

weekly worker



No trust in judges: government attacks on trial by jury must be resisted, says Paul Demarty

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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CITIZEN SULTANA

LETTERS



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

YP stitch-up

An overruled, outmanoeuvred and stage-managed left. That's my takeaway from last weekend's Your Party founding conference. I'm not surprised: the signs were there from its 'first stutterings', and then it seemed every few weeks we had to shrug off exasperation at the spats between Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana and the organising committee.

It seemed like members were being drip-fed deliberate chaos by the nameless and faceless bureaucrats - from the original radio silence over local organisation (so we just got up and did it ourselves), to the stillborn first membership portal, the freezing out of Zarah Sultana and the delayed release of founding documents and amendments. I had the same impression, looking back on Your Party's first months, as I did when I was a kid, looking back to the mud track, after we'd brought the cows in for milking on my grandparents' small farm: what a lot of shit they've dropped on the way here.

Yet there was hope that, given a collective boot in the right direction, we were potentially seeing a glimpse of a vanguard for a mass socialist party. And, once the sortition results were out, it felt like there could be no turning back now. Of course, if you had been sortitioned and wanted to attend in Liverpool, you first had to cross the profiteers' palms with a lot of silver - the going rate for a hotel room was £250 a night, I heard from many delegates.

But the shenanigans didn't end there. On the eve of the conference, as thousands travelled to Liverpool, expulsion emails were wending their way into members' inboxes for the crime of holding dual membership, including Lewis Nielsen, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. At a Socialist Unity Platform meeting I'd attended the night before, we were warned that a witch-hunt would ensue if the current organising committee weren't challenged. There was little support for the idea that evening, but what a difference 12 hours make.

On the morning of day one, a comrade had only just settled in his seat next to me when he said something like: "The left feel they can be as combative and argumentative as they like, because we're so far from power we've nothing to lose; let's hope that outlook doesn't ruin things today." Hang on, I said, surely there's no behaviour more hostile than the current committee expelling members already.

At first there was little regret on his part. He'd heard the SWP was out to take over Your Party through bloc voting, so it was probably best they were out, he said. It didn't take long to talk him round that this was not how a left-unifying mass party should be behaving, particularly without endorsement by its members, and that this was likely the thin end of the proverbial wedge.

He turned to tell the comrade next to him about it, then the members behind us joined in the conversation. The bureaucrats' behaviour wasn't impressing them and, when the dual membership vote came round, my impression was the floor was for it, and it was voted in by a 69% majority.

It wasn't exactly the win I'd

hoped for, having tried to endorse a motion allowing acceptance of all left groups, not the cop-out, "with aligned allied parties", but it remained permanently in draft - a tactic used many times over by the committee.

The camaraderie and open discussion I experienced among members that morning was in stark contrast to the atmosphere from 'our leaders'. As the chair and officials came on the stage, the welcoming atmosphere was sucked out of the room. The dementors had arrived. Yes, they gave plenty of impassioned speeches about ending austerity and whatnot to rabble-rouse the room, but I had the distinct impression we were being carefully herded in a certain direction.

First we were told that there would be "no points of order from the floor"; that all suggestions were to be made to the standing orders committee during proceedings - oh, and they would also close promptly during the lunch break, so if there's a queue, never mind, you just won't be seen. I imagined a black-bettered, blank-faced version of *Little Britain's* Carol Beer sitting at the computer telling delegates, 'The committee says no'.

Also, any shouting, heckling, or attempts to interfere with proceedings were explicitly banned and anyone caught doing it would be thrown out. If you had any doubts about their sincerity, you only had to look around the room, peppered every few metres with a 'bouncer'.

I was now beginning to feel like I was in a cross between a prison camp, surrounded by guards, and a very strict school assembly, with the head and senior teachers glaring down at us from the dais, alert for any signs of misbehaviour.

These weren't empty threats either. When a group of delegates stood up from the floor to speak, they were brusquely marched out, despite the room shouting, "Let them speak!" Just as fast, the live feed to delegates watching from home was shut off. I read on a social post that viewers were fed images of smiling-faced Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana, *à la* BBC test card.

That turned out to be true, because I experienced the same thing on day two, watching from home. It happened several times, when there were disputes between members and those up on high. Such as when comrades used their stage debate time to call out the organising committee for refusing to allow the "workers' wage for elected representatives" point of order. It was kept off the agenda despite being one of the most popular amendments, and was eventually thrown out - first for being a duplicate and then for a typo. Even Orwell couldn't make this up.

Again and again, members on the floor voiced their impatience, as the proceedings plodded along, leaving no time to debate amendments. We faced either the rictus grins of authority, as they suppressed the resistance, or admonishment: one chair said some of us "were being very naughty", another that she'd "need a glass of wine after this - no, two", and another that she "wasn't scared of us". A comrade leaned over to me and said, "I was regretting coming, but it's worth it for the entertainment!"

Such was the iron fist over the agenda that when we had extra time at the end of Saturday, we were told to debate the new name of the party (most had already voted on that in the morning) instead of the many, many points of order that had been

put forward by members.

Despite the weekend of debate between Your Party members, the sharing of ideas, of solidarity across group lines, the shameful stitch-up of thousands hopeful for something better has left a sour taste in my mouth. If the bureaucrats' behaviour is anything to go by, the fervour I saw and the chance of an opportunity to build something really socialist and democratic will likely be pissed up the wall. We'll have to wait for the elections in a few months to see exactly how.

After that? Well, as my mother would say, "If you want owt doing right, do it yer sen". That might be our only option.

Pat Taylor
email

YP gains

Despite the completely undemocratic nature of the founding conference of Your Party, there have been significant gains for the socialist wing of the party, even if they are confined to what the leadership considered acceptable.

We must focus on the central executive committee elections and elect a CEC that can defend socialists from purges and also ensure that another conference is hosted during the party's first year, before the 'two thirds majority' amendment makes improving the constitution particularly difficult. We also need to educate people on why online voting is so atomising - how it turns democratic debate into 'who can build the most email lists'.

Perhaps the most important and most controversial vote, other than the dual membership amendment, was the decision of the conference to establish a collective leadership. The social democratic wing of the party was seemingly angered and confused: how could people vote for ordinary members to run the party instead of having a celebrity politician leader? Surely for a party to be electorally successful there needs to be a person who can inform the people of Britain that they intend to run the state, and who can convince millions of people that they as a person are able to improve their lives if granted power? Someone for the media to obsessively discuss - one individual who can utilise their own personal platform to promote the party.

There is some truth to that (although also it should be mentioned that politicians still have a platform even if they are not the leader of a party - for example, New York mayor Zohran Mamdani). However, the fact is that we cannot rely on the traditional media at all: if they can build popularity around a celebrity leader, they can also annihilate that popularity. After all, they managed to convince millions of people, even would-be supporters, that Corbyn and the Labour Party were at the very least unable to deal with a supposed rampant anti-Semitism crisis. Much of the social democratic media were completely unable to refute these claims, and often did not properly stand up for anti-Zionists or even actively perpetuated those claims. Some of those that today talk about the need for a great leader to 'play the media' have previously failed, when such a leader was subject to the ability of the mainstream media to gradually associate them with so much negativity that their popularity eventually collapsed.

What we need is socialist media - genuinely unapologetically socialist media that advocates a socialist worldview and promotes a socialist understanding of news events. That

includes social media, YouTube channels, etc, as well as traditional-style newspapers (of course, these days such newspapers should also have a website at the very least), because quite often the socialist online community does not have the kind of following that would be necessary for a genuine alternative form of news media for the vast majority of people. To some extent we need to have some method for distributing news IRL.

When Your Party is properly set up, not only should there be at least one national YP newspaper, but branches need to join together to set up local newspapers (eg, all the London branches joining together to produce a London newspaper, or all the Oxfordshire branches for here in Oxfordshire), which should discuss not just local news, but also national and international news, as well as the internal politics and events within YP, so that readers can know about *their* party.

This branch cooperation could also be utilised to gather funds to set up socialist newsagents, where obviously YP publications could be purchased, ideally alongside various other socialist publications (yes, even indeed the newspapers of the various socialist groups of Britain). Of course, these socialists newsagents should also have journals and books and various socialist media. Having a presence 'IRL', and a 'third space' would

help build the socialist news media ecosystem that is required for the ideas of socialism to gain an influence within the minds of more people.

Dovah
Oxfordshire

For YP exclusions

I have to admit that, despite being far from ignorant of the atrocious history, behaviours and lack of basic political (as well as personal) morality of much of the Trotskyoid groups, grouplets and sects in this country, I was staggered by the brazenness and sheer brass necks of the vast majority flocking to join Your Party, as if their own sect membership, political history, commitments and loyalties were of no consequence whatsoever.

Have they all suddenly had Saul of Tarsus conversions on the road to the Liverpool conference, having realised the complete futility and pointlessness of their sectarian and sect histories to date, and suddenly become converts to the notion of a genuinely mass-membership, broad socialist party? Have they resigned their membership of the sects, leaving their 'cadre' cards at the door? Are the sects committing to winding up and dissolving, in favour of YP? Will their primary loyalty be to YP rather than their individual sect? Of course, as we all know, none of that will be true.

We all know what they are up

Online Communist Forum



Sunday December 7 5pm

Report from YP Liverpool founding conference ... with plenty of time for discussion

Use this link to register:
communistparty.co.uk/ocf

Organised by CPGB: communistparty.co.uk and
Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk
For further information, email Stan Keable at
Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk

A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain

to. They are flocking to Your Party because they see opportunities to recruit to their own sects. To basically try and establish slightly larger versions of their current selves. Then they will either clear off or be thrown out anyway for their conduct - no doubt complaining and whinging, as they are thrown into the gutters. Classic Trotskyism. Complete opportunism and parasitism. Disgusting, disgraceful and shameful behaviour.

Social media outlets of some of the sects have been 'outraged' that members of the Socialist Workers Party have been expelled from Your Party, and maybe also from the Socialist Party in England and Wales and some others. Instead of faux outrage and whining about 'witch-hunts', surely the basic question should be, *what the hell* are members of the SWP, SPEW and others, doing in another socialist party in the first place?

Should anyone really be surprised that Your Party have (eventually) woken up to the problem that they have attracted: alongside the tens and possibly hundreds of thousands genuinely committed to a mass socialist party, there are people who are absolutely not committed to the YP project, but only to furthering the advance of their own individual sects? Is it really so shocking that Your Party should want to establish some boundaries for basic membership: eg, that the person should be genuinely committed to Your Party, as opposed to one of the sects?

It is, of course, possible that some of the groups and sects might genuinely see the need for a mass socialist party, in which they might seek to further their politics, programme and strategy; that the aims and objectives of their group might be complementary, rather than antagonistic, to Your Party. So, what would be the principled, open and democratic response?

Surely, it would be along the lines of openly approaching YP and its leadership and openly seeking opportunities for close working and cooperation, and maybe even open affiliation as an option? I know YP doesn't currently have a provision for affiliation of other organisations, but surely that could be worked up as an option, especially if it was persuaded through example and practice that open affiliation of genuinely supportive socialist and revolutionary groups would be beneficial?

I would hope that Your Party *does* at some point allow for the formal, open and democratic affiliation of genuine working class organisations and formations, progressive democratic campaigns (including for international peace and solidarity, struggles for justice, equality and non-discrimination for oppressed groups, etc), and socialist and revolutionary groups which have a real basis in the working class and are genuinely committed to the politics and strategy of a mass, socialist, working class party.

Zarah Sultana's notion of a party of the whole left (quoted by Carla Roberts in at least one of her reports in the *Weekly Worker*) is no doubt exceedingly attractive, and might, possibly, over time, provide the political and organisational basis, or at least a framework, for a very significant unity of the left - of socialists, communists and other genuine revolutionaries. That members of the various socialist, communist and Trotskyist groups, might possibly be able to work together in a cooperative, beneficial and mutually enhancing manner - as

opposed to knocking verbal lumps out of each other, pursuing nefarious infiltration and membership poaching drives, and overall punching far less than our apparent collective numerical weight.

It would seem appropriate that affiliated organisations should have some formal collective input into the decision-making of Your Party, as well as presumably making financial contributions for the privilege and encouraging their supporters to take out individual membership of YP. But there should be no automatic or logical reason why the collective 'vote' of affiliated organisations should automatically 'drown out' or otherwise marginalise the role of individual members.

(The sniping at trade union 'bloc votes' is very revealing. A 'bloc vote' is simply the trade union (or other organisation) deciding democratically how its total membership vote should be cast in line with its collectively agreed policy. We should be in favour of collective and disciplined decision-making in the working class movement.

It would be perfectly possible to establish ringfenced percentage shares of (say) decision-making conferences to individual members, affiliated trade unions, trades councils, community groups, national progressive democratic campaigns, affiliated socialist and communist parties and groups, etc. So the various voices from the various constituencies making up the overall membership basis of Your Party could input in a balanced, open and democratic manner. Of course, affiliated memberships should have appropriate weight. But so should those who do sign up on an individual basis, in their communities and localities or workplaces.

YP provides a fundamental challenge to the entire history, sectarianism, behaviour and bad morality of the great majority of the Trotskyist groups. Of course, to date, they have been collectively wetting themselves with excitement over the prospect of being able to fish for recruits in a much larger pool (and in a typically underhand and surreptitious manner). If they continue like this, frankly, they deserve to be exposed and kicked out like dogs in the night.

But they also have a big opportunity to change. If they have genuine confidence in their own politics, programme (or equivalent), in their own comrades, in their own groups, etc, then approach YP openly, democratically and respectfully, and formally explore opportunities for closer working or even affiliation. If they are rebuffed, then work through daily practice and example to persuade Your Party they were wrong and should change their approach.

If they keep to their sect memberships and prime loyalties, and stick to decades of ingrained sectarian and parasitical behaviour, then, frankly, they get what they deserve.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Remember Fidel

On November 25, the world commemorated the ninth anniversary of the death of Cuban leader Fidel Castro - the remarkable revolutionary communist, who died peacefully in Havana at the age of 90 after surviving more than 600 CIA-orchestrated assassination attempts.

Fidel Castro never compromised in his anti-imperialism nor

renounced his commitment to socialism. He was, and will continue to be, a revolutionary inspiration for the poor and oppressed around the world, those fighting against imperialist exploitation and plunder, against racism and prejudice in all its forms, those fighting for social and economic justice and a working class democracy.

In early 1989, shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, I wrote an article, 'In defence of socialism', which counterposed the transitions underway in the socialist bloc countries: that is, the "dangerous trend to embrace capitalist economic mechanisms and political values" with the process of socialist reinvigoration underway in Cuba, where "Castro has raised the banner of resistance, the true banner of socialism and Marxism-Leninism".

The bourgeois press had declared capitalism to be victorious. *The New Yorker* proclaimed: "Less than 75 years after it officially began, the contest between capitalism and socialism is over: capitalism has won" (January 23 1989). And yet, 36 years later, New Yorkers voted in a self-proclaimed socialist as the city's new mayor. Whatever his political limitations, it has upset the ruling class in the United States. On November 21 this year, the House of Representatives passed a resolution to denounce "the horrors of socialism". What exactly do they fear? The resolution was sponsored by rightwing Cuban American politician Maria Elvira Salazar, who has built her political career on opposition to Cuban socialism. The spectre of Fidel Castro and socialism is haunting imperialism.

For more analysis of imperialism and crisis, please go to <https://davidyaffe.org.uk>. Please take time to explore the website - it represents a lifetime's political and theoretical work - and feel free to get in touch, with any thoughts or questions via the contact form.

David Yaffe
Email

Censorship fight

A film featuring spectacular new evidence of state censorship of the Palestine genocide premiered in Bristol on Saturday November 20. New material in the film, *Censoring Palestine*, includes previously unseen footage of police arrests and eye-witness accounts of alleged police brutality during demonstrations against the ban on the protest group, Palestine Action.

The revised film exposes a major escalation in the British government's attempts to clamp down on protest about the genocide in Gaza. It is one thing to accuse protestors like Palestine Action of criminal damage, if they enter an arms factory and spray paint there. But to prosecute them as terrorists is outrageous, unjust and utterly unjustified.

The updated feature-length documentary from Platform Films includes contributions from award-winning filmmaker Ken Loach, comedian activist Alexei Sayle, journalist Sarah Wilkinson, who was raided by anti-terrorist police, and relatives of the Filton 24 protestors, imprisoned for their actions against the Israel-owned drone-maker, Elbit Systems.

The terrorism law is being used on an industrial scale against peaceful protest. Well over 2,000 people have now been arrested for simply holding up a sign saying that they oppose genocide and support Palestine Action. People whose only 'crime' was to protest against

war crimes are being put in jail for years of their lives. This has to stop.

The government is trying to outrageously censor the public debate on Gaza and if they get away with this they will, we believe, take even more draconian measures. The aim of our film is to alert people to this danger - we must fight for our freedoms or risk losing them.

The premiere of the updated film took place at the Bristol Palestine Film Festival. The screening was followed by a panel discussion, with human rights barrister Ousman Noor and Sue Parfitt, an 83-year old priest arrested for supporting Palestine Action.

Check it out.
Norman Thomas
Platform Films

RIP Phil

I believe I first met Phil Kent (Phil Railston), who died on October 17, and his dog, Cookie, at the same time - back at a comrade's old pad in London. Cookie, still a puppy then, greeted someone else with a firm bite to the nose and then proceeded to mess up the entire flat - a task successfully accomplished within a quarter of an hour. Phil made no attempt whatsoever to stop her, instead regaling us with tales of his travels to India, as he watched on.

Phil was a real character - funny, sharp, self-deprecating, one of a kind. He was never chauvinistic, but he wasn't particularly politically correct either. Perhaps because of his age and generation, or perhaps because he had politically come of age with the Workers Revolutionary Party's pre-war brand of Trotskyist orthodoxy, he had successfully dodged any New Left influences, which may have been partly why he always remained human and relatable. The other reason was that, unlike many communists, he never went around with the posture of an all-knowing sage. He'd often offer a sharp observation on some political subject or other, but then added the phrase, "I'm saying this from a position of considerable ignorance" - something that is ultimately true of everybody, but few in our circles have the guts to admit. I loved that

turn of phrase from Phil.

I also loved drinking with Phil and Jack Conrad when the London Communist Forum was still at the Calthorpe Arms pub. We'd often stay in the pub downstairs long after everyone else had left, and Phil would proceed from pints to spirits. One of my last memories from that period is when I told him I was going to Italy to visit a girl (the one I live with now). Phil replied that I was very lucky, because, in his words, "Italian girls are famous for wearing nothing all day".

Phil was far from being a well-adjusted member of society, but he still somehow managed not only to survive, but also to contribute something valuable to this world. In his case, this was his sheer presence in the CPGB, and his indispensable role as layout artist for the *Weekly Worker*. I always found people like him - in fact, especially him - deeply reassuring. They show that the important thing is to *deliver* in some field, preferably of your own choosing. It's fine not to be exactly 'normal' otherwise.

I'm glad that the one time I visited London after I had moved to Italy, I made sure to go for a pint with Phil at one of his preferred haunts, and took Cookie for a walk in Chestnuts Park. In the past, they had always rushed ahead of me and I'd struggle to keep up. I always wondered how a man in his 70s and about half my size could walk so much faster than me. But it wasn't the same this time. They had both lost quite a bit of life force, and it felt as if it could be the last time I'd see them, so I cherished every moment. Sadly, that's exactly what came to pass.

Phil is a big loss for everybody who knew him. I'm in a different country and couldn't attend his funeral ceremony, but I was there in spirit, and I'll commemorate him the way he'd want me to - by raising a glass or two to him. I wish I could do so at one of his favourite pubs.

Rest in peace, my friend, Phil. Meet you at the long bar in the sky!
Maciej Zurowski
Italy

Fighting fund

End year with a bang!

What a contrast between the last four days of November and the first three of December! Let's start with November, when we still needed an awesome £755 to reach our monthly £2,750 fighting fund target after last week's issue.

That was always going to be problematic with just four days to go, but we got nowhere near it! We received just £210 between November 27 and 30, taking us up to only £2,205. In other words, we were £545 short. But our thanks still go to those who helped us out - comrades DB and PS (£50 each) and DI and AC (a fiver each). Those four used PayPal, while comrades JT and BK (£25), AB (£20), JM (£15) and MD (£10) contributed by bank transfer or standing order. Finally, comrade Hassan handed his usual £5 note to one of our team.

I have to say it's been quite some time since we failed so dismally to get anywhere near our target, so now the question is: can we make up for last month's failure, as we approach Christmas?

Let's hope so. And, as I said at the beginning, the start of December has been totally different: no less than £698 came our way in the first three days!

Thanks go to JC, AC and TT, who each donated exactly £100, while EW chipped in with £55, LC (£50), BO (£35), MM (£31), ST (£30), MS and BH (£25), DL and MT (£20), CP (£16), AN and BG (£15), RM (£13), RP (£12), MM (£11), DI and JD (£10 each) each used standing order or bank transfer, while comrade TM (£5) was the only one to use PayPal.

So now we need to build on that brilliant start to December and make sure the *Weekly Worker* ends 2025 with a bang! Let's not only raise the £2,052 still needed, but get enough extra to make up for November's shortfall.

You can do it! ●

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

YOUR PARTY

A house divided

No wonder Jeremy Corbyn personally thanked Karie Murphy in his closing conference speech: she delivered a masterclass in manipulation, says **Carla Roberts**. But it was Zarah Sultana who won the day - her defiance should inspire members to fight back in the branches and at the next conference

Your Party's launch conference is likely to go down in history as one of the most undemocratic, stage-managed stitch-ups in working class history. Jeremy Corbyn's right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, has outdone herself in micromanaging every single detail to make sure HQ stays firmly in control - at least on paper. However, while the very limited and atomised online voting led to some truly awful rules and formulations now having been agreed (see below), the mood in the ACC hall showed a very different picture. The line of security guards protecting the top table from the plebs symbolically reflected YP's divide.

On many things, the most leftwing options won. And, had conference declared itself sovereign, set its own agenda and discussed its own motions and amendments, there is no doubt we would have walked it. It was a thoroughly leftwing event. Those lucky enough to be sortitioned to attend the two-day event showed very vocally that they disagree with the expulsions, the lack of democracy and the sidelining of the members and branches. There were many defiant speeches from the floor, cheered on loudly by those in the hall. This culminated on Sunday afternoon in the rousing speech by Zarah Sultana, who pulled no punches in criticising the leadership. She clearly sided with the membership and is now the unofficial spokesperson of the left.

It is now incumbent on the left to build on that sentiment. Yes, we should stand a joint slate for the elections to the central executive committee (CEC) in January/February, based on principled politics and demands for democracy. Crucially, we have to wage a fightback from below, in the branches. We should encourage comrades to build democratic caucuses, pass critical motions, defy the purge and mobilise the membership to rebel and start cohering nationally in YP. We also need to push for a reconstituted conference that can revisit some of the more dumber things agreed in Liverpool. It remains to be seen if the Socialist Unity Platform can play that role, but there certainly is a need for the left to organise seriously (more below).

Manipulations

Conference started even more undemocratically than many feared. The standing orders were not even put to the members - we were simply told they could not be changed or even challenged. A comrade from Counterfire was bundled off when she tried to challenge the agenda. Emergency motions were banned. Most amendments were ruled out of order or simply never published. Speakers were interrupted and the livestream cut off whenever speakers criticised the unelected leadership.

Conference itself had been downscaled rather dramatically - and had quietly been moved from the main ACC into the much smaller exhibition centre next door. No more than 1,500 attendees were present on either day - down from the 13,000 first promised. We suspect that number would have been even lower, had those traveling to Liverpool known in advance that voting would take place entirely online, by all 'verified' members - and surely often without ever listening to a single 'debate' (we use that



Time to go: Karie Murphy and Len McCluskey

phrase very loosely). As an aside, we have learned in the process that only 21,000 of the 54,000 YP members are 'verified' - ie, have clicked a particular button in their email after they applied to join. This number went up by about 1,500 after many realised that this was required to vote. Still, the number of those voting never rose above 10,000, which gives us a good indication of the *real* membership figures.

This tight control of conference and voting by atomised individuals at home could not stop *some* left choices, such as collective leadership, going through - but it also led to some truly terrible outcomes, the results of which were only announced on Monday:

■ Your Party has now enshrined sortition as a method to choose future conference participants, in addition to *some* delegates from the branches, in a ratio "as defined or required by that conference's remit" - we can just about imagine. It did not help that in the run-up to conference we were told by fellow socialists that sortition really is not all *that* bad and can be tweaked. Only 32.92% voted in favour of conference being made up by "delegates elected by the party branches, organised sections, affiliates or any combination thereof". Another hotch-potch, but not quite as bad.

■ However, to make matters worse, this decision almost does not matter, as the following 'option' also won: "Voting on matters at party conferences shall be open to all members through online voting systems, accessible throughout conference time." A whopping 77.22% of members supported this. It is perhaps no surprise that those voting at home were in favour of that possibility continuing. Conference has therefore become almost entirely redundant.

The left has failed to explain why online OMOV voting is a bad idea. Even Sultana supported it for a while (though she seems to have changed her view). Doesn't it give members who cannot attend a chance to be involved too? Kind of - but not really. Had only conference attendees been allowed to vote - and vote on the issues it had wanted - the results would no doubt have been entirely different. It would have pushed YP massively to the left. It would have enshrined democracy and accountability. Which is, of course, what the Corbyn clique desperately tried to avoid. Voting via mobile phone empowers those in

charge, as has become abundantly clear over the weekend: they were able to decide what we were allowed to discuss and what options we were given.

Online voting

In our view, online voting of all members actually disempowers the branches - and therefore the membership as a whole. It is the branches that should be discussing motions, amendments and who to send to conference to represent them. That is real, active democracy, not sitting at home, clicking a button. As the votes were all taken hours and days after the discussion, people voted simply on what they read on their screens, without context, without hearing arguments for and against - and on formulations written by HQ. A travesty of democracy - and now enshrined in YP.

It is excellent that members opted to "explicitly signal YP is a socialist party" - only 19.74% voted against. There is, of course, no explanation of what 'socialism' means and Corbyn probably has something very different in mind than Marxists. Less positive is that members also voted to keep the formulation: "Your Party should be a mass party rooted in the broadest possible social alliance, with the working class at its heart."

The two options given were either to "keep the whole sentence" (vote yes) or delete the words, "mass" and "broadest possible social alliance" (vote no). As if you could not build a mass party based on the working class alone! Another entirely manipulated vote. It is no surprise that 'yes' won with 67.9% of the vote, given the choices.

Amendments

These were all part of the so-called 'roadmap amendments', formulated and pre-chosen by HQ - and members were not allowed to amend them. Before conference, we were able to submit our own amendments, for a short window of 36 hours - and then had another 36 hours to find other members to endorse them, so they could become 'priority amendments'. Over 500 were submitted - but not even 100 were published. Most amendments were either disqualified, often without any reason given, but most of them just sat there as 'drafts' (they still do!). The ones that were allowed through by HQ speak

volumes. Three examples will suffice:

■ The Socialist Unity Platform submitted over a dozen amendments, based on the Sheffield Demands.¹ Two of them made it through, including one stating that "MPs and all public officeholders should receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker, with the rest being donated to the party." It quickly received hundreds of endorsements. A similar amendment, submitted by the Democratic Socialists (DSYP), was ruled out of order because it was replicating the SUP one. Then, after many hours, the SUP amendment was disqualified because of a minor cut-and-paste error in the text! But the DSYP one was never reinstated, despite both the SUP and DSYP protesting before and at conference.

This was no mistake or oversight either, because the same trick was repeated once more after somebody at HQ clicked the wrong button and wiped out all endorsements and voting had to be restarted. Had there been no minor error in the text, the amendments would not have made it past the 'draft' stage. HQ clearly did not want it to be heard.

■ A number of amendments were submitted to lower the threshold needed to recall MPs and councillors, including by the SUP. But only one amendment on the issue of 'recall' was allowed through (and was subsequently voted through) - about *local officers*. The principle of the amendment is right - it should be done by a simple majority in the branches. The problem is that a number of amendments that called for the same *vis-à-vis* "public office holders" were not even allowed to go through. So, in order to start recall proceedings against a councillor or an MP, this now requires "40% of all local members to sign a recall petition" - given a largely passive membership, almost impossible.

■ Interestingly, two harmless amendments on a 'people's budget', moved by the Socialist Party in England and Wales, made it to the conference floor, despite the fact that they received far fewer endorsements than many others. HQ does not seem to have a problem with SPEW at the moment - but that would probably change rather quickly if they started campaigning on something more radical than their ongoing and increasingly bizarre emphasis on YP having a federal structure, with special privileges for the trade union bureaucracy (ie, a Labour Party mark two).

Collective

The narrow vote in favour of "collective leadership" (51.6%) instead of the strong leadership model (48.4%) is excellent - communists definitely favour governance by equals, without anointed kings or queens. That does not mean there will not be any leaders on such a collective body. Lenin was the *de facto* leader of the Bolsheviks through his moral authority, not because he was elected as The Leader.

But we should be clear that this is no unqualified victory for the left, as some believe. Yes, HQ would no doubt have preferred the other option. However, if Corbyn and co really could not live with collective leadership, they would simply not have tabled it. Which is, of course,

what they did with all the amendments that they *really* did not approve of.

It looks to us like a rather blatant attempt to stop the 'dual leadership' model going forward that Zarah Sultana has been campaigning for. Neither Corbyn nor Sultana can now officially be crowned The Leader of YP or even serve on the officers' group, as MPs are barred from those positions. However, that affects both of them disproportionately, which is why this option was allowed through. Yes, Sultana's role has massively increased in recent months. But this is still King Corbyn's show, whether he is crowned or not. Despite his reputation taking a hell of a battering among YP members, the same cannot be said about his role nationally - YP is still known as 'Jeremy Corbyn's party'. His name continues to carry a lot of weight.

Many on the left are now pinning their hopes on the elections for the new CEC, which start in January. However, there is very little chance that these will be organised by HQ any more fairly than conference was. HQ will continue to manipulate, cheat and deceive members, just as it has done in the last few months. It does not need to miscount votes, as it has plenty of other tools in its arsenal:

■ For example, we note that the 'interim members rules' contain this little one: "Members must declare that they have no pending or past legal issues (criminal, civil or regulatory) that could cause reputational or financial harm to the party."²

Not convictions - but "issues". That kind of vagueness could easily be used against Sultana in the ongoing drama over her decision to launch a unilateral membership portal on September 18. As director of MOU Ltd, she is at the heart of the Information Commissioner's Office investigation into a possible "misuse" of data (thanks to the Corbyn clique reporting her). They might not dare expel her after what happened at the weekend - that could easily lead to YP imploding. But perhaps they will stop her from running for the CEC. We hear that HQ is seriously looking at both options.

■ Also, we should note that the election for the 16 'ordinary' places on the CEC will now take place by region, with each getting (roughly) two seats. This will make it a lot harder for the left to argue for a national political alternative.

■ There are four seats reserved for "public office holders" (MPs, councillors, mayors), four for representatives from "organised sections" and one each from Wales and Scotland - all in the attempt to favour rightwingers loyal to HQ.

■ Add to that the fact that the CEC will be elected via online OMOV voting, which favours big names and celebrities. We might possibly get a CEC stuffed with Corbynites (if they can find any after this weekend).

Despite all these limitations, we do, of course, favour collective leadership in general. But we should have no illusions that it will be easy for the left to control it.

It is positive that Sultana threw her weight behind collective leadership, once she knew that co-leadership was not on the cards. A smart move, which made her even more popular on the left, especially as there is some chance that she *might* actually have

won in a straight leadership contest. She has gone for the more democratic option. Plus, although she *used* to call for online votes on everything, including the leadership, it seems she has become aware of how easily it can be manipulated.

Momentum

The Corbyn clique clearly takes *inspiration* from Momentum. When the latter’s membership started to organise in branches and regions and increasingly challenged the misleadership of Jon Lansman, he used an email signed by Corbyn to manipulate Momentum members into voting to abolish all democratic structures - via online OMOV voting! That was the beginning of the end of that particular bureaucratic monstrosity. That enforced constitution also banned from Momentum membership anybody who had been expelled by the Labour Party as part of the witch-hunt against Corbyn and his supporters.

Last weekend unfortunately showed that Corbyn still has not learned any lessons from his defeat as Labour leader. If one was very favourable to him, one *could* argue that it was because of his political isolation on Labour’s national executive committee that he ended up, perhaps reluctantly, bowing to the right, accepting the anti-Semitism smear campaign, watching silently, as his general secretary, Jennie Formby, threw many of his own supporters, including close personal friends, to the wolves. Chris Williamson, Jackie Walker, Marc Wadsworth, Graham Bash and many other Corbyn supporters were publicly smeared, suspended and expelled. The right was admittedly very strong and benefited from the active support of the bourgeois media and the pro-Zionist lobby.

But the same really cannot be said of Your Party. There is no pressure from the right that *could* be used to justify the fact that, on the eve of conference, a number of leading members of the Socialist Workers Party were expelled. No valid reason why the press pass of Counterfire leader John Rees was withdrawn or why his comrade, Michael Lavalette, was not allowed to go into conference, unlike other councillors who were, despite not being sortitioned either (both were eventually waved in by King Jeremy).

There is no possible excuse this time around. The victim of one of the biggest witch-hunts in British history has become the witch-hunter general. The mind boggles. As a fig leaf, Karie Murphy quickly made up a set of “interim membership rules”,³ which were published on YP’s website on the Friday before conference. Under point 4, “Exclusive membership”, we read that “members may not be a member of any other national political party in the UK or abroad”.

These expulsions were no mistake, as some naives seem to think: after all, didn’t Jeremy Corbyn tell reporters in Liverpool that they were only expelled because “the SWP is registered with the electoral commission, therefore it is another party”? And didn’t it turn out that this is untrue? It hardly matters if Corbyn was fibbing or if he really did not know better. SWP comrades have confirmed that they remain expelled.

The Corbyn clique has picked on the easiest victim first: the SWP remains widely loathed - and not just because of the cover-up of the rape allegations against ‘comrade Delta’. No doubt, the *plan* was that it would soon be followed out the door by many others. Perhaps Counterfire is next on the list, and probably the CPGB. Followed by anybody else who speaks up and causes problems.

However, the mood at conference clearly showed that the membership reject any kind of purge. But this

does not mean that HQ will not try to conduct one. It is important that members and branches now speak out loudly against the expulsions - and refuse to implement them, as comrades in Sheffield have just done. The left must continue its fight for Your Party to become a party of the whole working class - which, needless to say, must encompass the whole left too. We need *real* dual membership.

The SUP’s amendment on the issue read: “All left groups, large and small, should be positively welcomed into the party. Members should have full rights to organise openly into tendencies or platforms, permanent or temporary, and advocate publicly for political positions, even if they differ from the current majority.” Of course, the amendment was never allowed to go to conference.

Dual membership

The ‘debate’ around the issue of dual membership was, perhaps, the most dishonest of the whole conference. Members were only able to choose between either banning dual membership outright (option B) or allowing the newly elected CEC to draw up a white list of organisations, “where they have been approved by the CEC as aligning with the party’s values, to include those with whom the party cooperates electorally. The approved list shall be subject to ongoing CEC review and annual ratification by national conference” (option A).

Option A won with 69.2% of the vote. As with all other votes, there was no method to abstain or choose ‘neither’. No amendments to these two options were permitted either, despite the fact that the feedback from the regional assemblies clearly showed that many do not agree with either formulation. Members ended up voting for option A because they wanted to show their opposition to expulsions.

It was rather entertaining to see the chair scrambling around to get members to speak in *support* of the dreadful option B. They eventually found the infamous ‘Kika from Cambridge’, who had been kicked out of the WhatsApp group of the tame YP Connections Network a few months ago for witch-hunting leftwingers and, as it turns out, being in the group under false pretences - she was never elected to represent Cambridge YP in the network and even stopped the group there from holding such an election, probably because she knew she would

not win. She has since been appointed by HQ to run some facilitator training sessions and is probably hoping to get onto the CEC (by mentioning her here we hope to prevent that).

We should not think for a moment that this rule on dual membership is mainly aimed at members of the Green Party, Labour or, for that matter, rightwing parties. There are plenty of rules already requiring members to support Your Party’s programme, rules and standing orders. No, we have now seen the evidence that this is, very clearly, for the purpose of getting rid of the “Marxist sects”, as Karie Murphy calls them. They are not respectable enough for the kind of party the Corbyn clique wants to run. And HQ probably hopes to get rid of a large block of members voting the ‘wrong’ way. Corbyn is happy enough to stand next to the SWP’s Lewis Nielsen as part of the We Demand Change campaign (in fact he did so two days before he expelled him), to let John Rees organise the troops, so he can march in front of a banner of the Stop the War Coalition, and to brush up his anti-racist credentials by speaking at events organised by the SWP’s front, Stand Up to Racism. But he has once again been convinced by those around him to do the unprincipled, shameful thing.

This is not just a politically appalling decision that will increasingly take the shine from Saint Jeremy: it is also short-sighted. After all, for somebody so focused on electoral work, Corbyn must be aware that Your Party requires a serious number of foot soldiers to deliver leaflets, canvass, run street stalls.

SUP

Considering the bureaucratic shenanigans and the fear of much of the organised left at being labelled ‘wreckers’, it is perhaps no surprise that, when it came to the ratification of the four amended conference documents, no joint voting advice could be agreed upon by the groups in Socialist Unity Platform.

At first, it looked like SUP would ask supporters to reject the constitution at least. But then Zarah Sultana’s husband, Craig Lloyd, started lobbying groups to vote *in favour* of it - allegedly because of a rumour that Corbyn had told his supporters to vote *against* the constitution. A bizarre and untrue story, based on what looks like a single tweet by a Corbyn loyalist. Amazingly, this fake story, coupled with Sultana’s advice, spooked

enough organisations to actively support the constitution. Groups like the Democratic Socialists (DYSP) changed their advice mid-election and we must admit that the CPGB’s Jack Conrad too was (very briefly) convinced to recommend a vote in favour of the document.

And so a final opportunity to show at least some *symbolic* resistance to the way conference was stitched up was unfortunately lost. Much of the left ended up voting in favour of a constitution that enshrines a witch-hunt and can easily be used against them too. Considering that only 6,941 people voted on the constitution, the left could have delivered an embarrassing blow to the leadership. Instead, the result of 90.28% in favour would make Nicolae Ceausescu blush.

It remains to be seen if SUP will exist beyond conference. It organised a very good fringe event on the Saturday, with a rousing final event.⁴ It played an excellent role in the run-up to conference, bringing diverse political groups together on the basis of their support for the Sheffield Demands,⁵ which call for democracy and openness in Your Party. They spread like a wildfire and were discussed up and down the country, in the branches and the regional assemblies. Some of the demands won:

- A collective leadership, with the CEC electing officers from among its numbers.
- HQ deleted a clause demanding ‘confidentiality’ (though that still features in the ‘interim membership rules’).
- Membership is now open to anyone who lives in the UK and no longer excludes migrants and refugees who do not hold residents’ rights.
- Branches are no longer *forced* to organise local assemblies, which have been entirely downgraded. There is no longer any suggestion that the assemblies should be able to initiate or decide on the party’s policies or even its candidates, as proposed in the first set of documents. Local community organising structures “shall be defined and run by the local parties”.
- Branches can now also choose not to organise along constituency lines.

Clearly, HQ was worried about SUP and paid close attention. When SUP proposed an emergency motion calling on conference to elect a small group of ‘returning officers’ to take the CEC election out of the hands of the Corbyn clique, they came up with their own ‘Members’ Oversight

Committee’: Five YP members, chosen by sortition, are now to “act as caretakers, executing the democratic wishes of the party, as voted on by members in the founding conference”. Of course, they will not do that - Karie Murphy will stay firmly in charge.

There certainly is a need and a space within Your Party to cohere and organise the left: for example, in the run-up to the CEC elections, but also in cohering the much-needed fightback below.

Democratic Bloc

In this context, we should report that the centrist Democratic Bloc of former Momentum vice-chair Mish Rahman walked out of the SUP over the conference weekend. Its official reason was a rather tame tweet by Max Shanly (responsible for chairing SUP meetings) on the question of dual membership. As comrade Shanly quite rightly outlined, the winning option was almost identical to what DB had initially proposed: “It is literally lifted direct from your own proposals! It’s on your website!!!”⁶ If anything, it is even worse than what the YP constitution now states, because it demands that ‘approved parties’ also have to “share their books with the new party’s NPC - so that we can understand the size of their membership, their finances, their GDPR compliance and their disciplinary procedures.”⁷

That tweet was just the excuse the DB was looking for. Its departure is no great loss - quite the opposite. It had played the role of leading the rightwing guard in SUP. In order to make it seem like *it* was the main democratic opposition, it stopped SUP initiatives from going forward and, crucially, led the campaign against SUP presenting an emergency motion in Liverpool, which was calling for a reconstituted conference and the election of an emergency leadership.

DB was not the only group worried about an active rebellion being seen as “wrecking the process”, but it was certainly the best at convincing others that the SUP should stick to playing by the rules. The last SUP organising meeting before conference managed to turn this around again, with a small majority voting that SUP should at least *support* the motion that Counterfire and the SWP were planning on moving (but were not able to). But, by this time, it was too late to start cohering supporters or indeed convincing those in Liverpool to wage a proper fightback.

In reality, the left now has a year to turn some of the most stupid and undemocratic conference decisions around - that is how long it will be that changes to the constitution and standing orders will only require a simple majority: after that, a “two thirds super majority.” So, for a start, we need to campaign for a reconstituted conference within those 12 months.

The left has certainly lost a battle this weekend - we were never going to win conference by sticking to ‘legal’ routes, as they were almost entirely closed down by the unelected leadership. The turnout in Liverpool showed that we probably *could* have won, as a majority of participants were clearly from the radical left wing of the party. And we will probably lose some more battles: for example, when it comes to the CEC.

But, if we learn some lessons about what went wrong, we *might* yet win the war ●

Notes

1. dsyp.org/sup.
2. www.yourparty.uk/rules.
3. *Ibid*.
4. The main video of the SUP fringe is here (more are being processed this week): www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp4tCCfIcjA.
5. docs.google.com/document/d/1bMMvEv-tt.
6. x.com/maxshanly/status/1994451068797751720.
7. www.dembloc.com/party#party-building.

No purge in Your Party!

Resolution agreed by the Sheffield YP branch meeting on December 2:
This branch notes:

1. We welcome that Your Party was officially launched on November 29-30 as a “socialist” party with “the working class at its heart”. However, there were serious democratic deficits, including the fact that members were presented with limited choices, with hundreds of amendments having been ruled out of order or never even published.

2. This was particularly problematic on the question of YP membership requirements, where members could only choose between two options:

■ Option A - Dual membership with aligned allied parties: Members shall be permitted to hold membership in other national political parties, where they have been approved by the CEC as aligning with the party’s values, to include those with whom the party cooperates electorally. The approved list shall be subject to ongoing CEC review and annual ratification by national conference.

■ Option B - No dual membership: Members may not hold membership in any other national political party.

3. Many members voted for Option A, because they oppose expulsions and want to build a party of the whole left. But, contrary to its title, it does not allow for “dual membership” in any real sense of the word. Groups have to be added to an ‘approved list’. They cannot even do so until the CEC has been elected in February/March.

4. No amendments to these two options were permitted, despite the fact that the feedback from the regional assemblies showed that many do not agree with either formulation.

5. A number of prominent members of the Socialist Workers Party have been expelled from Your Party on the eve of YP launch conference, soon after new ‘interim membership rules’ were added to the website. Jeremy Corbyn told reporters in Liverpool that the expulsions were down to the fact that “the Socialist Workers Party is registered with the electoral commission, therefore it is another

party”. Despite the fact that this is incorrect, SWP members remain expelled. This branch believes:

6. As we have outlined in the Sheffield Demands, we believe that “all left groups, large and small, should be positively welcomed into the party. Members should have full rights to organise openly into tendencies or platforms, permanent or temporary, and advocate publicly for political positions, even if they differ from the current majority.”

7. Witch-hunts and purges have a habit of quickly spiralling out of control, as we have seen in Momentum and the Labour Party. We fear that members of other parties could soon be expelled and excluded too.

This branch resolves:
8. We will continue to welcome members of the SWP and all other socialist organisations to fully participate in our branch, on all levels.

9. We demand the immediate reinstatement of all expelled members and will actively campaign to overturn this ban ●

YOUR PARTY



Zarah Sultana vs Corbyn and his fearful clique

A triumph for citizen Sultana

Corbyn's clique began the witch-hunt on day one, got its organisational strategy and standing orders passed and remains firmly in control of the levers of power. However, the left is clearly winning the battle for hearts and minds. **Jack Conrad** gives the view from inside the ACC hall

What is now officially known as Your Party had a stormy first conference. The witch-hunt, as we feared, began on day one. The SWP's national secretary, Lewis Nielsen, was told he had been expelled on the way up from London. By the way, he shared an Avanti carriage with Jeremy Corbyn and his entourage (and, generously, Lewis offered to buy them a cup of tea). Others were turned away at the door, including councillors Michael Lavalette (Counterfire) and James Giles (Democratic Bloc).

However, ironically, because of the failure to cover transport and accommodation costs, and a pervasive 'why bother' rank-and-file attitude, given that there would be no conference votes, there was an unexpectedly shrunken sortition pool. Accordingly, a healthy proportion of those actually going to Liverpool were made up of the left ... and the organised left too. Not because we are rich - we aren't. It's just that we are a dedicated lot, relish a good political fight when it is on offer and, above all, we know what is at stake, given capitalism's polycrisis, the abject failure of the mainstream parties, the Green Party diversion and the spectacular rise of Reform and the far right. Historically it is, yes, socialism or barbarism.

So, instead of 13,000 members attending what would amount to a rally over the Saturday and Sunday, conference happened not in the Arena and Conference Centre's biggest space. Rather we met in the downscaled smaller hall: capacity around 1,500. There were about 1,200 of us there each day (and most, at least those whom I asked, were attending

over two days, not just one). There was, note, always plenty of room on the back, tiered seats.

Given the absence of conference votes, you have to rely on a subjective assessment when judging the size of the left at conference: eg, how many were giving out leaflets and selling papers, how many faces I recognised, how many recognised my face (not least from Online Communist Forum). Above all, however, there were the boos, the clapping and the cheering. My guess - and it is nothing more - is that the left accounted for around three-fifths of those who were there ... and Jeremy Corbyn, Len McCluskey and Karie Murphy knew it and didn't like it at all.

Failed revolution

We wanted the Liverpool conference, for all its many defects and shortcomings, to declare itself the *legitimate* sovereign authority in Your Party. Not through a coup, obviously, but a clear, unambiguous, democratic vote.

However, the attempt to carry through a revolution at the beginning of conference fell completely flat. Though agreed by the SWP, Counterfire and the Socialist Unity Platform, our democratic rising never happened. The spark did not even spark ... let alone set conference alight.

Counterfire's Eleanor Badcock did challenge the agenda near the beginning of proceedings. However, she directed her remarks to the chair, not conference as a whole. Apart from comrades sitting on the right-front row, who could hear her, few knew what was going on. Sitting on the

left-front row, I instinctively knew what she was doing, but, even though I rushed to support her, I have no idea what she actually said. The chair brusquely dismissed her, and stewards and FGH security guards quickly dealt with her. Comrade Badcock was effortlessly escorted to meet the conference arrangements committee (and then totally disappeared from my view thereon after).

Because those present were chosen by sortition, conference did politically reflect the majority ... albeit with a highly diluted, largely uncoordinated and inexperienced left in the conference hall itself. Most left leaders did not win the YP lottery ... though I did fleetingly see Lindsey German and briefly talked to Hannah Sell. Further diluting the politics, the chair chose floor speakers at random (from what I could tell). There were, though, plenty of own goals. Left comrades, such as Claire Laker-Mansfield, Amy Leather, Tam Dean Burn, and not a few others besides, made outstanding, passionate, barnstorming - albeit three-minute - speeches.

Chairs would interrupt mid-message, accusing them, accurately, of not talking to the set (often totally boring, if not totally stupid) agenda item, but instead making a protest speech. Behind the scenes, the event team - perhaps Oly Durose himself - cut off the livestream broadcast too.

Inside the hall, and not constantly looking at social media, I did not clock anything about that - till, that is, the end of the first day, when I left the ACC. Walking through the phalanx of paper sellers - before heading to the SUP's packed fringe meeting - I came across a Socialist Alternative comrade

and congratulated him on Claire Laker-Mansfield's speech. Excellent, the best of the day, I said. Not flattery - she was good, very good. I was also genuinely amazed to learn of the YP censorship ... which has more than a whiff of Stalinite thought control about it. However, thankfully, in the age of PCs, smartphones and laptops it is bound to backfire. Share, share and share again.

Because of our well-publicised plan for moving a point of order, the mainstream press was full of nonsense, such as "Communists plot takeover of Your Party".¹ Actually, of course, we wanted a democratic vote and conference setting its own agenda and, crucially, electing an emergency, a provisional, a temporary leadership, tasked with encouraging, organising and financing the branches *and* preparing a fully democratic conference in 2026, based on elected and accountable branch delegates (we would recommend by STV).²

FGH private police

The Corbyn clique responded to our plan with two countermeasures. Firstly, by unilaterally ruling points of order out of order - a travesty, when it comes to any sort of democratic organisation. Labour still allows a conference delegate, who believes that there is something untoward, to raise a point of order. The chair makes a ruling and puts it to a vote.³ Essentially, the same happens in parliament.⁴ Company AGMs too.⁵ But not with Your Party in Liverpool.

Secondly, FGH was brought in. One of the UK's largest privately owned security companies, FGH has between 1,000 to 5,000 people on its

books (depending on demand). As a private police force, FGH works in close cooperation with official police forces. As such it stands fully in the tradition of America's notorious Pinkertons. Founded in 1850, Allan Pinkerton's private police force provided security for Abraham Lincoln, but went on to carry out operations directed against organised labour. Pinkertons infiltrated trade unions and acted as factory security guards and strike breakers.

There were uniformed FGH guards everywhere, not least lined up along the front and sides of the huge, raised stage. Most of them were on the living wage or just above ... and bored silly. I did my best to fraternise. They had to keep their eyes on the conference floor and acted on instructions coming to them from ubiquitous earpieces. Corbyn and his clique clearly feared us and did not trust us to behave with due civility and deference.

The choreography was awful. Humble attendees, such as myself, were separated off from those on the stage by a good 30 feet of empty space staffed by FGH guards and a 'don't cross' barrier. Beyond that constituted a no-go zone. When I took photographs of speakers and dared put a toe beyond the barrier, I was politely warned off by FGH guards (being a good boy, I did as I was told). The whole arrangement reminded me of a Communist Party of China congress (albeit done on the cheap). Top leaders are arranged on a podium located at a considerable distance from the 2,000 or so ordinary delegates. The seating visibly reflecting the power structure.

Having failed to carry out a revolution, the left was forced to

fight on the terrain of reform. Some wanted to do that from the very beginning, because they believe YP is reformable. It isn't. Others, such as ourselves, use the struggle for reforms to organise, to educate and to prepare.

That meant we were forced to fight within the Corbyn clique's agenda, structures and according to their rules. We were never going to win then ... even if we won. The Corbyn clique gave us choices not of our choosing: 'would you rather die through strychnine or a bullet?'. The clique, of course, claimed that the membership made the choices through their submissions. Frankly, I don't believe a word of it. The clique chose ... doubtless using the wonders of voodoo doodoo AI.

Light of day

Left amendments which had demonstrable, widespread support never saw the light of day. What a surprise. Members were given notification that they had been selected to go to Liverpool very late in the day, and the same went with the agenda and the short list of amendments that would be debated in the hall.

Some see nothing more than gross inefficiency in all this. Surely not the case. Karie Murphy, responsible for the whole jamboree, is an experienced operator. She knows all about the dark arts of the trade union and labour bureaucracy ... and applied them to the Liverpool conference in spades. So, in actual fact, we are dealing with cynical calculation, not amateurish bungling.

It should be stressed, moreover, that this is a form of the class struggle that ultimately serves capitalism by cohering a bureaucracy that keeps the working class firmly under control. We have seen what this means in the fate of European social democracy. Leaders of what once were working class parties committed not to ending capitalism, but to managing, propping up, benefitting from capitalism. The Fabians in Britain providing the theory (marginalism, positivism, managerialism, gradualism⁶).

Of course, the Corbyn clique aspires not to establish a Labour Party mark two (that is the obsession of the Socialist Party in England and Wales⁷). No, instead the model is some kind of British version of Podemos, Five Star and La France Insoumise (theory provided by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, coming via James Schneider's 'movement populism'⁸). Marxist politics are rejected in favour of putting together a rainbow coalition, building mass electoral support and getting into government - with a view to enacting radical reformist measures. The army, the legal system, the civil service, the constitutional monarchy go largely unquestioned.

Instead of the dreadfully 'old-fashioned' ways of doing things in the workers' movement, like strong, autonomous branches, the election of accountable conference delegates and democratic debate, there is a leader cult, sortition, performative consultation, formless local assemblies and media manipulation.

How did that model fare in Liverpool? Well the *evolved* political statement, constitution, standing orders and organisational strategy all survived. But the left made its mark. Not least when it came to defeating the idea of electing The Leader by plebiscite - a big defeat for the Corbyn clique. Instead there is the principle of collective leadership. So we don't have a king, nor do we have an empress. We are all citizens of a (flawed) Party Republic. Hurrah!

We scored other victories too. Though given horrible choices - ie, the least worst - there was, nonetheless, in the main, a left-right choice that could be made. In every case the left won the vote ... not, of course, in the hall.

Every (pinched) debate featured only a handful of speakers and ended flatly with no vote, not even an indicative vote ... till, that is, the next day, when the plebiscite results came in. Nonetheless, the left won across the board.

Here, it is not simply a question of word. There is the question of spirit too.

True, we did not win the war. Once we fluffed our democratic rising, that was altogether impossible. Nonetheless, we won a string of moral victories, battles or, if you like, skirmishes. This is very important politically.

Crucially that included the home front. When it came to the OMOV votes on collective leadership, dual membership, socialism, the working class and branch organisation, what was *claimable* by the left won - sometimes with a wafer-thin majority, but mostly with a crushing one. Corbyn and his clique lost.

The only vote Corbyn won was the Your Party name. But, given the even more unpalatable others on offer, that counts for naught. Myself, I would have, if I could have, voted for 'none of the above'. But I couldn't - that option was unavailable. As a result, I didn't bother to vote on this one at all.

To my best knowledge Jeremy Corbyn is a very nice man on a personal level. He is always ready to help and would not hurt a fly. He is the epitome of the 'Good' character (the Delusional Messiah) in Peter Barnes's wonderful black comedy play/film, *The ruling class* (1968). Fittingly his fringe meeting on Friday night at Liverpool's The Black-E promoted not his conference plans. Rather it was a joint-event with Len McCluskey and featured poetry, music and a little, inconsequential chatter. There were plenty of empty seats.

Politically Corbyn is completely indecisive and easily swayed by friends and foes alike (we saw that over Brexit and anti-Semitism, when he led the Labour Party). Either way, he is not theoretically educated, strategically far-sighted or tactically astute ... nor is he a good speaker

He lacks the ability to provide a clear historical narrative, his politics are of the clawingly sentimental kind, his righteous anger always appears feigned and his jokes invariably fall flat. His Liverpool speeches were just about competent, but did not address our differences. His targets were the usual suspects: Sir Keir and the Labour right, Nigel Farage and Reform, Donald Trump and US imperialism. His recipe for success: 'show respect for each other' and, by implication, unite under his leadership. So nothing about the purge, nothing about the lack of democracy and nothing about the negative lessons of Labourism.

Your Party's other two Independent Alliance MPs are noticeably unimpressive. Of course, their 2024 general election victories were amazing. But neither of them are the fighters for socialism that we need. Shockat Adam is an optometrist and runs a small business. His speech was very much that of a well-meaning, middle class political amateur. When he called Jeremy Corbyn a "political rock star", myself and others near me laughed out loud.

Ayoub Khan was nothing less than embarrassing. A Liberal Democrat since the early 2000s - he served as a Birmingham councillor - he remains a Lib Dem at heart. He told us how shocked he was that they tried to stop him speaking out over Gaza in May 2024. But he could clearly tolerate the 2010-15 Conservative-Lib Dem coalition, its imposition of austerity and the retention of student tuition fees without rebelling. It is worth adding that it was the coalition government under the Liberal, David Lloyd George, which agreed the Balfour

declaration in 1917. It committed Britain to establishing a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.

Different order

Zarah Sultana is of a different order. She boycotted the first day in solidarity with those who had been expelled or excluded. That garnered lots of press and TV coverage ... and further endeared her to the left. She turned up on Sunday afternoon, along with a little bevvvy of supporters, including councillor James Giles, and made her much anticipated "first contribution".

Her speech was well crafted, well delivered and well received. She praised Jeremy Corbyn, but only to talk about how the old must give way to the new (applause). She attacked the witch-hunt, the lack of democracy, the cynical manipulation. "Worthy", she said, of the "Labour right" (thunderous applause). She declared herself proudly anti-Zionist, lambasted capitalism, demanded socialism and called for the abolition of the monarchy (thunderous applause and cheering). Shrewdly, she also welcomed the vote for a collective leadership: "a victory for the membership" (standing ovation).

Jeremy Corbyn, Karie Murphy and Len McCluskey were humiliated. Corbyn, on the stage, had to clap now and then. It was clear, however, that inside he was squirming. I almost felt sorry for him ... but, of course, I too joined the standing ovation for Sultana. Effectively she has made herself the leader of the YP left ... and is perhaps YP leader in waiting too (not The Leader, with a capital 'T' and 'L' now, of course).

Should we have illusions in citizen Sultana? No, certainly not. Like Corbyn, she is a career politician. Typical of the Labour left nowadays, she cut her teeth on the National Union of Students executive and Young Labour before winning her Coventry South seat in 2019. Instinctively she still reaches for identity politics. Nonetheless, at least in terms of rhetoric, she is shifting to the left and this is welcome - not least because it gives the forces of socialism and communism a bigger audience.

As for me, I came away from Liverpool experiencing neither the slough of despond nor the bliss of elation. But I did come away with hope ... and, to borrow a phrase, "revolution is an act of hope".⁹ ●

Notes

- 1. R Cline 'Communists plot takeover of Your Party' *The Daily Telegraph* November 28 2025.
- 2. J Conrad 'Neither king nor empress' *Weekly Worker* November 27 2025: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1563/neither-king-nor-empress.
- 3. labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/15258a_21-How-Conference-Works-FINAL-Electronic.pdf.
- 4. www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/point-of-order.
- 5. www.charlesrussellspeechlys.com/globalassets/pdfs/services/corporate/2020/2020---annual-general-meetings---guidance-for-company-secretaries.
- 6. G Foote *The Labour Party's political thought: a history* London 1997, pp24-32.
- 7. While you can take the comrades out of the Labour Party, you cannot take Labourism out of the comrades. Speaking to SPEW's annual Socialism school, general secretary Hannah Sell argued that trade union affiliation is essential if you are going to classify a party as a workers' party. This is what she said: "We would add that the Greens are not a workers' party, because the organised working class - 6.5 million organised in trade unions - has no say whatsoever in its decision-making." Her ideal is a federal party which allows all socialist organisations to affiliate and has the trade unions at the core. Without that "unfortunately, Your Party, at least in its beginnings, is also not going to be a workers' party". So, Your Party should be "approaching trade union executives [ie, the trade union bureaucracy] saying 'we want to discuss how our MPs can represent your interests in parliament, and how together we can start to build a party in which your union's members have a collective voice'" (*The Socialist* November 20-26 2025).
- 8. See J Schneider *Our bloc: how we win* London 2022.
- 9. Often, but wrongly, attributed to Peter Kropotkin.

Two rebel speeches

Claire Laker-Mansfield of Soct Alt



My name's Claire, I'm from Dartford Your Party. I'm also a member of Socialist Alternative.

I want to speak on the name, 'Your Party', not because I think it's a particularly good name, but because I think this *should be* our party. And I also want to speak on the reason why we're having this agenda - this debate now on the agenda - when we've been given four options, none of which were particularly popular, as far as I can see.

It's because there were amendments that were submitted by hundreds of members all around the country, which talk about the issues that people on this conference floor wanted debated - amendments which have been silenced because they call into question an unelected clique that has been doing damage to this party. Earlier, we heard a discussion about the potential damage, the 'red scare' of leftwing groups, of the people who have been on the streets building these branches, getting people out against the far right, organising against cuts. We were talked about as if we were the danger.

I know that more damage was done when Zarah Sultana was about to go on *Question time*, when she was being attacked by the MPs who were supposed to be stewarding the

founding of this party. That's done more damage than anything that any of us have done.

And this should be our party. But that means that we should be allowed to debate the amendments that have been submitted. We should be allowed to talk about the clauses which have been inserted, sneakily, to allow witch-hunts through the back door, which we know the vast majority of members of this party are against. We should make this our party because we want it to be founded on working class struggle. We want it to bring together, yes, not just left groups: we want it to bring together working class people, who are fighting back in their communities, workers who are on strike. We want it to bring together Palestine campaigners, anti-war activists.

And all of those people have politics. They don't come to this party as blank pages. We are working class activists who are fighting back.

We have politics, we have ideas, we debate those ideas. Let's make this our party - not in name, but in reality. That's what I'm here to defend. And I believe this is a stitch-up - there should have been a debate on the amendments that were submitted.

Thank you ●

Tam Dean Burn of Communist Platform



Thank you. My name is Tam Dean Burn from Glasgow and the Equity union. There is an absolute necessity to start trusting the membership, but there is also another necessity. We have been shown time and time again here that we cannot trust those who are currently in the position of power and leadership. They have failed us, comrades.

It is abundantly clear that the

membership must be given power in the branches. We must be given immediately all of the data, so that we can reach out to the 850,000 people who showed great interest in this party and we need to win them back. We need the data and we need the money in the branches in order to facilitate the possibility of democracy genuinely taking root in this organisation.

Because until now it has almost become a complete sham. We have shown that the membership is still finding ways to express itself. As Zarah said, we want every socialist in this country to be welcome in this organisation and to unite the left to really embed democracy. Without democracy, the working class is never going to be able to fulfil its historic mission of socialism. Socialism demands democracy, and democracy demands membership delegate structures, so please vote for the membership, vote for the branches and give us the data! ●

SULTANA

Socialism or barbarism

She called herself anti-Zionist, condemned the witch-hunt, demanded the abolition of the monarchy, denounced the evils of capitalism and set conference alight. This is the **Zarah Sultana** speech in full

Thank you for being here in sunny Liverpool today. And it gives me extra pleasure in saying that, as a Liverpool fan and as always, ‘You’ll never walk alone’.

I want to stand. I want to start off by thanking all the workers that have made this conference possible. I want to extend my solidarity to the PCS union and the Tate workers on strike.

I am so honoured to co-found this party with Jeremy, who I have an enormous amount of admiration and respect for. I know that I speak for all of us, when I say he gave us hope when he became leader of the Labour Party. But now we are building something new: Your Party, with more than 55,000 members. In just a few months, we have built something no-one in Westminster believed was possible: a mass, democratic, working class movement - the largest socialist party in the UK since the 1940s.

And this, our inaugural conference, is historic. More than 2,000 delegates in this hall, with thousands more watching online and voting. And today we will finalise the structures of a party that belongs to its members. Not to MPs, not to donors. Not to nameless, faceless, unelected bureaucrats, but to you. Some will say that the decision to adopt the collective leadership model is a win for me. It is not. It is your win: it is you, the members, who have won. But you need to deliver that win. So, if you’re watching at home, take out your phone. If you’re in this hall, vote ‘yes’.

But, before we move forward, we have to confront what took place yesterday. The expulsions, the bans, the censorship on conference floor are unacceptable. It’s undemocratic. It’s an attack on members and this movement. And those decisions were made at the top, not by you. Many of those people expelled found out only after they had arrived in Liverpool. People who had travelled across the country, took time off work, booked hotels, spent hundreds of pounds that they could not easily spare discovered at the door that they had been barred. And the shocking sight of a Muslim woman being manhandled and dragged out of conference is something that should shame any party.

These actions come straight out of the Labour right’s handbook. The same playbook we have all lived through for years. The witch-hunts, the smears, the intimidation, the bullying, the legal threats, and the leaks to the Murdoch press. Let me be absolutely clear. The members will not stand for this. The movement will not stand for this. And I did not leave the Labour Party, you did not leave the Labour Party, to create just another Labour Party.

Everywhere I’ve travelled in over 30 towns and cities across the country - from Worthing to Glasgow, from Merthyr Tydfil to Birmingham - working class people have said the same thing: this party must be run by its members, not MPs. This party must never be captured from above. This party must never become a Labour Party mark two. And that is why we are here - to build a new kind of politics: democratic, principled and rooted in the power of the working class.

Rule of rich

Everyone in this room and everyone outside of this room knows what’s wrong with Britain. Nothing works and nothing gets better. This country is



What the comrades thought

rigged to serve the rich and powerful who bought and paid for it. And we plan on beating them before they lead us into fascism. Our diagnosis is simple: in the last 20 years, megadonations to political parties from the rich haven’t just doubled; they haven’t just trebled: they have gone up sevenfold.

When prices go up on your weekly shop, supermarket bosses are pocketing that and then buying politicians. When your rents soar, landlords use your cash to lobby MPs, so their interests are protected. When the seas rise and our towns flood, energy bosses buy another private jet, while we all pay the price. The billionaires buy up our newspapers, our social media platforms, our TV channels, gaslighting us into blaming our neighbours for the mess. They want you angry, but just not at themselves.

Getting worse

Our message to our friends and our neighbours is, if you want to know why your life is getting harder and why everything keeps getting worse, you should know that the people who control your food, your home, your energy and your media - they are sending billions of your hard-earned money to the Cayman Islands. And they’ve got three political parties - Labour, the Conservatives, and Reform - to support them.

So you work harder for longer, for less, while politicians take money from poor kids and pensioners. Everything gets difficult, so offshore bank accounts get fatter. The only thing that none of these old parties will ever say is that there is enough room for everyone in this country except for the renters who own Britain and charge us just for living in it. They are the real parasites and it’s about time they got what they deserve.

We have a weak and pathetic Labour government that is pushed this way and that, along with the political winds, because it does not have the political *will* to confront the parasites who own Britain. We are here to break up a system that humiliates our disabled friends and neighbours and deprives them of the cash that they need, while funnelling an extra £11 billion a year to arms companies.

That’s right: Rachel Reeves wants an extra £11 billion spent on defence every year, and all the old parties back it. Every second, £350 is spent of our money on war. That’s money into the pockets of shareholders for the merchants of death over the last two years, where that money has funded daily spy flights over the ruins of Gaza, aiding and abetting a genocide. This is a Labour government happy to oppress people abroad and at home.

This isn’t a coincidence. The politicians who attack the disabled in Liverpool and demonise the desperate arriving on small boats - they are the same people who blow up our world with war, occupation and genocide. But we know that the real enemy of the working class travels by private jet. So it’s not about stopping the boats: ordinary humans suffer everywhere, so that the mighty and powerful can sleep in silk sheets in their blood-soaked mansions.

As socialists, we stand with the oppressed everywhere, from Sudan to Congo. And let me say this loudly and proudly: I am an anti-Zionist. We must sever all ties with the genocidal, apartheid state of Israel. We must expel the ambassador and stand with the Palestinian people, until every inch of their land is free: from the river to the sea - a single democratic state with equal rights for all. And we must ensure there is a day of reckoning for those who have enabled genocide: eg. David Lammy and Shabana Mahmood.

As a movement, we care so deeply about Palestine. In part because we know that the starvation and annihilation of a people in distant lands shows what our political class would do to us if they thought they could get away with it. The same people who run Britain want you to believe that every refugee is a rapist, while they grab £12 million of taxpayers’ money to protect a parasite - Andrew Mounbatten-Windsor, who has never seen the inside of a cell or a courtroom.

What matters to the rulers of Britain is not the safety of women and girls: it’s the peace and pleasure of the powerful. What a sick society we live in, where our political and media class bend over backwards

for the royal family, including Prince Andrew, a close friend of the notorious paedophile, Jeffrey Epstein. That’s our money that used to provide him with housing. That’s our money that defended him in court. That’s our money that put food on his table. Well, not any more. We shouldn’t just abolish Andrew’s titles. We should abolish the monarchy.

The truth is we have an epidemic of fake populists who rail against every elite, until someone mentions a wealth tax and then suddenly they go quiet. Just look up Reform’s donors. They are bought and paid for by the parasites. But the real scandal is that this Labour government is mimicking them. When Farage says, ‘Kick an immigrant’, Starmer replies, ‘How hard?’ and shamefully uses the same language as Enoch Powell, calling us an ‘island of strangers’. We are not an ‘island of strangers’: we are an island that is suffering. And we see politicians constantly shifting the blame from people who actually have all the money. And then we have our home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, being endorsed by fascist Tommy Robinson.

Fight back

Our politics desperately needs an organised working class that fights back and says, ‘If you come for any of us, if you come for the pensioners among us, the disabled among us, the immigrants among us, the queer and trans among us, if you come for any of us, you will see our collective response. A politics that does not centre on the needs of the most marginalised isn’t worthy of the name ‘socialism’. That means saying loudly and unequivocally, ‘Refugees are welcome’.

The rise in transphobia we are seeing is deliberate. It is being stoked as a wider culture war, designed to divide us. And, just as with Muslims, with migrants, with disabled people, the goal is always the same. Find a scapegoat to distract people from who really holds the power. It is an old tactic of the ruling class: divide and rule. And our movement has to say with one voice: ‘We stand with our trans siblings, with migrants, with Muslims, with disabled people. We stand with the most marginalised.’

And I stand before you as a proud child from Birmingham. My grandparents came to this country after Britain’s rulers looted their homeland. We are here because they were there! I grew up being told by politicians and police officers that people in my neighbourhood were suspicious or worthless, because we committed two offences as soon as we were born: we were Muslim and we were working class - for which I will never apologise!

And, yes, the stakes are enormous. The old politics is dying and, if the new cannot be born, this will be the time of monsters: centrist politicians presiding over decline and decay, pushing people’s rage towards the far right. But from New York, in the very heart of empire, a new politics emerges. The new mayor, Zohran Mamdani - unapologetically socialist, unapologetically Muslim, unapologetically immigrant - built a campaign that proved what is possible when the working class unites people who look different, pray differently and love differently, but all wanting a life of dignity, where people and the planet thrive.

If we don’t win this global fight,

decay will give way to fascism. And people who look like me will be imprisoned in tents and deported to war zones, while everyone gets poorer - except for the hedge-fund managers, who donate to Labour, the Conservatives and Reform. But, if we win, we will aim to create a world renewed for future generations.

I’ve been thinking a lot about these stakes and it’s a huge responsibility to carry. You may have noticed that the process of starting up this party has had some hiccups. Some of that is my fault and for that I apologise. But I want you to know that my aim from the very start has been to ensure that this party is led by you, the members, and not MPs.

None of us have ever set up a new party before, never designed its structures from scratch, and that process has been messy. We have to get better at working with each other. We have to ensure that the best cure against any culture of backroom deals is people power. And that’s why I’ve been fighting for maximum member democracy. I know that I speak for many, when I say I don’t want a party of witch-hunts and stitch-ups. I want to work with every socialist in a spirit of comradeship and equality. And I want the working class to control this party, just as one day they will control the economy.

We know that control of our economy has to be taken away from the parasitical profiteers and into the hands of workers who actually generate our collective wealth. We are not here for tweaks of a broken system. We are not here just to lower some bills and sprinkle a wealth tax. We are here for a fundamental transformation of society.

Democracy

That means democracy in every workplace, every community, every corner of life. So, yes, we will reverse the failed experiments of Thatcherism by taking water, energy, our railways, transport and communications back into public ownership. But that cannot be the limits of our ambition. We must seek new horizons. The banking industry, food production, construction, and so much more, because we know this fundamental truth: the working class can run society better than the billionaires, the profiteers and the war criminals who rule over us today. People used to say that a week was a long time in politics, but these days it feels like everything can change in an hour or a day.

Whatever difficulties we’ve had in founding this party, that won’t matter if, from today, from now on, we face the working class in all of its diversity and say with a united voice something that all the capitalist politicians have given up on saying: that, in the sixth richest country in the world, life can be better. You can breathe clean air, eat good food and live in warm homes. You can spend less time working and more time with your loved ones. And you can look at your neighbours and know that they’re working hard like you (unless they happen to be billionaires, of course).

Finally, as a country, we face a stark choice. It’s socialism or barbarism. And I will leave you with one of my favourite quotes, which I’ve used at every event I’ve spoken at. It’s a quote from Arundhati Roy, who says: ‘Another world is not only possible: she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.’

Solidarity! Thank you so much ●

FRINGE

Ideas, unity, action

The aim was not to paper over differences, but to present them, explore them and debate them. Needless to say, this was not just a top-table event. Each session involved plenty of contributions from the floor. **Yassamine Mather** reports on the fringe meetings organised by the Socialist Unity Platform



There is a famous Persian proverb which essentially translates: “If God or destiny wills it, even the enemy can become the cause of something good.” In some ways, inadvertently, Jeremy Corbyn and the bureaucrats who were trying to stitch up the Your Party conference have achieved something many of us never thought we would see: a degree of real unity among the various groups of the radical left in Britain. Of course, it was a temporary tactical alliance and had its own problems, but we can build on this, as we will all face the expected witch-hunt in YP.

The Socialist Unity Platform was formed after a series of discussions convened by the Democratic Socialists of Your Party, who believe that unity between socialist groups and organisations can build the power needed to intervene effectively.

This process began with discussions at The World Transformed event in October, where a united proposal was put forward by various YP platforms and factions. The DSYF built on this success by broadening unity negotiations, issuing open invitations to groups across the British left and to YP proto-branches.

I attended several of the pre-conference meetings. Members of the following groups and organisations were present at some of these SUP

meetings: the Bolshevik Tendency, Campaign for a Mass Workers Party, Communist Party of Great Britain, Democratic Bloc, Democratic and Socialist Network, Democratic Socialists of Your Party, Greater Manchester Left Caucus, Haringey Socialist Alliance, Marxist Strategy, Merseyside Pensioners Alliance, Platform for a Democratic Party, Sheffield Left, Socialist Alternative, Socialist Workers Party, Spartacist League, Counterfire and the Trans Liberation Group, as well as individuals from YP proto-branches.

I must stress that this was not any kind of alliance, but merely a short-term series of coordinating meetings. Contrary to some media reports, SUP had no intention of disrupting the Liverpool conference. Our aim was always to oppose the standing orders and, when that failed, to ensure that as many speakers from the left as possible could get to the microphone. Given the speakers from the SWP, SPEW, SocAlt, Counterfire and the CPGB who addressed conference, that alone can be considered a victory.

Nevertheless, the SUP organising committee achieved a major success by planning the details of a nine-hour fringe meeting held on Saturday November 29. Its positive aspect was that a range of different views were

View from the back of conference: left had a majority, won the arguments, but failed to organise in a decisive, effective, revolutionary manner.

That needs to change

presented, although the early sessions were sparsely attended, because, to our surprise, many comrades from left groups and parties were sortitioned and ended up inside the conference hall.

If I am not mistaken, the fringe meeting required a great deal of effort to organise, and I do not think it would have happened without SUP comrades’ tireless work in reconciling conflicting proposals for subjects and speakers.

One issue - retrospectively a diversion - was the suggestion to livestream the conference inside the fringe meeting. This was inappropriate from the start: comrades cannot both listen to speakers and follow a livestream. Technically we managed it, but in practice many comrades - including some organisers - ended up sitting in the corridor with laptops and phones, following the livestream instead of attending the fringe.

Artificial

The first session was on ‘Digital democracy, crowd-editing and the problems with one member, one vote for leadership elections’. In this session Charlie Porter (DemSocs), patcon (of Metagov - “the laboratory for digital governance”) and I spoke.

Advocating the AI tool, Pol.is, patcon distinguished it from typical

“AI-assisted deliberation” tools that analyse a “soup of words”. Instead, Pol.is captures people’s reactions to individual ideas, creating a visual map of participants. This reveals subgroups and “boundaries”, helping to uncover “deep points of agreement” underlying disagreements. His core thesis is that “making these social and opinion-based boundaries visible is essential for productive group dialogue”.

I criticised what we know of the AI tool used by YP to summarise assembly transcripts, highlighting a “lack of transparency” - its workings being a ‘black box’ requiring blind trust. I echoed Inácio Vieira’s comments about the use of arbitrary metrics like “90% agreement”, which appeared to use a deceptive gimmick. Broadening the critique, I argued that such tools have an inherent bias, favouring the tech-savvy. They oversimplify debates and “cannot replicate the essential, dynamic process of live debate”. As a result, they are “fundamentally unsuited for core political debates” involving radical ideology, and for Marxists “real meetings where ideas are contested and debated remain irreplaceable”.

Charlie Porter (Democratic Socialists) offered a structural critique, arguing that digital tools create only a “veneer of mass engagement”,

while being exclusionary. He warned that they “undermine real political building” focused on local branches. A major danger is the creation of “hyperleaders” - charismatic, unaccountable figures, who gain direct digital mandates, entrenching separation from the base. This leads to “party fiefdoms” controlled by “party lords”. He argued these tools are “a poor substitute for in-person, branch-based democracy” and risk creating a “shallow, centralised, leader-focused party structure”.

Climate

The session on climate change and eco-socialism opened with Chris Saltmarsh of Ecosocialist Horizons and Tim Head from Organising for Popular Power. Chris explained why there was a need for this newly formed tendency to address the party’s failure to treat the climate crisis as central to its politics and strategy. He argued that climate and socialism are inseparable: socialism cannot be built on a collapsing ecological foundation, and the climate crisis cannot be solved under capitalism, which is structurally incapable of a rapid, planned transition. Eco-socialism is therefore essential rather than optional.

Chris outlined a dual strategy: a short-term tactical transition, focused on rapid decarbonisation, state action to discipline capital, and a combination of electoral interventions with strong grassroots movements; and a long-term eco-socialist transformation, aimed at democratising the economy, reconciling production with planetary limits, and going beyond decarbonisation to address the question of wider ecological breakdown. He described the climate crisis as the defining contradiction of our era, already passing tipping points and threatening the conditions for socialism.

He closed by posing three strategic dilemmas for YP: how to balance urgent climate timelines with slow party-building; how central climate politics should be when voters prioritise cost-of-living issues; and how to win major concessions from the capitalist state, while simultaneously building the power to defend them. Overall, the intervention positioned eco-socialism as a necessary framework for the left’s future strategy.

The second speaker, Tim Head, was critical of ‘electoralism’ - the idea that winning elections is a sufficient strategy for change. He argued that, while elections are necessary, they are not sufficient for achieving socialist or climate goals, advocating a focus on grassroots organising. Comrade Head added that real power comes from building a strong social base and popular power through mass-movement organisation, rather than relying primarily on electing politicians. This point was illustrated by the example of a small number of Green MPs being a “limited victory” in his view.

Quotas

The next session was titled ‘Should we call for quotas?’, with Steve Owen (Democratic Socialists) speaking in favour and Mike Macnair (Communist Platform) against.

Steve made a case for using quotas and specific measures to boost diversity in socialist leadership. He argued that quotas for women, racial and sexual minorities, and trans people are an important tool to address the chronic underrepresentation of oppressed groups in leftwing party leadership - a political problem, not just a numerical one. Quotas serve two purposes: they ensure that leadership bodies more accurately reflect the working class; and they force factions within the party to seriously develop their politics on oppression and liberation by recruiting, supporting and listening to comrades from

underrepresented groups.

Responding to objections, he rejected the claim that quotas are “undemocratic”, arguing that socialist democracy is about collective representation and principled politics, not individual popularity. He acknowledged the risk that bureaucracies might misuse quotas for tokenism, but insisted this danger can be prevented through strong democratic structures, such as open factions, proportional voting systems and free debate. Overall, quotas were presented as both necessary and politically enriching for a socialist party.

Mike Macnair argued against the use of formal quotas, drawing on his lengthy experience in the International Marxist Group, which used a slate system with a nominating commission that was tasked with balancing genders and promoting racial minorities. He acknowledged this was a membership choice, but the point is more complex. Comrade Macnair argued that effective leadership often emerges from comrades from oppressed groups pushing themselves forward - a trend visible throughout history.

He argued that the solution to underrepresentation is not quotas, but politics and political campaigning. Conversely, he warned that quota systems are frequently used by bureaucracies to maintain control, something he witnessed in the IMG, where slates ensured representation of those loyal to the apparatus. This bureaucratic manipulation is not unique: one could mention the US New Communist Movement, which fractured over “competing oppressions”, and the large Italian group, Lotta Continua, which tore itself apart over similar “intersectionality” policies without a clear political line.

Comrade Macnair also cited a practical example: a union branch that once elected an all-women executive to promote feminism. It failed because the women elected had the same political disagreements as the wider membership, and it did not substantially change their work. As far as he was concerned, successful campaigning - such as against the Thatcher government’s anti-homosexual Section 28 - was built on political action, not quotas. The underlying danger, he stressed, is that the principle behind quotas carries a dynamic of sectionalism and splintering.

In conclusion, comrade Macnair argued that promoting women or black comrades into leadership is not a bad idea. The argument for quotas was often about challenging old-guard trade unionists to promote feminism, and in a larger pool you naturally find more diverse individuals. The point is, however, that, while we certainly want to promote such comrades, the primary mechanism must be political struggle and clear programmatic unity, not a system that risks internal division and bureaucratic cooptation.

Middle East

The next session was on Palestine and wars in the Middle East. I was one of the speakers; the other was the pro-Palestine activist, Ryan Belhadj.

Comrade Belhadj rooted his contribution in his work with the Palestine movement in Manchester, arguing that the struggle has been central to the formation of YP and offers essential lessons for the UK left. He stressed that the Palestine movement provides a model of effective extra-parliamentary action - such as shutting down arms factories and driving divestment - that must inform broader class struggle. Internationalism, he argued, is non-negotiable: British workers’ liberation is tied to global liberation, and any left politics confined to domestic issues is doomed, given that UK capitalism relies on the “spoils of colonialism”.

He explained how Zionism was a blueprint for modern repression, meaning that solidarity with Palestine is a defensive fight for all oppressed people.

Comrade Belhadj also insisted that the Palestine movement is the main catalyst for current possibilities of left unity, which must include not only parties and factions, but also grassroots social movements. He warned against both external state repression, such as anti-terror legislation, and internal compromises with bourgeois Palestinian authorities that undermine revolutionary forces. Ultimately, he argued that real power comes not from electoral gains, but from building militant, community-rooted movements, capable of forcing change.

I tried to address the ongoing situation in the region, stressing that, while Hamas is not currently fighting, Israel’s relentless bombings continue every single day, making this a brutally one-sided conflict. The so-called sponsors of any peace process - the US, Qatar, Egypt - are no friends of the Palestinians, whose plight remains extremely dangerous. Slightly increased food aid is a pathetic measure of ‘improvement’ that masks a horrific reality.

The risks are escalating. Israel’s assassination of a Hezbollah figure in Beirut this week shows how state-sanctioned murder in foreign countries has become the disturbing new ‘norm’, hypocritically ignored by those who claim to uphold international law. I added that the region is now facing the extremely unpredictable threat of a wider war, particularly a potential second Israeli attack on Iran. The scenarios propagated by Netanyahu and his allies are illusions. The fantasy of a ‘smooth’ regime change led by an exiled, Zionist-supported figure is a joke - look at the ‘smooth’ results in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.

The media’s focus on Iran’s nuclear programme is a myth, used to justify war. Iran does not have a deliverable nuclear weapon, unlike nuclear-armed Pakistan or Israel, which secretly possesses hundreds. This is about creating pretexts for further conflict.

The entire region is on a knife-edge. Given this profound danger, it is absolutely essential that YP should be unequivocally anti-Zionist. We cannot have a leader who is unable to state that clearly.

YP programme

The next session was entitled ‘What kind of programme for Your Party?’, with Mike Macnair, Ted Reese (DemSocs), Richard Brenner (Marxist Strategy), HaPe Breitman (Marxist Bulletin) and Vincent David (Spartacist League).

Comrade David spoke first, reflecting on the day’s conference and arguing that the leadership had escalated its offensive against the left - evident in the purge of the SWP and attacks on figures like Zarah Sultana. Conference itself was tightly stage-managed by the bureaucracy, but what stood out was that the right wing also had genuine support among many delegates. The central political conflict is now clear: a liberal, ‘moderate’ right that wants a ‘respectable’ party free of socialist influence; versus revolutionary socialists fighting for a working class, socialist alternative.

He insisted that simply defending democracy or opposing witch-hunts is insufficient, because significant sections of the party back the right’s agenda. The core problem is the revolutionary left’s lack of political coherence. What is needed is unity around a clear, shared political platform, not just procedural unity. He pointed to examples, such as Zarah Sultana herself: while she takes strong positions on Nato, Zionism and trans liberation, her programme remains

limited on issues like the climate crisis.

He argued that revolutionary socialists must articulate independent class politics, including on controversial issues, such as immigration: oppose racism and deportations, defend immigrants, but also reject the ruling class’s use of immigration to depress wages. The goal is to develop a distinct working class position, not to echo liberal slogans or capitulate to the right. He concluded by stressing the need for revolutionary unity and a firm commitment to defending one another, including upholding trans rights.

For his part, Mike Macnair selected five key points to introduce a discussion that may initially seem abstract. According to him, this abstract starting point is necessary, because we must first analyse the foundational situation: specifically, the substantial and broad-based support within the party for Corbyn’s project, correctly observed earlier.

What is that project? It is essentially the ‘official’ Communist Party’s *British road to socialism* - the idea that the first step is to get a Labour government, and then other Labour governments further to the left. Having been thrown out of the Labour Party, Corbyn’s project is to create a Labour Party mark two, which - just like the current party - is within the framework of British parliamentary dominance, the party apparatus and a commitment to parliamentary politics.

On the one hand, the left keeps reinventing the square wheel in the form of popular front-type reformism, which is what the *British road to socialism* was. When people talk about Britain playing a positive role, we must consider the real role of the British state - for example, supplying weapons to Israel through RAF Akrotiri, flying reconnaissance for the IDF over Gaza, and so on. So the position needs to be unambiguously anti-imperialist and unambiguously defeatist - just as defeatist in relation to Britain’s and the United States’ proxy war in Ukraine as in relation to the genocide in Gaza.

Second - and this is where controversy begins, he said - we need a maximum-minimum programme. The maximum programme promotes the idea of getting wholly beyond capitalism. It is not enough to offer piecemeal answers for immediate struggles. We need to be propagandising for a society completely beyond current class society.

It is a programme counterposed to mere mass mobilisation. It is a programme for the immediate changes a workers’ government - or a government of workers’ parties - could make that would break the political power of the capitalist class and create the conditions for a transitional process. For example, the expropriation of the City of London emerges immediately. A programme for re-industrialising Britain alone is an illusion, because Britain deindustrialised precisely because it was the world’s hyper-imperialist power before the US.

We therefore also need a minimum programme: a programme for taking political power. He concluded with comments about the need for political democracy in the workers’ movement.

Next, HaPe Breitman emphasised the need for democracy within the new party, where every member should be heard and every position discussed. He argued for support for oppressed nations in their fight against neocolonialism. Referring to the protests and strikes in Italy over Palestine, he commented that blocking the transport of military hardware to warmongering countries not only expresses solidarity with the oppressed, but is also crucial for building the self-confidence of the working class.

Richard Brenner argued that socialist demands must be tied to a concrete strategy for mass mobilisation, turning the working class into an active, fighting force. He called for direct action against the cost-of-living crisis - such as a campaign for a price freeze, targeting supermarkets and food corporations - and highlighted local organisation for free public transport as an example of how militant action, not just elections, can win popular support. These struggles, he said, must connect to broader demands like nationalising key industries, pegging wages to inflation, and coordinating mass strike action across unions.

Comrade Brenner insisted that YP must be rooted in real working class struggles rather than functioning as a hollow electoral machine. He also addressed the rise of the far right, calling for a unified working class defence organisation, combining legal, digital and physical protection for migrant communities, comparable to the Community Security Trust.

He urged campaigns for a rent freeze, defiance of anti-union laws, and worker-led control over technology and production - leading logically, he argued, to expropriating banks and major corporations and centralising economic planning under workers’ control. In closing, he reaffirmed the need to fight for democratic demands, oppose repressive legislation, and insist that MPs act as militant representatives on a workers’ wage. Above all, he stressed that socialist power comes not from parliamentary mandates, but from mass mobilisation.

Ted Reese argued that socialism must go far beyond Corbyn-style social democracy, which relies on a mixed economy that capitalism cannot sustain. Capitalism, he said, is structurally incapable of meeting working class needs and increasingly survives only through intensified exploitation, unemployment and ecological destruction. While reforms and concrete campaigns remain essential, the movement must build power in streets, workplaces and communities, guided by DSYP’s democratic programme and points of unity. He argued that capitalism’s social, economic and environmental crises are interconnected, with automation deepening systemic instability. Austerity is not merely a political choice, but a survival strategy for capital, and reversing it alone is insufficient. Ultimately, he insisted, real change cannot come from electing socialist MPs: it must be built from below, as the ruling class will never give up power voluntarily.

Where next?

Speakers in the last session were Max Shanly (DemSocs), Lewis Nielsen (SWP), Shabbir Lakha (Counterfire), Mike Forster (Campaign for a Democratic Party), Sophie Wilson (Sheffield YP) and Jack Conrad (CPGB).

The chair opened the meeting by noting the “bad news”: Zarah Sultana, who had previously agreed to speak, was absent as she had another meeting to address. But there was also “good news”: genuine unity on the left, with groups talking to each other for the first time in years, said comrade Roberts. She described how the Socialist Unity Platform emerged out of necessity, anticipating the undemocratic outcomes seen at conference.

The day’s events - particularly what could be called Karie Murphy’s “masterclass of manipulation” - showed how bureaucratic manoeuvres blocked democracy by shutting down debate, excluding hundreds of amendments and preventing discussion of core questions, especially the forming of a party of the left. Regional assemblies had overwhelmingly supported a broad, open, left party, yet the conference

offered only tightly controlled options and disallowed meaningful amendments.

Despite the setback, comrade Roberts insisted that the left cannot walk away; instead, it must regroup, learn from what had happened, and continue building democratic structures where differences can be discussed without sectarianism. She warned that exclusions like that imposed on Lewis Nielsen are only the beginning, echoing past Labour Party purges, and argued that the bans and stitch-ups should not be recognised. Everyone should be welcomed, the ban ignored, and resistance maintained if attempts are made to enforce it.

Forward

Mike Forster began by saying he wanted to reflect honestly on what had happened at the conference so far and how the movement should now move forward. He described the preceding weeks as chaotic and demoralising: MPs resigning, members being denied entry, YP factions threatening each other with legal action, and relentless, hostile media coverage. Internal disorganisation compounded the crisis - key documents arrived late, motions were unclear and delegates received confusing or contradictory instructions about amendments. Comrade Forster said he arrived feeling dispirited and uncertain whether anything productive could emerge from the gathering.

Despite this bleak atmosphere, he explained that Saturday's events had actually restored some optimism. The leadership had done everything possible to shut down political discussion: cutting microphones, preventing speakers from taking the floor and attempting to tightly choreograph the debate. But these efforts largely failed. Delegates on the left repeatedly improvised ways to speak and refused to let the leadership bury contentious issues. Even the chair struggled to maintain control.

Sophie Wilson spoke about the experience of Sheffield and how the membership had formulated the Sheffield Demands. By informing, involving and freely debating, Sheffield has become something of a model YP branch. She was convinced that Sheffield would not implement any witch-hunt. The left must stay united.

Introducing the next speaker, the chair referred to that day's *Daily Telegraph*, which had published a sensational story claiming there was a "communist plot" to disrupt the conference and an attempted CPGB-organised takeover. She introduced Jack Conrad to address this accusation and clarify whether such a plot ever existed or was ever intended.

Comrade Conrad began: "I don't really know what to call myself - 'delegate' isn't the right word. I was selected through sortition. I didn't expect to be chosen. Either way, I was selected to participate for two days." His overall impression was exactly what he expected: this was going to be a stitch-up, and it was a stitch-up.

He rejected the idea that the leadership was merely incompetent: "These people are cynical. They're very used to organising, and are very skilled at it." He continued:

What kind of conference did I want? One where we listen to debate, we clap, we cheer - and then we do what should happen in a conference hall: you raise your hand and you vote. That should have been our conference ... we won the argument. But we didn't vote. You may have voted on some small things, but ask any ordinary person: after a debate, how do you conclude it? You vote. It's basic political culture.

He added a few remarks on political culture and, in particular, heckling,



Lewis Nielsen and Max Shanly: perspectives

noting its origins among Dundee jute workers, where the 'heckler' was the person elected to read leftwing newspapers aloud in the noisy factory. "Heckling is a democratic right."

He invoked Lenin's speeches at congresses, where figures like Bukharin would shout, asking a pointed question and Lenin would respond, often brilliantly. That, comrade Conrad insisted, should be our culture - democratic, thoughtful, noisy, robust and passionate, not stage-managed, with constant demands for respect, civility and silence. He described how he learned only afterwards that a comrade from Socialist Alternative had been cut off mid-speech for those watching online, thus depriving members of one of the best speeches of the day. "Pure cynicism - a disgrace."

His conclusion: "Go back to the branches. Do not carry out the witch-hunt. If you allow the witch-hunt of one organisation or one individual, all will follow. And some of those imposing the witch-hunt will discover they are a problem too."

Lewis Nielsen

The next speaker was Lewis Nielsen (SWP), who had been expelled from YP the previous day. He said he had hoped to share his experiences and thoughts on the atmosphere on the conference floor, but he was not allowed in. He added, jokingly, that reports of a dramatic row with Jeremy Corbyn on the train were nonsense: "We had a good chat, and I even offered to buy Lara a cup of tea."

Unable to comment on the conference atmosphere, he instead addressed the political stakes. He argued that two facts confront the left. First, Nigel Farage is now the dominant figure in British politics and may well be the next prime minister. If he wins, the state will round up migrants and detainees on a scale reminiscent of the United States. Labour has done similar things, and Barack Obama did them in the US, but the scale envisioned by Trump - and now Farage - is far greater.

Second, Keir Starmer is paving the way for Farage at a pace few predicted. His attacks on working class living standards and increasingly racist rhetoric from senior figures, such as secretary of state Shabana Mahmood, remove any real alternative. This is why debates happening now - at conference, in branches, online - are crucial.

Yet he struck an optimistic

note: "Remember August, when 800,000 people signed up. People who never attend demonstrations, who aren't in far-left groups, told me they had joined." So how did the party go from booking a 13,000-capacity hall to ending up in the 1,000-capacity one next door? We can focus on personalities, he said, but fundamentally this is about Labour politics. "We kept saying we didn't want a Labour Party mark two, yet the same unelected people who ran Labour are running this new party."

Still, he argued, the energy behind the 800,000 sign-ups has not disappeared. Some are joining the Greens, but the Greens are not the answer. So what must be done? First, we need a united party. He supported Jeremy and Zarah being part of the collective leadership - not out of illusions, but because their supporters must be won to a more radical programme. Second, we need more democracy, not less. Numbers have fallen from 800,000 to 50,000 paying members (and now to around 1,000 at the conference), because there has been no genuine democracy. The leadership fears the membership.

Third, we should stand candidates wherever possible and, finally, we must be radical. Mélenchon is no saint, but the insurgent energy around him is the sort we need - anger at the establishment, a recognition that the left must build to defeat the right: "Insurgent politics can win. Around 90% of this party supports these principles. People want a party that unites the left and opposes the far right - and we should deliver it."

The chair introduced the next speaker, Shabbir Lakha from Counterfire, reminding the room that the comrade who tried to challenge the standing orders earlier that morning was from his organisation - "so, well done to her". Shabbir argued that the conference exposed the emptiness of claims about a 'new' democratic way of organising. Instead of empowering members, it reproduced the control of a small, unelected clique - from selections to conference management. The conference should have been massive and politically transformative, showcasing the strength of the 800,000 who originally signed up and sending a warning to Starmer and Farage. Its failure to do so is a major missed opportunity.

Excuses about the process being 'messy' are being used to justify actions that undermine democracy, such as expulsions. Yet despite the

controlled agenda, many attendees clearly opposed expulsions and supported more democratic structures. The attempt to keep revolutionaries out - like the last-minute expulsion of the SWP - have failed.

Shabbir also highlighted the lack of substantive political discussion. Meanwhile, 100,000 people were marching for Palestine in London the same day - an example of a real mass movement that created space for the new party. That movement, built largely by the revolutionary left, represents the working class constituency the party must root itself in.

Looking ahead, he called for a broad, socialist, anti-neoliberal party that includes the revolutionary left rather than excluding them through purity politics. The stakes are high: this party is the best opportunity in a century to build a serious alternative to Labour. To succeed, it must champion genuine democracy, embed itself in mass movements, and develop a unifying programme that resonates with working class people.

The overwhelming feeling in the room - and the contrast between 800,000 sign-ups and fewer than 5,000 at the conference - shows strong support for a radical, movement-rooted, insurgent party. That is the direction Shabbir urged the left to fight for.

Wizard of Oz

Max Shanly, of the Democratic Socialists, began with a wry aside about searching for journalists and security-service types in the audience, before turning to the surreal state of the party. He described how members collectively spent £180,000 attending the event - he himself paying hundreds in transport and accommodation - only to find a process that felt like a pantomime, with Jeremy Corbyn cast as the Wizard of Oz. What should have been a democratic conference had become, in his words, "smoke and mirrors", run by a self-appointed clique more interested in preserving their own privileges than building a socialist party.

He recounted how those who once campaigned for internal democracy have now degenerated into bureaucrats who bully members, report comrades to state institutions, and preside over the collapse of membership from 800,000 expressions of interest to barely 50,000 members. For him, this crisis reflects an internal class struggle: a ruling caste within the party claiming superiority, while blocking the liberation of working class people. Their behaviour - trading £100,000 jobs, carving up regional power, treating the party as private property - shows that the era of monarchic leadership must end.

Yet he insisted on hope: the left's future is bright, unity is possible, and a truly democratic, republican form of party organisation must be built. That struggle, he argued, begins within the party itself and continues until both its internal autocrats and the wider monarchy of British politics are overcome - replaced by a republic, where everyone stands as an equal participant in their own governance ●

To watch the whole thing, go to: www.youtube.com/live/Fo_4QWRUjvg?si=uD3yloEdTbcNn_DS

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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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weekly worker

Real aim is
to roll back
trial by one's
peers

No trust in judges

Government attacks on trial by jury must be resisted by all democrats and socialists. We should not only fight to extend trial by jury: we should also demand the election of judges, says **Paul Demarty**

It would, of course, be the government of Sir Keir Starmer - former director of public prosecutions - that undertook the most extensive assault on jury trials in living memory.

Lord chancellor David Lammy is in charge of this little initiative, and he is responding to an earlier report by Brian Leveson - a senior judge, probably best known for helping the interminable inquiry into phone hacking. Leveson's report recommended suspending the right to a jury trial for offences that carried a maximum sentence of three years. This was not enough for Lammy, who seemed to prefer five years, although, apparently under pressure from aghast cabinet colleagues, he seems to have retreated to the Leveson standard. Magistrates will have their sentencing powers increased, and a fast-track system of judge-only courts is to be created.

The official justification is of the narrow, penny-pinching, petty bourgeois sort. There is a huge backlog of cases; the machinery of justice, of which we Brits are unjustly proud, must clank ever onward. There are jail cells to fill (though notoriously not enough), keys to throw away. Judges will be able to get through everything much quicker.

Canonical trials

Of course, the jury system - as Mike Macnair reminded readers of this paper a couple of years ago - began as a way of *speeding things up*.¹ In the 12th century, canonical trials - overseen by a single judge - had become impossibly dilatory. This was because judges could not, in fact, be trusted, and so any case could be appealed up through the ecclesiastical hierarchy, all the way to the pope himself. Spurred on by King Henry II, the use of various local notables to oversee the peculiar judicial practices of the day - trial by combat, or by ordeal - evolved into the jury system roughly as we know it, such that it was enshrined famously in *Magna carta* in 1215.

Are today's judges to be trusted? The idea has gotten into modern intellectual culture that they are now mere technicians - "automatic statute-dispensing machines", in Max Weber's sardonic phrasing. We will look more deeply into this later, but an unavoidable part of the context for this decision, for all the philistinism of the ministry of justice's justifications, is the troubling habit juries have of reaching the wrong decision. Comrade Macnair's article responded to Tory outrage at acquittals of activists in Palestine Action, Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter.

The other significant legal story of the present situation, after all, is the current judicial review of the preposterous proscription of Palestine Action as a "terrorist



JM Morgan 'The Jury' (1861)

organisation". Asa Winstanley of *Electronic Intifada* spotted something fishy about this appeal: there was a last-minute change behind the gavel. Out went high court judge Martin Chamberlain, a free-speech specialist, and in came a panel of three judges led by Victoria Sharp, who has family connections and employment history that imply sympathy for the state of Israel.²

Of course, family connections do not *necessarily* mean anything - Ms Sharp may be a scrupulous straight arrow. Even so, it is a reminder that the very fact that this matter - of decisive importance for free speech, such as it is, in this country - is *not* coming before a jury. The Kafkaesque monstrosity that is "anti-terrorism" legislation definitionally has no room for juries of one's peers: one wing of the establishment - the judges - is told in secret of the evidence concocted by another - the security services - and makes a determination on that basis.

Explanation

David Lammy's big scheme, thus, has three layers of explanation. One is the economic pressures that are the official explanation, and are hardly wholly fictional. Another is the interests of the judiciary and legal profession *per se*. Finally, there is the general authoritarian drift of British society.

So to that backlog of 100,000 cases then. Opponents of the scheme have concentrated on the question of whether these changes will actually work. Not much of this backlog, it turns out, is for stuff that carries a maximum sentence of less than five years, never mind three. Yet that is perhaps the wrong question to ask. There has been no apocalyptic crime wave in the last few years, despite hysterical rightwing commentary to the contrary. There was no such

backlog in times when the crime rate genuinely was much higher.

The reality is that this is the legacy of a long period of underinvestment. Such underinvestment shows all the signs of being *deliberate*. It is a common trick in the neoliberal era: run something down so it goes to ruin and therefore there is "no choice" but (usually) to privatise the whole thing.

In this case, the object is different. Governments have been chipping away at the jury system for decades - recently, defamation cases were removed from its purview, and we have already mentioned the way that anti-terror law allows the state machine to suspend ordinary means of justice. (The Palestine Action judicial review is, of course, by definition a judge-led thing, but we are only here because the government was able to impose draconian measures against the organisation on its own steam.) Cuts to legal aid - another means of denial of justice - have no doubt gummed up the works further.

Secondly, we come to the judiciary as such - for whom this amounts to a power grab. The hegemonic liberal-constitutionalist mode of statecraft has very great esteem for the judiciary, as a check on the power of the government. But we must inquire into *what* power, and protection for *whom*. The supposition that the judge is 'independent' likewise demands an answer: independent *among* whom?

To be too brief (and to speak only, here, of the judicial power in modern capitalist societies), the judiciary is independent *among capitals*, when it is not wholly suborned (as it often is). It is to be relied on in contractual disputes, in rough proportion to the size of the capitals arrayed against each other in such pursuits. It protects capital from popular sovereignty, from the 'tyranny' of incursions into its property.

Of course, the judiciary - and the

justice system more generally - offers *some* protection to ordinary Joes like us. It convicts murderers, whose victims are overwhelmingly poor, at some kind of rate. It defends some of us, some of the time, from openly fraudulent abuse by capitalist firms. Ideally, it will do enough of this sort of thing to ensure 'legitimacy', which is expended on defending capital.

Judges reliably defend capital for perfectly straightforward reasons. A judge, in the end, is a lawyer successful enough to be promoted to the bench. A successful lawyer - in the modern 'free market in legal services' - is one, crudely, who commands large fees; and one commands large fees by having wealthy clients and achieving success in their interests. A judge, on average, is someone therefore *unusually supportive* of arguments in favour of the power of capital.

He or she is, therefore, also usually establishmentarian more generally. Loyalty transfers to the institution of the state. Judges have offered no resistance whatsoever to the flagrant incursions on popular liberty that have only multiplied since the outset of the war on terror. They have, however, whitewashed state crimes (Lord Hutton and his inquiry), protected the state from the consequences of major scandals (Leveson himself, who reduced phone-hacking to a matter of press ethics and basically ignored the direct complicity of the police and senior politicians in the Murdoch empire's skulduggery); and invented novel instruments like the superinjunction to silence news stories unfavourable to major corporations.

Authoritarian

By handing over more and more powers to judges, governments tend to enervate what democracy we enjoy in our absurd, chimerical constitution. And this, finally, is

part of a wider tendency. For what democracy we enjoy is the fruit of our ability, in the workers' movement, to *impose* concessions on the state. With the defeat of the workers' movement in the Thatcher years, we have lost the ability to do so, and so politics, and broader social life, has become progressively more authoritarian, judicialisation - 'juristocracy', to borrow a word from Ran Hirschl - being one method of bringing this outcome about.

Those, like Simon Jenkins of *The Guardian*, who argue that jury trials are anachronistic therefore have a point. They *are* anachronistic from the point of view of a society where all levers of popular power are being broken one after another. With a jury, one must always ensure that a prosecution is not only legitimate, but *just* in a fuller sense. It is an imperfect mechanism for doing so, especially in a time of generally dismal class consciousness. Yet the 'wrong' answer, given in cases like the Colston Four (anti-racists who dumped a statue of a slave trader in Bristol Harbour in 2020), is a standing insult to the cosy arrangements of the elite.

Wider picture

Though such cases will be front of mind for leftists when considering Lammy's proposals, it is important to see the wider picture. Trial by jury, though stumbled upon almost by accident by English kings nine centuries ago, has proven a sticking point in all great social upheavals in this country for a reason. It really is a *democratic* institution - subject to deformations typical of our fundamentally undemocratic economic system to be sure, but a check on the arbitrary power of the ruling class over us: the only 'check and balance' worth having. In a future socialist society, it will remain a check against the bureaucratic degeneration that we know, from the history of the 20th century, is a grave danger.

It should be defended, and extended at a minimum to all criminal cases where prison is a possibility. Further measures to neuter the overwhelming power of capital and the state to suborn the courts will also be necessary - crucially the election of judges with term limits. The left, finally, should take note of these matters, even when there is not some immediate relevant flashpoint, like the Colston case or Palestine Action.

The task of delegitimising the judiciary, and fighting to bring it to heel, is always before us •

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Notes

1. 'Defend and extend the jury system' *Weekly Worker* November 23 2023: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1468/defend-and-extend-the-jury-system.
2. electronicintifada.net/content/judge-palestine-action-case-has-ties-israel-lobby/51085.