

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



With Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana still split, can the Liverpool conference assert its sovereignty?

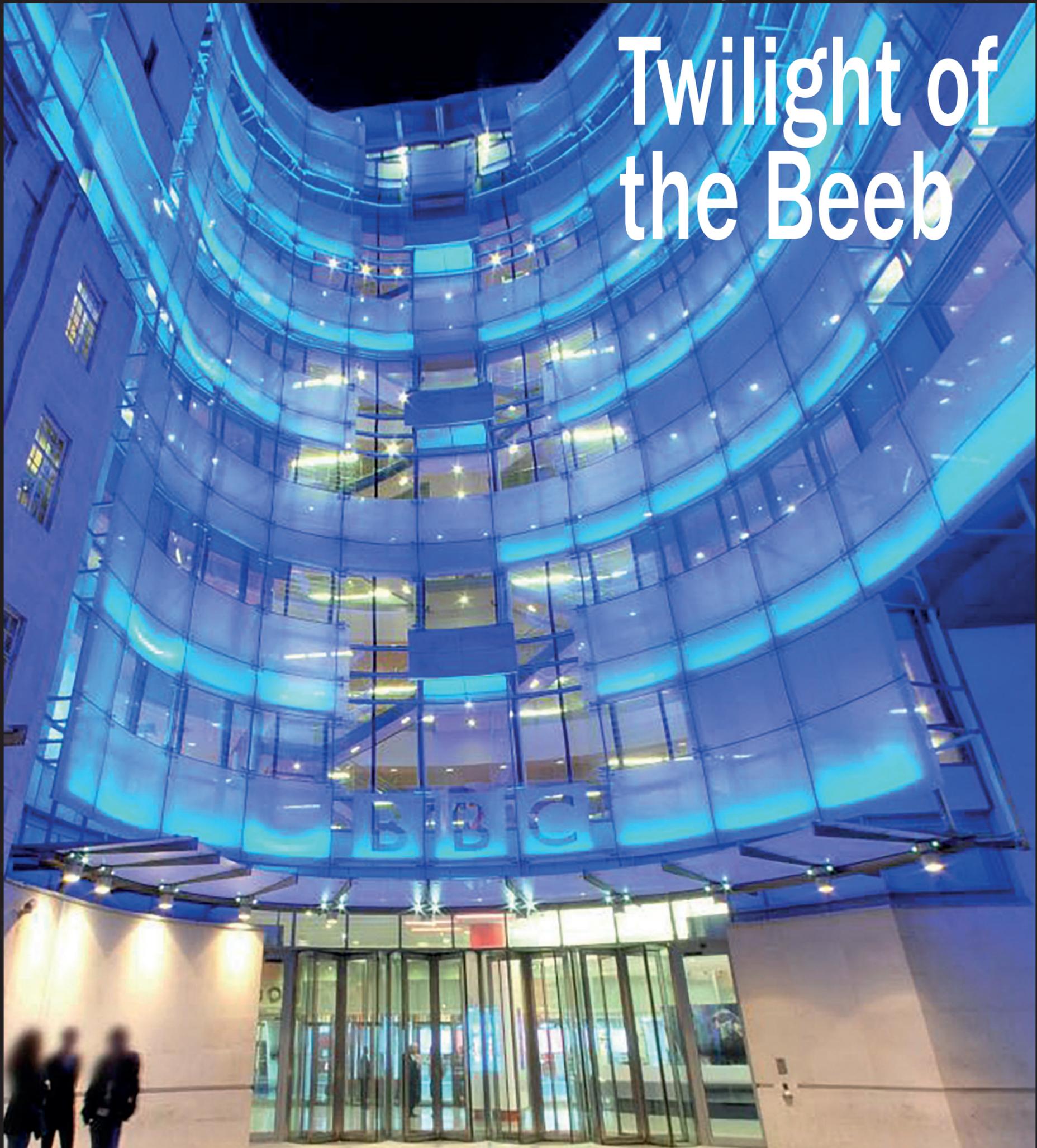
- Letters and debate
- Netherlands elections
- Polemic: Bananasplits
- Another 1929 looms?

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Twilight of the Beeb



LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Paucity of inches?

Given the quantity of reporting in the past year on the 'communist fusion' process, I have been disappointed by the paucity of column inches given over to discussing the formation of factions within Your Party, which seems to offer a much more plausible opportunity for the reconstitution of Marxist forces within a more unified left.

Like many, I was excited to learn of the launch of the Democratic Socialists caucus, an organisation I joined at the start of September. The caucus has made significant achievements - particularly due to the initiative of Tina Becker, who ensured that the Sheffield Your Party assembly was a much more democratic process than others.

Unfortunately the commitments of the caucus to democracy are not entirely clear. Many members appear to believe that freedom of speech/dissent should not apply to those with reactionary views on trans rights, and my persistent arguments to the contrary led to me becoming something of a hate figure on the caucus WhatsApp chat. On November 2 I was contacted by a member of the executive committee, who asked me to explain why multiple formal complaints had been lodged against me - a difficult question to answer, given that the content of those complaints was not shared with me. Although the EC member encouraged me to remain a member of the caucus, a few hours later, on the morning of November 3, I was removed from all caucus WhatsApp chats. The fact that I had been expelled was not formally communicated to me until I contacted the EC to seek clarification. Not quite what I expected from a 'democratic' organisation!

An alternative vehicle for Marxists might prove to be the revolutionary caucus proposed by the Spartacist League. Although a proposal for the caucus was published on the *Weekly Worker* letters page on October 2, an engagement with its contents has been conspicuously absent from subsequent issues. While one can only assume that the CPGB believes joint enterprise with the Spartacist League to be without merit, those of us who appreciate the work of the CPGB in developing a programmatic approach to communist politics would greatly benefit from a comradely critique of the Sparts' initial attempt at producing a 'draft platform' for communist unity.

At the moment it seems that the "paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity" is more interested in publishing easy criticisms of the Socialist Workers Party and Revolutionary Communist Party than in working constructively with genuine revolutionaries.

Finn
Leeds

Zarah for leader

The founding conference of Your Party is fast approaching. However, the conference promises to be anything but a walk in the park. All the accumulated tensions of recent months are bound to erupt in one way or another. With thousands of delegates, and infighting at the top, we can expect confused debates, clique fights and manoeuvres of all kinds. So how can we navigate the chaos?

The task of socialists at this conference is to fight for political

clarity. The only way to do this is to *put politics first*. We must push back against distractions, tertiary disputes and turf wars, and always fight to bring the debates back to the question of *what should this party stand for?* This is how we can focus the discussions on the most important questions. This is also how we can fight so that the lines of division - because there will be divisions - remain on *clear political questions*, and not on confused organisational issues or personal allegiances.

We think that, in order to succeed, Your Party must be a radical, socialist and working class party, ready to wage war against the ruling class. This is how we can win back workers (including those who look to Farage), fight Labour and distinguish ourselves from the liberal Greens. Vague calls for 'peace', 'justice' and even 'socialism' will not cut it. The party must stand for a radical break with the status quo, and this will require a struggle on the conference floor.

We urge socialists to fight to adopt clear positions against Nato, against Zionism, for class-struggle politics and for working class power against the British imperialist rulers. Furthermore, we should fight to put the people who share those politics in leading positions. Zarah Sultana stands out as a leader who has argued for clear socialist and anti-imperialist positions. She, as well as those who take a clear side with her on these questions, must be put in the strongest organisational positions.

Achieving this would be a victory against the conservative and liberal elements in the party, who will no doubt oppose these positions. It would also be a first step to establishing Your Party as a fighting alternative that is able to speak to working class anger. Even if revolutionaries remain a minority, a debate on these questions will show where everybody stands. But, to get there, we must avoid the pitfalls ahead.

One of the greatest dangers is that the debates and polarisations at the conference will be exclusively over organisational matters. Most of the founding documents are purely about the structure of Your Party, with the political statement being an afterthought. And many socialists are organised in the Democratic Socialist caucus, whose main focus is the organisational rules of the party. *This is a false and dangerous road, which we must warn against.*

It would be a disaster if the central polarisation at the founding conference of a new socialist party is purely over organisational structure. An acrimonious fight for or against sortition, over the minutiae of branch structures or for or against co-leadership will only bring confusion and sideline debates over what the party should stand for.

Those around the Democratic Socialists argue: "If members can win a democratic party with a mediocre programme, the programme can be replaced later; if we win a perfect programme but have no way for members to hold their leaders accountable, then neither is secure" (K Glasssmith *Prometheus*, November 10). This is a totally wrong view of politics.

Politics isn't a rule book - it is an expression of the class struggle. And parties are groupings which represent classes. Now, there is a battle raging over which class Your Party will represent: the working class or the liberal middle class. The decisive element in this struggle is *not* the organisational rules, but *political positions*, which reflect contending class interests. Understood this way,

one can see how placing structure over programme not only misses the entire struggle unfolding, but is a way to reconcile the working class, socialist trend with the liberal, middle class one.

Let's be concrete and look at Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. Corbyn won two landslides in leadership contests *despite* the countless anti-democratic rules put in place by the Blairites to sabotage the left. The key element was that Corbyn struck a chord among workers and youth, who were animated because he spoke to their class aspirations in opposition to the Blairites. Fast-forward four years: Corbyn's leadership ended in disaster, not because of the structure of the Labour Party (or Momentum), but because Corbyn never wanted to wage a real struggle against the Blairites. He capitulated to the Zionist offensive and ended up campaigning for the European Union. This totally undermined his support, particularly among workers.

Corbyn's rise and fall in Labour shows that what is decisive in politics is *not* the rules. What is decisive is what class interests you are fighting for. There is no organisational talisman against capitulating to the ruling class.

This isn't to say that structure is unimportant, or 'not political'. Sometimes, differences over structure hide broader differences over aims. So we do need to fight for party democracy at the conference. We must oppose sortition, oppose the ban on dual membership - a threat to the left - and support the possibility of recalling leaders, etc. We support such measures because they can assist the fight for socialism. But these measures in themselves are not decisive. So, don't get bogged down in organisational discussions. Politics is the crucial element.

Some in Your Party will agree with opposition to Nato, Zionism and for working class power. But they will then argue against making these positions party policy in the name of 'unity': ie, we do not want to scare off more conservative elements. Again, here, the question is, what type of party are we building?

To undercut Farage, it isn't sufficient to simply oppose him. The Greens, Labour, the SNP and Plaid Cymru are all against Farage. But they fight Reform UK by defending the status quo, which is fuelling it. To really undercut Farage, we need a party that will wage war against the status quo. This is one of the reasons why opposing Nato or Zionism are not abstract questions. Support to Nato and Israel are clear red lines for the ruling class. We cannot fight the status quo, nor fight for a fairer Britain, if we remain part of Nato and the American empire.

The point isn't to shout slogans or to throw out everyone who disagrees with these positions. Rather, it is to fight for Your Party to be a real, working class and radical alternative to the status quo - and making the case as to why these points are key to this purpose.

Many at conference are wary of left groups. They see them as a nuisance who seek to push their own little brand at the expense of the movement - or else as splitters and wreckers. Unfortunately, many leftists in their actions only reinforce these views. Groups like the SWP are jockeying for organisational positions in a covert manner. The RCG, while correctly pushing for key political positions, insist on the need for a premature split and openly declare that they are not interested in building Your Party. Each of these discredits the Marxist left as a whole.

The task of Marxists at the conference must be to demonstrate in front of the whole membership *why, in order to succeed in the struggles of today, Your Party needs Marxism*. This requires putting one's own narrow partisan interest aside and placing the interests of the movement first.

Again, the only way this can be done is if we concentrate on the key political questions facing Your Party. Marxists will be a minority at this conference. We will not have organisational control, nor should we seek to obtain it through manoeuvres and power plays. Rather, we must use this conference to cohere a *revolutionary trend within Your Party* on the basis of an open struggle for our ideas.

Obviously, this would be much easier if revolutionary groups came together in a united front on common positions. This is why we are supporting (with criticisms) Zarah Sultana. Not only does she draw a number of clear socialist lines, but every socialist can get behind what she is currently pushing.

This conference will likely be a mess. The way to cut through the confusion and endless debate is to *put politics first*. Put secondary considerations to the side, hammer out clear socialist lines, link up with those who agree with you and always keep your eyes on the goal: building a working class, socialist party. Join us in this struggle!

Vincent David
Spartacist League

Nat separatist

I am curious as to the political purpose of your somewhat hostile introduction to comrade Steve Freeman's article, 'Call for a Political Statement boycott' (November 6). In the article he argues correctly that Your Party at present is committed to a "social-monarchist unionism". You chose to preface it by stating that he "calls for dividing the working class movement in Britain along national lines".

I would like to present the following arguments in support of Steve and his comrades in the Republican Labour Education Forum from myself as a republican socialist and YP member, based in Scotland.

You appear to have a kind of Whiggish perspective that views the creation of the UK as a 'good thing', whose integrity is required to unite the British working class. A more materialist view would, I think, argue that the modern UK state developed out of the early development of capitalism in England. A political revolutionary process begun during the Cromwellian period (which included the defeat of the English Levellers) and resulted in the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. This led to the Act of Union of 1707, which incorporated Scotland into a greater Britain.

Importantly, consolidation of the Union State settlement also required the defeat of democratic and republican struggles across these islands, including the United Irishmen (1798), the Scottish Rising and general strike of 1820, and the Merthyr (1831) and Newport (1839) risings in Wales. The UK is a capitalist state built on the defeat of more progressive alternatives. It is their state, not ours.

On the question of the integrity of the UK state aiding working class unity, I would point out that the UK ruling class has a permanent policy of 'divide and rule', which takes a multitude of forms. One of these forms is to bombard the people of England and Wales with an anti-Scottish agenda, usually involving how the UK state subsidises feckless Scotland amid disparaging references

to 'sweaty socks' (Jocks). This ferments an anti-Scottish feeling among the working classes of England in particular.

The mirror image of that is to bombard the people of Scotland with the idea that Scotland is too poor, too weak, too lacking in resources to stand on its own two feet. Expressions of Scottish culture - in particular the languages of Scotland - are disparaged. Until recently Scottish history wasn't taught in Scottish schools except as an adjunct of English/British history. These processes nurture an anti-English sentiment amongst the more backward members of the population. A more sophisticated response is a more democratic, anti-Westminster, anti-the-crown-in-parliament, republican response. It is no accident that Scotland's greatest Marxist thinkers, James Connolly and John Maclean, were both republicans and they both advocated the break-up of the UK state. To overcome these divisions requires the people of Scotland being allowed to express their right to national self-determination.

Reform type English/British nationalism has echoes amongst smaller ethno-nationalist movements in Scotland and Ireland. Either socialists and the Labour movement can ignore this and continue with what are economic arguments about 'nationalism dividing the working class', or we can *recognise the democratic and republican content* of the desire for independence and seek to steer this process in a progressive and democratic direction.

In the United Kingdom the process of uniting the working class and building a left hegemonic force capable of carrying through the necessary democratic transformation requires the breaking and ending of the power of the UK unionist state and the abolition of the undemocratic *crown powers*. This is the argument for the strategic perspective of independence and republican democracy.

In our present situation the YP in Scotland should aim to aid the working class in its self-organisation to achieve national leadership and become the hegemonic class. This cannot happen if it confines itself to narrow class issues (economism). It must also consider the wider popular democratic aspirations and struggles of the people, which may not necessarily have an overt class character. Through such a strategy we can win independence on terms favourable to not just the Scottish, but the whole British working class, opening up the path for a further radical reshaping of society and the economy. I believe that there is no UK/Westminster road to socialism. Ending the union through a democratic dissolution of the UK union should be the socialist strategy.

In the case of YP this points to the need for a Scottish party which is both unequivocally pro-independence for Scotland and is itself a fully independent Scottish party. It should be a sibling party of YP parties in England and Wales. It's time for a republican strategy, that champions the democratic sovereignty of the people and the creation of independent national republics on the island of Britain as a necessary step towards socialist transformation of society.

Bob Goupillot
Republican Socialist Platform

Green time

I have read Carla Roberts insightful articles about Your Party's internal goings-on with interest. Carla points out that many people who were looking to join YP have had second-thoughts, and have therefore joined the Green Party instead. I am one of them.

The 800,000 people who registered

an interest in YP is a red herring. The ‘Enough is Enough’ campaign headed by Mick Lynch (RMT) and Dave Ward (CWU) had 500,000 registered supporters, but these disappeared into the ether. This has also happened to the 800,000 Your Party supporters.

Since the charismatic Zack Polanski became Green Party leader two months ago, membership of the Greens has risen from 68,000 to more than 150,000. Two recent opinion polls have put the Greens on 18%, three points ahead of Labour. It is entirely possible that at the next general election the Greens will have 50 seats or more.

Unlike the undemocratic Your Party, which will not have any branches, the Green Party has local branches - and regional and national conferences, where motions from rank-and-file members can be debated and become party policy.

Green Party policies, which all Marxists would support, include:

- Abolition of all private landlords.
- The banning of all buy-to-let mortgages.
- The mass building of council houses.
- Rent controls.
- Ending the two-child benefit cap.
- Equalising capital gains taxes with income taxes.
- A wealth tax on millionaires and billionaires.
- The legal regulation by the state of all drugs.

Instead of wasting time with the stillborn disaster of Your Party, all Marxists should join the Greens.

John Smith
Cambridgeshire

Trans liberation

In the opposite spirit of one of the most amazing titles ever given to a piece of my writing (‘Trans rant’ Letters, September 24 2024), I would like to congratulate the CPGB for the recent theses on trans liberation outlined in the last issue of the *Weekly Worker* (‘Communism and trans liberation’, November 13).

I have my disagreements, and I will continue to argue for them. Comrade Roberts’ amendments, I thought, were politically sound and on a personal level I would have voted for them. But that is the spirit of democracy. What is more important in my mind is to see the CPGB develop a solid line on this issue - a heartening experience, especially when one surveys, to be blunt, the depression-inducing scene of the British left on trans liberation.

Compared to the reactionary, backwards-looking perspective of the CPGB (Marxist-Leninist), and the pathetic cowardice of the *Morning Star* group, to see an openly communist group in the UK taking up the banner of trans liberation genuinely does warm my heart. As a small contributor to the *Weekly Worker*’s letters pages, and to the debate on trans liberation, I am also somewhat vindicated by this, so I hope comrades will forgive me for being slightly smug.

There is a long road to go yet, but if the CPGB can consistently argue for trans liberation and against the reactionary and, to be blunt, delusional bugbears dragged out by the sects of Great Britain around trans women, then this step will be an even bigger one forward.

Brunhilda Olding
Australia

Pile of drivel

Mike Macnair in his new theses on ‘Communism and trans liberation’ concludes his introduction with: “... the Communist Party of Britain - and this paper’s letters column’s resident Stalinist, Andrew Northall, as in his letter last week (November 6) - identify separatist feminism as the ‘official leadership’ of the women’s

movement, and as a result tail-end the politics of feminists who have gone over to a conservative form of feminism and become ‘useful idiots’ for the cynical scheme devised by US Republican Party political operatives to use the ‘gender question’ as an entering wedge for Christianist patriarchalism.”

What an absolute pile of drivel, nonsense and gibberish! Not even one word of truth or anything with the slightest connection with any reality. Macnair is a complete charlatan and a fantasist.

Apparently, the BBC have “put together” a video to show Robert Griffiths addressing a Christian fundamentalist fringe meeting at a Republican Convention ... No, not really.

Almost as a nervous tick, Macnair repeatedly litters his articles with the same phrases: “the trinity of class, race and gender of the CPUSA (Communist Party of the USA)”, “managerialism”, “intersectionalism”, “Eurocommunism”, “popular frontism” and “Maoism”. If we are really unlucky, we get a repeated account of his own factional and sectarian history in some weird Pabloist tendency in the 1970s, which neither has the faintest interest or relevance for the present day (or any day, to be frank). His latest contribution manages around nine out of 10 for these repeated ritual references.

I suspect, given the ritual nature of his repeated references, Macnair knows as little about the CPUSA, Eurocommunism, intersectionalism, etc as he does about the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Macnair asked in the letters column if the SPGB would be in favour of “forced collectivisation of small farmers and businesspeople”. Anyone who knows anything about the SPGB would not put forward such a breathtakingly ignorant and stupid question.

Macnair has managed to sucker the *Weekly Worker* group, including in theses 10 and 11, that the “phenomenon” of violence against women, trans people, ethnic minorities, gay people, including by the police and other state forces, etc, is “at root driven by the performance of competitive heterosexuality”!

So nothing about the nature of a class-divided, exploitative, capitalist society. Nothing about the state being an organ of class rule. Nothing about the state generally having monopoly of force or even violence to maintain the subjection of the majority and the continuation of class rule. Apparently, the dreadful murder of Sarah Everard was driven primarily by “competitive heterosexuality” rather than the fact the perpetrator had access to a police warrant card and was a member of a violent state paramilitary force.

I am not even sure what “competitive heterosexuality” is, or why Macnair should be so personally bothered about the alleged concept. Does this apply to women or is it a purely anti-male slogan? Ironically, it sounds like a very extreme concept of the most extreme ‘intersectionalists’.

Ironically, not even the most extreme “Eurocommunists” (I assume Macnair is referring to the tendency in the CPGB in the 1970s and 80s, which had very little in common with the real Eurocommunism in western Europe) would have been so crass or stupid as to suggest “competitive heterosexuality” was at the root of state violence in modern capitalist society.

I don’t particularly like the concept of “intersectionalism” which implicitly suggests that the oppression of different groups or sections in society ‘intersect’ or ‘cut across’ each other. I prefer concepts like ‘overlay’ or ‘overlap’.

Macnair asserts that “Eurocommunism”, “the CPUSA”, “the ‘broad democratic alliance’ of the CPGB”, were about separating out struggles: for example, women for women’s liberation, black people for black liberation, gay people for gay liberation, etc. No, completely and utterly wrong. Not even tilting at straw windmills, just those in Macnair’s sectarian imagination.

Let’s take the Communist Party here in Britain, as one example of a western CP. Since the war, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and later the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), have consistently advocated that (although some of the wording of precise concepts has evolved) proceeding from the basis that the broadly defined working class in Britain is the overwhelming majority of the people in this country, and the fact that ‘advanced capitalism’ has produced a modern working class of ever increasing diversity and complexity, the central strategic task is for the organised working class, the labour movement, to build a broad, popular, democratic alliance, directed against monopoly capitalism.

Ironically, Tricia Davis, a leading ‘Eurocommunist’ in the CPGB in the 1980s put this central strategic concept remarkably well in the July 1984 *Marxism Today*: “The working class movement is currently deeply divided by sectionalism, sexism and racism. The meaning of a politics of alliance is not to create networks of mutual support as ends in themselves: it is rather to develop these alliances in such a way that, through ridding itself of sectionalism, sexism and racism, a united working class, with a self-conscious sense of its own political identity and historical role, can emerge. The broad democratic alliance, then, is a description of a process for the transformation of the working class into an organised political force.” So, fundamentally, about transforming the working class from being a “class in itself” into a “class for itself”.

The broad popular democratic alliance (the precise term has changed over the years) has never been about an arithmetical adding together of different groups of society or their individual demands into a shopping list manifesto. It has always been about transforming the labour movement, so it becomes conscious of all the range of oppressions in society and increasingly champions their interests and demands as its own. It is also about transforming the movements and groups advocating and campaigning for their own specific interests: transforming all these democratic movements to greater awareness and consciousness of how exploitation and oppressions in modern capitalist society are all interrelated and interacting, and therefore need to be challenged in a much more joined up, unified and integrated manner.

Only through working class organisations championing the rights and demands for emancipation, equality and social justice, for women, people who are ethnic minorities, gays, lesbians, trans, migrants, disabled, etc, can the true leading role of the working class be realised and the prospect that any real social and economic progress be achieved.

Communists are active, involved and frequently play leading roles in all these struggles. They should and do inject the politics of class and of Marxism-Leninism into all such struggles, where appropriate.

We can and must make genuine progress in achieving these demands in current society, including, as a start, by making major inroads into the wealth and power of the monopoly

capitalist class. Ultimately, of course, we need to overthrow this class and establish a socialist society, which will give us the foundations to truly eliminate the sources of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and prejudice.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Ignorant distortion

Lars T Lih has written a 13,514-word analysis of the February 1917 revolution (‘Duelling editorials’ November 6). This focussed on the March 12 1917 editorial by Irakli Tsereteli (Menshevik) and the one from Lev Kamenev (Bolshevik) on March 14.

This methodology allows him to distort the whole picture of the Russian Revolution: how the political situation evolved from the 1905 failed revolution, where the soviets first appeared, to the dual power standoff between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd soviet in particular (resolved when soviet power was established in October by the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky). This was the greatest single event in human history, unequalled since then, as all subsequent attempts at socialist revolution have failed. The methodology of the piece allows Lars T to mention Kamenev 63 times, Lenin 29, Stalin 25 but Trotsky once only (and that a passing reference, when he complains that Kamenev is not given the historical pride of place he deserves).

Lars T rejects the importance of Lenin’s ‘Letters from afar’ and his April theses: “The automatic assumption of historians is that Lenin’s April theses were aimed at his fellow Bolsheviks. Why did Lenin call for no support for the government? Because (we are told) *Pravda* had earlier been calling for such support, and Lenin wanted to rebuke it and its editors. But the April theses contain no explicit attack on *Pravda*, and our look at the duelling editorials show that in fact this automatic assumption is highly dubious. Indeed, a closer look shows that Lenin sided with Kamenev and Stalin on some key issues.”

We must remember that the Mensheviks saw the coming revolution as a bourgeois revolution, led by the bourgeoisie who would develop the productive forces after an extended rule and so make the socialist revolution viable. The Bolsheviks also saw the coming revolution as bourgeois.

However, if we look at what Lenin said about this, we get the correct picture. The April theses *did* seek to change the Bolshevik position. He wrote that those who supported the “revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” were “behind the times” and should be “consigned to the archive of ‘Bolshevik’ pre-revolutionary antiques”. He made this statement in his ‘Letters on tactics’ in April 1917, shortly after returning to Russia from exile.

To understand his statement, it is important to know the meaning of the key terms:

■ “Revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry”: This was a long-standing Bolshevik slogan developed by Lenin in the 1905 revolution. It described the necessary ‘bourgeois’ phase of the revolution in Russia. Since Russia’s bourgeoisie was weak and tied to the tsar, the task of overthrowing feudalism and establishing a democratic republic would fall to an alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry.

■ “Old Bolsheviks”: This referred to long-time members of the Bolshevik Party who clung to the pre-1917

political line and were not ready to adjust to the new conditions after the February Revolution of 1917. If we look up the four-page section in volume 24 of *Collected works*, we see that he is referring in particular to Kamenev and Zinoviev, but also to the majority of the Bolshevik leadership at the time.

Following the February Revolution, which overthrew the tsar, many Bolsheviks believed the first, or ‘bourgeois-democratic’, stage of the revolution was complete. Lenin, however, argued that this stage had resulted in an unstable “dual power” situation. The Provisional Government, representing the bourgeoisie, held official power. The soviets (councils of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ deputies) possessed the real authority of the masses.

In his April theses, Lenin argued that the Bolsheviks must move past the “revolutionary democratic dictatorship” and immediately push for the second, “socialist” stage of the revolution. In his view, the path forward was to work toward transferring all state power to the soviets, which would form the basis of a “dictatorship of the proletariat”.

Lenin was directly criticising party members, such as Lev Kamenev, who opposed his new position and defended the old formula. Lenin argued that clinging to the old slogan was no longer a revolutionary position. He famously dismissed their arguments as “antiquated”, “worthless” and “dead”. He felt that the old line was holding the party back from seizing the opportunity for a socialist revolution.

After the Bolshevik central committee voted on October 23 1917 in favour of Lenin’s motion for an armed insurrection, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev feared it would lead to civil war. Without the central committee’s authorisation, Kamenev and Zinoviev publicly voiced their opposition in the Menshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn*. This was a major breach of party discipline and threatened to derail the Bolsheviks’ plans for seizing power. In response, Lenin wrote a proclamation calling Kamenev and Zinoviev “deserters” and demanded their expulsion from the party. He never forgot this betrayal, even referencing it later in his ‘Testament’. The outcome: despite the damage caused by the publication, the Bolsheviks proceeded with the insurrection, which succeeded with surprisingly little resistance and resulted in the overthrow of the Provisional Government.

We must insist that it was one revolution begun in March and completed in October. There were ‘two stages’ in one sense, but not in the Stalinist counterrevolutionary sense, where first a feudal or fascist regime is overthrown to allow capitalism to develop the productive forces or allow a democratic capitalism to reestablish itself, and then they might be ready for the socialist revolution.

We can only conclude that if both Irakli Tsereteli and Lev Kamenev are largely ignored by historians left and right, then that is because a real revolution exposed them as not revolutionary. Given Kamenev’s vacillation after October 1917, his alliance with Zinoviev and Stalin against Trotsky after Lenin’s death, his brief participation in the Joint Opposition against Stalin over China, and his final ‘confession’ in the Moscow Trials, we can only agree with Trotsky that he was already a political corpse before he was executed.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

MEDIA

Twilight of the Beeb

The current crisis of the BBC is the outcome of long-term transformation of the wider British establishment, and its total subordination to the USA, argues **Paul Demarty**

Given the amount of nonsense being spouted about the BBC by the right at the moment, it feels necessary to state this at the outset: the notorious splice of two parts of Donald Trump's speech undertaken by *Panorama*, and repeated by *Newsnight*, was not in fact misleading.

The BBC is perfectly capable of lies and misinformation, but in this case it took footage of the American president inciting a coup attempt, and edited it to leave the impression that he, well, incited a coup attempt. If this is misleading editing, then editing *as such* is misleading. It is no undeserved favour to the BBC to note that this whole hysteria is spectacularly disingenuous, and typical of the whinging, cringing resentment of the deranged right.

Yet still it comes. It is remarkable how quickly every grievance, legitimate and petulant, has been piled onto what looks increasingly like the Beeb's funeral pyre. It is not for nothing that leftwingers and Palestine sympathisers have been quick to point out the corporation's well documented partiality towards Israel, after all - including Yasmine Mather in last week's *Weekly Worker*.¹

On the other hand, it really is crazy to find the right attacking the BBC for *anti-Israel* bias, but there you go. Representative is Stephen Pollard, former editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, who took that paper in a decidedly Likudnik direction, now frothing in the *Telegraph*. He accuses the corporation's defenders of talking about "great rightwing conspiracies" in order "to deflect from the other examples of bias ... over BBC Arabic, over its coverage of the Gaza war, and over how deeply in thrall it has been to the Stonewall agenda on trans issues". The underlying problem is the BBC's willingness to bend the truth in the service of a perceived 'greater good'. "It doesn't matter if the facts are wrong. Israel is the villain, so, so long as it's seen as such, all is well."²

Stephen Pollard, of course, could never be accused of bending the truth to suit a wider narrative - and it would be out of order to note that, during his editorship, the *JC* notched up an impressive 14 separate adverse Press Complaints Commission/ IPSO rulings and several substantial libel settlements. And the *Telegraph* - surely nobody in such an august publication could ever be caught in the act of making a misleading quotation (or pseudo-misleading quotation, as is the case with Trump's speech).

Pollard may even believe it, for all I know - just as he may really believe that he is unsuccessful on the dating scene due to his pro-Israel views,³ and not because he is a puffy-faced, roughly-spherical, middle-aged man with a toxic streak of self-pity. Indeed, he is not *completely* wrong in this general sense. There is a determinate political content to the supposed 'impartiality' of the BBC. It is precisely in light of this content that the impact of this absolute nothingburger of an accusation is potentially so disastrous.

There is a certain common rightwing conception of these failures of 'impartiality'. That is, that the BBC draws its membership from the same broad class of university-educated liberal elites as the wider cultural sphere, including other media outlets and of academia. Its output thus reflects the ideological prerogatives of this 'class' (for the critics, if not for



January 20 2021: Donald Trump's attempted self-coup

Marxist theory, this *is* a social class) and is thus systematically biased against intrinsically conservative popular common sense.

Commercial pressure

What *is* the British Broadcasting Corporation? It has its particular historical and institutional eccentricities, of course: the pietistic moralism of founder John Reith shaped its early history, just as the successive stages of competition from commercial broadcasters have shaped its later history. Yet we might step further back - what is a *corporation*, in the BBC sense? It is an organisation chartered to undertake some activity by the British sovereign.

Of course, we do not mean to get into some Lyndon LaRouche-style conspiracy theory about the direct power of the British royal family. The meaning of this loyalty to the crown should be interpreted rather, as we have had cause to mention recently, as the army's oath to serve the crown is interpreted: a loyalty to the continuity of the *British state*, considered as a long-term project, apart from the short-term political cycles at work.

The BBC was founded in the autumn years of British global hegemony, and thus espouses a certain attitude - that there is something distinctive about *British* statecraft that endures even after decolonisation. It is a cousin, perhaps, to the Commonwealth: an instrument of soft power, but also sometimes a liability, since it is possessed by the ghost of national glory.

Rightwing media tycoons - above all Rupert Murdoch - have always hated the BBC, considering it an outrage that it is insulated, relatively speaking, from commercial pressure. (That is a simplification, but let it go.) The unspoken part of this hatred is that such insulation clearly results in *better* output, at least compared to the commercial bourgeois media. It is quite nice, on the whole, to just be able

to watch a television show, without being constantly bombarded with adverts for dodgy personal finance and gambling websites.

BBC News has its blind spots, to put things mildly, but it is - finger in the air - approximately 40% more truthful than the *Telegraph*; that is not because the latter is run by worse reactionaries, but because it is driven to cretinous sensationalism *by the direct commercial pressures at work*. I think often of an incident ably narrated by Peter Osborne at the time of his departure from that paper:

On 22 September [2014] *Telegraph* online ran a story about a woman with three breasts. One despairing executive told me that it was known this was false even before the story was published. I have no doubt it was published in order to generate online traffic, at which it may have succeeded. I am not saying that online traffic is unimportant, but over the long term, however, such episodes inflict incalculable damage on the reputation of the paper.⁴

In fact insulation from direct commercial pressure comes at a cost. Though funding for the BBC is hypothecated, theoretically insulating it from direct government interference, its charter is periodically up for renewal, and *political* appointments to the board of the BBC Trust are common - a matter dramatically highlighted by the role in the present scandal of Tory apparatchiks like Robbie Gibb and, indeed, Tim Davie. At the end of the day, the BBC is an apparatus of the state, no less a state broadcaster than the Soviet First Programme. Part of its *utility* to the state is the fig leaf of its independence, so it has enjoyed a certain level of protection from direct interference - but that has been leaking away for years.

Despite the fact that its main adversaries are the private Tory media

(or Reform media, in the *Telegraph's* case ...), the present downward trajectory of the BBC arguably began in the last period of Labour government, when the corporation went to war with Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell over the 'dodgy dossier' promoting the invasion of Iraq. With the death of whistleblower David Kelly, that became enough of a scandal to lead to the Hutton inquiry, which resulted in a lamentable whitewash of the government position (no worse than one could expect from a judge who cut his teeth in Northern Ireland at the tail end of the Troubles).

Hutton whitewash

Though the Hutton whitewash became a scandal of its own, it proved - in the short term - a great opportunity for Blair and co to bring the BBC to heel. Director general Greg Dyke resigned; Andrew Gilligan, the Tory journalist whose reportage had caused all this drama, was cast into the private sector.

Since then, the corporation has become ever more risk-averse. Its approach to the tendentially more hostile Tory governments after 2010 was basically cringing and supine; perhaps Murdoch would have got his way and succeeded in getting the BBC dismembered to his great advantage, had his own business operations not triggered their own vast media-political scandal with the phone-hacking affair of 2011. This wariness has tended to bloat the managerial bureaucracy of the corporation - partly a matter of ever more intrusive editorial oversight, and partly a matter of keeping people on the payroll on good money, so they do not leave and denounce the BBC on the way out.

The tendency has thus been for the BBC to become *less* defensible in general over time. Its fear of its own shadow leads to violent bias *in favour of the right* - which, however, will never be enough for its beneficiaries. It is dependent on an esoteric form of regressive taxation - the TV licence

fee - which is plainly unsustainable, as linear TV is steadily displaced by ad-hoc streaming; but it can ill afford to have the licence fee really come up for reconsideration when the BBC is surrounded by enemies.

The Iraq invasion was not merely a traumatic event for the BBC: the *scale* of opposition reflected a correct gut instinct on the part of the masses, yes, but also a profound split within the British establishment. One side - victorious in the end - prized the 'special relationship' with the United States above all else; the other still dreamed of pursuing some distinctive British policy, shaped perhaps by a certain residual pro-Arab sympathy in the deeper reaches of the foreign office. The BBC - an integral part of this wider establishment - was a place where such a fight could be had.

But now the fight is over: British submission to the US is entirely complete, as is obvious from the present government's comically degrading toadyism towards Donald Trump, including in its response to the current BBC scandal. It is possible to ask, at this point, whether we even have an establishment to speak of. The natural party of government, the Tories, is on the ropes; the natural *alternative* party of government, Labour, is in a state of acute disarray. The threatening challenger - Reform UK - is for practical purposes a US media operation with a fractious political party tacked on.

This whole situation is perhaps trickier for the left than it first appears. We are obliged to denounce the attacks from the right, since the basic problem they have with the BBC is that it accurately described Donald Trump's self-coup, and that it dared even to mention the mass deaths inflicted on Gaza by the Israeli state. Insofar as we are so obliged, we come in some sense to the defence of the BBC.

Yet we have something in common with the right. We both must conclude that the BBC, as representative of the British establishment as it actually exists, is largely obsolete. We both believe that this older British establishment, even were it possible to reconstruct, should remain safely in the dustbin of history.

We diverge largely when it comes to what must supplant the corporation, in the end. For the right, it is a matter of bringing things 'up to date' by ensuring that there is no popular media outlet available that cannot be directly bribed through advertising, or otherwise subordinated to American state interests. For us, it is a matter of creating media with real institutional heft outside of both British state interests *and* the market (and, behind the market, American state interests).

We continue to insist that the construction of such a media requires a mass workers' party. That is the potential alternative institutional skeleton - a means of production and distribution, that is able to go places the bourgeois media never can ●

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Notes

1. 'Heads roll at BBC' *Weekly Worker* November 13: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1561/heads-roll-at-bbc.
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3. x.com/stephenpollard/status/1757115800555512183.
4. www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/why-i-have-resigned-from-telegraph.

NETHERLANDS

Politics of right-moving centre

Rogier Specht of the Communistisch Platform assesses the recent general election and the first attempts to form a new coalition government. Unfortunately what passes for the 'left' is pro-Nato and pro-war. Principled Marxists have a duty to get their act together

The centre holds. That was the mainstream media story of the October 29 general election in the Netherlands. After the 2023 rightwing victory of Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV), Rob Jetten's centre-liberal Democrats 66 (D66) nearly tripled its seats, putting them in front of the PVV. London's *Guardian* called it "an uplifting victory for the politics of hope".¹ For the left, however, there is less to be hopeful about.

The fall of the last cabinet in 2023 saw an end to the 13-year political reign of then prime minister (and now Nato secretary general) Mark Rutte and his conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). That period consisted of various coalition governments with various different parties, while the last years of Rutte's administrations were characterised by political scandals. Most importantly, the child benefit furore and the nitrogen crisis. The child benefit scandal saw thousands of families wrongly targeted for welfare fraud, often on the basis of their ethnic background.² The nitrogen crisis was the result of a legal ruling on emissions, forcing a reluctant government to take measures on agriculture.³

The child benefit scandal led to MP Pieter Omtzigt, who had partially exposed it, splitting from the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) and forming his own party, New Social Contract (NSC), which called for constitutional and democratic renewal. He was hailed as the messiah by the press, and his party won 20 seats out of 150 in its first election outing. The nitrogen crisis, meanwhile, led to farmer riots, and subsequently to the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB), which also consisted of a lot of former CDA members. The BBB surprisingly won the 2023 provincial elections with nearly 20% of the vote, though it soon lost support, only winning 5% of the vote in the 2023 general elections.

The result of the 2023 elections was a PVV-VVD-NSC-BBB rightwing coalition government, which was mostly characterised by political bickering. There were almost weekly fall-outs over this or that issue between the coalition parties. After nearly two years, the government was abandoned by Wilders when he gave the coalition an ultimatum on anti-immigration measures. The other parties in reality largely supported the measures, but at that point it hardly mattered any more.

Now, the October 29 election result has led to some shifts between parties. Those in the rightwing coalition mostly lost votes, though not equally. Wilders' PVV lost 11 seats, going from 37 to 26. The VVD lost two seats, going from 24 to 22. After their rise in the last elections, the NSC lost all their seats, falling from 20 to zero. The BBB tally went down from seven to four.

Looking at the centre, there have also been some shifts. The centre-liberal D66 gained narrowly from the PVV and ended up being the election winner with 26 seats. The Christian democratic CDA regained some of the ground it had lost to NSC and the BBB, increasing its seats from five to 18, while the centre-left/social democratic GreenLeft/Labour Party saw a decline from 25 to 20.

Seemingly then, there has been some restoration of the centre. But, looking at the far right, there have also been some shifts. Although Wilders' PVV lost 11 seats, the far right



Geert Wilders: out in the cold - for the moment

actually gained 12. The Forum For Democracy (FVD) had previously lost votes over, among other things, anti-Semitic texts and conspiracy theories about the world being governed by reptiles. But on October 29 they gained four seats, going from three to seven. The Conservative Liberals (JA21), which split from FVD over these scandals, used the failure of the PVV government to present itself as the 'clean' right, unmarred by scandals, and thus as a potential junior coalition partner. It grew from just one seat to nine. So the far right has around 45 seats - a not insignificant bloc. Besides this, the centre parties have also significantly shifted to the right on immigration.

Soft left

Meanwhile, the Dutch centre-left has been steadily declining over the last 15 years. It now has 26 seats, divided between the Green Left/Labour Party (GL/PVDA), the Socialist Party (SP) and the Party for Animals (PVDD).

The Labour Party (PvdA) was decimated after forming a coalition government with the VVD following the 2012 elections (the second Rutte government) - a defeat it is still recovering from. It has spent the last few years trying to merge with the Green Lefts. This year the merger was agreed by their congresses, though the two organisations have yet to merge, and stood separately, but as part of the same list for the second time. The aim of the merger is to form a larger centre-left governing party that can be a stronger bloc in coalition negotiations. This is in line with the shift to the right that the GL has been undergoing since its inception - seen through its support for austerity, war and joining municipal coalition governments.

The unity between the two is based on a programme of cuts, support for the Nato and EU war machines, and restrictions on immigration. Labour leader and former vice-president of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, has been passionately advocating a "centre cabinet": ie, a VVD-CDA-D66 coalition with his own party. The GL-PVDA bloc has positioned itself as the guardian of the capitalist order alongside the liberal parties, while Timmermans presented

himself as the Dutch Keir Starmer. The members of this 'merger in progress' ended up losing five seats, from 25 to 20, which led to Timmermans stepping down, though it is likely that the party will be a coalition partner in the coming government.

As for the Socialist Party, it has gone further downhill. Having won 25 seats in 2006, it now has just three (dropping by another two last month). So it has been losing support for 15 years. In 2021 it expelled the Communistisch Platform, and the SP's youth organisation, ROOD, over a fight about the SP positioning itself as a potential coalition partner with VVD. In the latest elections the SP half-heartedly opposed both the 5% Nato budget commitment and Rarm Europe. It proposed establishing a 'Nato mark two', which would exclude the Americans (global instability is attributed to lawlessness, driven by the US).

The party also continues to support arms supplies to Ukraine - supposedly on condition that diplomatic channels are maintained at the same time. But in practice this is indistinguishable from the existing position of European powers (France, Germany, Italy ...) to force Russia to the negotiating table. Taken together, the SP advocates a social-imperialist 'militarisation at a slower pace', with a reorientation towards French-European imperial interests. The party also supports measures against migrant workers.

The SP is willing to sacrifice its 'principles' for participation in government with bourgeois parties. In recent years, it has increasingly declared the VVD to be the main instigator of the problems of the past 15 years. Whereas the SP previously launched fierce attacks on, for example, the PVDA for its participation in 'Rutte 2' (the executive branch of the government from 2012 until 2017), it now seems to be putting *itself* forward for a role as junior coalition partner. The SP's *mild* criticism of coalition participation with rightwing parties is thus definitively a thing of the past. It has proposed a "coffee coalition" with just about all parties up to and including the CDA.⁴

Then there is the Party for the Animals (PVDD). Over the

past decade, its course has been characterised by a shift from an ideology focused on animal welfare, to an ecologically tinged variant of utopian socialism. Previously, the party claimed it was "neither left nor right", but now it has shifted, positioning itself more explicitly as 'leftwing' by placing increasing emphasis on social issues. However, these issues are primarily analysed from the perspective of society's ecological needs. With regards to programme, the party is very similar to the SP.

Animal left

Recently, it has gained a lot of support among the activist left through its opposition to the genocide in Palestine (party leader Esther Ouwehand recently appeared in parliament wearing Palestinian colours⁵). The PVDD used to be a pacifist party, but, with the Ukraine war, it too has been shifting. Like many other green parties in Europe, it now enthusiastically supports war from an ecological perspective!

Its position on Nato is virtually identical to that of the SP, with only variations in exact wording and a few differences in nuance. Both want a 'Nato mark two' without the US (like the Greens' Zack Polanski in Britain). They support arms supplies to Ukraine, but on condition that diplomatic negotiations are encouraged and that the export of 'prohibited' weapons is halted. Unlike the SP, however, the PVDD has enthusiastically backed the 'Rarm Europe' plan. This was accompanied by a performance by the Russian feminist protest band, Pussy Riot, at its last party congress. Punk rock in support of imperialism. Nonetheless, the party remained on three seats.

Lastly there is the intersectionalist party, BIJ1. This lash-up is to the left of the SP and PVDD in opposing Nato and militarisation. The party emerged from the anti-racism movement and recruited quite a lot of activists and NGO employees. At its height it gained one MP, but lost that seat in 2023. BIJ1 never succeeded in building a functioning party structure and has been plagued by internal disputes, breakaway councillors and, to keep

all this under control, anti-democratic measures at online conferences. They came even less close to a seat in parliament this time around. The party seems very close to its end.

In conclusion, these elections have led to the restoration of the centre, but by shifting to the right - most significantly on immigration. Besides that, the far right has stabilised into a very sizable block. It will be the liberal D66 that will form the core of a new coalition government: its Wouter Koolmees was appointed as *verkenner* (scout) to explore potential combinations. A former D66 social affairs minister and current chief executive of the national train service NS, Koolmees's main idea is to form D66 and CDA into a governmental core around an agreement on what are normally sticking points: immigration, housing, security and defence, nitrogen emissions and the economy.

To this goal two informateurs⁶ have been appointed to guide this process - former CDA leader Sybrand Buma and former D66 minister of finance and economic affairs, Hans Wijers - but Wijers stepped down within 20 hours after the press published negative comments he made about VVD leader Yesilgöz.

Because of the consensus on sidelining Wilders and the PVV, the most likely outcome is a centre-right or centre-left governing alliance, consisting respectively of D66-VVD-CDA-JA21 or D66-VVD-CDA-GL/PVDA. The VVD, however, has also excluded the possibility of a coalition with GL/PVDA and is trying to manoeuvre D66 into the centre-right option. The next report on negotiations must be presented to parliament by a December 9 deadline.

The new government will surely go for large-scale rearmament in line with both the Nato 5% target and the Rarm Europe plans, with several parties (eg, D66, CDA and JA21) advocating the (re)introduction of conscription. VVD campaigned for the "largest investment in security ever". This large-scale rearmament means that a decision has been made to torpedo the remnants of social policy. This militarisation is already accompanied by increasing repression and restrictions on freedom of expression, which has been seen with the repression of the Palestine solidarity movement.⁷

What passes for the 'left' is weak in size and collaborates with the plans for militarisation. While revolutionary left groups have been growing on the margins, they are still far from being able to meaningfully challenge the parliamentary 'left'. In the immediate future there is little to be hopeful about ●

Notes

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3. www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/nov/16/nitrogen-wars-the-dutch-farmers-revolt-that-turned-a-nation-upside-down.
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YOUR PARTY

All out for Liverpool!

With fractures and splits at the top, conference, as the party's sovereign body, ought to seize control and elect an emergency leadership. There is every reason to believe that such a bold initiative will be heartily welcomed by branches and members, says **Carla Roberts**

Another week, another scandal (or four) rocking the nascent Your Party. There is one positive side effect stemming from the utterly chaotic and untransparent way that the launch conference in particular has been organised: in the first round of sortition, (into which all members were automatically entered), suspiciously few leftwingers were picked. But a huge number of those selected seem to have said 'no thanks' to the golden ticket - probably because they did not fancy splashing out hundreds of pounds for transport and accommodation costs to attend a conference where they do not even know what they will discuss or how they could meaningfully intervene. We still have no idea if there will be a way to move amendments or if HQ will simply present participants with a pre-written set of 'options', to which attendees must say 'yes' or 'no'.

So perhaps it is not really surprising that, after the second round of sortition, for which members had to apply, things are looking very, very different. Hundreds of members of leftwing groups have now been picked, possibly because they are among the only ones who actually want to go. Dozens of supporters of the Democratic Socialists in Your Party have been sortitioned, along with, we hear, about 70 members of the Socialist Workers Party, with probably similar numbers from Counterfire and the Socialist Party in England and Wales. Even Socialist Alternative has managed to get 20 members selected and a dozen *Weekly Worker* supporters will be at the conference too. In fact, it seems only a small minority of those who applied in the second round *did not* get in. But among those not chosen are, interestingly enough, many cadres from those left groups with, shall we say, more recognisable names. Is there a blacklist of some sort?

Among those sortitioned, however, are also a few familiar names, who, we suspect, were not even on the radar of HQ as potential troublemakers: Tony Greenstein, former ambassador Craig Murray¹ and, in a truly bizarre twist, Chris Williamson, the former Labour MP - the same Chris Williamson who was hounded out of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, because he stood up to the anti-Semitism smear campaign, defending comrades like Marc Wadsworth and Jackie Walker. He is also, rather famously, a deputy leader of George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain. Somebody will probably get in a bit of trouble for that particular oversight. But as dual membership is not banned (yet), they will struggle to find a way to exclude him now. Ditto Craig Murry, who might or might not still be a member of the Alba party and/or the Workers Party.

We suspect that among those who will *actually* turn up in Liverpool, members of organised left groups might well constitute something like 50% of all participants, especially as the total number of attendees seems to have been reduced from the original 13,000 to 3-4,000.² Add to that the fact that HQ left it so late informing 'sortitioned' participants that hotel and train prices have now further rocketed, making it likely that quite a few of those with a golden or silver ticket will simply not show up.

As an aside, we also know now that some participants have been



Zarah Sultana: even quoting Lenin

invited to attend both days, but others just for one day - presumably this is to fill certain 'quotas' for each day. The even more bizarre version previously discussed, where conference was to be split into quarters, with different sets of delegates attending for a few hours each, is off the table. Oh and those not sortitioned will be able to vote at home, at the same time, making the whole sortition process look even more pointless.

On the YP website, members can now see all other members' names and locations (looks a bit like an 'unauthorised use of data' to us), though you cannot actually contact them, which makes it also pretty pointless. Nevertheless, it shows that there are exactly 53,503 members - not a bad figure on paper, but a large portion of them seem pretty passive. It will be interesting to see how many will actually vote at conference and how many used the incredibly clunky crowd editing tool copied from Yanis Varoufakis's organisation, Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 - if we ever get to see any of those figures. There is an interesting article by Cambridge YP member Inacio Invita explaining the many technical problems with the software that prevent it from allowing any kind of democratic, transparent process.³ We would add that the obvious solution is not another piece of (better) software, but democratic and transparent decision-making in the branches, with elected branch delegates moving amendments at conference. Just because this is an old way of doing things does not mean it is a bad way of doing things.

In any case, we now know that hundreds of members of the organised left will be in Liverpool - this means the left has a very realistic chance of strongly influencing conference proceedings. The newly launched Socialist Unity Platform can now actually hope not just to make a splash at conference, but maybe even turn things around in Your Party more generally. Perhaps it does not have to become the stillborn mess that it looked like even a few short days ago. Conference will be 'make or break' time, in other words. More on the SUP below.

Second thoughts

Certainly, the people currently running Your Party cannot be left in charge. They have messed things up so thoroughly that even those nominally running things - the five male MPs of the Independence Alliance - are barely hanging on.

On November 14, Adnan Hussain, MP for Blackburn, announced that he has "stepped out of the steering process for Your Party. I wish those who continue to work on this endeavour the very best of luck and hope their hard work achieves the results they desire." Speculation as to whether he has also resigned from Your Party might be the wrong question: we hear he never joined in the first place! Hussain complained of the "pattern of clique-like behaviour and gatekeeping"⁴ - a thinly veiled dig at Karie Murphy, right-hand woman of Jeremy Corbyn, whose brilliant idea it was to hand over the party to the five MPs in the first place. They were supposed to 'steer' the ship until the election of a leadership in February or March. We hardly needed any more proof, but Hussain's post certainly confirms it never was those five who were leading the party or who composed the dreadful founding documents. It was all the work of Karie Murphy and those working under her direction, including James Schneider (who since has also become so fed up with the incompetence at HQ that he left a few months ago, though there are rumours he might have snuck back in).

Judging by a rather ill-tempered post by Iqbal Mohamed (MP for Dewsbury & Batley), he might follow his AI colleague, Hussain, out of the door before long. On November 15, Mohamed took to Twitter to explain:

... no member decisions have been made by us and the allegations that we have tried to freeze Zarah out of Your Party or anything else are false. All four of us voted for Zarah as co-leader against Jeremy's wishes and advice. Being co-leader was a condition/prerequisite for Zarah before she would resign from the Labour Party... If Your Party cannot unite the members and supporters, then how will it ever be able to unite the country to stand up to those who are exploiting us and failing us?⁵

He is clearly unhappy about being blamed for a mess he had no say in. Funnily enough, he references a meeting of the now-abolished YP Organising Group, where Corbyn did not have the bottle to speak or vote against the motion that proposed the co-leadership with Sultana. He and his supporters simply abstained. Another piece of evidence that shows how badly suited to any leadership position Corbyn really is.

Then there is Jamie Driscoll, the

former mayor of North of Tyne, who just announced that he has decided to remove himself from the project altogether. He has just let it be known that "I'm not a member of Your Party, and won't be joining."⁶ He is continuing to build his dead-end party, Majority UK, whose only distinguishing feature is that it can boast of having no politics whatsoever - simply a set of vague platitudes.

Even previously loyal supporters, Mark Serwotka and Beth Winter, who were both, we believe, former members of the secret Organising Group, are now openly rebelling. They were put in charge of leading Your Party in Wales and have largely done so in the top-down manner requested of them, with Serwotka using a recent article in the *Morning Star* to rant against the organised left, as we reported in last week's *Weekly Worker*.⁷

But now, even he and Winter have broken ranks and accuse YP HQ publicly of "shameful" behaviour for not releasing the data of local members: This "flies in the face of any commitment by YP UK to autonomy and self-determination for the people of Wales. We will not allow Wales to be treated with contempt and it is beyond shameful that the actions of a few at the centre at a UK level risk hindering what we are trying to achieve here in Wales. We cannot and will not allow this to happen."⁸

Obviously, this post has also more than a whiff of nationalism about it. Those two clearly know that *no* branches and *no* regions have been given any local data. Do they seriously demand special treatment just for Wales? While they are both not hardened Welsh nationalists, they are certainly of the 'soft' variety, when it comes to calls for Welsh independence. We suspect the real reason for the 'outrage' has more to do with them planning to split away from YP altogether. They have been busily collating their own data, we hear.

Communists argue for the closest unity of the working class. In the face of global capitalism, should we really split up our forces into smaller and smaller sections? When there is a real national question and a democratic deficit, we argue for self-determination and federal structures as a way to keep the working class as united as possible. Yes, Scotland and Wales should have the right to secede - but, as communists, we argue strongly against the working class exercising that right here. That would weaken the historically constituted British

working class. Rather than toying with the dead end of nationalism, we should oppose it. Branches and regions of Your Party should have autonomy, but we should be clear that our fight against the *British state* can only hope to be successful with a strong Britain-wide party of the working class.

Next messiah?

Clearly, things are falling apart rapidly at the top of Your Party. It is not the rightwing media making it all up, as naive loyalists still seem to believe. As we have seen, this is also not really a straight 'faction fight' between Camp Corbyn and Team Sultana any more. It now goes much further than that. Still, Sultana is clearly planning on standing against Corbyn in any leadership contest. She has been touring the country and has organised a 'pro-democracy' rally in Liverpool on the eve of the launch conference.

HQ is really not helping matters by continuously and publicly attacking Zarah Sultana - it is, in fact, pushing her into the role of the obvious anti-shambles, pro-democracy candidate. Just minutes before she appeared on BBC *Question time* on November 15, an official Your Party statement accused her of withholding funds collected by MOU Ltd, the company that was previously used by all sides to collect donations. She had made an initial transfer of £200,000 and has announced that for legal reasons she would be sending money in "tranches", but that was not good enough for Karie Murphy, who let it be known that YP is "frustrated" that the bulk of the money was "beyond its reach" and that it was pursuing the full amount immediately. Nothing new there, of course, but Sultana was not wrong to claim that the timing amounted to an attempt at "sabotage".

We also hear that the organisers of a Your Party rally in Manchester have been put under immense pressure - by "an intermediary acting for Jeremy Corbyn" - to de-invite Salma Yaqoob, an ally of Sultana's. HQ also seems to think it is a good idea to brief journalists that Sultana probably will not be allowed into conference. According to *The Times*, "A Your Party source said Sultana would need to be on speaking terms with those organising the conference to have any clarity about when and whether she would speak. 'The problem is she isn't on anything approaching speaking terms,' the source said."⁹ And, in addition to having reported Sultana to the Information Commissioner's Office for launching the "unauthorised" membership portal, we hear that she has now also been reported to the Parliamentary Standards Committee and that the person HQ got to do the report has apparently been promised a parliamentary seat in return! You cannot sink much lower than using the bourgeois state to attack a fellow socialist.¹⁰

Top lot

Yes, Corbyn still has the name recognition, nationally and in polls. But this is looking very different among the YP membership - the shine really has come off the man. Should there be a straight leadership contest between Corbyn and Sultana, it is looking more and more possible that he could actually lose. We can only guess what manoeuvres HQ would adopt to prevent that - expel Sultana, perhaps? Pull the plug on the whole

project? Smash it all up? Neither would surprise us, judging by the many self-destructive moves in the last few months.

Communists can support many of Sultana's pro-democracy demands, quite a few of which she has borrowed from the 'Sheffield Demands' and the Democratic Socialists (who in turn have borrowed many of their demands from the Democratic Socialists in America and the CPGB).

She openly calls for "dual membership" ("let all socialists unite") and against a ban on left groups; that "future conferences should have delegates elected by all members meeting", that "CEC positions must all be ordinary seats that everyone can contest (none reserved for MPs)" and "only members should decide who represents them: open selection, mandatory reselection and the right to recall. We cannot have Labour 2.0: no backroom deals, no fiefdoms, no coronations." This is also in reference to the role of "local assemblies", which, according to the draft constitution, may "initiate" and even decide on YP policy, as well as the party's candidates. Of course, a real party of the working class would engage with people who are not members - but letting *anybody* decide on Your Party matters (which might include Tories or Reform members) is an obviously ludicrous idea and must be rejected.

As an important aside in this context, it is worth quoting Karie Murphy's remarks at the end of a meeting organised by Your Party Connections (the full transcript is published online¹¹). When asked how existing YP branches could "register" with HQ, she replied that, basically they cannot, because "that type of structure will be determined" by the newly elected CEC:

I guess what the challenge will be for them, and it's not for me to say, but I guess the challenge will be for them is, how we stop this automatic replication of brand structure that lots of other organisations have got, where there's an obsession on the chair, on the minute secretary, on ... whatever, that doesn't ... actually work in communities, where we would like to see these communities focused on community organising rather than on ... um, you know, bureaucracy and election period only. So the structure of the branches, whilst it's important, it is a new structure, rather than just, you know, an acknowledgement of an old-fashioned way of doing things.

Apparently, "That's been the demand." However, she managed to contradict herself in the very next sentence: "You know, literally within weeks of the party being established, we were getting emails saying, 'We had a branch, this is our secretary, we are now moving towards nominating names for elections' and stuff like that. That's not how we feel that this organisation should develop."

So the "demand" from the branches is clearly entirely different to what she and Corbyn 'demand'. Just like Sultana, communists reject the proposal for opaque local assemblies. They are not new, shiny methods of making politics more accessible or interesting: they are a rather blatant attempt to take the power away from Your Party members and make the bureaucracy even more powerful.

We are glad that Sultana also seems to have given up on the undemocratic demand for a Zoomocracy (with 'one member, one vote' on everything online). This atomises and depoliticises members. She has clearly moved to the left rather rapidly and has taken to quoting Lenin (depending on

the audience). We have yet to see if this is a permanent conversion or if it is chiefly designed to attract the support of groups like the SWP and the Democratic Socialists for the forthcoming leadership contest.

Needless to say, communists do not want to switch from an old messiah to a younger version. We might well consider calling for a vote for Sultana in any straightforward contest - but we argue against such powerful, Bonapartist leadership roles in the first place. That is not a contradiction: a certain Karl Marx supported Abraham Lincoln's election campaign, while opposing the monarchical powers the president of the USA holds.

Sultana has opted for a cop-out on that issue, demanding that it should be up to "conference to decide on the leadership structure", which might be "sole leader, co-leadership or a collective leadership". That shows her political weakness and, quite probably, her own ambitions. We have no way of verifying if she really "approached the Green Party, asking for a guaranteed leadership position before she left Labour. Several sources allege she did - and that she was told she would need to stand for election like anyone else",¹² but the rumours are certainly there and Sultana has not denied them.

Socialist unity

Will Sultana try to lead a democratic rebellion at conference? Who knows. Her pro-democracy rally on Friday November 28 in Liverpool features Max Shanly from the Democratic Socialists, SWP national secretary Lewis Nielsen (wearing his lovely Stand up to Racism hat), but also two speakers from the Democratic Bloc. The rally is chaired by the ambitious councillor, James Giles, and features Mish Rahman - former member of Labour's national executive committee and vice-chair of Momentum. In both roles, he was not exactly known for campaigning for democracy or standing up to the witch-hunt. In fact, in Momentum he loyally implemented the constitution of Jon Lansman, which barred from membership anyone expelled from Labour in the campaign against Corbyn and his supporters.

Both Giles and Rahman were members of the secretive Organising Group and only discovered their love for democracy when Karie Murphy shut it down and they lost their seats next to the source of power. They continue to campaign for a Zoomocracy, where all decisions and elections are conducted via online votes - no doubt they hope that, with their snazzy social media presence, they can bamboozle enough naive, isolated members at home to vote for them. We understand that they have recently changed their view on dual membership and now only want to bar members of parties who stand candidates against Your Party. But their website still features their former demand for the CEC to keep a list of 'acceptable' left groups, which have to "open their books".¹³ In a Zoom meeting on October 14, Rahman openly said that he "wants to prevent

entryism" and opposes left groups joining. We should be more than wary of the Democratic Bloc.

It is (still) part of the Socialist Unity Platform (SUP), which was launched in an online meeting on November 15, where members and representatives from a large number of left organisations and Your Party branches agreed on a set of key amendments to the main founding documents, previously known as the 'Sheffield Demands'.¹⁴ The meeting also agreed on a 'battle plan', which includes the decision to publish a voting guide, organise a Zoom meeting to brief all conference participants who support SUP, organise an all-day fringe event in Liverpool and attempt to present an emergency motion at the launch conference in Liverpool. The precise wording of the latter is still being discussed, but basically focuses on the proposal to organise a 'reconstituted conference' in June/July 2026, with elected delegates from the branches, where all decisions of the launch conference can be revisited and, if necessary, changed by a simple majority.

A smaller working group is still discussing if it also wants to include the proposal to elect an interim steering group in Liverpool that could lead the party until the reconstituted conference. Clearly, those currently in charge are heading fast towards a potential crisis. On a purely technical level, such an unscheduled election would not be an insurmountable problem - however, not only are we against the election of national leaders via an atomised membership. Concretely, we want the Liverpool conference to take control. Despite being chosen by a bizarre form of sortition it is the *legitimate sovereign body* of YP. It should overthrow the self-appointed, incompetent, Murphy regime and elect an emergency, a temporary leadership tasked with preparing and organising a democratic conference in 2026. There is every reason to believe that this would have widespread support in Liverpool and amongst the membership as a whole. In any case, our call for conference to take control is clearly not a wrecking attempt, to stop it in its tracks - rather it is trying to spell out and rectify the huge democratic deficit of every single aspect of the launch conference.

Ken Loach has expressed his "enthusiastic support" for such an emergency motion, but might be unable to speak on it in Liverpool because of health reasons. HQ would have found it difficult to gag him, but we suspect they will not have quite the same hesitation, when it comes to more 'normal' members of Your Party.

Groups in support of the SUP include the Democratic Socialists in Your Party (DSYP), Ken Loach's Platform for a Democratic Party, the SWP, Democratic Bloc, CPGB, Socialist Alternative and many reps and members of YP branches. Funnily enough, the most conservative views at the three meetings held so far were expressed by the Spartacist League and the International Bolshevik Tendency. While the latter has now withdrawn from the SUP altogether, comrade Eibhlin McDonald has

joined the smaller working group (as a silent member) and the Spartacist League has donated £100 to the fringe meeting. However, it has shown that it comes from the same Trotskyist stable that dismisses anything that is not part of the mighty 'transitional programme' as a diversion. The fight for democratic space in Your Party, for example, is perceived as not really important and our emergency motion "is counterproductive and could discredit the left", as comrade Vincent David put it at a recent Communist Forum. Instead, the Sparts claim that they want to focus on "politics" - as if fighting against the proposed ban of the organised left, against bureaucratic stitch-ups and in favour of a democratic constitution is 'unpolitical'. It hardly needs saying, but if there is no democratic space for the left to organise, none of us will be able to effectively fight for our politics.

As a rather obvious aside, the most well-known split in working class history, between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903, was - on the surface - about structure: specifically a formulation about the membership requirements of the RSDLP. The disagreement, however, reflected two very different *political* perspectives about how revolution could and should be made - and by which forces. A hugely important question, obviously, which first found reflection in a disagreement about *organisational* matters.

Even more bizarre

Even more bizarre are the reasons over which Steve Freeman's mini-campaign, the Republican Labour Education Forum, has left the SUP: "First, a preamble was introduced along the lines of the YP Political Statement. The RLEF majority had already agreed to boycott the YP statement and it was inconsistent to support this version. Both RLEF representatives voted against this. Second, at the last meeting it was agreed to choose a name for the Platform. This became a choice between 'Platform for a Democratic YP', which we supported, and 'Socialist Unity Platform'."

So Freeman, a self-declared communist, decides to leave an initiative of the socialist left, because the preamble contains politics (the context of which he does not seem to actually disagree with) and the word 'socialist' in the title! This is perhaps the most ridiculous example of Freeman's long-standing conviction that socialists should always fight for "republican" halfway houses and against, well, socialism. An obvious dead end.

Talking of dead ends, the Revolutionary Communist Party and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain have both given up on the fight in Your Party - both are instead concentrating on building their own confessional sect.

The Socialist Party in England and Wales is still involved in YP, but has been boycotting the SUP so far, despite being invited to all the meetings. Its opposition seems to centre on the fact that the SUP does not fight for YP to adopt a federal structure, with

special rights for the trade unions and their bureaucracies. That really is looking like an increasingly weird hobby horse, considering the state of the unions. The comrades insist on the futile attempt to rerun Labourism and the organisational principle of *federalism*. We, of course want a mass Communist Party built on the organisational principle of democratic *centralism*.

As an important aside, the proposal to include a demand for 'quotas' in leadership elections was rather roundly defeated after a comradely discussion at the November 15 SUP meeting. Those voting against made it clear that, of course, they recognise that there is a lack of women, trans people and ethnic minorities on the left, including in leadership positions and that this is a problem we should seek to overcome. CPGB comrades and others argued that technical solutions that effectively strengthen the bureaucracy were, however, the wrong way to go about it. There is also the problem of who to include in such quotas.

Ellie Vincent from the Democratic Bloc rather neatly symbolised that issue when she argued that we should also include "people from low-income backgrounds". Would we have to show our bank accounts to Karie Murphy for that one? What about disabled people? Which disabilities count? No, this is an obvious, never-ending list that would divide us into smaller and smaller sections, which are then supposed to be brought back together by the magic of intersectionality.

Jack Conrad made the point that we are not looking to "hold up a mirror to society", but to put together the "best fighters for communism". And those might well come from 'higher income' backgrounds, as they did in the Bolsheviks (which also had a much higher proportion of Jewish members). Friedrich Engels is another good example. He was a full blown capitalist. We recognise that some sections of society suffer double and triple oppressions. That does not make those oppressed automatically into the best advocates of "correct politics" and, indeed the communist programme that lays out the plan for the liberation of *all* of humanity.

Needless to say, different representatives might have voted against the proposals for other reasons. The SUP represents a useful fighting agreement, but does not imply programmatic unity. Depending on how the launch conference goes, it might also be a good vehicle to fight around the programme of the new party. It is certainly a very positive development and we are urging all supporters and readers of the *Weekly Worker* to sign up ●

Notes

1. x.com/CraigMurrayOrg/status/1991065477901148599?s=20.
2. www.politicshome.com/news/article/inside-the-corbyn-sultana-battle-your-party.
3. inacioinvita.substack.com/p/inside-your-party-s-crowdedediting-tool.
4. x.com/AdnanHussainMP/status/1989339473977754087.
5. x.com/igbalmohamedMP/status/1989843100877881799.
6. https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/inside-the-corbyn-sultana-battle-your-party.
7. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1561/avoid-the-quota-trap.
8. x.com/BethWinterCynon/status/1990333925776933138.
9. *The Times* November 19.
10. x.com/mohammedakunjee/status/1991153999110717636.
11. docs.google.com/document/d/1rxLzlj2FV8FpC36wiFeR6M1j1qvYEm1yDMa_tuuBc/edit?tab=t.0.
12. x.com/NAJ562/status/1990168615375569298.
13. www.dembloc.com/party.
14. dsyp.org/sup.
15. docs.google.com/forms/d/1mJle-LBB0hCjuc5dg4Yo5NuLJIHj-OMqP4eJj2meU4c/viewform?edit_requested=true.
16. actionnetwork.org/ticketed_events/zarahs-eve-of-conference-your-party-rally.

Support Socialist Unity Platform

There is now a webpage with all relevant information: dsyp.org/sup.

■ Come to Liverpool on November 29-30 to help us hand out leaflets with our key demands, lobby delegates, attend our fringe event - and get to know each other! Please fill in this form to tell us you are coming.¹⁵

■ Join our WhatsApp Community to coordinate SUP's intervention at conference and beyond. You receive the link when you have filled in the Google form above.

■ Help us in putting on an all-day fringe event during the YP founding conference in Liverpool on Saturday November 29: Join us from 12 noon in the Roddick Rooms, 54 St James Street. Programme tbc. Send proposals for speakers and sessions to democraticunityyp@gmail.com.

■ Get your organisation or local Your Party branch to sign up to the Socialist Unity Platform - you can also sign up as an individual! We are asking national organisations

to make a donation of £100, YP branches and other groups £25 or £50 and individuals £2.50 or £5: opencollective.com/socialist-unity-platform.

■ Attend the pro-democracy rally organised by Zarah Sultana on the evening of Friday November 27 and help us hand out leaflets. We are there from 7pm.¹⁶

■ Please donate towards the printing costs and the room hire (total of around £1,500): opencollective.com/socialist-unity-platform. ●

POLEMIC

Splitting over unity

Despite its own Labourite name, Steve Freeman, of the Republican Labour Education Forum, says there can be no unity with those whom he calls social monarchists ... or even those who are committed to Socialist Unity as a label of convenience

“Will you walk into my parlour?”
said the spider to the fly.
“’Tis the prettiest little parlour that
ever you did spy.
The way into my parlour is up a
winding stair,
And I’ve many a curious thing to
show when you are there.”
“Oh no, no,” said the little fly, “to
ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair
can ne’er come down again.”
(Mary Howitt ‘The spider and the
fly’ 1829)

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is facing the deepest crisis any of us has known in our lifetime. The British social monarchy has reached a state of degeneration beyond all hope and expectation. According to Tim Stanley, “Britain is lurching towards civil war, and nobody knows how to stop it” (The Daily Telegraph April 3). The warning signs are flashing red for danger, when 150,000 people take to the streets of London with Union Jacks, flags of St George and Israel.

The largest ever Orange demonstration in England marched under the slogan, ‘Unite the Kingdom’. Elon Musk addressed the marchers and warned them that, “whether you choose violence or not, violence is coming to you. You either fight back or die” (The Guardian September 15). It should be no surprise to hear, for example, the Royal College of Nursing reporting an increase of 55% in complaints of racism and abuse of its members.¹

Racism is one indicator of the growing ‘crisis of UK democracy’. People have lost trust and confidence in Westminster and the two major loyalist-unionist parties, Conservative and Labour. People and politics are breaking out of the constitutional limits of the two-party system in England. Politics in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is already on a different trajectory through the struggles between unionists and anti-unionist parties.

How can we understand the war in Gaza if we limit ourselves to events from October 7 2023? We have to go back deep into history to 1967, 1948 or 1936 and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Balfour was an anti-Semite and a strong supporter of the ‘Orange Union’ and opponent of Irish home rule. His misnamed ‘Declaration’ was, of course, issued under the name of King George V, committing the imperial crown to Zionism.

The tragedy of Palestine is directly linked to the imperial history of the ‘Orange Kingdom’. The present crisis goes back to the Thatcher government and the defeat of the NUM and the trade union movement in the 1980s. It was a break with the post-war settlement, which established the 1945 social monarchy and the state of Israel in 1948. All of this can be traced to the revolutionary 17th century and the defeat of the ‘Sea Green revolution’ in 1649 and the triumph of the Orange Revolution (1688-1707).

The United Kingdom is breaking down, unable to contain social forces becoming unchained from the Orange constitution. In England there is growing support for ‘outsider’ parties like Reform UK, mirrored on the left by the rise of the Green Party and the



Bananasplits: pure comedy

forthcoming founding conference of Your Party in Liverpool. The crisis of UK ‘democracy’ is beginning to polarise politics. Yet in England there is no mass party from the right or the left which rejects the constitution of the kingdom.

Your Party

Your Party is the vanguard, the politically conscious and active part, of the English working class movement trying to work out ‘what is to be done’. I say ‘English’ here because this is an initiative coming from England and not Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. It arises out of the pro-Palestine movement in England and the election of five English independent MPs who are now the provisional leadership of Your Party. The first ‘branches’ of this party were in constituencies such as Camden, Liverpool, Harrow, Islington and other localities that elected these MPs. Of course, this initiative did not confine itself to England, not least because the English left are mostly British unionists.

The launch of Your Party is a magnet, drawing all the contradictions of British Labourism and British Marxism into its ranks. The constitutional fault lines in UK politics run between the unionist monarchy and the anti-unionist republic. These centuries-old divisions run through the working class of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales from the defeat of the Sea Green revolution and the triumph of the Orange revolution.

Your Party is like a new house built across the fault lines of British politics. Scientific advice warns us that structures built on or near fault lines are highly vulnerable to earthquakes. The best advice is to choose the ground carefully before laying the foundations.

This leads us to consider the crucial question facing the YP conference - the programme. A party is nothing without a programme - the strategic plan that members sign up for, the contract between them, which forms the basis for common action and holding the elected leadership to account. It is the programme that decides who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’, not bureaucratic rules and proscriptions.

Without the foundations of programme we are in danger, because organisation is not an independent

entity, but the means to put the party programme into action. The programme needs a defined role and rules in order to execute effectively. Yet the current focus on organisational structures and rules looks like a ‘dead cat’ distraction thrown on the table: ‘Don’t look over there at the programme. Look here at the rules.’

The YP Political Statement is the most important document of all. It is the programme, because there is nothing else. As such it is totally inadequate. Of course, it is not a programme. As it says in the very opening statement, “It is not a programme or manifesto”. This is not to educate us nor tell us the obvious: it is to disarm the critics.

This ‘non-programme’ reveals something about the provisional leadership of YP. They are either clueless or have a programme in their back pockets. It is a reasonable working hypothesis, not an established fact, that the programme is based on the 2017 and 2019 Labour manifestos. In which case we would all learn more from rereading those manifestos than from the YP Political Statement. There are many policies in the 2019 Labour manifesto that people might agree with. Yet it was built on the fundamentally flawed view of ‘democracy’. Some highlights include:

- Second referendum on Brexit with option to vote ‘remain’.
- Two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.
- Support for reform of the constitutional monarchy and the union of nations.

These constitutional reforms include the reform of House of Lords, for a constitutional convention, support for the Good Friday agreement, more devolution for English regions and opposition to Scottish independence.

Opposition

The question is, should we oppose the YP Political Statement? It uses the term, “democratic socialism”, to paper over the cracks between the social republicans and social monarchists. Opposition to the statement comes mainly from republicans of various kinds, because it ignores the question of political democracy internally or externally. The republican opposition includes the Democratic

Socialist YP, Republican Labour Education Forum, RS21 (MUC), the Communist Party of Great Britain and Republic YP.

Supporters of the statement wonder how can we oppose something so general. What about words and phrases about ‘peace’, ‘justice’, and ‘freedom’? How could anybody possibly vote against these words? Of course, it is not individual ‘words’ we are opposing, but the construction, the totality, the implications and the deceit.

The Democratic Socialists YP are the largest group of republicans in YP who oppose the Political Statement and have introduced a ‘Delete all and substitute a republican programme’. A supporter of the RLEF has drafted republican amendments to the original without having to delete all. This is a disagreement of tactics, not programme, between whether we should boycott or amend.

A republican boycott is a call for all republicans in YP to take a stand against the general drift into social monarchism. Boycott is the most extreme form of opposition. It says, ‘Do not go down the rabbit hole of trying to amend it’. A republican boycott highlights three objections to the YP Political Statement.

First, as already stated, there is no programme. Second, there is no republican programme - one necessary to found a republican or republican socialist party. Third, there is no democratic process in place for developing a YP programme. The only option on offer is to see where we are next year and meanwhile be saddled with the Political Statement.

It is not totally clear if the CPGB are part of the republican opposition rather than simply a communist opposition for YP to become a Communist Party of Great Britain. The CPGB appears to deny they support a republican boycott and seem to call for ‘ripping it up and starting again’ without providing any political criteria or basis for this position. It is very hard to resist the charm offensive of the greatest democratic exercise in the history of the British left.

Now back to the spider and the fly. It is a poem about how the cunning spider entraps and eats the fly through seduction and manipulation. It is a cautionary tale against the use of

flattery and charm to disguise true intentions. The ‘Orange spider’ tries to draw the fly into its web. At first the fly says no to all the promises and inducements, but eventually, after a few hours of arguments and amendments, the ‘Sea-Green fly’ is drawn into the web and consumed for supper.

Socialist unity

In the last three weeks the Republican Labour Education Forum has been working with many socialist groups around the issue of YP democracy. Our standpoint is summarised as:

- For a democratic secular republic;
- Opposition to the British union;
- For a social republican programme;
- For a ‘party republic’.

The basis for this united front was in cooperation around the idea of a ‘party-republic’ promoted by the DSYP and the amendments proposed by Sheffield YP, known as the ‘Sheffield Demands’. Some very important dialogue took place in a comradely spirit. However, with reluctance last Monday the RLEF decided to withdraw from this united front because of two decisions.

First, a preamble was introduced into the agreed democratic constitutional amendments along the lines of the YP Political Statement. The RLEF majority had already agreed to boycott the YP statement. This preamble was inconsistent with the stance we had already taken. It was agreed, with both RLEF representatives voting against it.

Second, at the last meeting it was decided to choose a name for the Platform between ‘Platform for a Democratic YP’ and ‘Socialist Unity Platform’. We backed ‘Platform for a Democratic YP’ because it accurately described our position on organisation and what we wanted to convey to YP members. The ‘Socialist Unity Platform’ is not our message, but was chosen by a majority.

The RLEF reviewed the situation at its meeting on November 17 and decided we would not continue. The RLEF is in favour of a united front between social monarchists and social republicans on the basis *solely* of the fight for a ‘party republic’. However, at this present time during the founding of a new party, the RLEF is opposed to any programmatic unity between social monarchists and social republicans as false and misleading. The opposite is necessary in the sharpest polarisation between the Orange and the Sea Green. We are not in favour of founding this new party around a false unity of ‘democratic socialism’ or ‘socialist unity’, which simply gives a free pass to the social monarchism of the 2019 Labour manifesto.

In order to unite Your Party we must first draw clear, sharp lines of political demarcation between the social monarchists and the social republicans, and between the unionists and the anti-unionists. Without this, we are in grave danger of repeating the path trodden by the Socialist Labour Party, Socialist Alliance, Respect, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and Left Unity.

Our answer to the orange spider is ‘No, no and no’ ●

Notes

1. www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/uk-rcn-reports-rise-in-members-facing-racist-abuse-271025.

REVIEW

Darkness and its reflections

Jim Moody picks out four of the best films screened at the LFF which are now on release in the UK

Last month's 69th London Film Festival hosted 160 feature films, 70+ shorts, episodes from three series and 11 immersive and installation games. All from 79 countries.

Most received their UK premiere at LFF; some still await British distribution, though the Festival is an unabashed marketing opportunity, of which producers and rights owners take full advantage. The process may see talented input creating cultural output, but return on investment drives most films' onward progression toward its market, be that niche or mass.

Zionist terror

Kamal Aljafari (director) With Hasan in Gaza, 106mins

Kamal Aljafari is also credited as screenwriter, cinematographer, editor and producer of this documentary, which was shot by him in Gaza in 2001 - a generation ago.

One evening it records Israeli settlers using mortar bombs against the city of Khan Yunis, damaging buildings and terrorising families; there is only limited return rifle fire, as on that occasion "so many are attending funerals". Firmly lodged in settlers' minds, the Zionist racism that ideologically backs the colonial regime has come out fully in its genocidal colours, as the ideology's 'final solution' to the Palestinian problem hit the world's TV and mobile screens daily.

Clearly, the Gaza Strip will not look like this ever again. Gaza City, within this infamous concentration camp, was a tightly packed urban centre with something like a two million population. The fact that there was a university, together with hospitals, schools, churches and mosques, testifies to a long history, foreign aid ... and human ingenuity, resilience and strength.

With *Hasan in Gaza* features clips from both Gaza City and Khan Yunis, as Aljafari accompanies Hasan Elboubou. Hasan had been searching for a friend and cellmate from when they were imprisoned by Israeli forces during the First Intifada (1987-93). He shared a cell with nearly 40 others. But Hasan's friend was taken away and disappeared after he stood up to a guard's brutality, and had not been heard from for over a decade. (Sadly, at present, Hasan's current whereabouts are also unknown.)

Murder victims

Kaouther Ben Hania (director/screenwriter) The Voice of Hind Rajab, 89mins

This film focuses on a single case at West Bank Red Crescent call centre, the only one dealing with emergency calls from Gaza, including some from all of 60 kilometres away. Six-year-old Hind Rajab's uncle in North America has alerted the centre after she contacted him by mobile phone: the West Bank staff then establish a direct line to the girl. She says she is in the bullet-riddled car along with "all my family" - their dead bodies lying next to her.

Recordings of the actual phone messages form part of the drama, which is played by actors representing the key people: Rana Hassan Faqih (played by Saja Kilani), Omar A Alqam (Motaz Malhees), Nisreen Jeries Qawas (Clara Khoury) and Mahdi M Aljamal (Amer Hlehel). The real individuals involved appear in cameos toward the end.

The powerlessness of those at the call centre obviously infuriates Omar, who responds with emotional



From 79 countries

explosions - he was the first to make contact with Hind Rajab. Her heart-rending pleas of "Come and get me!" are unbearable. Gunfire is clearly audible in the recording and she tells them that she has been injured. Omar and his colleagues have to keep her on the phone, while the last remaining Red Crescent ambulance comes to rescue her. A safe and secure route must be arranged via the International Red Cross. Its staff have to act as intermediaries with the genocidal killers of the IDF. The tension is palpable as night falls, especially after Hind Rajab reports further injury from the small-arms fire coming from an Israeli tank.

It comes to a climax, as Hind Rajab tells them that the tank is right in front of the family car. After which she is heard from no more: just like 16,000 children over the last two years whose deaths have been at the hands of the Zionist regime. Finally, the Red Crescent ambulance, speeding along its 'safe and secure' route toward Hind Rajab, is fired upon by the IDF, its brave staff killed. No ceasefire can bring them back.

Victimhood

Jan Komasa (director) Good boy, 100mins

Back in the UK, a 19-year-old ne'er-do-well, Tommy (Anson Boon), has no criminal record despite a lot of mobile video evidence of his brutalisation of gays and foreigners, as well as heavy abuse of alcohol and hard drugs. One night he is kidnapped, while drunkenly stumbling around outside. It soon becomes clear why.

Way out in the countryside, in a large and isolated house, a Balkan migrant, Rina (Monika Fraczyk), gets hired as a cleaner. Her employer, Chris (Stephen Graham), while taking her on a tour of the house, reminds her of her non-disclosure agreement, and for good reason. For in the cellar, kidnapped Tommy is chained up, with a secure collar round his neck. No way can Rina refuse to work there: Chris threatens her, using her precarious UK immigration status.

Chris's wife, Kathryn (Andrea Riseborough), embraces Tommy's forced rehabilitation: he is, after all, to be their 'good boy'. Their 10-year-old son, Jonathan (Kit Rakusen), sees little wrong either: he has experienced nothing but home schooling in complete isolation, and interacts weirdly well with Tommy.

Eventually Tommy stops ranting and raving, so Chris instals an overhead trackway throughout the house, so that still-shackled Tommy can move around. He becomes a (chained!) member of the family. Tommy then plays the hero and gets beaten badly by invading people traffickers who recapture Rina. His efforts go down well with Chris.

But one night Tommy manages to free himself and flees, though he fails to tell police anything about his experience. His mother lets slip that she did not even report him missing - it was his one-time girlfriend who did. So Tommy finds his ex-girlfriend, she bizarrely lets him chloroform her, and he takes her 'home' to Chris's and Kathryn's house!

Sub-Clockwork Orange territory, perhaps. Any 'moral' cheering at Tommy's well-deserved incarceration or, in contradistinction, relief at his plucky escape, is certainly premature. Instead of escaping, he adds another victim to his own acquired victimhood. Inculcated dependency produces individuals as property in all but name to those who would exploit them - or are he and his girlfriend willing slaves in their own captivity, and thus enslaved free agents? We are in oxymoron territory. Bourgeois society produces some weird outcomes, and its punishment/reward setup seems to have worked well for the newly extended 'family' and its satisfactory conclusion: 'You are mine ... my good boy.'

Barbarism

Jonatan Etzler (director) Bad apples, 100mins

Maria (Saoirse Ronan) is an overwhelmed teacher of 10-year-olds. Her ex-partner, deputy head Sam (Jacob Anderson), is no more help than the head teacher, Sylvia (Rakie Ayola), who tells her that dealing with disruptive kids is part of the job. In actual fact, of course, that is exactly the role of a deputy head in most schools, which would these days suspend or even expel children who were as disruptive as Danny (Eddie Waller). In present-day Britain, this takes more suspension of disbelief than is normal in film fiction.

Unsurprisingly, Maria is not a happy bunny, personally and professionally. Danny scars his desktop and verbally abuses a fellow pupil in a foul way. Maria intervenes - but not, of course, to haul the little

scrote to the head's office for a beating 1950s/60s style; instead she bleats ineffectually to the boy to stop. All the time he knows full well she cannot physically restrain him. Evidently the rest of the class is failing to learn well in this nasty atmosphere.

One dark night Maria stops her car near Danny, who is vandalising a parked car. When he sees her, he attacks her car, too, and then her. She tries to stop him, but accidentally knocks him unconscious, so drives him to a hospital. But he regains consciousness, saying he will claim she attacked him - so she drives home, where she bundles him into the cellar and locks the door. No-one knows where he is. Danny's lone-parent father is distraught, but also ineffectual and overworked, and neglecting Danny.

Turning practical, Maria orders a restraint harness and chains him up below stairs. Stockholm syndrome kicks in, while police searches prove fruitless. Danny's unpopularity means

his disappearance is hardly registered by anyone but his father. Meanwhile, Maria gets him a bunk bed and a wardrobe, but keeps him restrained.

Teachers and parents can maybe understand (if not approve!) Maria's extreme reaction - the numbness and powerlessness in being unable to rectify a child's problems and the overall situation: the lack of support and overwork for teachers and parents (heaven forefend if one were both).

All starts to go south when a fellow pupil discovers the imprisoned Danny, but then she only uses it as leverage to gain advantage at school. However, she cannot contain herself and exposes Maria dramatically at a closed parents' and teachers' evening. Most of the parents and the deputy head are adamant in protecting the school's name - unsurprisingly, given how difficult it can be to get kids into a reasonably 'good' school. They also welcome all the positive changes wrought by Maria, thanks to her keeping Danny out of circulation, and refuse to make this a matter for the police. Moral suasion, if not the mild threat of their child being sent elsewhere, wins over the doubters. Danny stays chained up ... for a long time.

Some years later and subsequent to the head's resignation, the deputy head has become head teacher, while Maria has taken on the deputy headship. However, an older and bolder Danny breaches his dungeon one day and is on the run to freedom ... and likely exposure of his captors.

Behind the absurdist satirical approach that *Bad apples* shares with *Good boy* are some questions, of course. Has punishment ever been absent in how infringement of rules and laws are envisioned and applied? Pretty obviously not. It is, then, only a matter of degree, concerning how much punishment and what it is to consist of, that is at issue. At Maria's school, we get a form of corruption covering up serious crime 'for the good of the majority'. That way is moral bankruptcy, erosion of society, and a depraved collective humanity ●

Fighting fund

We need your help

Despite a number of very useful donations received over the last week, I have to say that, as thing stand at the moment, we are way behind the going rate, if the *Weekly Worker* is to get anywhere near our £2,750 fighting fund target in November.

Six contributions came our way via bank transfer or standing order - thank you, comrades MM (£75), TR (£40), TW and GB (£25 each), OG (£24) and JL (£10). There were the same number of donations via PayPal, coming from comrades KS (£50), JH (£30), plus a fiver each from comrades RD, GP and a second RD! Finally, comrade Hassan handed his usual £5 note to a member of our team.

All that came to £299, taking our running total up to £1,079. In other words, although, as I write, we are just one day away from two-thirds of the month, we're nowhere near even halfway there! True, we'll soon be getting a few substantial monthly standing orders, but even those will leave us

far below the £1,671 we still need in the last 11 days of November.

So we really do need a lot more of our readers and supporters to help us out. Please feel free to step in yourself. Why not click on the PayPal button on our website, make a bank transfer or send us a cheque? For more details about any of those ways, please go to the relevant page: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate.

I can't say how much we need your help right now: we depend on you to ensure that the *Weekly Worker* can continue playing its unique and essential role in the campaign for the principled, genuinely democratic-centralist, Marxist party the working class so desperately needs ●

Robbie Rix

Our bank account details are name: Weekly Worker sort code: 30-99-64 account number: 00744310 To make a donation or set up a regular payment visit weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate

ECONOMY

Capital's structural rot

As stock markets reach new highs in a speculative orgy, perhaps the signs are that a massive crash, outdoing 1929, is already underway. The stats for the jobs market, private and government borrowing and housing certainly show that America, the world's largest economy, is entering recessionary territory. World socialism becomes ever more necessary, writes **Ted Reese**



The latest - possibly greatest ever - global capitalist meltdown is underway. US unemployment has been ticking upwards for the past two years and, after the worst October for 22 years, job losses have already hit 1.1 million in 2025 - up by 65% year-on-year.

Job cuts have surpassed one million in a single year only four other times in the past 32 years: in 2001 when the dot-com bubble burst; 2008 and 2009, during the housing market crash and Great Financial Crisis (GFC); and in 2020, when the Covid pandemic and lockdowns struck (following flatlining growth in 2019). The federal government leads the way with 300,000 job losses, followed by the technology sector (100,000), warehousing, retail and services.

According to Moody's Analytics, 22 US states and the District of Columbia have experienced shrinking gross domestic product this year, and another 13 have flatlined, leaving only 16 generating or experiencing growth.

A wide range of economic data signals a brewing crisis. The Institute for Supply Management manufacturing index indicated a contraction in the US manufacturing sector for seven consecutive months up to the end of September, putting the index at 49.1 - a figure strongly associated with economy-wide recession.

Housing starts in the US are expected to come in at 1.3 million this year, having dropped from 1.6 million

in 2021 to 1.55 in 2022, 1.42 in 2023, and 1.36 in 2024. In August, the delinquency rate of office mortgages packaged into commercial, mortgage-backed securities jumped to 11.7%, surpassing the 2008 peak of 10.7%. As recently as December 2022, the rate stood at only 1.6%.

Some 67% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck (up from 63% in 2024, according to PNC Bank) - spending their entire income on bills and expenses and leaving little or no money for savings or emergencies.

Desperate not to spook investors, multinational investment bank Goldman Sachs contended in October that "anticipated investment returns are sustainable". In the past three years the value of the stock market index, S&P 500, has doubled - putting it at 179% of GDP - something that took 20 years from 1965-85; or 17 in 1997-2014. The wider Wilshire 5000 is at a record high of 223% of GDP, beating the 193% of December 2021 and 135% of March 2000. A stock market frenzy, however, is itself a bellwether of a weakening real economy, since a shortage of profitable opportunities in commodity production - where new value is created - is chucked instead into the glorified betting of speculation, inflating the value of stocks and generating a false sense of prosperity.

Many commentators and analysts sounding the alarm are drawing comparisons to 2008 and 1929. The situation might well be worse than

The unemployed line up outside a soup kitchen opened in Chicago by Al Capone, February 1931

either. At the end of 2024, US banks had about \$483 billion of unrealised losses on their securities; compared to no more than \$150 billion in the run-up to the GFC.

The concentration of stocks and general wealth in the US is now on a par with the late 1920s, for the first time since that dark period. The population's richest 10% of households own 94% of the stock market's value. The top 25 stocks account for 45% of the S&P 500 and the top seven for 31%. Nvidia's market cap is 7% of all 3,265 publicly-traded US companies.

But only 10% of households had invested in the stock market when it crashed in 1929 - now 62% of American adults report owning stocks (and that is not counting retirement funds that are often directly or indirectly invested in the stock market). At least 43% of retail investors (individuals) are buying more stock than their cash can afford. America's economy is the stock market and, at an all-time high, it is highly leveraged.

In the run-up to the Great Depression (1929-39), active home mortgages represented 10% of America's GDP, rising to 32% in 1930. American mortgage debt today is 70% of GDP, more than \$18 trillion in total household debt. (In Australia and Canada, mortgage debt is higher than the country's entire GDP.)

The rapid expansion of margin debt - the total amount that investors have borrowed to buy securities, which

fueled the 1929 crisis - reached a record high of \$1.1 trillion in September (up by 34% on 2024). The private (non-bank) credit market is exploding at a rate of around 15% a year, rising from \$0.5 trillion back in 2012. Drawing comparisons to the 2008 subprime housing crisis, US subprime used-car lender Tricolor filed for bankruptcy in September after it allegedly pledged the same loan portfolios to multiple lenders, exposing private credit providers and major banks, such as JPMorgan, Barclays and Fifth Third, to unexpected losses, with its filing listing up to \$10 billion in assets and liabilities.

Everything bubble

The private credit bubble is only one part of a much larger one - an 'everything bubble' that since the GFC has for the first time ever engulfed every asset class. Now the 'AI bubble' has joined the party and out-bloated all that came before. The top 'Magnificent 7' stocks are all tech-sector, and the tech and artificial intelligence sector accounts for a whopping 50% of the US's GDP growth this year (92% in New York, California and Washington). Since the debut of the advanced research assistant tool, ChatGPT, in November 2022, AI-related stocks have added an estimated \$17.5 trillion in market value - 75% of the S&P 500's gains.

In breakneck competition to construct expansive data centres, equipped with specialised, cutting-

edge chips, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon and Meta reported a combined capital expenditure of \$245 billion in 2024 - a figure expected to surpass \$360 billion this year. According to an MIT report, though, only 5% of integrated AI tools are generating profitable returns.

In the third quarter, venture capital deals with private AI firms dropped by 22% quarter-on-quarter. Amid ongoing problems with reliability and the rocketing costs of training new models, furthermore, AI-tool usage at firms with more than 250 employees dropped from nearly 14% in June to under 12% in August. According to Edge AI & Vision Alliance, training costs have surged by more than 4,300% since 2020, driven mostly by the rising price of chips and staff (engineers and researchers).

Investment has been pouring into AI stocks out of lack of other options. Oracle's debt-to-equity ratio is a scarcely believable 500%. Chat-GPT owner OpenAI is valued at \$500 billion, but lost \$4.3 billion in the first half of 2025 and is expected to lose \$14 billion in 2026. The company does not expect to be profitable until the end of the decade and is now begging tail-between-legs for a government bailout, potentially heaping yet more debt onto the back of a public increasingly weighed down by the burden of saving the private sector *continuously* since 2008.

According to MacroStrategy Partnership, the sheer volume of capital flowing into AI dwarfs previous speculative orgies, estimating a "misallocation of capital" equivalent to 65% of US GDP - *four times more than the housing bubble and 17 times more than the dot-com bust.*

Nvidia, OpenAI and major data centre operators are propping up one another's growth through large, incestuous circular investments. As demand far outstrips supply, Nvidia sells its chips (which it designs, but are actually manufactured by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) at an extremely high margin. It is left with little choice but to subsidise that demand by investing in AI firms that then purchase its hardware. OpenAI has committed to

buying 10 gigawatts of compute from Nvidia, at a cost at least \$15 billion each; but in return Nvidia is investing \$100 billion in OpenAI (for non-voting shares). Similar arrangements run through other firms like CoreWeave and Nebius.

As profitability falls, liquidity reserves and lending dry up and job losses rise; the Federal Reserve, the US central bank, is tentatively lowering its baseline interest rate to encourage banks to transfer their reserves onto the market (at higher rates) - fuelling the bubble.

If an 'external' factor does not spook investors first, the intensifying concentration of stocks will eventually shut out too many of them from returns and a massive sell-off will begin, bursting the bubble. The fictitious 'money' which investors have been throwing into this hole will be wiped off the ledger board. A 30% correction is strongly correlated with an economy-wide recession.

Gita Gopinath, former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund and now with Harvard, believes that a market correction of the same magnitude as the dot-com crash - when the S&P 500 and the NASDAQ Composite crashed by 50% and 75% respectively - could wipe out about \$20 trillion in wealth for American households (nearly 70% of annual US GDP). On that basis, consumption would fall by more than three percent and GDP by two percentage points - easily enough to push the US economy into a deep recession. She also estimates that foreign investors could face wealth losses exceeding \$15 trillion - about 20% of the rest of the world's annual GDP, since US equities make up 60% of the global market. We should not be surprised if Gopinath's estimate turns out to be wildly conservative.

1929 again

In contrast with the asset inflation that characterised the aftermath of 2009 and the asset and consumer price inflation after 2020, 1929 resulted in absolute overall deflation, which the Fed is desperate to avoid, since money loses its value faster relative to debt, and demand falls faster in

anticipation of falling prices. The Wall Street crash impacted the whole world so badly, because the US (then a net lender) was the world's biggest lender. The rest of the world needed to borrow American capital to grow their economies.

As the home of the world's dominant reserve currency and richest consumer base, a US collapse today will again, of course, shock the whole world. Now, though, the US is a net borrower and the largest borrower in the world. About 25% of its government spending is financed by foreign capital inflow, but the appeal of the devaluing US dollar appears to be waning. At the end of 2024, China's US Treasury holdings were \$759 billion, down from \$1.07 trillion four years earlier. The figure for Japan is down from \$1.3 trillion to \$1.1 trillion. As a share of global reserves, the greenback has fallen to 56% from 73% in 2000.

Since 2020, official US government debt-to-GDP has been higher than the 119% at the end of World War II. On course to soon hit \$40 trillion, US government debt is growing at around 6% per year and the annual government deficit (since 2008) 8.5%. As the debt rises, the risk of lending to the government climbs, as the chances of the overstretched tax base losing its capacity to repay (and with interest) therefore naturally increases. Lenders therefore tend to demand higher rates, further undermining their own investment, as the government is forced to increase its borrowing to cover the difference, expanding the money supply and fuelling inflation.

Interest payments grew from 6% of government spending in 2020 to 13% in 2024, making it the fastest growing component of government spending - and already surpassing the outlay on defence and medicare. This state of affairs is clearly unsustainable. The tax base, which capital is so dependent on for bailouts and subsidies, is collapsing.

The Trump administration is naturally desperate to bring borrowing rates down and is making moves to pack the Fed with its own people, in order to get its wish sooner rather than later. When the Fed lowers its interest rates, market rates usually follow to some extent, even if the Fed's rate falls lower absolutely. In recent years, however, market rates have spiked in response to a lower Fed rate, in anticipation of higher government debt and inflation, making debt more expensive to repay, while relatively disincentivising borrowing, investment and dealmaking (mergers and acquisitions).

With inflation still stuck at 3% - above the 2% target aimed at maintaining business stability - the Fed is today much more reluctant to intervene than in the past. US inflation hit a 40-year high of 9% in 2022, impacting not only assets, as in the aftermath of 2009, but also, this time, consumer prices. The average basket of goods is now 25% higher than in 2020.

As the economy deteriorates further, the Fed will have little choice but to once again drop its rate down to zero - as it did for the first time ever in 2009, and then in 2020 - and print money to buy debt from banks and corporations at an even greater rate than it did in 2008 and 2020, when the money supply grew by a shocking 40% in less than two years. The Fed's coming intervention will again devalue wages and savings, amounting to another - likely greater - round of inflation. Countering inflation will, compared to the past, require limiting bailouts to a smaller proportion of the private sector and making even greater cuts in public spending.

Liberals and social democrats will blame Donald Trump's anti-migrant policies for exacerbating

labour shortages, along with his tariffs - taxes on American importers and consumers, which are impacting demand and draining reserves, but which are designed in part to tackle a government deficit that has been mounting over several decades.

Trump and his policies are symptomatic of deeper structural rot. The reality is that capitalism unavoidably generates the conditions of its own downfall. In summary, making profit, of course, requires growth (of commodity production) which, via innovation that speeds up production, tends to result in the devaluation of commodities and *less profit per commodity*. Capital is therefore increasingly dependent on making the state its biggest customer and bleeding the public dry.

Karl Marx

As the general rate of profit falls, investment opportunities dry up, resulting in 'over-accumulated' gluts of surplus money capital that cannot be profitably reinvested. Karl Marx's contention that this immanent barrier to innovation and productivity growth tends to grow "more formidable" is illustrated in many ways: by the record high prices of cryptocurrency, gold and speculative stocks, for example; and the amount of dead cash amassing in US money market funds - hitting \$7.5 trillion in 2025, up from \$5 trillion in just three years.

Via bankruptcies, mergers and acquisitions - the recent deals between the likes of Nvidia and Open AI represent a gigantic proto-merger - the ownership of capital and wealth *necessarily* concentrates in order to offset falling profitability; excluding an increasingly large proportion of the population from the capitalist class, which is therefore pushed back into a corner of its own making, from where it lashes out increasingly aggressively, stimulating an intensifying class struggle, through which the working class must eventually prevail.

As capitalists continue to automate production in the effort to lower costs and widen profit margins, the contradiction at the heart of the system continues to deepen. No wonder AI is unprofitable - data is produced and rearranged at increasingly breath-taking speed. Unlike humans, robots and computers cannot be exploited through wage labour or by commodities capitalists need to sell. The fully automated system of production capital itself reaches for is making capitalism historically obsolete and (global) socialism necessary.

Why socialism? Empirical economic data again makes the case: that the concentration of wealth through bankruptcies and mergers is demonstrated by the fact that - *despite 50 years of aggressive privatisation* - the number of private banks and corporations in the US has roughly halved since the turn of the century. A 'final merger' evidently beckons - to be enacted by a socialist state, since a capitalist state cannot by definition expropriate the whole private economy - necessitating the transition to an economy owned entirely by the public, *since no exchange of ownership is necessary in a total monopoly.*

A long, hard, painful struggle awaits - but so too, at last, does working class liberation ●

What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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Online Communist Forum



Sunday November 23 5pm

Liverpool: plans and prospects. Political report from the CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

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Assimilation must be unforced and two-way

Twenty years of uncertainty

Mahmood wants to pull the rug from under Reform UK by adopting its migration agenda, writes **Eddie Ford**

Keir Starmer is under relentless pressure from Reform UK, with every poll consistently showing it comfortably ahead of the other parties.¹ But one of the great advantages of bourgeois government is that you can take the agenda of the opposition and make it *yours* by putting it into practice. This is a huge advantage and something that governments are very practised at doing - as we can see with Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, as she sets about her "moral mission" to create the most hostile environment she possibly can for migrants seeking asylum and settled status in the UK.

Of course, the Tories and Reform - whilst welcoming her new stance along with Tommy Robinson - are saying that she has not gone far enough: you have to leave the European Court of Human Rights, reinstate the Rwanda policy or something similar, etc, etc, if you really want to get tough. Mahmood is cynically using her own migrant background to justify her inhuman new asylum laws: hence her comment in parliament that "a country without secure borders is a less safe country for those who look like me" - she was born in Birmingham to parents of Urdu-speaking Pakistani origin and spent her early childhood in Saudi Arabia - she was particularly noted for being the first ever Lord Chancellor to swear her oath on *The Koran*.

The core idea she puts forward is that people who have been granted temporary asylum must have that status extended for *20 years* before being allowed permanent settlement in the UK (as opposed to the current five years, after which people can apply for indefinite leave to remain, offering a pathway to British citizenship). This will then be reviewed every *30 months* and at any point migrants could be returned to their home country if it is now deemed 'safe'.

Denmark

If implemented as intended, Mahmood's new policy would represent the longest wait in any European asylum system - including Denmark, which is the model that has been providing her inspiration. Ten years ago, when more than a million people arrived in Europe fleeing war, repression, poverty and state failure - largely from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea - the Danish government dramatically changed the rules. Ever since then, temporary residence permits have only been granted for one to two years at a time and there is no longer any guarantee of getting permanent residence. In order for that to happen, refugees have to be fluent in Danish and are also required to have had a full-time job for several years.

There has been widespread criticism of the Danish approach, of course - especially the related law against "ghettoes" (or "parallel societies"), which allows the state to sell, convert or even *demolish* apartment blocks in areas where at least half of residents are considered to have a "non-western" background - Nigel Farage must be taking note.²

Unsurprisingly, this year the European Court of Justice found



Walter Crane 'Columbia's courtship' (1893)

that the law constitutes direct discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin - ie, what most people would regard as racist.³ But the harsh and repressive approach to asylum has unfortunately proved to be effective, at least if the statistics are anything to go by, and therefore suggests that the Danish model could work for Shabana Mahmood despite the differences between the two countries.

Thus back in 2014 a total of 14,792 asylum-seekers arrived in Denmark, with the largest numbers coming from Syria and Eritrea. By 2021 that figure had dropped to 2,099. Of the nearly 100,000 residence permits that were granted in Denmark last year, just 1% were recorded as going to refugees. The 99% included 9,623 refugees from Ukraine, who are categorised separately, migrants from other parts of the European Economic Area, family reunification and people on work and study permits.

There is the US too, with the White House celebrating reports that, thanks to Donald Trump, this year could be the first year in at least 50 that the United States has experienced negative net migration - meaning more people are expected to leave the country than enter. Indeed, a few months ago the administration promoted a news segment from CNN claiming that Trump's "hawkish" immigration policies will lead to net negative migration, down from 2.8 million in 2024 to around zero and the White House even posted a graphic on X that appeared to be saying it had

already met that target. The graphic showed a border patrol agent and was emblazoned by Trump with the words, "NEGATIVE NET MIGRATION for the first time in 50 years", and "Promises made, promises kept".⁴ Of course, that comes with ICE, meaning widespread fear and loss of basic democratic rights.

Actually, the CNN story originally shared by the White House did not make that claim and Trump's rejoicing about negative net migration is a bit premature.⁵ One think tank predicts there will be negative net migration this year and others estimate that, although net migration will be lower than in years past, it will not be negative - with the Census Bureau calendar showing that the net migration data will be published next month. Either way, it indicates that the president's hostile and bellicose attitude - the US model, if you like - is working, not only to dramatically reduce or eliminate illegal migration, but also arguably contributing to America's long-term relative decline. After all cheap, worst-paid, labour is vital for whole sectors of its economy: agriculture, construction, hospitality, etc.

Toughness

Apart from warning that "dark forces are stirring up anger" over migration, which Shabana Mahmood appears happy to feed, the home secretary has claimed that the government has failed to show the "necessary toughness" to enforce the removal of families whose asylum claims have

been refused. According to a policy document released on November 17, "many families of failed asylum-seekers continue to live in this country, receiving free accommodation and financial support, for years on end" - something must be done.

One measure being planned is to trial "incentive payments" of thousands of pounds to encourage asylum seekers to leave the UK if their claims are rejected. At present, claimants are given up to £3,000 to remove themselves from the UK. The government has also announced that it will legislate to toughen up how courts apply the European Convention on Human Rights regarding family life, enabling more deportation of people with family members still in the UK.

Other key measures unveiled this week include: restricting asylum-seekers to one single appeal rather than different appeals on multiple grounds; creating a new body for fast-tracking cases for dangerous criminals and those with little hope of success; legislating to restrict last-minute modern slavery claims; joining other countries in seeking reform of ECHR article 3 rights in order to more narrowly define the risk of torture and degrading treatment; and changing the home office's duty to provide support to asylum-seekers to a mere *discretionary* power and thus enabling them to potentially be removed from accommodation.

Another idea borrowed from Denmark, that manages to be both barbaric and incredibly petty at the same time, is that asylum-seekers could have jewellery or other valuables taken to pay for the costs of processing their cases - though apparently this would not involve the seizing of wedding rings, which doubtlessly the Tories or Reform will seize upon as an example of woke backsliding proving that Labour is not serious.⁶

We could have a situation under the home secretary's new rules, for example, that, if one part of Syria is considered safe by the government, you could be sent straight back any time to torture or death. Even more to the point, are you ever going to be able to establish a normal life when you have got this Sword of Damocles hanging permanently over your head?

Judging from Mahmood's comments this week, the draconian changes to the asylum laws could possibly include children who were born in Britain (or maybe born abroad, but raised and educated in Britain). All this obviously creates the very real danger of another Windrush scandal, if not worse, and leaves refugees in near-permanent limbo, with children liable to be uprooted from schools and adults unable to build careers, and makes integration - the supposed goal of Mahmood and her rightwing critics - a lot harder, perhaps impossible.

Trying to out-Reform Reform seems like an impossible task, as you can surely never satisfy Farage-type demands, but this is certainly an attempt by the home secretary to pull out the rug from under Reform by essentially adopting its politics on immigration, so that you can basically turn around to those crowds who have

been protesting outside hotels and other such places and say - yes, we agree with you.

We have had the nauseating spectacle of Shabana Mahmood saying society is being cleaved apart - not by the anti-foreign agitation of the Tories, Reform and the far right, but by migrants: *they* are to blame for your crap jobs, lack of affordable housing, long wait at the NHS even to see your GP. It does not matter, of course, that if you actually go to hospital, a very large proportion of the staff are migrants - whether doing the mopping up or all the way up to the consultant that supervises your treatment.

Yes, Keir Starmer made that foul speech about "an island of strangers", but these people are definitely not strangers to you and me.⁷ They are who we were brought up with - our friends and neighbours, who we see in the shops and down the pub, and we should fight any attempt to tear us apart.

Failure

But we should criticise the labour movement and workers' movement for not going out and energetically integrating migrants into our structures, because we have become too bureaucratized.

Sadly, people tend to join a union now for insurance purposes rather than any notion that you can determine its direction. Most unions now are remote and distant - far from being militant organs of class struggle. The same applies, of course, to workers' parties, not least the bourgeois workers' party - ie, the Labour Party. That does not mean that we should fall into the opposite Socialist Workers Party-type trap of only liberalistically saying, 'Refugees are welcome here', which is obviously not the case in some parts of the country. What we need to do is campaign for positive assimilation, and that means by definition a *two-way process* - not everyone becoming some model of 1950s England, as Reform seems to imagine.

But it also means recognising why employers want migrant labour. In general, it is either because they have got specific skills, or, mainly, because they provide *cheaper* labour. We need a *positive* approach to migration, as laid out in the CPGB *Draft programme*, which states that migrant workers are not the problem: rather "the capitalists who use them to increase competition between workers are" (Section 3.5, 'Migrant workers and racism')⁸ ●

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Notes

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