many spread muddle in bitter arguments over where the lines should be drawn.

Much of the world has not accepted that same-sex unions can be called marriage. Some, and notably in Black Africa, will not allow them at all. Some allow polygamy, at least for Muslims. Very few allow polyandry, one woman with several husbands: it was customary in Tibet but Beijing suppressed it. And in the West, those vehement that gay marriage is an inherent human right are mostly just as vehement that legal recognition of polygamy or polyandry is out of the question.

Accusing those with genuinely different beliefs of a wicked hatred of freedom is only likely to make their

opposition more intense.

In the West, the 1960s young were supposed to spontaneously make a kindly and harmonious social order. But visibly have not.

Song and dance are normally part of integrating humans into a social order. They have become sophisticated money-making machines: but chaotic machines with no wider purpose.

It is not even that capitalists are in control. They are feeding off of it, but they do not control it.

When 1960s radicals got jobs and started paying tax, many were persuaded by Thatcher and Reagan that the state was wasteful and oppressive. That market forces would sweep away the *bad* barriers. Except that Thatcher, at least, did not expect her policies to sweep away what was left of traditional British sexual rules.

The capitalists liked a twisting of the existing Mixed Economy system to give them a much bigger slice of wealth. But the Thatcher / Reagan promise that more freedom for capitalists would mean more wealth all round was false.

Yet not seen as false, because the centre-left under leaders like Bill Clinton and Tony Blair surrendered to this false economics. And they and other leaders do nicely, and were bitterly hostile when Corbyn and Bernie Saunders tried to revive real socialism.

Hence disasters like Brexit, which thinking capitalists mostly disliked. But there is little connection between being a successful capitalist and being able to think coherently about the wider world.

The Western system in the 1940s saved itself by taking in a lot from Leninism.<sup>1</sup> But Moscow's decline, caused basically by being Russian Nationalists in a nominally multi-national system, was used as an excuse to revert to 19th century economics.

No 19th century economy managed better than 2% annual growth. It looked amazing, only in a world where most countries changed little from century to century.

They gladly shot themselves in the foot, and now wonder why it hurts.

Mainstream Western thinking is baffled that hyping notions of Freedom gets people insisting on versions of freedom that the Mainstream West were unfamiliar with. Such as Afghans who felt liberated when the Taliban returned.

People said 'no limits', but actually meant 'only

<sup>1</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

my limits’.

Dogmatic *freedom-is-what-I-say-it-is* attitudes cause hatred and acts of violent individualism: notably mass shootings and suicide bombers.

Also ethnic conflicts, which can be avoided by compromise and by shared values being imposed. But not if every compromise is seen as wicked and as treason.

Nationalities that fought each other when not under a strong empire fight again when competitive politics is treated as an absolute ideal.

The only real success for the New Right has been to deliver vast amounts of extra wealth and income to people who already had far more than they needed for a normal life.

Weakening socialism was no success, because other hostile creeds replaced it.

Including violent individualism. Personal Totalitarianism.

## India –

### Twisting a Twisted System

You probably weren’t told that Modi’s BJP got more votes in the recent election than in 2019.

Or that Modi only ever had just over a third of the electorate.

As usual, it is *The Economist* that records the unwelcome facts that practical business people need to know. And then twist them in a New Right direction, but still worth reading:

“It is not that the BJP’s popularity has fallen across the board. Its overall share of the national vote declined only fractionally, from 37.3% to 36.5%.... In the south, in the past a weak spot for the BJP where it was hoping to make headway this time, its vote share did in fact rise markedly. But in its heartland, the Hindi-speaking states of the north, its

vote share fell. And whereas its increased support in the south was not enough to win it any extra seats there, its decline in the north cost it dearly... In effect, the BJP’s vote was unchanged, but much less efficiently distributed. In 2019 its 37% share of the vote won it 56% of the seats; this time a similar showing yielded only 44% of seats...

“The increase in the BJP’s share of the vote in the south was substantial: it jumped from 18% to 24%. This was the reflection of a determined push to make the BJP a truly national party, with lots of spending and visits from grandees devoted to the region. But under India’s first-past-the-post electoral system, the BJP’s improved standing did not translate into a single extra seat.”<sup>2</sup>

India only has two fully national parties: Congress and the BJP. Plus Communist Parties strong in several regions, but minor elsewhere.

Leninism had mixed success in getting rooted in other societies. In China, it was marginal before Moscow made it go into alliance with the Kuomintang. And it emerged after being betrayed and massacred as the main alternative to the Kuomintang, with other options made insignificant. That’s a truth totally beyond the understanding of China’s marginal Trotskyists – I’ve just finished a long book about them,<sup>3</sup> and they call it Stalin’s blunder. Yet the entire world has never seen a significant Trotskyist party except in Sri Lanka, where authentic Trotskyism no longer matters.

It sees a great many squabbling

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2024/06/06/the-people-and-places-that-turned-away-from-the-bjp> - pay site

<sup>3</sup> Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo

Trotskyist sects, whose rise has neatly coincided with the general decline of the left.

In India now, the BJP has 240 seats, and needs another 32 for a bare majority. Modi’s allies have 53, but two relatively large parties hold 28 of them. If they withdrew, he could not rule with the remaining 25.

But that assumes the Congress-led INDIA alliance stands solid. With jobs and other favours that Modi can offer, it is unlikely they would. Some are anyway right wing, and would probably not want to replace Modi with a Congress leader. Yet no anti-Modi government can be formed without Congress, unless the BJP itself splits.

To rule, Congress with 99 seats would need 173 allies from a great diversity of small parties. Many more than were part of INDIA, and it would be like herding cats. So probably Modi stays.

Will he do more for the poor, to win them back in his ‘cow belt’ core? Maybe. But if not, a rival Congress-led government from 2029 might do no better. He might bounce back in 2034.

## Anti-Social Housing

“Why Britain is the world’s worst on homelessness.

“Insufficient housing, an eroded social sector and diminished state support made tens of thousands destitute.”<sup>4</sup>

Like *The Economist*, the *Financial Times* needs to give something like the truth to the elite who actually run the country. And seem happy to see the Tories ruined, on the assumption that Starmer will try to fix a disintegrating society without being harsh on the rich.

“When people picture homelessness, they tend to

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/24117a03-37c2-424a-97ed-6a5292f9e92c> - pay site



imagine people sleeping rough on the street, tipped into insecurity by substance use problems. Viewed this way, one might imagine the US would rank highest in any international comparison.

“Wrong. The main form of homelessness is people living in temporary accommodation, the main driver is an inability to afford housing, and America is not even particularly close to the worst. The UK holds that ignominious title, with an astonishing one in 200 households living in emergency lodging outside the formal housing sector....

“After declining for several years, the number of English households living in temporary accommodation more than doubled between 2010 and 2023 from 48,000 to 112,000, the highest figure since records began...

“Conditions in these buildings are often atrocious. Damp and mould are commonplace, as are insect and animal infestations. The disruption of being moved from place to place causes adults to drop out of work and children out of school. In the past five years alone, the parlous state of temporary accommodation has been cited as a contributing factor in the deaths of 55 children in England.

“These arrangements also impose enormous costs on local councils...

“Relative to population size, the UK builds fewer homes than the vast majority of other developed countries. This has sent private sector rents spiralling, exacerbated by a 25 per cent shrinking of the social housing sector since the 1970s, slowly closing a crucial safety valve.

“Losing your home tips people into spirals of despair and destitution, and the inability to afford rent is by far the fastest growing source of new homelessness in England.”

Very nice for private renters. But maybe the bulk of the elite have decided it has gone too far.

## Snippets

### China's Continuing Rise

“China Rules the Green Economy. Here's Why That's a Problem for Biden.»<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/08/climate/china-us-podesta-liu.html> - pay site

The US elite cares more about global dominance than the welfare of its ordinary citizens. But China has gone from a maker of cheap goods to a sophisticated state-dominated economy.

“China has become a scientific superpower

“From plant biology to superconductor physics the country is at the cutting edge”<sup>6</sup>

Even the dominance of US and allied electronics is failing:

“America's assassination attempt on Huawei is backfiring

«The company is growing stronger—and less vulnerable”<sup>7</sup>

These reports are not from left-wing sources. Most of the left is fixated on the view that Stalin and Mao were actually failures. That repudiating Stalin was brilliant, despite the later Soviet collapse. That maintaining respect for Mao was very wrong, even if in a mundane sense China does very well.

It is left to the advisors of practical capitalists to speak something like truth:

“For centuries the West sniffed at Chinese technology. Self-regarding Europeans struggled to accept that such a far-flung place could possibly have invented the compass, the crossbow and the blast furnace...

“China is now a leading scientific power. Its scientists produce some of the world's best research, particularly in chemistry, physics and materials science. They contribute to more papers in prestigious journals than their colleagues from America and the European Union and they produce more work that is highly cited.”<sup>8</sup>

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### Still Fighting to the Last Ukrainian

Years before the Soviet collapse, I looked at a map and reflected that an independent Ukraine might be a very significant country.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2024/06/12/china-has-become-a-scientific-superpower> - pay site

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2024/06/13/americas-assassination-attempt-on-huawei-is-backfiring> - pay site

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2024/06/13/how-worrying-is-the-rapid-rise-of-chinese-science> - pay site

It still might. But it would need its own version of what Putin did for Russia. And most people in Western Europe still swallow the media line that Russian support for Putin is an aberration, caused by hatred of Freedom.

No one mentions that Russia declined sharply from the comfortable stagnation of Late Soviet times.

Nor are we told that Russia under Putin has recovered. That Ukraine was corrupt and poor, even before the 2014 bust-up.

Yet can anyone still believe that Putin will be humbled and destroyed by a resurgent anti-Russian Ukraine?

I suspect the issue now is not being held responsible. In twenty years' time, we may get leaks confirming that people realised from 2023 that Kiev was never going to get even the limited aim of restoring the 2022 borders. But not saying so is much safer.

Zelenski escalated his demand – no peace without Crimea. This undermines anyone in Russia who would dump the Donbass to restore relations with the West.

I'm aware that the West's elite are making money out of the continuing war. But when reading about Europe negotiating with China over cars, I feel that a lot of the politicians realise that the whole effort to isolate Russia and China has failed.

The Gaza War has not helped, but it had already failed. That must have discouraged many from risking making enemies by trying to restrain Israel.

Ukrainians serving in Kiev's armies are being expended, civilians in their areas suffer, and Zelensky gets away with ruling without a new electoral mandate.

But we are safer with liars than fantasists. All along, lines were drawn to make sure that it was only Ukrainians and foreign volunteers who got hurt. Not risking letting the war expand.

Unlike Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi, Putin's Weapons of Mass Destruction are real.

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### An End to Feed-the-Rich?

“World's billionaires should pay

minimum 2% wealth tax, say G20 ministers

"Brazil, Germany, Spain and South Africa sign motion for fairer tax system to deliver £250bn a year extra to fight poverty and climate crisis...

"Billionaires have the lowest effective tax rate of any social group».<sup>9</sup>

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### The Alternative Right

Dire warnings about a rising Far Right seem excessive to me. As they rise, they become more mainstream.

Why not say *Alternative Right*? A return to more normal conservatism after the destructiveness of the Thatcher / Reagan creation of a New Right.

No longer mad faith in capitalism.

Racists? Immigration, a normal part of the human history, causes resentment if too many strangers arrive too fast, and with too many strange ways. Especially in an economic decline for ordinary members of the host population, even if it was the rich in that same population that caused most of the trouble.

Humans live within social structures, but the rules are arbitrary and infinitely variable. Bringing in outsiders is always disruptive.

All modern humans are born with a potential to adapt to any system. But any system need not be your system. And 'spontaneous human nature' may not produce any viable system.

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### How to be a Good Follower

«If there is one thing anyone with a job and a pulse needs to learn, it is how to lead. That, at least, is the message from the tsunami of books, courses, videos and podcasts on the topic...

"Missing in all this is an inconvenient fact. Most people in the workforce are not leaders and pretty much everyone reports to someone else. The most useful skill to have in your current job may well be how to be a good follower...

"A corner of the management

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2024/apr/25/billionaires-should-pay-minimum-two-per-cent-wealth-tax-say-g20-ministers>

literature is devoted to 'followership', but it remains small."<sup>10</sup>

Another interesting piece from *The Economist*.

But New Right success owes a lot to ordinary people fantasising about being part of the elite. Not thinking about what is good for the sort of people they actually are.

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### Austerity Was Pointless

"How the 'unforced error' of austerity wrecked Britain

"The Tories' cuts were an obvious economic blunder, but their disastrous consequences are still piling up – and there is little hope Labour will reverse the damage.»<sup>11</sup>

From *The Guardian* – which however was bitterly against Corbyn when he was seriously fighting austerity. So the damage continues.

"More than two-thirds of council-funded youth centres have been closed in England over the past 14 years, owing to a prolonged squeeze on local government finances, according to research by Unison...

"1,243 youth centres had been shuttered in the period since the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government took office in 2010, leaving only 581 in operation.

"The collapse in youth services has put teenagers 'at risk of isolation and of being swept into gang and knife culture', Unison warned and called on the next government to prioritise rebuilding the network.

"In the past, youth centres were able to help keep teenagers on the right path, providing guidance and advice to youngsters who perhaps weren't getting any support at home.»

"More than a decade of cuts to services had 'undone much of the previous good work'."<sup>12</sup>

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### Fixing Addiction

"China Drug Situation Report

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.economist.com/business/2024/05/16/how-to-be-a-good-follower> - pay site

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2024/jun/28/how-the-unforced-error-of-tory-austerity-wrecked-britain>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/6952c553-5af7-436f-aa8a-79c5ce53e4e6> - pay site

2021...

"Thanks to extensive drug prevention education and the Campaign "Care for Drug Users", the scale of drug abuse kept shrinking down. As of the end of 2021, there were 1.49 million registered drug users nationwide with a year-on-year decrease of 17.5%."

Not so good in the USA:

"We have treatments for opioid addiction that work. So why is the problem getting worse?

"Opioid addiction doesn't get as many headlines as it used to, but the crisis is as bad as ever. It doesn't have to be...

"Decades into the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in American history, people are dying at higher rates than ever. Between 2017 and 2021, the number of overdose deaths involving opioids jumped from 47,600 to 80,411 — many more Americans than are killed each year by guns or cars. The surge has been largely driven by powerful synthetics like fentanyl, an opioid 50 times more potent than heroin."<sup>13</sup>

Nor for us:

"Drug misuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2023...

"Although there was no change in prevalence of any drug use for people aged 16 to 59 years compared with the year ending March 2020 (9.4%), levels increased by 17% compared with the year ending March 2013, where prevalence was at an all-time low (8.1%)."<sup>14</sup>

The New Right has made a world fit for junkies.

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

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2024/1/16/24033590/treatment-opioid-addiction-crisis-2024>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/drugmisuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2023#overall-trends-in-drug-misuse>

# Reflections on questions concerning global warming

Richard Jones

## Part 3: Global Climate Change? in sea level.

I had intended for this instalment simply to look at the facts about the climate record (expecting to find confirmation that average temperature has been rising, and then in later instalments examine the evidence as to causes, the oracles predicting how this will evolve, and the pundits telling us what to do about it). Instead I found that when I looked for science I found politics. So I am led (also) to continue with the theme of science versus consensus.

One of my first thoughts when I started to enquire into global climate change was the question: What does global climate mean?

Before all this climate politics, I “knew” a couple of things...

Different places have different climates. North west Europe, for instance, had a milder climate than, for instance, higher latitudes in North America, due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. As a gardener, I was aware of classifications, like ‘temperate’, ‘arid’, ‘tropical’, ‘mediterranean’, etc, but obviously ‘global climate’ can’t be any of these.

Globally, the geological record shows periods called ice ages, which apparently include ‘interglacials’ that are more like ‘intraglacials’ in that they are milder periods during a long ice age. These are gross variations that affect the whole world, even if not uniformly. Hence global. However...

Before all this climate politics, did anyone ever look finely at averages of temperature over the whole surface of the earth and report small (I am comparing with large changes between ice age and interglacial) changes as being changes in ‘global climate’?

I don’t think I’m splitting hairs here. Maybe climate experts are on to something important, but the publicity about climate change is of two kinds: dramatic attention-grabbing stuff that is local, and commonly local weather rather than even local climate. Then there is the global stuff, a small increase in average temperature and a small rise

Then there is the matter of glaciers and arctic ice.

As a young child living in Geneva, I saw moraines on the Rhône and elsewhere, and learned that they were from episodes where glaciers terminated at that location. Also, I visited glaciers quite frequently and learned that the alpine glaciers were still retreating following the last ice age. Ice age to interglacial, that is meaningful global warming, global climate change. The imagery of glaciers calving and reports of glaciers retreating are impressive, but how does one distinguish whether this is the continuation of the process beginning thousands of years ago, or something new and a genuine emergency?

If a glacier is calving more iceberg volume now than a while ago, does that indicate that the glacier is moving faster (why?) or that there has been an increase in its volume, leading to greater pressure and driving force? Or something else?

I have been posing questions that scientists would frame when first giving attention to the matter. If the input to public discussion were primarily scientific, it seems to me that it should predominantly be presenting scientific questions and answers. Instead it is overwhelmingly persuasive.

When I said above that I found that when I looked for science I found politics, I was referring to the ‘information’ flow. Clearly, if there is a climate emergency due to the ability of humans to change the global climate, then there is a political emergency based on the need for humans to change the climate beneficially. So, the validity of politics concerning remedial action depends on what is the real state of affairs with ‘global climate’ and human input. That is not what bothered me. The problem with the climate politics is that it serves persuasion instead of science.

Scientists who are confident in their knowledge do not usually engage in

persuading their peers or the public. Mostly they do not address the general public at all. If they do, it is to try to explain a topic in a way to make its ideas accessible. To persuade as to its validity would be pointless, as that assessment commonly requires years of learning, although there may well be descriptions of key experiments that lent support to a hypothesis.

With climate change, on the other hand, hordes of scientists are recruited to publicise the matter. Do they explain? No, they persuade, and we are to be persuaded mainly by the supposed consensus among scientists. An Australian dissenter writes:

“When science was born, the consensus at that time was driven by religion, politics, prejudice, mysticism and self-interested power. From Galileo to Newton and through the centuries, science debunked the consensus by experiment, calculation, observation, measurement, repeated validation, falsification and reason. Appeals to consensus are not new. The methodology of science allows problems to be solved, whereas the science of the global warmers is designed to confirm a political opinion. There is a consensus regarding the science of global warming but only amongst ascientific environmental activists.

“Scientific fact now no longer seems to be necessary. Human-induced global warming is one such example, where one camp attempts to demolish the basic principles of science and install a new order based on political and sociological collectivism. Science is becoming a belief system wherein the belief with the greatest number of followers becomes the established fact and received knowledge. This belief is sustained by consensus and authority. With this new authoritarian science based on consensus and espoused by UN’s IPCC and other agencies as authorities, it appears that true science does not matter anymore. If Mann’s “hockey stick” chart showing rising global temperature is based on



fraud and invalid statistical methods, it just does not matter because we still have a consensus.”

(Ian Plimer - Heaven and Earth: Global Warming, the Missing Science)

It turns out that the scientific consensus is quite an industry. The journals have a remarkable output on the subject. I will cite one example. This from a paper by Naomi Oreskes, an accomplished geologist who turned her attention to areas such as history and philosophy of science. She has written books on plate tectonics and addressed specifically the fact that in its early years, there was something like consensus, especially in the US. that the theory of continental drift was bunk. So this is someone who is fully aware that scientific consensus counts nothing in determining the validity of a proposition.

In “The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change” (10.1126/science.1103618) Oreskes opens

‘Policy-makers and the media, particularly in the United States, frequently assert that climate science is highly uncertain. Some have used this as an argument against adopting strong measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, while discussing a major U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report on the risks of climate change, then-EPA administrator Christine Whitman argued, “As [the report] went through review, there was less consensus on the science and conclusions on climate change” (1). Some corporations whose revenues might be adversely affected by controls on carbon dioxide emissions have also alleged major uncertainties in the science (2). Such statements suggest that there might be substantive disagreement in the scientific community about the reality of anthropogenic climate change. This is not the case.

‘The scientific consensus is clearly expressed in the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).’

A few scientific organisations are listed as compliant, then we get to the nitty-gritty: nearly a thousand papers were found in a search for “climate change” and these were

examined for consensus. A quarter were not relevant but ‘Remarkably, none of the papers disagreed with the consensus position.’

The conclusion is indeed remarkable when many scientists have been active in opposing the supposed consensus. A clue as to the discrepancy may lie in the subsequent correction: the search term that assembled the articles was not as stated. Rather, it was “global climate change”. Can it simply be that dissenting articles would not use that phrase? On the other hand the consensus in question is that average surface temperature has increased and that human activity has contributed. Dissent is mostly about projections and whether there is a climate emergency. This is not unlike claiming a consensus for Israeli treatment of Palestinians by reference to people agreeing with the right of Jews to defend themselves.

Another response to the widespread criticism by scientists is that the critics are not ‘climate scientists’.

This set me wondering “What is a climate scientist? What is climate science?”

Study of climate and climate change involves input from many scientific disciplines. To name a few, meteorology, geophysics, fluid dynamics, chemistry, thermodynamics, mathematics and mathematical computing and modelling. True Believers seem to rely on the weakest link among these: computer models of past and present climate. Dissent from experts in any of these and other relevant disciplines can be dismissed as ‘not climate scientists’, even though they may have used their expertise to analyse the matter. So, apparently, a climate scientist does not mean a scientist using relevant expertise to examine questions of climate change. It means someone with climate science in their job description.

It occurred to me to examine the use of this terminology with the Google Ngram viewer. This is a very useful tool for examining the historical currency of a phrase. Google has a massive database of books digitised and OCR’d (extraction of text from scanned images--this contains errors but these will usually be insignificant

in bulk statistics for searched phrases).

Lo, it turns out that usage of the terms ‘climate science’ and ‘climate scientist’ surged in just the period of the climate emergency narrative. See

[https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=climate+scientist&year\\_start=1800&year\\_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=climate+scientist&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3)

[https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=climate+scientist&year\\_start=1800&year\\_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=climate+scientist&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3)

As these terms have only been widely used in the same period as the climate emergency narrative, it seems likely that everyone (ever) employed as ‘climate scientist’ was appointed in this context. What are the chances that someone with that appointment would be a dissenter?

That question is the weak conclusion. The stronger one is to ask whether or not promoting the climate emergency was in the job description. This question is not available for scientific or even forensic enquiry as such matters are inevitably shrouded in secrecy and evasion.

This instalment of my ‘Reflections’ was to examine the matter of recent climate change. I have not mentioned sea level. Alarms about sea level are entirely predictive, as it is a gradual process not subject to the extremes of weather that can be popularised as climate change. I will look at this topic in the next article about climate forecasts.

To conclude, the discussion about recent climate change, global warming, call it what you will, has been dominated by persuasion and extravagant claims (from both sides). There has been manipulation of data, but more often manipulation of how the data are presented. For the reality, and I don’t consider this the holy grail, just a reasonable and probably impartial assessment, I will cite Jonathan E. Martin in his text “Introduction to Weather and Climate Science”

“It is an undeniable observational

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# Britain's Immoral Foreign Policy

## The Guilt of Upper London and the Mahan USA

By Gwydion M. Williams

Press Poisoners – Now on  
Television

Upper London's Other  
Victims

The Oddity of Kosovo

Post-Truthful in Gaza

Britain Gave the World  
Democracy?

The USA as Redefined by  
Admiral Mahan

### Press Poisoners – Now on Television

Irish socialist James Connolly complained in 1913 about the way that newspapers owned by the rich had learned how to manipulate the decent feelings of ordinary people. Pretending to care, but undermining everything that might actually help them:

"You find always a sloppy sentiment sloppily expressed in favour of Labour in the editorials, but all through the news columns,

and in all its headings and sub-headings, you notice that always undue prominence is given to every item that tells against Labour, the views of its most unimportant enemies are heralded forth with the utmost prolixity, and the views of its most eminent partisans are slurred over and made to read as unintelligibly as possible...

"The *Irish News* has carefully rejected everything that tells for the organised Labour movement, and has carefully suppressed every item the mere chronicling of which might convey to its readers an idea of the justice, power, or growth of the working class in any part of the world."<sup>1</sup>

This remains the trick. Nice stories about China stopped coming when it became clear that China's rulers were seriously undermining the USA's hegemony. Having once been urged to take firm action against Islamic extremists in the Chinese province of

1 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1913/08/press.htm>

Xinjiang, the story suddenly switched to Beijing being unreasonably nasty to the poor Uighurs.<sup>2</sup>

At no time did any of our news media correct the widespread belief that Tibet was a sovereign state that China wickedly annexed in 1949. The main facts are clear: Lhasa as capital for the regional government of one of three Tibetan provinces had made a bid for independence in 1912. They never got any sovereign government or major international body to recognise them.<sup>3</sup> The current Dalai Lama was born in Amdo, which never claimed independence. He was imposed without use of the traditional Golden Urn that was sometimes supposed to magically find the correct candidate. And this was largely thanks to pressure from China's central government. The Lhasa government only made a new claim to independence after 1945, when it became clear that the Communists would win China's Civil War.

Nor were the Dalai Lamas the spiritual wonders that most people see them as. Some were powerless. Some were murdered by Tibetan politicians; men who clearly did not worry about supernatural consequences.<sup>4</sup>

Awkward facts get slurred over by saying 'China claims', even when few would dispute that the particular claim was correct.

You can imagine the anger and derision if some news source said '*Poland says that Germany invaded them in 1939*'. It is technically true, since Poland says it: but grossly misleading since everyone else says exactly the same. But similar methods are used to slight awkward facts that a serious news source cannot actually deny.

<sup>2</sup> <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Bliaring-about-Xinjiang-and-about-Islamic-Extremism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/tibet/tibet-and-international-law/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/tibet/the-truth-about-the-dalai-lama/>

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fact that the average surface temperature of the Earth has increased by about 0.8°C (1.5°F) over the last 150 years or so. This increase has prompted considerable scientific study ... computer models of the climate system ... suggesting ... additional warming, the degree of which is not certain, as there is some variability among the projection....

"A warmer planet means that, even without an increase in relative humidity, the actual water vapor content of the atmosphere ... will increase. A current high-profile question regarding future climate concerns how such increased water vapor content might change the nature of the general circulation of the Earth's atmosphere."

The role of water vapour in the atmosphere is of course much more dynamic than carbon dioxide, due to condensation and evaporation. So we have a trivial increase in average temperature so far, and an enormous challenge for forecasting future climate change.

One thing that we can be sure about is that global climate is a very complex system. As such it has numerous feedback mechanisms, and most of these (as in the human body) are negative feedback: they respond to oppose change. The suddenness (on a geological time scale) of transition between ice age and interglacial implies that there are also positive feedback mechanisms. An example may be the change in albedo (reflection of solar radiation) accompanying gain or loss of ice cover--significant in temperate latitudes for ice ages, less so currently for arctic ice.

When I was younger, it was frequently said that Britain went to war to defend 'gallant little Serbia'. More recently it has been put out of public memory that this was ever said. Serbia's ambition to conquer ethnically mixed Bosnia before 1914 is embarrassing when 'Greater Serbia' has been defined as an evil. And no one now mentions that the Serbian government in 1914 was dominated by people who had murdered the king and queen of one of Serbia's two rival home-grown monarchies. Mentioning this undisputed fact would lend credibility to Austro-Hungarian claims that the Serbian government was behind the murder of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife.

The recent celebrations of the undoubted courage and sacrifice of D-Day were reported with never a mention that the Germans had more than half of their army tied up trying to stop the relentless advances of the Soviet Red Army.<sup>5</sup>

Bias is standard. I tried imagining a variant on Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with a chorus of media sheep bleating the following:

Russia holding Chechnya bad

Georgia holding South Ossetia good.

Serbia holding Kosovo bad

Albanian Kosovo holding Serb Kosovo good

China holding Tibet bad

India holding Kashmir good

Indian Fast Growth Bad

Chinese Fast Growth Bad

Chinese Cheap Goods Good?

Pause, wait, it recently has eternally been Chinese Cheap Goods Bad

India the Admirable Largest Democracy, wait, now Bad Modi Dictatorship, wait, now Modi Hopefully Curbed

Similar cases, hard to do as a chorus, are Aksai Chin integral for India, though China could build a road through it and not be noticed till Indian visitors read about it in a Chinese news source. Western climate guilt is left in oblivion. It is hardly ever mentioned that we produce far more greenhouse gas per

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Nazi-Germany-Was-Defeated-in-Russia>

head than Chinese or Indians.

They've also got the public convinced that few Ukrainians wanted to be part of Russia. But the areas the Russians hold voted for parties that were against the Orange Revolution. Crimean and Donbass Separatism vanish mysteriously after being mentioned just after the Second Orange Revolution. So did Western sightings of Ukrainian nationalists using Nazi symbols.<sup>6</sup>

This media nonsense is part of what I am calling Britain's Immoral Foreign Policy. The USA is now even more guilty, and much of Europe far from clean. But as a Briton, I have a duty to say that the foreign politics of Upper London, and not at all what most Britons think it is.

Upper London has seldom had any good purposes. Defeating Nazi Germany was excellent: but for the government it was a war for Anglo global hegemony, with racism continued.

### Upper London's Other Victims

Lots of Tories had an enthusiasm for Hitler that ended only when he became seen as a threat to the hegemony of the British Empire.<sup>7</sup> Churchill was different only in seeing much earlier that Hitler was not going to stay within British-defined limits. Mussolini's fascism was not such a threat, and Churchill showed an open enthusiasm that embarrassed most other Tories.<sup>8</sup>

Ordinary Britons suffered much less than the rest of the world from the global work of Upper London. The elite who came to power in 1688, and have so far kept their dominance. We got huge tracts of fertile temperate land where ordinary Britons could settle and live better than at home. Where both other

<sup>6</sup> <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Ukraine-Western-Media-in-2014-Reported-Nazi-Links>

<sup>7</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/45-1-more-on-fascism-the-world-wars/britains-purely-imperialist-war-against-nazi-germany/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/why-churchill-admired-mussolini/>

immigrants and the survivors among original inhabitants had to adjust to our culture. But we did also suffer. It is both foolish and self-defeating to lump us together with our rulers.

I am not criticising Britishness. I'm fond of my own nationality, without claiming it is better than any other nationality. Just as I'm fond of my own relatives, without claiming they are necessarily better than anyone else's relatives. If there were an 'index of social usefulness' they would rate high, but that should not be a guide to anyone's feelings.

For my own nationality, we are not better, but nor are we worse. Britain crystalised a broad movement towards modern industry that was likely to happen anyway. And Global Sea-Powered Imperialism was begun by the Spanish and Portuguese, inspired by Italian ventures within the Mediterranean. These fell behind the rest of Europe, but France and the Dutch were ahead of the British in following the Iberian example. Even the Danes had a small empire, including slave-grown sugar.

The British Empire did have distinct failings, including an usually widespread and rigid racism. All the European empires had a racial bias, but Britain placed everyone categorised as White above all of the rest. I see this as English middle-class prejudices overcoming the more fluid view of the old aristocracy. Though I think it was only in the USA that the children fathered by slave-owners mostly remained slaves, and were often sold to strangers.

The other European empires mostly let family ties override racial bias. Novelist Alexandre Dumas was the son of the illegitimate son of a black slave mother.<sup>9</sup> Pushkin was the great-grandson of a nobleman of African origin who was kidnapped from his homeland by the Ottomans. Freed by the Russian Emperor and raised in the Emperor's court household as his godson.<sup>10</sup>

The radicalisation of the 1960s pushed into mainstream politics in the 1990s. Blair's dismal New Labour government did at least

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandre\\_Dumas#Birth\\_and\\_family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandre_Dumas#Birth_and_family)  
<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Pushkin#Ancestry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Pushkin#Ancestry)



break rigid lines on race, gender, and openly-expressed sexuality. Only then could open gays and individuals not classed as White could rise in the Tory party, and then lecture us about how benevolent the Empire actually was. And incidentally, it's only from the 1960s that it became normal for West Indian cricket teams to have a non-white captain.

But 1960s radicalism was also full of confusion, much of it encouraged by the drug-fuelled world of pop music. 'Nothing is real, sang Lennon and McCartney, yet the current consensus is that neither of them was in fact a walrus.

A sensible complaint against 1950 technocratic values mostly failed to say just what is wrong with it. For me, much of its supposed rationalism is pseudo-rationalism. And one well-known case is the Trolley Problem.<sup>11</sup> A runaway trolley is going to kill five people on the track ahead of it. You can pull a switch to divert the trolley and save them, but it will kill another person who is on that track.

For me, the issue is our natural human aversion to killing people, and especially to killing the innocent. If it were a matter of sacrificing one pack of vital emergency aid to save five equally useful packs, few would hesitate. But I am fairly sure that all existing systems of law would count the Trolley solution as murder.

A variant removes the track-switching, but gives you the option of pushing a fat man off of a bridge to stop the trolley. This is less popular, because it is more easily recognised as murder. But some people can still be persuaded it is *rational*, since more lives are saved.

Similar mental confusion was increased by the once-rational voice of global marxism suddenly declaring that Stalin had been something utterly different from Lenin

Overall, the left often made the *wrong* criticisms. One incident I recall is anarchist SF writer Michale Moorcock getting a slot on Channel 4 to moan about Britain recovering the Falkland Islands for the people who actually lived there. Argentina said that since the islands were near they were theirs: an argument that is certainly not accepted for Cyprus, where nearby Turkiye claims only one-third for a long-settled Turkish population. And

11 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trolley\\_problem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trolley_problem)

unlike Cyprus, the Falkland Islands are one of many small islands that were either never settled, or abandoned as too tough for tribal life. But since Britain's role was called imperialism, the justice of the actual case was ignored.

Moorcock once impressed me. But as I gained understanding, I increasingly saw him as a nice collection of everything that was wrong with the 1960s. I began ridiculing his pretentious heroes.<sup>12</sup> Re-imagined one of them as Jerry Cuckoo, Slayer of the Abominable Milkman, the famous Door-to-Door Salesman of Appalling Dooms.

Moorcock was a gifted storyteller who wasted much of his talent on the wrong world-views.<sup>13</sup> *Was*: it has been many years since he has done anything significant. And I'd suspect something seriously wrong with anyone who feels at home in Texas. Anyone except a Latino or an Apache.

### The Oddity of Kosovo

Kosovo is one of the few Western ventures from the 1990s not to have ended in obvious disaster. Afghanistan is lost. Iraq disrespects them by being warm to Iran, and most recently by criminalising homosexuality, which was covert but legal under Saddam.<sup>14</sup> But a flagrant breaking of existing norms for Kosovo runs smoothly. As of June 2024, 104 out of 193 United Nations member states recognise Kosovo. Mostly Western, or poor countries open to Western influence.

A notable absentee is Spain. They'd find it hard to explain why Kosovans had an inherent right to secede, but Catalans are criminals to even ask the question.<sup>15</sup>

Also missing is Ukraine. Much of the world brackets the war with Russia's disastrous 1968 invasion of leftist and reformist Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev's blunder, and with hindsight the first stage of failure for pro-Moscow Leninism.<sup>16</sup> But Kiev knows that the

12 <https://gwydionmadawc.com/80-humour/a-multiverse-excursion/>

13 <https://gwydionmadawc.com/57-about-tolkien/defending-tolkien-against-michael-moorcocks-condemnation/>

14 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_rights\\_in\\_Iraq#Post-2011\\_U.S.\\_withdrawal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Iraq#Post-2011_U.S._withdrawal)

15 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_recognition\\_of\\_Kosovo#Countries\\_which\\_recognise\\_Kosovo\\_as\\_an\\_independent\\_state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_recognition_of_Kosovo#Countries_which_recognise_Kosovo_as_an_independent_state)

16 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-007-july-1988-2/>

Russians moved into Ukraine because Kiev was planning to overrun the pro-Russian portions of the Donbass. Hoping to repeat another US success, when Croatia in 1995 conquered its remaining majority-Serb regions with a NATO-trained army.<sup>17</sup>

Kiev had signed the Minsk Agreements, which would have conceded the original demands by the elected regional governments of the two Donbass regions. Which promised a referendum to see if they wanted autonomy: a vote likely to be won, since the last whole-nation election gave a majority to parties that had opposed the First Orange Revolution. Parties now banned nationally by Kiev, even though those parties outside the Donbass had condemned the Russian invasion.

For Crimea, Kiev complained about the haste with which the elected regional government of Crimea organised a vote to secede and then be taken back into Russia, where they had been till Khrushchev moved them in 1954. But no one has ever suggested a second vote under proper outside supervision. The Crimeans only accepted rule by Kiev by a narrow majority when the Soviet Union was dissolved, and when it was expected that Russia and Ukraine would remain friendly.<sup>18</sup>

This was not a foolish hope. Ukrainians are a branch of the Ruthenian people: people who were conquered and oppressed by Poles and Lithuanians. They and South Russians also suffered over centuries from slave raids by Muslims based in Crimea.<sup>19</sup> Moscow conquered Crimea and made lands called 'Wild Fields' safe for Ukrainian and Russian peasants to settle.<sup>20</sup> The territory also included Jews, mostly inherited from Tsarists conquests from Poland-Lithuania. People who mostly had middle-class roles; Trotsky's family were prosperous farmers there.

Ukrainians, some still ruled by Austria after the partition of Poland, intermittently claimed independence. Sadly, this invariably included

[the-1968-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-doomed-the-soviet-union/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian_War_of_Independence#1995:_End_of_the_war)

17 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian\\_War\\_of\\_Independence#1995:\\_End\\_of\\_the\\_war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian_War_of_Independence#1995:_End_of_the_war)

18 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991\\_Ukrainian\\_independence\\_referendum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Ukrainian_independence_referendum)

19 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean%E2%80%9393Nogai\\_slave\\_raids\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean%E2%80%9393Nogai_slave_raids_in_Eastern_Europe)

20 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild\\_Fields](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_Fields)

massacres of Poles and Jews. The Poles have not forgotten it.<sup>21</sup> They just keep quiet now, when they hope to weaken their old enemy Russia.

When the Tsars fell, Ukrainian nationalists claimed most of what had been two Russian provinces, but not including Crimea. Crimea had more Russians than Ukrainians, plus a majority of Crimean Tartars, descendants of the slave raiders. Almost all Tartars were deported to Central Asia after some had worked for the Nazis during World War Two. Russians became a majority, but were apparently not bothered by the 1954 transfer from Russia to Soviet Ukraine. Soviet Ukraine was run by people who were either ethnic-Russian or Russia-orientated.

The Donbass, also strongly Russian, felt at home there: though they had suggested they would better be separate from the new Soviet Ukraine when it was being established in the early 1920s.

Only when the heirs of World War Two Ukrainian pro-Nazi fighters came back from refugees in Canada did polarisation begin.

You don't get this from most Western media. From the mainstream media you can still sometimes get excellent accounts of the facts, or at least those facts that fit the current politics. But you don't get a fair assessment of the sort that the BBC News was once respected for. And is now disrespected widely, having blatantly lapsed into propaganda under short-sighted Tory pressure.

Years back, I read a book called *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War*. It gives a reasonably accurate account of the foolish and unfair settlements. Then declares that in combination, they were the absolute best that could be done for a lasting peace.

This creature has feathers, webbed feet, a beak, and it quacks a lot. Therefore it's a panda!

A joke about something that acts like a duck being a duck comes from the Old Right, and was often unfair. But not detached from reality, as the current stuff often is.

You can read on the Wikipedia how the 'International Court of Justice' managed to wriggle round the risk of a judgement on Kosovo independence that would have offended the USA.<sup>22</sup> And also get a summary of the general debate over whether Kosovo made it acceptable for

other regions that had a discontented regional majority to secede.<sup>23</sup>

Majority Western opinion is that seemingly similar events must occupy entirely separate moral universes, depending on the wishes of the current President of the USA. They don't put it quite like that, but it is another 'quacking panda'. A thing that is classified in defiance of the evidence.

And they seem surprised that the Global South views such 'international law' with increasing contempt.

### Post-Truthful in Gaza

Western media and politicians may even have become confused about the difference between lies and truth. I have made jokes about people being 'post-truthful'; believing that reality was whatever you wanted it to be. *A dream within a dream*, some Buddhists say – but they still accept that planting rice and then tending it carefully is a good idea if you hope later to eat the risen crop.

I knew the idea from science fiction, notably the hilarious *Thursday Next* stories of Jasper Fforde. But I assumed that this was just fiction, and mostly missing from the other fiction of writers who play with the idea. I had supposed that politicians were also realistic about the world in general, and not just their immediate politicking. But now I doubt, and worry a little about the possibility that this unrealism might even extend to nuclear war.

I worry only a little, because the people in charge of the dishonest politics tend to notice when their immediate self-interest is at risk. *Let Justice Be Done, Though The Heavens Fall – But Not in My Back Yard!*

So far the threat of nuclear war has stopped NATO trying the air interdictions they have done elsewhere. I assume the military were firm about the matter, and threatened to go public if they were overridden. I keep an open mind about what we may eventually learn about the wishes of some politicians.

Elsewhere, it does seem that post-truthful ideas have taken over.

A governing Hard Right in Israel is officially designated as Without Sin. Suggestions that six months of horrors for Gaza might be wrong has been denounced as anti-Semitism and an outbreak of hatred.

With hindsight, it should be obvious that six months of televised suffering by Palestinian women and children was going to increasingly appal the

public. But Israel and most Western governments not only call it unexplained anti-Semitism: they act in a way that would only be sensible for them if this were true.

I'm sure that the prolonged suffering of Gaza and the lesser but much less excusable suffering of the West Bank has generated more anti-Semitic hatred than already existed. But the main effect has been to undermine previous indifference or sympathy. And this shift has mostly applied to Israel, rather than to Jewish minorities in the wider world. Including more and more of the vital Jewish support in the world beyond Israel.

Well before October 2023, I had wondered whether there would eventually be a grand line-up of Muslim states that Israel could not counter. Could not threaten with nuclear weapons if Pakistan were included, with its own deterrent. It may have been the grand objective of Hamas, with loss and death accepted by people with a great confidence in their religion. Men with a solid belief that Allah will reward them with Paradise for militance, and send the neglectful to Hell.

Or they might have decided that life would not be worth living if their culture and faith were wrong. So they might as well die in the hope that it's true. It is the same culture that produced suicide bombers, which lasted until it was clear they were getting nowhere. It turned out that people can live with bombs, as most of Europe did in World War Two.

Regardless, Israeli actions and the lack of serious US control makes a powerful Islamic combination against Israel much more likely.

The history of the Crusades is relevant here. British memories mostly stop with Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, and the failure of Richard the Lionheart to reverse this. But in 1229 a nephew of Saladin turned over limited authority over Jerusalem to Emperor Frederick 2<sup>nd</sup>, who was at odds with a series of popes.<sup>24</sup> In 1244, the city was sacked, Christians decimated, and almost all Jews driven out. That was done by Khwarazmians, Muslim nomads driven from their original home by the Mongols.<sup>25</sup> In 1260, Mamluks of Egypt defeated an alliance of Crusaders and Mongols, some of them converts to Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Most Mongols in West Asia and in the territory that later became Russia eventually settled on Islam as the most

21 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/West-Ukraine-The-Bitter-Past>

22 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advisory\\_opinion\\_on\\_Kosovo%27s\\_declaration\\_of\\_independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advisory_opinion_on_Kosovo%27s_declaration_of_independence)

23 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo\\_independence\\_precedent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_independence_precedent)

24 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth\\_Crusade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_Crusade)

25 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Jerusalem\\_\(1244\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(1244))

26 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Ain\\_Jalut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ain_Jalut)

reliable faith: those in East Asia settled on Buddhism. And finally the Mamluks cleared out the last crusaders by taking Antioch in 1268 and Lebanese Tripoli in 1289. The Ottomans later replaced them, but with no Christian power until World War One.<sup>27</sup>

I assume the theorists of Hamas etc. know all this, and can take a long view.

Beyond the Muslim world, Israeli actions are one of many things that turn more and more of the Global South against the USA. Centred around a Russia-China alliance that the rest of the Global South sees as much less threatening than the USA. Japan might eventually flip.

This changing world must strengthen Moscow's hopes of forcing Kiev to accept the *status quo*. To abandon dreams of conquering all of the ethnically-diverse ex-Soviet Ukraine on the basis of a bitterly anti-Soviet and anti-Russian nationalism. To conquer and probably drive out those who wished to return their region to the Greater Russian family.

## Britain Gave the World Democracy?

The protesting liberal-left see current wars and the spread of autocracy a surprising, as well as distressful.

As a good system unexpectedly failing.

I see things otherwise. It's not a strange failure in the system. It *is* the system. The norm for how the power politics work, if you look behind the fine words and empty promises.<sup>28</sup>

Britain has had parliamentary government for nearly three and a half centuries: the famous events of 1688. But not even loosely democratic till the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An era of limited democracy in Britain began less than a century and a half ago. Reforms in the 1880s made the vote secret, so it was harder for the rich to bully voters.<sup>29</sup>

Votes were confined to the upper middle class in the grand reform of 1832, but were extended twice, and from the 1880s included a majority of adult men. No women till 1918, and only women over 30 until 1928. Not race-based in mainland Britain, though in Ireland the property qualifications probably meant that a majority of Irish Catholic men had no vote before 1918. But in the wider British Empire, serious self-government was granted only where those defined

as the White Race had a comfortable majority: where they had swamped and partly massacred the original inhabitants. When the population was mixed, as in South Africa, voting was officially racist.<sup>30</sup>

I also suspect that the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution were critically dependent on votes being confined to a rich minority till the 1880s. The rise of industry had been made possible by the emergence of a coherent body of scientific knowledge in Western Europe from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. But I can see nothing inevitable about new economics causing the dispossession of most of the English peasantry with Enclosure.<sup>31</sup> Nor the destruction by factory work of many small-scale skilled trades, or the gross exploitation of workers in the early Industrial Revolution.

My view is that it hinged on the system being parliamentary but not democratic. Autocrats and aristocrats tended to look after the population as a whole. They believed in massive social inequalities, but were less comfortable about major economic inequality. They tended to think that everyone had a right to be looked after in their own 'station of life'. But the British upper middle class was much more self-centred, and much less willing to think about the likely long-term results. Many had the vote even before 1832, and they were the bulk of the 'public opinion' that governments had to worry about.

People speak of 'British influence' in the world. For me, it has always been a ruling-class power that was able to keep control even when there was a popular electoral majority. I've been calling it Upper London: the habit of speaking of government policies as the acts of 'London' obscures the fact that the actual policies are nothing like what most Londoners want.

The legacy that Upper London gave the world was never Popular Power: that was done by successive revolutions in the United States, in France, and in Tsarist Russia. In Britain, a voting minority who were economically privileged squeezed the rest.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many were shocked that Britain could be a rich society full of extreme poverty. And after four decades of Thatcherism, many are shocked again.

Things were always more complex in the USA. Farmers and workers got

the vote several decades earlier. And regional power was much more diffuse. New York is the single most influential city financially, and maybe in literature. But the visual media are strongest round Los Angeles. Politicians go to Washington, which was created to be a forum without strong self-identity. So for the US equivalent of Upper London, I hit on the phrase **Mahan USA**. Admiral Mahan was the single most influential person giving the USA the global role it had previously avoided.<sup>32</sup> One among many, and lukewarm about early US imperialism. Global expansionism was implicit in taking the Philippines from Spain, crushing those Filipinos who had wished to rule themselves. And incidentally, the US suppression of Filipino wishes was an early instance of the widespread use of 'waterboarding'; torture by controlled suffocation.

Mahan was not the only man involved. But he was central, and he makes a neat soundbite. Theodor Roosevelt had anti-capitalist ideas that have been banished from his party, the Republicans. Ideas that are currently marginal in US electoral politics as a whole. Hearst with his newspapers succeeded only when he was going with the flow: he was originally part of the Progressive Left, but supported Hitler in the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Mahan does not have political baggage like that.

The USA could have been something much better than what it became. Mahan was a significant part of the wrong turn.

Britain would have done better without the global ambitions of Upper London, just as Sweden and Switzerland did fine after giving up dreams of a wider empire within Europe. By having no direct connection with Europe's imperial rule of the rest of the world.

Denmark also did fine after failing to become a major global imperial power, though they had a small stake in slave-grown Caribbean sugar.<sup>34</sup>

The USA was begun by people wishing to make their own lives separate from European wars and empires. And also determined to go on robbing Native Americans, and not wanting to have African-Americans anywhere if they could not be slaves. But a Mahan USA was not the original goal. Trump is

27 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamluk\\_Sultanate#Bahri\\_rule\\_\(1250%E2%80%931382\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate#Bahri_rule_(1250%E2%80%931382))

28 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Western-Liberals-as-Greedy-Failures>

29 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>

30 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections\\_in\\_South\\_Africa#Enfranchisement\\_of\\_white\\_women\\_and\\_poor\\_whites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_South_Africa#Enfranchisement_of_white_women_and_poor_whites)

31 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosure#Social\\_and\\_economic\\_factors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosure#Social_and_economic_factors)

32 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Thayer\\_Mahan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Thayer_Mahan)

33 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Randolph\\_Hearst#Move\\_to\\_the\\_right\\_and\\_break\\_with\\_Franklin\\_D.\\_Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Randolph_Hearst#Move_to_the_right_and_break_with_Franklin_D._Roosevelt)

34 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish\\_overseas\\_colonies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish_overseas_colonies)



# The demise of the “general needs” housing consensus

By Eamon Dyas

The removal of the Labour Party's Land Values Tax from the statute book by the Conservative-dominated National Government in 1934 represented the final dismantlement of the legislative structure that the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929 had attempted to put in place in the service of local government housing. While the removal of that tax represented a final dismantling of that structure, the structure itself had been abandoned the year previously when the same Conservative-dominated National Government passed the 1933 Housing Act. By then the issue of local government housing had come to revolve around the associated issues of housing standards and subsidies.

What the Labour Party had set out to achieve in terms of its post-First World War housing policy took place in the context of a public opinion that had first emerged during the war and continued to influence politics in Britain for over a decade after it. That opinion, coming as it did from the atmosphere generated by the necessity of mobilising the entire population for the war effort as well as the establishment's fear of the forces of Bolshevism that the war had in essence created, was one that was conducive to the emergence of a more socially aware political outlook. That outlook fed into

the question of the Britain that was to emerge in the aftermath of the war and, in terms of housing, by the time of the appointment of the Government's Second Reconstruction Committee in February 1917,

“a national housing programme came to be regarded as the pivot of post-war social policy, and from the first the problem was seen as both a quantitative and qualitative one – it was not just a matter of providing enough houses but of building enough good houses for the men who had suffered and their children who would restore the depleted strength of the nation.” (A Social History of Housing 1815-1985, by John Burnett. Published by Routledge, London, 1991, p.202).

Then, in August 1917 the Ministry of Reconstruction's Advisory Housing Panel, under the chairmanship of the Fourth Marquess of Salisbury, on the advice of one of its members, Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, (son of the chocolatier and social reformer, Joseph Rowntree) stated that 300,000 new houses would need to be built in the first year of peace alone. The Panel further recommended that the State and local authorities should take responsibility

for building those houses with the State providing the subsidy and the local authorities taking ownership of the houses.

Before that, and irrespective of whether the post-war houses were to be built under private or public control the question of the quality of these houses had been addressed by the Local Government Board. Before the emergence of the Department of Health in 1919 responsibility for housing rested with the Local Government Board and as part of its post-war planning strategy the Board commissioned a committee to establish the minimum quality of such houses. That Committee was appointed in July 1917 with responsibility for advising on the building standards and design specifications for post-war working-class housing. The Committee was under the chairmanship of Sir John Tudor Walters MP (with Raymond Unwin, the champion of garden suburb housing, a member) and it produced its report in October 1918. The recommendations in the report were radically different from anything that had gone before in terms of housing specification. This was reflected in the size of houses (minimum square footage, height etc.), their layout (the number and arrangement of rooms), how the houses

## Continued From Page 20

popular because he will retreat from it, though I doubt he would be willing to put it in those terms.

### The USA as Redefined by Admiral Mahan

The Mahan USA supported by Upper London interferes everywhere. And calls it a threat to democracy when a voting majority dares thwart them.

And are not always clever about it.

I remember from back in the 1960s, it was a scandal when someone discovered CIA funding to the Moderate Left in Britain.<sup>35</sup> Done even though front organisations were used, and would have seemed OK to the recipients.<sup>36</sup>

At that time, the USA foolishly mixed Dirty Tricks and Soft Power in a single recognisable organisation. A diverse body – I remember hearing that the intelligence-gathering parts of the CIA correctly reported the likely failure of the various stunts in Indochina that other branches of the CIA were involved in. But no one doubts that torture and assassination were done globally.

They have got it better organised now. Separate bodies, some of which may be genuinely funded by right-wing multi-millionaires. Or by Imperial Liberals.

35 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress\\_for\\_Cultural\\_Freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_for_Cultural_Freedom)

36 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encounter\\_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encounter_(magazine))

Or relationships may be complex.

Having read a fairly pro-Soros book about his life, I can't help noticing that George Soros showed no sign of having inherited even his father's middling business talents, till he moved to New York.<sup>37</sup> Once there, he became a genius at speculation. Hailed as a philosopher after some empty blather about quantum effects. He seems unaware of Chaos Dynamics,<sup>38</sup> which I'd see as more relevant. Where the failure of useful determinism is confirmed rather than speculative.

Could Soros have been created as a much cleverer sort of CIA front? Fed tips from stuff that the CIA was not supposed to use, but would come across in their legitimate work?

An operator where actual CIA funding would have been unacceptable?

Whatever, overall Imperial Liberal policy is not only dishonest and unjust, but increasingly backfiring. New Right politics has caused spasms of harder-line nationalism, including Brexit.

Attempts at a people-driven 'Capitalist International' have had little electoral success. The New Right needs to 'bulk up' with nationalism and with sly appeals to racism, as with the absurd Rwanda 'asylum' scheme in Britain. But they have been prone to lose control. And working capitalists are often bigots.

It is falling apart, and deserves to fall.

37 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Soros#Investment\\_career](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Soros#Investment_career)

38 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos_theory)

were to be sited in terms of density (it was recommended that no more than twelve houses to the acre in urban areas and eight to the acre in rural areas), and also how they looked in terms of their appearance with a recommendation that housing schemes should avoid the appearance of “sameness” by consisting of a variety of designs.

By the time of the Armistice the estimate of the number of required homes had risen to between 400,000-500,000. However, the idea that these houses should be built to the higher standard continued to be acknowledged and not restricted to the constraints of cost. It was this mixture of quantity and quality that was seen at the time to be beyond the capacity of private enterprise alone to deliver. From the perspective of the private builder that burden of scale and quality was added to by the high cost of money, men and materials at the end of the war. Another factor was that the rent controls that had been introduced during the war continued in existence after the war with the result that by the 1920s rents in real terms were 25% to 30% lower than they had been in 1914. This meant that, from a purely commercial point of view, when it came to building houses for rent, it did not make sense to commit capital to large-scale house-building projects in such an uncertain and unfavourable environment (see: *The Housing Debate*, by Stuart Lowe. Published by Policy Press, Bristol University, 2011, p.78).

It was this combination of circumstances that led an influential cross-section of society to come to the conclusion that it was not possible to rely upon private enterprise alone to meet the housing shortage particularly when it came to that aspect of the housing shortage that impacted the working-class. The view then was that the State had no other option but to get heavily involved in the task of house-building. Consequently, the direct involvement of the State through the use of subsidies became an intrinsic part of successive Governments’ post-war housing strategy as the only means to encourage house building both on the part of private builders and the local authorities.

### **The subsidy as a tool in the struggle between public versus private house building**

This did not of course mean that the strategy represented a shared world view across the political divide when it came to solving the housing crisis. While those of the socialist and left liberal sentiment might have seen the strategy in terms consistent with a long-term commitment to it, those whose natural instinct was

to favour private enterprise did not. For them it was the unique circumstances created by the war that compelled them to acknowledge that private enterprise was in no condition to solve the pressing issue of post-war house building to a scale and time-frame that was required. The post-war strategy was merely in place until such time when private enterprise was in a position to once more take over from the State in the building of houses. In the meantime, they were prepared to favour subsidies as long as those subsidies were also available to those who sought to build for the market.

The recommendations of the Tudor Waters Committee were put into practice at the end of the War by the Lloyd George Liberal-Conservative coalition and took the form of the Housing and Town Planning Act of July 1919, also known as the Addison Act (after Christopher Addison, the man who framed it and the first Minister of Health). But, in an early recognition of the divide at the core of post-War housing policy, the free enterprise interests were acknowledged in the passing of the Housing (Additional Powers) Act in December 1919. Among other things, this Act provided private builders with a guaranteed Government subsidy of £150 for every house they built as part of a local authority programme. Thus was born the idea of the “general needs” housing policy that all governments were to pursue for the next fourteen years. This was based on the idea that subsidies were to be supplied on the basis of their contribution to the solving of a general housing need – in other words, as a need that was not exclusively a need of the poorer section of the working-class. In that context such subsidies, if they were required, should be available to build homes, not necessarily on the basis of class but on the basis of where and by whom they were needed if such homes could only be built with the aid of subsidies.

The scheme initiated under the Addison Act was intended to build 500,000 council houses and it represented the first occasion where Government subsidies were used on a large scale to encourage the construction of local authority working-class housing. However, in the event only 170,000 were built before the scheme was abandoned in July 1921, a mere three months after Addison was replaced by the industrialist, financier and Zionist, Alfred Mond as Minister of Health on 1 April 1921. (It should be noted that Mond later resigned from the Liberal Party and joined the Conservatives in January 1926 on account of Lloyd George’s plans to nationalise agricultural land and as will

be seen later he was not the only liberal associated with the housing policy who resigned on that issue).

The political opponents of the Addison scheme had not been inactive during the two years of its operation and subsequently went on to criticise it for failing to meet its targets. The scheme had been met with hostility by the free enterprise elements in the Treasury and by many local authorities who were led by people of the same way of thinking. The impact of that hostility can be gauged from the fact that in the first year of its operation only 29,000 houses were constructed, and under the circumstances, it was quite an achievement for the eventual number to have risen by 170,000 in the last of its two years in operation.

By the time of the approaching general election of October 1922 many of the free enterprise advocates who had been prepared to acquiesce in the subsidy arrangement represented by the Tudor Waters Report and the Addison Act of 1919 began to coalesce with those elements that had opposed them from the start. This tendency then became more assertive in the wake of the Conservative victory in that election. By now the shortages in things like steel and building materials had begun to lessen with production of these items having successfully switched from a military to a civil purpose. The demobilisation of the armed forces also freed more men to serve the construction industry and these factors combined with easier access to mortgages created an expanding market for home ownership. The result was a dramatic fall in the cost of houses. We see that in the way in which the cost of a non-parlour, three-bedroomed house fell from £930 in August 1920, to £436 in March 1922, and to £397 by 1927.

Thus it was that the perceived need for subsidies began to lose influence in governing circles and be replaced by those who viewed the housing issue as one in which private enterprise was now fit to participate as the major building component. It was in response to these developments that Neville Chamberlain, the new Minister of Health in the incoming Conservative Government, introduced his Housing Act in 1923. The primary objective of the 1923 Act was to encourage private enterprise house building. It was not yet politically expedient to abandon local authorities when it came to subsidies but in essence his 1923 Act represented an attempt to marginalise them through the discriminatory use of subsidies. Under the terms of the Act local authorities were only eligible for what were now



much reduced subsidies if they could convince the government that the same work could not otherwise be done by private enterprise builders.

"The Act therefore constituted a complete reversal of the policy, began in 1919, of encouraging the local authorities to become major providers of working-class housing, and even the role of state aid was strictly limited by fixing a low maximum contribution and by making it available only until October 1925. After that, it was confidently assumed, houses would be built by the unaided efforts of private enterprise." (*A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*, by John Burnett. Published by Routledge, second edition, London, 1991, p.231).

Chamberlain's Act of 1923 had sought to eradicate what was viewed as an over-reliance on local authority subsidies to solve the problem of working-class housing. Instead the Act encouraged private builders to take advantage of the fall in the cost of men, materials and credit. Alongside these factors the Act's subsidy scheme favouring the private builder was designed to act as a further inducement for the construction of low-cost housing that would in turn facilitate the letting of such houses at a lower rent – something that was meant to be beneficial to the working-class tenant. However, part of this arrangement also necessitated the abandonment of the standards and specifications that had been an inheritance of the Addison Act of 1919. In practice this took the form of reducing the superficial areas of houses qualifying for a subsidy from the average of 900 sq. ft. that had been the case recommended in the design and specification manual associated with the 1919 Act – specifications, that in practice, were often exceeded by local authorities. The effect of this was that after 1923 the majority of local authority houses possessed a reduced superficial area of between 750 and 850 sq. ft. It was all these factors taken together that explains the fall in the cost of house building after 1921.

Although it included the possibility of local authority eligibility for the subsidy Chamberlain's 1923 Act used subsidies in a way that diminished the role of local authority-built housing and increase the reliability on private builders for the production of working-class housing. That object was originally deemed achievable by 1925 with the subsidies only planned to be available until October 1925 when the normal action of the market would make them unnecessary.

"In fact, the unreality of this

optimism was soon apparent, and the subsidy was extended until 1929, though a lower rate of £4 a house after 1927. In total the Chamberlain Act yielded 438,000 houses over its six years of life, 363,000 by private enterprise and only 75,000 by local authorities. Private house-building was undoubtedly stimulated to some extent by the subsidy, which local authorities were permitted to pay as a lump sum, varying from £75 to £100, but probably to a greater extent by falling building costs after 1920 and an expansion of home-ownership made possible by easier mortgages." (*A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*, by John Burnett. Published by Routledge, London, second edition, 1991, pp.231-232).

(It should be noted that the subsidies introduced under the Chamberlain Act continued to operate beyond the arrival of the first minority Labour Government of 1924 and into the second Baldwin administration). Although the houses built by private enterprise under the Chamberlain Act included those built with the help of local authority commissioned housing, by 1924, with the arrival of the first minority Labour Government, it was generally acknowledged that the shortage of working-class houses was greater than it had been in 1919. Consequently, the incoming minority Labour Government of 1924 was eager to make significant inroads into that shortage. With the 1924 Housing Act, also known as the Wheatley Act (after John Wheatley the then Labour Minister of Health) the party lost no time in re-positioning subsidies at the centre of local government housing. If the arrangements under Chamberlain's Act could be seen as a reversal of the 1919 Addison Act then the arrangements under Wheatley's Act of 1924 could in turn be seen as a reversal of Chamberlain's Act of 1923. The Wheatley Act saw the solution as being a long-term one extending over a fifteen-year programme where agreements with local authorities and the building workers' trade unions would enable the then annual output of 60,000 houses to be raised to between 150,000 and 225,000 a year.

Under the terms of the Wheatley Act, local authorities no longer

needed to demonstrate a housing need that could not be met by private builders in order to get building permission and be eligible for the subsidy. The Act also increased the subsidy introduced by Chamberlain from £6 per dwelling over 20 years to £9 per dwelling over 40 years and private builders were only eligible for this subsidy if they could show that they were building housing for rent. The purpose of the subsidy was to ensure a reduced cost burden to the local authority for every house built. This in turn allowed the house to be let at a rent that was affordable for a wider expanse of the working-class. In 1924 that affordable rent was set at 7s. 9d. exclusive of rates for a three-bedroomed non-parlour house – the commensurate rent for a similar house at pre-War levels.

In effect the Wheatley Act never came near fulfilling its fifteen-year objective. Although it was retained by the Conservative Government of 1924-29, that government reduced the subsidy from £9 per dwelling to £7 10s. in 1926 making it less effective. It survived into the Conservative-dominated National Government of 1931 but abolished by that Government in 1933. By the time it was abolished in 1933 the Wheatley Act was responsible for the construction of a total of 508,000 houses – 493,000 of which were provided by local authorities and 15,000 by private builders. This total for local-authority provided houses constituted nearly half the entire production of inter-war council housing. The stark contrast in the outcomes of the 1923 Chamberlain Act and the 1924 Wheatley Act can be gauged by the following: Under the Conservatives 1923 Act (which extended from 1923-1929), 383,000 houses were built by private builders and a mere 57,000 by local authorities; under Labour's 1924 Act (which extended from 1924 to 1933) 15,000 houses were built by private builders and 493,000 were built by local authorities.

However as one housing analyst has pointed out:

"this figure needs to be seen in the perspective of the total of 2,459,000 houses built in England and Wales between 1919 and 1934, equivalent



to one-third of all the houses available at the end of the war. The significant point is that out of those 2.5 million new houses, only 31% were built by local authorities, and of the 69% built by private enterprise only one quarter had the assistance of a subsidy. The need which had been identified in 1919 for a great increase in working-class houses for renting had not, therefore, been met. Between 1919 and 1934 there was an increase of ordinary working-class houses with rateable values up to £13 of only 19%, while more typically 'middle-class' houses rated at £14-£26, the majority of which were built for sale, increased by 60%, and houses rated at £27-£78 increased by 48%. (Burnett, p.233).

These figures include houses built without the assistance of any subsidy and therefore by definition outside the influence of subsidies so they offer no guidance as to the impact of subsidies on the creation of the type of housing they were meant to encourage. What they do show however is that the production of new housing between 1919 and 1934 not only perpetuated but accentuated the prevailing division between working class needs and the rest of society with the majority of new housing being built to accommodate the growing home-owning middle class rather than the needs of the working class for rental accommodation.

### **Subsidies and the concept of "general needs" housing**

The prevailing sentiment that motivated the all-party approach to housing since the First World War was that local authority housing was seen as a crucial part of supplying a 'general need' for housing. Lloyd George's "Homes for Heroes" initiative was designed to provide a minimum common standard for newly build houses designed to meet that general need whether they were built by private or local authority effort. Consequently,

"Throughout the 1920s the policy behind local authority housing was that it 'should bridge the gap' between what private enterprise could produce and the housing requirements of the area – that is to say, it should be for 'general needs', not only for the poor, and certainly not only for the poorest. In practice,

council houses went largely to a limited range of income groups – small clerks and tradesmen, artisans and the better-off semi-skilled workers, with average-sized families and safe jobs." (Burnett, p.238).

The idea of "general needs" housing was one that included subsidies for privately built housing and such subsidies had been provided by all the post-War governments until 1933. It was privately-built housing that constituted the other side of the gap that needed to be bridged. From the perspective of the free enterprise camp, subsidies expended on the basis of "general needs" housing were meant to include the prospect of making such privately-built housing available to those components of the working class who could afford it. This was part of the motivation of those from the free enterprise camp who continued to accept the need for subsidies beyond the point where the costs of housing had diminished the original purpose allocated to them in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. From the perspective of the free enterprise camp, this was something that could be fitted into the "Garden Suburb" ideology of those who were influential in the formulation of post-war housing policy while retaining an affinity with private enterprise.

The subsidies made available to encourage the construction of such housing was dependent upon those houses meeting a minimum standard as discussed above. In other words, while subsidised housing could be built by private builders or local authorities, the houses built would represent an acknowledgment that decent housing should be available to the working-class as well as others. Aside from the obvious difference in the quality of housing available to the working-class and the more affluent, the existence of a minimum housing standard encouraged by the housing subsidies continued to ensure that those houses would be acceptable to some of the social strata above the working-class poor whether they were privately owned or rented via local authorities.

By such means, as long as this view of housing as a "general need" prevailed the subsidies dispensed by central government ensured that local authority housing remained free from

the stigma of such housing being the exclusive preserve of the poor and impoverished working-class. The reality of course was somewhat different. Although housing supplied with the assistance of "general needs" subsidies included both private and local authority housing the standards associated with this housing were less likely to be exceeded by local authorities than by privately produced housing. This was because private enterprise built relatively few houses for rent and were more likely to be able to absorb the costs of higher specification housing at the point of sale than local authorities who continued to rely on government funding to supply housing for rent. Consequently, there was always a tension between the two components in terms of the supply of "general needs" housing and as the late 1920s and 1930s progressed that tension became more pronounced due to growing unemployment (it reached 3 million by 1931) and the expanding market for privately built houses that emerged as a result of the growth in the middle-classes and its taste for home ownership in the suburbs which occurred on an unprecedented scale during this period.

From the perspective of the poorer element of the working class, despite the weighty subsidies that had been provided through the Wheatley scheme it was not enough to ensure that rents of council houses came within the reach of this group. That element had remained untouched by all the post-war housing acts and were compelled to continue to reside in old rent-restricted property much of which, if not already slums, were rapidly turning into slums. This is the context of the 1930 Housing Act (the Greenwood Act) which provided subsidies to local authorities for eliminating slums in their areas and imposing an obligation on them to rehouse those displaced by slum clearances. In an attempt to address the issue of local authority housing being beyond the reach of those currently residing in slums the Greenwood Act had also introduced the idea of "differential rents" which has been covered in part 14 of this series.

Such plans however, were thrown into turmoil as a result of Ramsay MacDonald's determination to commit to an austerity programme in

collaboration with the Conservatives and the Liberals when he dissolved the minority Labour Government and established the National Government in August 1931. His actions had been made inevitable by his commitment to the recommendations of the report of the financier-dominated May Committee of the previous month. That report addressed the question of the Government's commitment to "general needs" housing in the following terms:

"We view with deep concern the steadily growing charge upon the Exchequer . . . for the housing of the working classes. There is a serious danger of the nation . . . finding itself committed to the principle that a man's wages are not normally intended to enable him to pay fully for his housing." (May, 1931, p.220. Quoted in *Housing Politics in the United Kingdom: Power, protest and planning*, by Brian Lund. Published by Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2016, p.155).

The unelected National Government of August 1931 was subsequently democratically endorsed by the general election of the following October which resulted in an overwhelming and unprecedented Conservative majority in the House of Commons. Although they possessed an enormous majority the Conservatives, for the sake of maintaining the pretence of it being a National Government, retained Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister. Despite its commitment to the austerity programme advanced in the May Report the large Conservative component of the National Government did not make any immediate move against the idea of "general needs" housing presumably for the same reason that they retained Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister. To have shed that aspect of the previous Labour position on housing – one that Arthur Greenwood and even Phillip Snowden had favoured – would have been tantamount to an open admission of the dominance of the Conservative view on the subject and that was something that neither Baldwin nor MacDonald would have welcomed at that time. As it was, MacDonald appointed Neville Chamberlain as a replacement for Arthur Greenwood as Minister of Health with responsibility for housing – a position he only held

from 25 August-5 November 1931 when he was succeeded by Sir Hilton Young.

And with the appointment of Hilton Young as Minister of Health the days of "general needs" housing were numbered.

### **Opening up working-class housing to the market**

Sir Hilton Young's view of politics emerged from a strong association with the world of finance and a deep antipathy towards Socialism. Before the First World War he had been a financial journalist with a career that included being assistant editor of the *Economist* between 1908 and 1910 and then as City Editor of the *Morning Post*, 1910-1914. He resumed this career in the late 1920s as Editor of the *Financial News* between 1926 and 1929. Alongside his military career during the War he had entered politics as a Liberal and was elected as a 'free Liberal' in the 1918 general election where he supported Lloyd George. This led to his appointment as Financial Secretary to the Treasury in Lloyd George's coalition government in April 1921 and he continued in that post until the fall of Lloyd George in October 1922. Thereafter he was chief whip of the Lloyd George Liberals and helped reorganise the party's finances. Like Alfred Mond mentioned above, he too resigned from the Liberals in 1926 over a disagreement with Lloyd George's land policy (which he viewed as socialistic) and joined the Conservative Party. As indicated above, his next governmental post was as Minister of Health in Ramsay MacDonald's National Government where he had responsibility for housing.

On 7 December 1932 he introduced his Housing (Financial Provisions) Bill to parliament for its first reading and explained its purpose in the following terms:

"The object of the Bill is to bring an end to the power of the Minister of Health to grant subsidies under sections 1 and 3 of the Housing Act, 1923, and the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924, and to enable him to undertake to make contributions in certain cases towards losses sustained by authorities under guarantees given by them for facilitating the provision of houses to be let to the working classes." (House

of Commons, The New Housing Bill, *The Times*, 8 December 1932).

The Bill was read a second time on 15 December 1932 and during its introduction Hilton Young expanded on the purpose behind it.

"In order to grasp the basis of the problem, let us look at the origin of the subsidy as we know it, an origin in the abnormal conditions which followed from the War, when, owing to the decrease in the supply of houses, there was a wide economic gap between the price which the wage-earners could pay and the economic rent at which houses could be built. To cover that gap, subsidies were introduced; if I may put it in this way, we erected a powerful engine to pump by subsidies capital into the supply of houses. Further consideration has shown that that engine is an expensive one, and that it is only necessary to keep it running as long as the capital has to be driven uphill, but if capital will find its way by natural gravity to supply houses, the use of the engine is no longer necessary". (Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 15 December 1932).

But, while Sir Hilton Young's reasoning may have encapsulated the thinking of the pro-market advocates, it was not how the Labour Party viewed the question of subsidies. Although the Labour Party attached a high importance to the use of subsidies as a means of maintaining rents within the reach of a significant section of the working-class, the party had a wider view of subsidies. In effect, subsidies were also seen as a way of ensuring the extension of local authority control over the provision of working-class housing. Subsidies provided the local authorities with the means of supplying houses that could subsequently be rented at a rate that would otherwise, if provided by private enterprise effort, be beyond the economic reach of the working-class. Consequently, to the Labour Party it was never a simple matter of the possibility of affordable houses being built by private enterprise even if that was later to become the case as such an outcome was not to be relied upon as a permanent solution to the provision of such housing. Rather local authority control was seen as a more reliable means for supplying such housing over the long term while at the same time ensuring that houses



supplied through those means would remain within the public sphere and thus continuing to provide a social need in the future. As local authorities were not commercial entities and had no private source of funds they were always going to rely to one extent or another upon public funds to carry out their perceived responsibilities to working class housing and this meant a reliance on central government subsidies.

This of course was never a consideration on the part of the constituency that Sir Hilton Young represented and as such he viewed subsidies as a hindrance to the operation of the market as a more efficient mechanism for the supply of working-class houses. He argued that local authorities by their ability to construct large housing schemes have the advantage of scale and this advantage translates into “preferences and facilities in regard to obtaining supplies, and so on.” This then meant that,

“the subsidised efforts of local authorities can always undersell the private builder and the private investor, and so long as you had that force of subsidised competition you could never expect private enterprise really to take up the business of house building.” (Ibid).

In essence what Hilton Young was saying was that local authorities can operate to scale when they embark on housing schemes. This provides them with a leverage over suppliers of building materials etc. which is not available to the private builder and that the subsidy they receive from central government inflates this advantage. The effect of this, according to Sir Hilton Young, was to disincentivise the private builder from becoming active in the supply of working-class houses. He further stated that:

“There are certain things needed to make sure that we shall get a supply of small houses from private enterprise. The first that we recognise, of course, is that we must have investors ready to come in and hold the houses. What we want is houses to let, and we cannot have them unless there is some investor who has bought them to hold them to let. I believe it is a matter of common knowledge to all those acquainted with the investing public and the

conditions of investment at the present time, that there is a strong demand on the part of investors, small and great, for working-class house property as an investment. All over the country one hears the same thing that investors are ready to come in as they were before the War to invest. The reason is not far to seek. The reason is the fall in the return on gilt-edged investments, and the difficulty of finding any other safe investments. That naturally drives people to seek this form of investment.” (Ibid).

As Sir Hilton Young saw it, by the end of 1932 the fall in the cost of material, the availability of labour and cheaper credit, alongside the unavailability of alternative areas of safe investment, had combined to produce a situation where investors were poised to commit strongly to such house building. The only thing standing in the way of this private investment surge was the obstacle represented by local authority housing subsidies.

Remove that disincentive and the potential return on investments in the construction of small houses would attract the necessary capital. However, he went on to say that he did not rely on that capital being advanced by the normal banking channels alone. The Government was to be an active agent not in directly supplying such capital, as had previously been the case with regards to subsidies, but by facilitating the flow of capital from other sources. That source of cheap capital was to be the building societies. This was explained in the second clause in his Bill:

“There is a scheme which I have to submit to the House in the Second Clause. It is a scheme under which the building societies will be encouraged to find the money which is needed for the building of the houses, to finance the housing. What are the conditions? The building societies have very large funds, more than enough to meet the whole needs of the situation, for which they are in need of reasonable investments. They are used to lending only to the owner-occupier on mortgage. That demand is saturated. The demand now is for houses to let.” (Ibid).

He admitted that this proposed channel of funds was not an essential

or vital part of the scheme but rather a “most useful aid”. Nonetheless, he had been negotiating with the building societies with the object of encouraging them to provide capital to investors for the construction of houses to let. Part of those negotiations had revolved around the need for the building societies to provide a higher percentage of the cost of the house than they had previously done with regards to mortgages. Instead of their usual limit of lending up to 70% of that cost they were now to loan up to 90%. They were also to loan the money for terms of 30 years at a 1% discount on the rate they charged on interest for ordinary loans. In return the Government was to provide a guarantee to the building societies against losses.

These arrangements were also to be available to the local authorities and the Housing Committee of the Association of Municipal Corporations, as well as the Federation of House Builders, had assured him that they would make use of the building societies’ funds provided on that basis.

The removal of the local authority housing subsidy was meant to release the pent-up eagerness of private builders and investors to get more actively involved in the construction of working-class housing. At the same time the scheme developed with the building societies to supply cheap capital for those willing to invest – including the local authorities – would ensure an ongoing and improved supply of working-class houses without the Government having to provide subsidies. The only remaining involvement of the Government with housing subsidies was to be in the area of slum clearance.

Hilton Young’s Housing Bill was given Royal approval on 18 May 1933 as the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act and it represented the end of the all-party consensus around what had been known as “general needs” housing that had existed since 1919. It also represented the end of what had been the influence of Labour Party housing policy on government actions between the wars.



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now filling. But the reaction of the political elites today is very different from that of yesterday. In the 1970s, when the PCF was still “the party of the working class,” the main objective was to tame this France by challenging the PCF’s dominant position among workers and employees. That’s why the goal of Mitterrandism was, in the words of its creator, “to demonstrate that three million Communist workers can vote Socialist. And to that end, the newly created Socialist Party moved to the left, advocating demands that would have terrified the middle classes and the old barons of the SFIO... if they had believed them. Today, nothing of the sort. The parties of the left and right are too far removed from the working class to consider replacing the Rassemblement National as its representative. But make no mistake. Winning back the working class vote means listening to their demands, their hopes and their fears, and developing a project that takes their interests into account. Are the political elites prepared to make the concessions that this implies? The answer is probably no. [...]

The sleepwalking metaphor is not without relevance here. Our middle classes simply don’t realize that if the Rassemblement National has been gaining votes in every election for the last twenty years, it’s not because the French - especially the working class - have suddenly become racist or xenophobic. There must be objective reasons for such a movement, and yet not a single party, left or right, has begun to critically examine its actions. On the contrary: listen to the Socialists and they will tell you that there is nothing to regret about Hollande’s presidency; listen to the Macronists and they will praise their boss’s record. The Communists have nothing to say about their record of the past forty years, Mélenchon still worships Mitterrand. If the National Rally is in the lead, it’s nobody’s fault. The bourgeoisie does not know that there is a world outside

of it, and that this world is inhabited by the working class, who are angry at being systematically neglected, if not stigmatized, and who are told that the bourgeoisie in the big cities know what is good for them. What can workers and employees think when their elites befriend the very people they accused yesterday of leading them to civil war in order to block the path of the candidates they voted for? How can they react when they hear rappers, the darlings of intellectual Paris, singing «Jordan t’est mort» [Jordan, you’re a dead man] and insulting Marine Le Pen?

Beyond electoral tactics, this whole affair points to a dangerous future. A failure of the RN - either if it is prevented from governing or if its government leads to failure - can only push the working class towards even greater radicalization, which could lead them to challenge the institutions themselves. This is where the petty tactics of our political elites, many of them trained in university politics or in the machinations of party congresses, reach their limit. It’s always dangerous to explain to the French people that we can’t do what they massively voted for because a European directive or a ruling by the Constitutional Council or the ECHR forbids it. The Constitutional Council can be a bulwark against a political majority or a government. But it is very dangerous - and unrealistic - to imagine that it could support a particular vision against the will of the French people. We must never forget that institutions do not fall from the sky, but are born of national sovereignty and are intended to organize the exercise of that sovereignty. An institutional system that appears to be a means of containing the general will, rather than allowing it to flourish, always ends up collapsing. Michel Debré and Charles De Gaulle understood this very well, which is why they built into their constitution the flexibility that has enabled it to withstand the test of time, bending where previous constitutions had broken. But this is exactly what our elites seem to be trying to do: prevent the will of the people from

prevailing by placing institutional obstacles in its path. The rhetoric about “disobedient” civil servants, Macron’s last-minute attempts to appoint affiliates to certain posts, the unnatural withdrawals, all give the clear impression of pursuing this goal. However, once the fog of the evening of July 7th has lifted, if we see - and in my opinion this is the most likely hypothesis - that the National Rally is relatively far from an absolute majority, someone will have to govern, with an Assembly that will in all likelihood be even more ungovernable than the previous one. And then what? Some people are starting to talk about a “plural government” - sounds familiar? - which could count on the goodwill, if not the support, of an arc stretching from the Communists to the Les Républicains - and why not part of the LFI? But for what project? For what policy? Would such a coalition have enough political clout to tackle the real problems - the deterioration of schools, de-industrialisation, the failure of assimilation, economic imbalance - and to find solutions likely to draw the working class away from the Rassemblement national? No ? Then we’ll have Marine Le Pen at the Elysée in 2027. Because the wind that fills the sails of the National Rally will not go away as long as the causes that generate it are with us. The Left should understand that at the point we have reached, and largely through its own fault, it will be difficult in the long term to avoid the Rassemblement National coming to power without risking a radicalisation of society that would lead to even worse things. Once it enjoys massive popular support, the more institutional obstacles are piled up in front of it, the more the institutions will lose credibility. It is better to have a far-right government supported by strong institutions capable of limiting its excesses, than to have a radicalised far-right come to power within a weakened institutional framework. If we don’t accept Bardella running the circus, we run the risk of seeing it run by lions tomorrow.

## French Elections 7 July 2024

*[The first round of elections left about 500 constituencies where no one had an absolute majority. 200 had only 2 candidates remaining, but 300 had 3 candidates eligible for the second round. Negotiations took place for the weakest candidate to withdraw in order to try and block the National Rally from being elected. In around 200 constituencies the Macron group and the New Popular Front managed to agree withdrawals.]*

*[We publish a French blog post by 'Descartes' commenting on the elections and in particular the good showing of the National Rally.]*

Posted on July 2, 2024 by Descartes

It didn't take long for the worst political reflexes to take over again. A few days ago, all we heard was talk of principles. On the left, we were told that Macron and Le Pen were two sides of the same coin, that the President of the Republic was a proto-fascist and that it was impossible to agree with Macron without losing one's soul. Macron told us that the extremism of a New Popular Front dominated by France Insoumise [LFI, France Unbowed, leader Mélenchon] was no match for that of the Rassemblement National [National Rally, with Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella], that the left-wing alliance was contaminated by anti-Semitism and that its political program would lead France into civil war. A few days later, everything changed. On the left, people are calling to vote for Macronist - or even right-wing - candidates, while on the right they are calling to vote for Socialist and Communist candidates, and even - while holding their noses - for the best-placed LFI candidates.

What happened to change their analysis of the situation to such an extent that they abandoned

their sacred principles? Well, it happened that the National Rally won one out of every three votes, with a record turnout that makes it impossible to dispute its representativeness. In more than 300 constituencies, the RN came out on top with more than 10 million votes. It was a triumph that had been predicted for months, or rather years, but that the small world of politics had talked about without really believing it. Today, our backs are against the wall. It is hardly surprising that such an earthquake should change the discourse of the political elites, forcing them to erase with their elbows what they wrote with their hands yesterday.

Such an outcome should challenge a political establishment that has categorically refused - especially on the left - to change its thinking. To ask why the "republican" (1) political offer, despite its great diversity, only really appealed to voters in the big cities and was rejected everywhere else. And why, in this election, the RN has regained its position as the leading party among workers and employees, even though its program has now become significantly tilted in favour of the wealthier classes.

But rest assured, these questions will not be asked. Just look at how, on the evening of this disaster, the left and the Macronists are only talking among themselves. The essential question is not how to convince the French, but how to save the furniture. They won't talk about security, industry, energy or purchasing power, they will talk about withdrawals and electoral agreements. They have nothing to say to the working classes, to those who voted for the candidates of the Rassemblement National. No, all these voters are considered lost to the cause, irredeemable rednecks. We only talk to people from the same world. The goal

is not to convince the plebs, to offer them an alternative project that could dissuade them from voting for the RN. The goal is to prevent the rabble - through their representatives - from coming to power. And for that, anything goes. The left is preparing to make people vote for the very people it denounced a few months ago as henchmen of fascism for passing an immigration law worthy of Vichy. Macronism and the "respectable" right are going to elect those they accused a few days ago of having sympathies for the October 7 massacre. All is forgiven, all is forgotten. Let's embrace and vote for each other, because the most important thing is to prevent these terrible people from taking office.

This unanimity can only be understood if we analyze this election as a class confrontation. The Macronist, communist, socialist, centrist and ecologist leaders have different discourses, but by and large they represent the interests of the same strata, i.e. the dominant bloc made up of the bourgeoisie and the intermediate classes. They may disagree on the color of the carpet, but when it comes to the fundamentals, they all pull in the same direction. The political elites that emerge from these parties have a common interest: preserving the system that feeds them. For the past forty years, the right and the left have shared positions and perks nicely, wielding power with increasingly imperceptible differences. Macronism, with "left" ministers passing "right" legislation in the same cabinet as "right" ministers passing "left" legislation, marks the consecration of this logic. And for forty years, the French working class has been sidelined and the political parties that represented it - the PCF, of course, but to a lesser extent the Gaullists and the Socialists - have turned their backs on it.

It is this vacuum that the RN is

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