

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly
worker



**No to Platonic republicanism:
Jeremy Corbyn must call for
abolition of the monarchy**

- Left Unity NC report
- LU conference motions
- Corbyn's internationalism
- End of the euro?

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Open the borders



LETTERS



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

Lesser evil

I was looking forward to the *Weekly Worker* after its holiday and it did not disappoint: a rigorous analysis and critique of everything that Corbyn and Corbynisism proclaim and stand for - thank goodness.

Then there is the gently critical "We should be looking beyond the progressive rhetoric ... and thinking before we ... support ... an apparently lesser evil" from 'Commissaress' in the report on Communist University ('Eight days of learning and debate', September 3).

And I had felt the same - what was this hope that the mild energy of Jeremy Corbyn's campaign represented a genuine potential source of a beginning of the 'refounding' of Labour? And, given the party's pro-capitalist stance at a deep level, what sort of hope is that anyway?

But, no, I realistically reminded myself: we need to bring together the energy of our class to achieve that end result, and it is necessary to work within Labour, as our present realistic start of 'Project Refoundation'.

So I imagined myself, with this week's *Weekly Worker* in hand, putting the question to Jeremy Corbyn during the meeting in Middlesbrough town hall (over 1,000 present): 'Jeremy, will you ask every comrade here tonight to read this copy of *Weekly Worker*, and seriously consider the reasons why you do not represent any sort of new beginning for this Labour Party you love, but that if most of your audience actively takes on the critique found here, we can indeed make a start?'

Well? The atmosphere in that actual meeting was not exactly inquisitive - more one of simple interest in what exactly we have in Corbyn's campaign, with a mild emotional commitment to some sort of 'renewal of 45'; several dozen comrades were aware of, and opposed to Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; three participants in the row behind me were seemingly unaware of the work capability assessment, let alone the assertion that some thousands of claimants had died within weeks of being found 'fit for work'. We were a mixed bunch. Whether - even with fairly jargon-free, inspiring calls to work together, to build an active social movement facing the task of cohering a massive working class response - I would have drawn more than a slack handful of that apparently sympathetic audience, is very doubtful.

'Commissaress' reminded us all that "forming alliances with ... reformist movements ... has never worked." Might she be correct? If she is, where might we put our energies next?

Tom Richardson
Middlesbrough

Migrants

Just to elaborate on Eugene V Debs' attitude to immigration and add to Stephen Diamond's comments (Letters, August 13), Debs' views developed from an anti-immigrant position to the one espoused later in life of inclusion - and this was not from Christian charity, but from what best advances the socialist cause. I think his ideas evolved from those of a trade union leader with vested sectional interests of his members to the broader ideals of a socialist spokesperson, representing all workers of all lands.

Debs inherited the prevailing prejudices of the American worker, reflected by the Know-Nothing Party of the time. He attacked the immigration agents as representatives of capital - "enemies of American working men" - who wished to "Chinise the country"

and he openly welcomed legislation that permitted the authorities to deport to their despot-cursed home the victims of these agents' efforts.

Debs found the Italians even less desirable than the Chinese. "The Dago," he claimed, "works for small pay, and lives far more like a savage or a wild beast, than the Chinese". This Italian "fattens on garbage" and cares little for civilisation and is, therefore, able to underbid an American working man. Only in this way can the Italian appear industrious and Debs warned that Italy has millions of them to spare and they are coming.

Jews fared little better. When it was announced that the London Board of Guardians had instituted a programme to transfer Russian-Jewish immigrants to the United States, Debs claimed that that this would increase the already increasing hostility towards immigrants. Identifying these immigrants as "criminals and paupers", Debs bemoaned the fact that most were able to "take up a permanent residence" and strongly advocated that "it was possible to end the infamous business".

These early views of Debs changed from class experience, not charity, and made the unions and the socialist parties ever stronger, as the influence of the foreign-born sections of the International Workers of the World, Socialist Labour Party and Socialist Party shows. The positive possibilities were highlighted by that Irish immigrant, James Connolly, when he was a labour organiser active in America.

I'd rather not remark upon Stephen Diamond's observation that "The migrants fleeing the class struggle in their native lands do not more deserve the largesse of the working class than those who stay behind, particularly when they remain to fight", as it appears to condemn every migrant and settler from all across the world for the past several centuries - including, no doubt, his own antecedents and those of his friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

Alan Johnstone
email

Obesity denier

Nick Allen's letter responding to my review of a book about obesity ('The bitter taste of capitalism', August 15) bizarrely opens with a defence of the way capitalism produces its sugar-laden foodstuffs (September 3).

He also appears to be an obesity epidemic denier, citing very low rates of childhood diabetes - despite the fact that in the US 30 million people have type-2 diabetes, according to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the same time he seems very satisfied with the food choices capitalism offers him. Going shopping with comrade Allen must be a treat - like accompanying Charlie on his first visit to the chocolate factory, as he marvels at the latest wonders cooked up by the Umpa-Lumpas. Yet for the rest of us there is no chocolate factory - only street after street of 24-hour Tescos and sadly in reality the Umpa-Lumpas turn out to be a handful of food conglomerates.

Yes, of course, there are fruits and vegetables available in Tesco, but to say that not to choose healthy food over processed, unhealthy food is simply down to individual choice or palate is to ignore many important factors - including billion-pound advertising industries that specialise in targeting children, cost and time ... in short to ignore the state of life in a modern-day capitalist state. This 'choice' has nothing to do with workers being unable to distinguish between the benefits of a burger over a banana (neither of which is a healthy meal, by the way).

I work as a GP in a very deprived

area, where there is a huge obesity problem and very high rates of type-2 diabetes, and unfortunately I regularly diagnose people in their 30s with diabetes. I don't consider my patients' obesity to be down to them being "dim", as comrade Allen claims - in fact they are on the whole very insightful and intelligent people, most of whom (unlike comrade Allen) can see that there is more to overcoming obesity than someone enlightening them that they should eat less and exercise more.

James Linney
email

Anti-Semitic?

Sarah McDonald's letter (August 13) contains absurd contradictions about the CPGB's record of capitulation to Zionist pressure over the past year, and its willing participation, in its own small way, in the kind of witch-hunting of critics of Zionism that on a bigger scale is now being flung at Jeremy Corbyn's campaign. I do sympathise with Sarah, as she has been given an unpleasant job to do: defending the indefensible.

Sarah criticises the disputes committee of Left Unity for rejecting the CPGB's anathema against my Marxist views on the Jewish question as supposedly 'anti-Semitic', and accuses the DC of negligence and brushing this under the carpet. That this is nonsense is shown by Laurie McCauley's praise for the same newly elected DC's "political neutrality, initiative and plain old common sense" and their rejection of those using the DC to conduct "political battles or even ... petty personal vendettas" (Letters, September 3). Sarah churlishly regrets that the DC rejected the CPGB PCC's own political vendetta, which with characteristic cowardice and hypocrisy, it left to others to fight. Thankfully the DC had the sense to dismiss the false allegations against both Laurie and myself.

She makes it clear that the CPGB does not take either racism itself or its smears against me seriously at all. She writes: "rest assured, the complaint did not come from us" and "it is not our job to act as LU's policemen". Well, I'm sorry, comrades, but if you really do believe that my publications are promoting 'racism' within LU, the job of any responsible LU member is to do just that!

The attitude Sarah attributes to Salman Shaheen, who "apparently asked why we in the CP had not brought this to the attention of LU", is very much to the point. If the CPGB seriously believed in their smear, or cared about 'racism', they would have made the complaint themselves. After all, they claim to be about providing 'political leadership' in LU.

They did not, because they do not care much about such things and in any case were well aware their allegations were based on a tissue of lies and would not stand up to scrutiny, as was subsequently proven. My views on the Jewish question have now been recognised as correct by *Socialist Fight*, and I am confident that they will gain much wider recognition on the left.

The CPGB's anathema was a capitulation to Jewish chauvinism and anti-Arab racism during and after last year's genocidal massacre of Arabs in Gaza by the Israeli state. Jack Conrad admitted, in an unguarded moment, that his motive for getting rid of me was cowardice. He could not stomach the possibility that, by associating with me and my views, the CPGB would be (falsely) accused of anti-Semitism.

Very revealing is the Conrad/Machover motion that signalled last year's heresy-hunt in the CPGB, where my views were equated with "Proudhon and Bakunin" as supposedly indicative of "left anti-

Semitism". Those obscurantists were unable to quote even one fragment to demonstrate any similarity between my views and these ideologues of 19th century anarchism. However, it is easy to show my commonality with classical Marxists such as Karl Marx himself, Abram Leon and also Isaac Deutscher.

The CPGB have, under Conrad's guidance, spent many years studying and assimilating the political views and methods of Hal Draper, the American Shachtmanite ideologue. Mike Macnair in his August 13 article, 'Socialism from below: a delusion' gave the game away when he noted Draper sometimes used "what Trotsky, in relation to the Moscow trials, called an 'amalgam': that he associates different and opposed political tendencies". Furthermore, on so-called "left anti-Semitism", he noted "the points Draper picked up on in 1960-66 about Proudhon's or Bakunin's anti-Semitism" as a distinctive aspect of Draper's political physiognomy. Draper wrote an article branding Karl Marx's famous essay, 'On the Jewish question', as an example of then-current ignorance and stereotypes about Jews - a criticism at odds with the praise for the materialist analysis in that essay by classical Marxists such as Leon and Deutscher. Jack Conrad, in his book, *Fantastic reality*, concurred with Draper on this (p58).

Conrad, with Moshé Machover in tow, acted as a pupil of Draper in the heresy-hunt in the Communist Platform, in evoking Draper's material about Proudhon and Bakunin, and following Draper's fondness of amalgams that Mike Macnair says were similar to those used in the Moscow trials.

Based on this method, the CPGB ran its own mini-version of a Moscow trial nearly a year ago. If Conrad had been more honest, his motion would have condemned me for echoing the 'left anti-Semitism' of Karl Marx and Abram Leon, not Proudhon and Bakunin. But then the anti-communist nature of the purge would have been obvious to even the most dull-witted CPGB supporter.

Regarding chauvinism on the left, Draper was one of the worst offenders. Take his 1948 essay, 'How to defend Israel', defending the Shachtmanites' support for Israel in its so-called 'war of independence'. Draper wrote: "If the Jews have the right to self-determination, what territory can they 'self-determine themselves' in without infringing upon the national rights of the Arab people? Is there any? Obviously none ..."

Let no-one accuse Draper of believing in equality of peoples. He was an unashamed Jewish chauvinist; well aware that supporting national oppression was the inevitable consequence of Israeli-Jewish "self-determination" through "infringing the national rights of the Arab people". This is an apologist's way of describing the massive pogrom, series of massacres and forcible expulsion of two-thirds of the Arab population of Palestine that constituted the *Naqba*.

This tradition gave birth to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty as well as the CPGB's pro-Zionist capitulations. Its Stalinophobia hides hypocrisy; it habitually engages in Stalinist techniques like Nazi-baiting others on the left. It produced more graduates, such as ex-AWLER James Bloodworth, the pungent Zionist chauvinist who has been prominent trying to witch-hunt Jeremy Corbyn over his bid for the Labour leadership. Bloodworth is the finished product of this type of politics.

But there is a continuum between Draper's and Conrad's methods and the more blatant expressions of pro-Zionist chauvinism at work today.

Ian Donovan
editorial board, *Socialist Fight*

Motions passed

The recently formed Teesside branch of Left Unity held its second meeting on Tuesday September 8. Although there were more apologies than attendees on this occasion, those present felt it important to get on with business, especially as all branch members had been invited to put forward motions for Left Unity's national conference and several had been proposed.

Motions for an alternative constitution and code of conduct for Left Unity, as previously published in the *Weekly Worker*, were backed by the branch, along with one opposing imperialist intervention in other countries and another advocating the dissolution of the UK state's standing army and its replacement by a people's militia under democratic control.

Whilst there was much common ground on motions regarding the Labour Party and Greece, we ran out of time to formulate satisfactory amendments. A motion proposing an active boycott of the government's referendum on the European Union fell.

Regarding progress on actions agreed at the last meeting, the branch secretary reported that he had written to LU's national council seeking formal recognition of the branch and that an online discussion forum for branch members had also been established. The treasurer reported that he had obtained application forms to open a bank account.

Tribute was paid to LU member Martyn Littlefair, who died on August 14. Although Martyn had been unable to participate in the Teesside branch's formation over the summer due to ill-health, the comrade had been a party member from its early days and he had a long history of actively supporting social justice and opposing austerity. The branch secretary had attended Martyn's funeral on September 2.

For news from Teesside Left Unity, please follow us on Facebook or Twitter and bookmark our blog at <http://TeessideLU.tumblr.com>.

Steve Michael
Teesside

Not subjective

By her reply to my letter on qualitative change Rosa Lichtenstein inspires a question: to be an objective law, must a quantity of changes making for a qualitative outcome always occur (Letters, August 13)?

No, a scientific law is not a command to nature (by God?), where simple prediction always comes true. Scientists now define it as an event that happens only in circumstances where all of certain mechanisms are present. As Roy Bhaskar has put it, "Causal laws then appear as the tendencies of natural kinds, realised under certain conditions."

This is why I would agree with Rosa if she pointed out that the horse, for example, has hardly changed at all in 30 million years. Smaller, larger, stronger, fleeter - often through selective breeding - but not qualitatively a new animal. Whatever tendencies were present that might have developed in an opposite direction - maybe towards being a predator - they didn't come into play. Dialectical thinking can live with minor change. Even Hegel noted that the Roman republic didn't collapse in the face of Julius Caesar: the next progression, as it were. Another Caesar had to decide the struggle another way, given the balance of forces.

Are we mistaken though in observing when something is qualitatively new in form - water into steam, ape-like into human, revolution into Stalinism? I'd say this was "subjective" only if it failed to be the start - or the end, as in Darwin - of an in-depth investigation and explanation.

Mike Belbin
London

LEFT UNITY



Goya: 'Witches Sabbath' 1797-98

Politics without the personal is non-politics

Censuring the 'bullying' *Weekly Worker* for reporting events in Leeds is not what LU's executive should be up to, says Mike Copestake

Rather like the ongoing and "toxic" split in Leeds Left Unity (the word of choice in the executive committee's minute dealing with the issue), claims that the *Weekly Worker* is engaged in "destructive" attacks upon individuals within Left Unity, whose politics we "misrepresent", are becoming tiresome.

What is new is that similar claims and even official censure are on this occasion forthcoming from the EC, which has spent time and energy defending the honour of one Matthew Caygill, a leading comrade in the anti-Workers Power branch of Leeds Left Unity, and himself an EC member. Though his own far lengthier emergency motion was not passed, a shorter, sympathetic alternative was. Indeed, it went beyond mere sympathy with the comrade. In effect the EC wants to outlaw honest reportage and robust polemics.

We note quickly that this is part of a persistent trend within Left Unity, which has demanded 'confidentiality' for disputes hearings and what happens in our branch meetings, a 'safe space', free from 'bad' words, silence on the reasons why comrades like Manchester's Laurie McCauley were unconstitutionally suspended (in his case for 15 months).

Apparently, the coverage in the *Weekly Worker* of the unresolved problems literally dividing Leeds Left Unity, most recently and most particularly in the article, 'Sectarian anti-sectarianism' (July 23), and the criticism of comrade Caygill contained therein, is "destructive", "personalised" and "bullying" (motion passed by the EC). Strong words indeed - ironically far stronger already than anything that has been said in these pages about comrade Caygill himself. But this is the least of the problems with the approach being taken, and the attitude and culture that it displays on behalf of both comrade Caygill and the EC itself. It amounts to little more than yet another attempt to put a lid on criticism. This in an organisation which has made huge play about "doing politics differently" and being "transparent", but which in fact continually lapses into exactly the kind of bureaucratic approaches and 'not in front of the children' attitude to reporting and polemic which are precisely the hallmarks of the existing

left, which many in Left Unity seek to define themselves against.

By contrast, the *Weekly Worker* always strives to honestly report on the workers' movement and on the actions taken by its participants, and seeks to polemicise against the real views of others - not engage in fruitless inventions. Needless to say, the views of Caygill and his co-thinkers are not misrepresented in the article in question, and no attempt has been made by the EC to demonstrate otherwise, because no such attempt could be successful.

What shall we make of the accusation that our criticism was "personalised" - that is, to do with a person? The question is, of course, who else is there to criticise other than those responsible for the witch-hunting action in dispute? It is undeniable that comrade Caygill and others formed a second Leeds branch especially designed to keep others out. It is undeniable that comrade Caygill has attempted to create a replica split from afar within Sheffield Left Unity through his various contacts. It is undeniable that comrade Caygill helped draft and put his name to a motion calling for Workers Power to leave Left Unity - to expel themselves in effect. It is undeniable that comrade Caygill blames Marxists for preventing LU from developing into a mass force. It is undeniable that comrade Caygill considers that dual membership should be abolished and also that within Left Unity one should only really put forward 'broad', non-revolutionary positions and arguments.

When the comrade gets up in EC meetings, or at LU conference, the view of the EC can only be that the wider membership of the party, and indeed the working class as a whole, does not have the right to know what he says because it is *personal*. The views of leading members are clearly of interest, yet it seems the party as a whole is not entitled to know about them. And surely what goes for the party also goes for the class. Does the working class really not need to know what those who seek to play a leading role in its movement do and say? This is a paternal and bureaucratic attitude suited to the protection of privilege from criticism, and, contra the EC, is foreign to the best traditions of the workers' movement.

Indeed, the best traditions of the workers' movement are filled with "personalised" reporting - even furious and invective-filled polemic. Not polemic for the sake of polemic, but because there are contending views, tactics and strategies in our movement, which we must all - as equal participants - be able to understand, endorse, condemn, and so on. The life and ideas of our movement must of necessity be our common intellectual property.

The only way not to criticise people - not to make politics "personalised" - is not to criticise their views, tactics, strategies and actions. Which in practice means silence - except for the views that come ready-packaged and pre-approved from the 'legitimate' judges of such matters: the leadership, which must be protected from "destructive" criticism! In other words, the logic of the EC is the same as that of the Socialist Workers Party central committee.

If branch or regional committee meetings are to be off the record, why not the NC? Why not the EC? Why not even forbid reporting of national conferences? At this level the logic is obviously absurd - you cannot do that (some organisations do, of course) because comrades need to know what is happening within the party, who is saying and doing what, what the arguments are and where people stand. Otherwise the party does not really extend beyond its leadership.

What about "bullying"? In my view, comrades need to get a grip on reality. Nothing in the article can honestly be described in such a way. Is comrade Caygill a child, who must be protected from harsh words? Is he unable to defend himself by pointing, say, to inaccuracies in what we wrote? One wonders what the EC members who voted for this nonsense were thinking. Of course, many an opportunist 'virtue' can be signalled by demonstrating one's opposition to the open reporting, debate and polemic contained in the *Weekly Worker* - the stronger, the better.

As for "destructive", it is the insistence on secrecy, safety and silence - as demonstrated by the motion passed by the EC on this occasion - that fits this description ●

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast commenting on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.org.uk/home/podcasts>.

London Communist Forum

Sunday September 13, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 2, chapter 4: 'The three figures of the circuit' (continued). Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

An introduction to human origins
Tuesday September 22, 6.45pm: 'Introducing radical anthropology'. Speakers: Chris Knight and Camilla Power. Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taverton Street (off Gordon Square), London WC1 (nearest tube: Euston). Talks are free, all welcome. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Solidarity with Greece

Friday September 11, 7pm: Trade union forum, Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1. Speakers include Candy Udwin, Louise Haig MP. Organised by Unite the Resistance: <http://uniteresist.org>.

Labour special conference

Saturday September 12, 10am: Declaration of winner, Labour leadership election, Queen Elizabeth Centre, Broad Sanctuary, London SW1. Organised by Labour Party: www.labour.org.uk.

Victory party

Saturday September 12, 11am: Tentative victory party for Jeremy Corbyn, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London W1 (result announced at 11.45am). Organised by Make Labour Awesome Again: <http://makelabourawesomeagain.uk>

Refugees welcome

Saturday September 12, 12 noon: National solidarity demonstration, Marble Arch, Park Lane, London W1. Organised by Solidarity with Refugees and many others: www.facebook.com/events/1047978998546751.

Wigan Diggers

Saturday September 12, 11.30am to 9.30pm: Festival, Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, the Wiend, Wigan. Organised by Wigan Diggers Festival: <http://wigandiggersfestival.org>.

Jeremy Corbyn night

Monday September 14, 7pm: Celebration, The Forum, 9-17 Highgate Road, London NW5. Stellar line-up of comedians, singers and poets. Organised by The Jeremy Corbyn Night: www.facebook.com/events/162486930751991.

Corbyn, Labour and anti-austerity

Tuesday September 15, 7pm: Discussion of results of Labour leadership election, New Cross Learning, 283-85 New Cross Road, London SE14. With Lindsey German and local activists involved in the Corbyn campaign. Organised by South East London People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/SouthEastLondonPeoplesAssembly.

Can Corbyn save Labour?

Wednesday, September 16, 7pm: Meeting, United Reformed Church, Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1. Speakers: Martin Mayer, Simon Hardy. Organised by Left Unity and Sheffield Open Socialist Forum: www.facebook.com/sheffieldsocialistforum.

Celebrate the suffragettes

Wednesday September 16, 7pm: Talk, Five Leaves Bookshop, 14a Long Row, Nottingham NG1. Sheila Rowbotham remembers suffragette, socialist and women's activist Alice Wheedon. £3. Organised by Five Leaves Bookshop: www.fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk/events.

No to evictions

Saturday September 19, 12 noon: March, Assemble Stratford Park, West Ham Lane, London E15. Organised by Focus E15: www.facebook.com/events/463931240434645.

Mexico rights

Saturday September 19, 7.30pm: Free film night, Tiendas Del Sur, 91-95 Newington Butts, London SE1. Organised by South London Peoples Assembly: www.facebook.com/groups/1441657952748038.

North East People's Assembly

Saturday September 26, 10.30am to 4.30pm: Conference, Royal Station Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Organised by North East People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/PANorthEast.

Labour conference

Sunday September 27 to Wednesday September 30: Annual conference of the Labour Party, Brighton Centre, King's Road, Brighton BN1. Organised by Labour Party: www.labour.org.uk/pages/annual-conference-2015.

No to the Tories

Sunday October 4, 12 noon onwards: Demonstration outside Conservative Party conference, Manchester Central Convention Complex, Windmill Street, Manchester M2. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/demonstrate_at_tory_party_conference.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

LEFT UNITY

Going into survival mode

The weekend's national council meeting failed to respond to the Corbyn challenge. **Sarah McDonald** reports

Left Unity's national council met in Birmingham on Saturday September 5, the third meeting since the current NC was elected. You could be forgiven for thinking that nothing is happening in the workers' movement in Britain at the moment. Those amongst the 33 comrades present who were expecting a thorough-going discussion on the implications of Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for the Labour leadership were to be disappointed.

In keeping with tradition, minutes and matters arising occupied almost two hours of the NC's time (and, to make matters worse, one comrade challenged almost every item on the agenda). I will give a brief outline of the highlights, sparing readers the soporific detail.

Following a report-back from Simon Hardy from the conference of the new left-nationalist alliance in Scotland - Respect, Independence, Socialism, Environmentalism (Rise) - the question of 'safe spaces' made a reappearance. Although proposals to introduce the policy have now been defeated twice by conference, its champions insist it is vital that 'safe spaces' is not abandoned. It turns out that no-one had acted on taking the agreed workshop forward. Comrade Terry Conway had been tasked with this, but had not done so because she disagreed with it. Now Bianca Todd is apparently going to make things happen before conference.

Jack Conrad of the Communist Platform expressed deep concern over a resolution appearing in the minutes of the executive committee's August meeting, which ended: "Left Unity condemns the destructive nature of *Weekly Worker's* coverage of the situation in Leeds. Left Unity recognises that such personalised attacks on comrades within Left Unity have no place within the workers' movement." Comrade Conrad stated that the *Weekly Worker* carried discussion pieces and robust polemical articles. Despite the objections of witch-hunters and their allies, that is not going to change.

Finally, Joseph Healy asked who had resigned from LU in light of the Corbyn campaign. Amongst NC members, only Luke Cooper and Liz Davies have left to join the Labour Party so far - departures that will trigger by-elections.

Conference

When we eventually got to the agenda proper, Yasmine Mather moved a motion on behalf of the four Communist Platform NC members regarding the standing orders committee's arrangements for conference. Our motion called for the lifting of the 500-word limit on motions and for the scrapping of the priorities ballot (where branches vote beforehand to decide which motions will be debated).

Comrade Mather argued that the SOC could itself remove unnecessary preambles from motions submitted, but, in any case, leadership bodies and commissions are not bound by such limits. In other words, the leadership sets policy and the membership can merely tweak it. The word limit is particularly problematic when attempting to equip LU with a constitution fit for purpose - given that day two of conference is to be devoted entirely to the question, this is somewhat significant. The comrade argued against the impracticality of a priorities ballot - many branches will not even meet in the short period between the publication of motions and the deadline. No doubt topical motions will be prioritised, but what about questions that are less immediate, but



Corbynism outside Labour is doomed to fail

still demand an LU policy? Priorities should be decided by conference itself, comrade Mather argued.

The CP motion was strongly opposed by some. Comrade Conway assured us that leadership bodies and commissions would be bound by the same word limit (we shall see at conference whether this will apply to any new 'safe spaces' policy, for example, which originally ran to several thousand words). Comrade Conway also argued that the priorities ballot is more democratic, but that it ought to be individual members rather than branches that voted. The logical conclusion of this would be to scrap conferences altogether - that would get rid of all those divisive debates.

Kate Hudson pointed out that the priorities ballot is part of the constitution, and so, in her opinion, it must be adhered to. I pointed out that it had not been adhered to in any of the three previous conferences, to which comrade Hudson heckled that the constitutional clause in question had been overlooked on those occasions. Comrade Mather, in her summing up, observed that priority ballots are part of the legacy of Blairism and its bureaucratic attempts to control Labour conferences. An amendment was agreed to the effect that a priorities ballot would not apply to motions pertaining to the constitution, which can only be changed by conference, but when the motion, as amended, was put to the vote, it received 14 votes in favour and 14 against (comrades from the Independent Socialist Network abstained), and so was not carried.

Labour challenge

By this point, the meeting was running considerably behind schedule. In the agenda sent out to NC members, a mere 45 minutes had been allowed for the discussion around the Labour leadership campaign and now this debate risked being even further curtailed. This was a completely farcical situation, given that we are witnessing one of the most significant developments on the left for many decades. Any serious organisation

would have given over just about the entire meeting to this matter. As comrade Conrad commented, it is important that we hear NC members views on this matter - the rest of the agenda should have been suspended in favour of debating this key question. In the end, discussion was extended slightly beyond the originally allotted time to just over an hour, but speakers were forced to limit their contributions to a pathetic two minutes - barely time to make a point of any substance.

Andrew Burgin opened the discussion by noting the shift in politics to the left - a reflection of the backing for Corbyn - and he argued that we must look for ways to engage with the new mood. He drew parallels with Bennism and commented that the politics of the Corbyn campaign were largely those of LU, but claimed that LU had more radical politics. Despite that, he thought it was inevitable that LU would lose members to the Labour Party - he talked about LU having to "survive" the present period. Comrade Burgin envisaged civil war within the Labour Party and was concerned that pressure from the right, and particularly the Parliamentary Labour Party, could cause Corbyn to 'moderate' his policies. He promised an online discussion journal for comrades both inside and outside Labour, and the creation of a 'Friends of LU' category for supporters who have left to join Labour. There should be a spring conference, he argued, along the lines of "What future for the left?"

Simon Hardy talked about the left-moving mood, which he said was exemplified in social attitudes towards the migrant crisis. He argued that what was needed was not a Labour Party mark two, but something to the left of that. Politics not based on electoralism, but on "campaigning", and in that sense "Left Unity is not going anywhere".

Of course, what is needed is something much more than LU - more than a halfway house - but posing further to the left just to distinguish yourself from a left-led Labour Party, is as instrumental as posing as left Labourites is dishonest. It becomes more about a

plan for your group's survival, not about what is actually needed.

Oliver New felt that those new recruits to the Labour Party would soon be disillusioned with the realities of the rightwing bureaucracy, and he would advise people not to join. For his part, Tom Walker began his contribution with the assertion that lots of people will be on their way out of LU, so LU should stay independent, but have a general orientation towards the Labour Party. He said that it would be a mistake to focus on a critique of the Labour Party. It should not be about differentiation, but rather commonality.

Jack Conrad complained that he was almost left speechless by the fact that LU did not take this issue seriously, as shown by the lack of time allocated to the item. In his view there would be all-out war in the Labour Party. It was very unlikely that we would see a repeat of the rightwing breakaway that led to the formation of the Social Democratic Party in 1981. They will stay and conduct a prolonged struggle. The comrade said that drawing a parallel between Bennism and Corbyn was profoundly mistaken. Tony Benn lost contests for both the leadership and deputy leadership. Corbyn is set to win. However, the mass influx into the Labour Party is amorphous and disorganised - a situation that needs to change, with potentially hundreds of thousands more people signing up after September 12.

He commented on the enormous powers Corbyn will have as leader - ironically thanks to a certain T Blair. However, Corbyn will not only face the Labour right, a hostile media and the financial and organisational might of big business. The special branch, MI5 and their cousins in the CIA will be working night and day to undermine and get rid of him. The comrade concluded that LU should not be relating to the Labour Party as an outside force, but should seek to transform it into a workers' party committed to genuine socialism. That would best be done by seeking affiliation.

Ed Potts made a valuable contribution, stressing the failure of

the far left's approach of advocating Labourite policies. He drew parallels with Syriza, which was essentially forced to manage capitalism, and pointed to the dangers of sowing illusions in this practice. Matthew Jones asserted that the Corbyn challenge was the most important thing to happen since the 1984-85 miners' strike and was sure there would be a split in the Labour Party.

In my contribution, I argued that a Corbyn leadership ought to use its powers to create its own media, newspapers, podcasts, broadcasts, etc, to combat the media onslaught it will face. A Corbyn victory would provide LU with an acid test - we need to put forward the Marxist politics that the vast majority of members say in private they believe in. The Labour Party cannot be reclaimed, because what people romantically view as 'old Labour' was never ours: it was and is a bourgeois workers' party. But this can change: as Trotsky advocated, Labour must become a united front of a special kind.

Yasmine Mather emphasised the importance of criticising Corbyn and trying to ensure he does not give ground to the right. The comrade noted that he was already starting to wobble on Trident and Nato. She, like others, said we should not support the Keynesian economic policies of so-called 'Corbynomics'. The role that the state will play, if Corbyn wins, and the potential for a coup within Labour will bring into sharp focus the question of democracy.

A motion from Lambeth, the essence of which is conveyed above in Simon Hardy's contribution to the discussion, was defeated. Those against either took the Andrew Burgin line of being 'more Corbyn than Corbyn' or wanted a significant change of direction. Needless to say, the Communist Platform does not see any kind of worthwhile future for LU unless it moves quickly and decisively in the direction of the Marxist programme.

Syriza

There was a brief discussion around a second motion from Lambeth regarding our attitude towards Syriza following the events of the last couple of months. Unfortunately, one mover, followed by four other speakers with two minutes' speaking time, hardly allowed for an intelligent discussion. Liam Cooper moved that we should distance ourselves from Syriza (once our 'sister party'), since it had sold out the Greek people, and that we should align ourselves with the leftwing split, Popular Unity.

Various comrades noted how the actions of Alexis Tsipras and Syriza had had a detrimental effect on the credibility of the left parties across Europe. Felicity Dowling, on the other hand, thought it was not a good idea to bad-mouth people (presumably it would make Tsipras feel unsafe). Matthew Jones argued against the motion, commenting that we cannot be asked to endorse one group when there are other forces emerging on the left and that we ought to look at them all.

Jack Conrad stated that Syriza was elected on a programme it could not implement. He agreed that we should not be supporting one group of former Syriza members, who had come from the same opportunist camp, but who were now proposing an equally disastrous policy amounting to autarky. Instead we must express our solidarity with the working class in Greece and oppose the institutions ●

MOTIONS

New foundations, new orientation

Communist Platform has drafted the following motions, together with our code of conduct, disputes rules and equality policy. Comrades are urged to secure Left Unity branch support for them and our alternative constitution

Labour Party

1. Left Unity welcomes the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party. It amounts to a revolution in the workers' movement in Britain.

2. All halfway house projects, opportunist attempts to chase the Greens, adaptations to petty nationalism have been exposed, wrecked or left high and dry.

3. Left Unity commits itself to the project of transforming the Labour Party into an instrument for working class advance and international socialism. Towards that end we will join with others and seek the closest unity of the left inside and outside the Labour Party.

4. Ideas of reclaiming the Labour Party and the return of the old clause four are totally misplaced. From the beginning the party has been dominated by the labour bureaucracy and the ideas of reformism. The party must be refounded on the basis of a genuinely socialist programme, as opposed to social democratic gradualism or bureaucratic statism.

5. The aim is not a Labour government for its own sake. History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

6. Labour should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme. This cannot be achieved in Britain in isolation from Europe and the rest of the world.

7. Socialism is the rule of the working class over the global economy created by capitalism and as such is antithetical to all forms of British nationalism. Demands for a British road to socialism and a withdrawal from the European Union are therefore to be opposed.

8. Political principles and organisational forms go hand in hand. The Labour Party must become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans. Towards this end Left Unity will demand the complete elimination of all undemocratic bans and proscriptions and will seek to affiliate to the Labour Party.

9. The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries, but proportionately, according to the political balance in each delegation.

10. All trade unions should be encouraged to affiliate, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy and join the Labour Party as individual members.

European Union

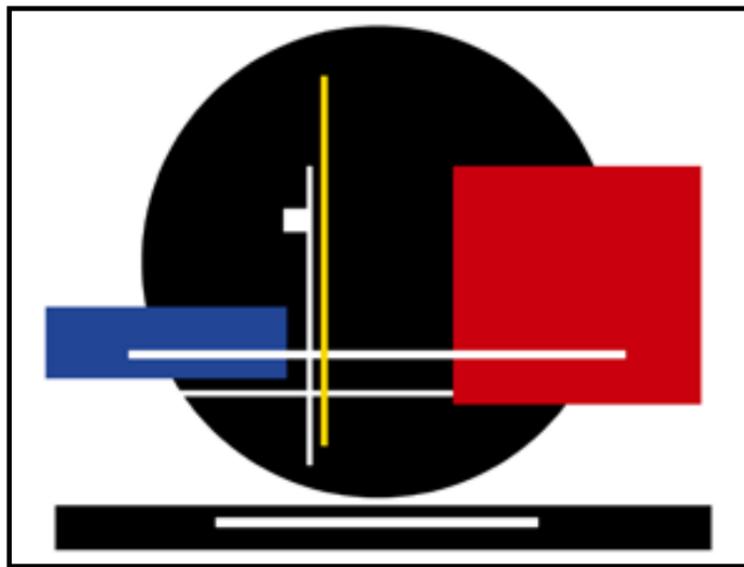
Conference reaffirms Left Unity's previous decision to fight for "a united Europe under the rule of the working class".

Conference notes:

1. That a referendum on British membership of the EU is on the Tory government's political agenda.

2. That a 'yes' vote will be an expression of support for whatever concessions David Cameron is able to get from the EU, and that any such concessions will be anti-working class to their core.

3. That leftwing support for a 'no' vote can only be justified by endorsing the



A clear set of Marxist principles and perspectives

utopian fantasy of 'socialism in one country', shown by Stalinism to be a dead end.

Conference resolves:

1. To call for a boycott of the referendum.
2. To continue to fight for working class unity across the EU, and united action on a continental scale.

Greece

Conference reaffirms Left Unity's commitment to campaign in solidarity with the Greek people against the fraudulent 'austerity' policy imposed by the 'institutions'.

Conference recognises that this 'austerity' policy can only be overturned by the common political action of the working class Europe-wide. Left Unity will therefore increase the priority it gives to Europe-scale political cooperation.

Conference, accordingly, recognises that Left Unity was, like Syriza, mistaken to promote illusions in the possibilities of a Syriza-led government overturning austerity in Greece without immediate common action of the working class across Europe.

Imperialist intervention

Conference recognises that imperialist interventions, in the form of wars and occupation followed by civil wars, have left most of the Middle East and north Africa in a state of permanent conflict. The United States as the world hegemon power, supported by its allies, seems content with the existence of failed states in the region and tolerance of Jihadist groups, including Islamic State.

Conference notes that after a year of US air attacks, IS remains as strong as it was in 2014. Turkey, a Nato ally of the United States, has been engaged in bombing Kurdish forces fighting IS.

Conference recognises that the signing of a nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 powers, while reducing the immediate danger of armed imperialist attack on Iran, may have paved the way for more conflict in the region, as regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia enters a new phase.

Conference reiterates its stance in opposition to imperialist military interventions in the Middle East. Peace cannot come courtesy of bodies such as the United Nations - an assembly dominated by exploiters and murderers. It is the duty of socialists to connect the popular desire for peace with the aim of revolution. Only by disarming the

bourgeoisie and through the victory of international socialism can the danger of war be eliminated.

Standing army and the people's militia

Left Unity is against the standing army and for the armed people. This principle will never be realised voluntarily by the capitalist state. It has to be won - in the first place by the working class developing its own militia.

Such a body grows out of the class struggle itself: defending picket lines, mass demonstrations, workplace occupations; fending off fascists, etc.

As the class struggle intensifies, conditions are created for the workers to arm themselves and win over sections of the military forces of the capitalist state. Every opportunity must be used to take even tentative steps towards this goal. As circumstances allow, the working class must equip itself with all weaponry necessary to bring about revolution.

To facilitate this we demand:

1. Rank-and-file personnel in the state's armed bodies must be protected from bullying, humiliating treatment and being used against the working class.
2. There must be full trade union and democratic rights, including the right to form bodies such as soldiers' councils.
3. The privileges of the officer caste must be abolished. Officers must be elected. Workers in uniform must become the allies of the masses in struggle.
4. The people have the right to bear arms and defend themselves.
5. The dissolution of the standing army and the formation of a well regulated popular militia under democratic control.

Code of conduct for LU members

Preamble

Left Unity aims as far as possible within the deeply unequal society within which we live to combat all forms of oppression and discrimination, to develop all our members as leaders, and to develop a culture of free discussion accessible to all members.

We recognise that this is most likely to be achieved by a political culture in which fully open debate, including accusations of sexism, racism, class prejudice, scabbing, etc, or saying that 'the emperor has no clothes', are possible; and in which members are free to communicate with each other and to organise themselves for common ends.

This code of conduct therefore merely sets certain minimal limits which are necessary to LU's ability to function and pursue these goals.

Members may not:

- violate this constitution;
- actively disrupt LU's agreed common actions (eg, election campaigns);
- persistently actively disrupt LU internal meetings;
- intentionally assist Redwatch or similar far-right organisations which target leftists with violence and threats, employers' blacklisting organisations or mass-media witch-hunts;
- 'troll' LU online forums;
- behave in a way which brings LU into disrepute: for example, by violence against other members, persistently oppressive conduct towards other members, or the exploitation of party office for private purposes.

LU recognises that we do not have the resources to properly investigate and handle complaints of serious crimes against other members: for example, rape or wounding/GBH; and that by attempting to do so we may contaminate evidence and thereby prevent justice being obtained.

Rules for disputes procedure

A. Procedure

A body handling a complaint or disciplinary charges against a member must:

- act as promptly as possible (having regard to the following points);
- give the person complaining sufficient opportunity to formulate their complaint, and the person complained against sufficient notice of the nature of the complaint and sufficient opportunity to formulate their answer to it;
- allow both the person complaining and the person complained against to have the unpaid assistance of another person;
- where facts are disputed, allow both the person complaining and the person complained against to call witnesses and to ask questions of witnesses they have called and of witnesses called against them, and to offer other evidence (such as documents, emails, medical reports, etc);
- conduct any hearing with fairness to both sides;
- where the complaint is not dealt with in a branch, publish to the region (if dealt with in a regional committee) or to LU generally (if dealt with in the national council, disputes committee or appeals committee) a summary of the decision and the body's findings and reasons.

These procedural obligations do not prohibit dealing with complaints by voluntary negotiation, mediation or reconciliation procedures, whether before or at any stage of formal complaints procedures.

Sanctions

Where a complaint is upheld or a disciplinary charge found proved, the sanctions imposed may range from censure of the member complained against, through other penalties, up to suspension or expulsion from membership of LU.

In deciding on sanctions, account should be taken of the seriousness of the complaint, the extent to which a persistent course of conduct is involved, and of the level of political experience of the person complained against.

A vote to expel a member does not take effect until ratified by the national

council or disputes committee on the basis of a report from the body hearing the complaint.

Equalities policy for LU internal procedures

Left Unity recognises that we live in a society characterised by profound systematic inequality, not just on the basis of class, but also of the oppression of women, discrimination against members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and LGBT people and of age hierarchies, as well as both direct discrimination and the inherent bias of market society against people with disabilities.

We aim for a party in which all people can fully participate.

We also recognise, however, that there are serious limits on the extent to which the life of the party can overcome the inequalities of capitalist society or 'prefigure' the future, and the complete and disastrous failure of previous attempts to create party 'liberated zones' or 'prefigurative politics'. In addition, a number of forms of discrimination and inequality, particularly around caring responsibilities and disabilities, immediately engage the questions of material resources and time; and the recent evolution of capitalism has been to reduce the resources in both space and time available to workers generally and to workers' organisations. For instance, we may and should aim to meet in accessible rooms, but such rooms may simply be unavailable or not available at a price which small LU branches can afford.

What follows is therefore an incomplete list of recommendations for LU's organisations for good practice in combating the effects of inequalities and discrimination on our decision-making. Most of these recommendations are hence subject to 'as far as possible' (generally, more will be possible for national meetings than for local meetings).

- Meetings should be held in accessible spaces and with hearing loops, and so on.
 - Scheduling of meetings should take account of members' or potential members' caring responsibilities (for children, for people with disabilities, etc). Childcare arrangements should be provided. IT (streaming, Skype, etc) should be used to facilitate participation of those unable to attend.
 - Agendas and motions should be circulated well in advance.
 - Every effort should be made to avoid overcrowded agendas, which tend to cramp participation in discussions (and hence set up conflicts between open discussion of debated issues, on the one hand, and prioritising the contributions of oppressed groups, on the other).
 - Chairing should be sensitive to the need to draw in contributions from those who might not 'normally' speak, as well as to the need to clarify differences and allow full debate. On the other hand, some rotation of chairing is desirable to allow other comrades to gain experience of that duty.
 - Meetings of any length should include appropriate access breaks.
- Left Unity needs to actively promote workers' education and similar initiatives to empower those who have had less access to formal education. The party as a whole, and branches, need to develop party education for the same purpose ●

CORBYN

Nato's version of war and peace

War and peace

Yassamine Mather looks at the contradictions in Jeremy Corbyn's foreign policy

Long before Tony Blair took the country into a disastrous war with Iraq, the foreign policy implemented by the Labour Party, in government and in opposition, had been virtually indistinguishable from that pursued by the Conservative Party, especially in relation to former colonies and the Middle East. There were Labour members of the war cabinet back in 1916-18, not to mention World War II. Sympathy for the new Zionist state, and the wish to remain a close ally of the United States, led the government of Harold Wilson to support Israel in the 1967 six days war and, although, under pressure from the party grassroots and the left, Labour took a more critical position to the Nixon administration's alignment with Israel in 1973, the party's foreign policy remained on the whole in alignment with that of the US.

It is clear that aspects of this

foreign policy will change with Jeremy Corbyn as leader, which is why it is hardly surprising that almost every day the rightwing press comes out with another scare story about Corbyn's international outlook and his current or past statements. His parliamentary record, his press and media interviews, on international issues have come under such intense and hostile scrutiny. The mainstream media have one aim: to demonise the new Labour leader.

The most recent 'revelations' were those in the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* about Corbyn's interview with Press TV in 2011, during which he called the assassination of Osama bin Laden a "tragedy", adding it would have been better if bin Laden had been tried in a court.

The readers of the *Daily Mail* and Rambo fans might be shocked by such a statement. However, many 'moderate' academics, lawyers and

politicians have expressed similar opinions. In fact immediately after the execution of bin Laden, Dr Robert Lambert, a lecturer in terrorism studies at the University of St Andrews, wrote an article in the very same *Guardian*, making a very similar point: "By choosing to execute the al Qa'eda leader, the US has denied justice to the victims of 9/11 and perpetuated the 'war on terror'."¹ Similarly, in an article on the BBC website, entitled 'Should Osama bin Laden have been caught and tried?', Jon Silverman, professor of media and criminal justice at the University of Bedfordshire, made similar points,² while Paddy Ashdown, former Liberal Democrat leader, speaking on the BBC's *Question time* in 2011, described the al Qa'eda leader's "execution" without a trial as "wholly, wholly, wholly wrong".³

The problem with the Corbyn

statement is not that he called for a trial of Osama bin Laden, but the illusions this seems to demonstrate about bourgeois 'international law' and the judicial system under the capitalist order. In fact there can be no doubt that the United States would have never allowed such a trial. This would have opened up a whole can of worms about the origins of al Qa'eda and the CIA's role in financing and arming it in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Saudi relations with the group would have been exposed too. And these are not allegations made only by the left. If you are in doubt about this, I recommend you view the video of Hillary Clinton and her statement to the US Senate.⁴

Iraq

Corbyn's illusions about 'international law' and the United Nations is also apparent in his comments about the Iraq war. There can be no doubt we

should admire his consistency in opposing that war, and in opposing all military intervention and sanctions (itself a form of war) against Iran and air attacks on Syria. Corbyn's anti-war record is excellent and he should be praised for it. But it is essential to establish whether the politics of the new Labour leader are different from those of the Marxist left. For us, war is the continuation of politics by other means and we have no illusions about international organisations such as the UN, which was set up to maintain the rule of capital and in practice acts to crown the supremacy of the US world hegemon.

In a statement to *The Guardian*, Corbyn said he would apologise to the British people for the "deception" in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and to the people of that country for their subsequent suffering. There is no doubt that the Labour government's role in helping to drive the invasion

was totally abhorrent and merits a clear and strongly stated apology. But Corbyn adds:

Let us say we will never again unnecessarily put our troops under fire and our country's standing in the world at risk ... Let us make it clear that Labour will never make the same mistake again, will never flout the United Nations and international law.

Leaving aside the question of "our troops" and whether they should "unnecessarily" be put under fire, it could be said that, given the current situation in the Middle East, in the civil wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen - most of them direct or indirect consequences of the invasion of Iraq - what is at stake is more serious than the UK's "standing in the world". When it comes to war, the definition of 'legality' is not as clear-cut or straightforward as Corbyn implies. The UN sanctions imposed on Iraq's Saddam Hussein and more recently on Iran's Islamic Republic were forms of war, aimed at weakening a 'rogue state', a dissident former ally, and paving the way for regime change from above. In the case of Iraq, the subsequent military invasion and occupation came after years of UN-approved 'legal' sanctions, but there can be no doubt about the damage they caused to the ordinary citizens of the country. The destruction of the Iraq's infrastructure was also undertaken through the use of punitive sanctions justified by 'international law'. They paved the way for both the invasion and regime change Rumsfeld-style.

In the case of Iran's Islamic Republic, Corbyn rightly opposed sanctions and campaigned for their lifting. However, there can be no doubt that those sanctions were imposed under "international law". They were 'legal' right up to July 2015, when the United States and other P5+1 countries signed a deal with Iran regarding its nuclear development programme. In fact the UN played an active role in the implementation and policing of sanctions that cost the lives of hundreds of Iranians, including hospital patients, the poor and the vulnerable.

Until we accept that these wars are international crimes, that they are not mistakes, whether or not they are 'illegal', we will not be able to deal with the massive problems they have caused. Unless the international left takes on the issue of 'legality' when it comes to imperialist war, we will see further alienation of the peoples of the region, as they fall into despair, anger and frustration, helping the jihadists to recruit volunteers, and eventually causing hundreds of thousands to flee the region.

Of course, at the time of the Iraq war, the Stop the War Coalition (including Corbyn as one of its leading members) argued that the coalition's stress on 'illegality' helped attract large numbers to the anti-war cause. That might have been true in the case of the Liberal Democrats, for instance. However, it did not stop the warmongers in the US and elsewhere - and it certainly did not help the left recruit from amongst the radicalised youth opposed to the war. It did not help win people to oppose the imperialist pillage of the 'third world' or US world hegemony.

Whether or not the invasion of Iraq was 'illegal', its occupation was swiftly approved by the UN security council. On day one of the occupation, the question became irrelevant. Having been given a platform from which to speak at the February 15 2003 demonstration, the Lib Dems returned to type. Once British soldiers were on the ground, the Lib Dems went patriotic and severed themselves completely from the anti-war movement.

As Mike Macnair wrote at the time,

By arguing against this invasion

on the grounds of its illegality, we hand a weapon to the warmongers, which has been and will be used in other invasions. If - in whatever way - the US-led 'war against terrorism' is driven by the economic interests of US capital, the strategic problem of stopping the war drive becomes united with the problems addressed by the anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation movement: the problem of world order in the 21st century. And it is here that international law comes back into the picture, as the symbol of a certain sort of strategy for dealing with these problems.⁵

To sum up this section of the article, Jeremy Corbyn's plans to issue a public apology over the Iraq war on behalf of the party should be welcomed and attempts to undermine the importance of such a gesture should be exposed. However, we should have no illusions in the new leader's analysis of legality, war and imperialism in the 21st century.

Trident and Nato

Speaking at a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament commemorative event in London in August, Corbyn reminded the audience that if he were prime minister he would not replace the Trident nuclear weapons system and would initiate a transition away from nuclear weapons entirely.

While he was criticised for jeopardising some 19,000 Scottish jobs, the strategy seems well planned and clearly defined in a document entitled 'Plan for defence diversification'. This explains how the skills of those who work on Trident, as well as in other defence-related industries, will be protected and how "socially productive", hi-tech industry and infrastructure projects will be able to use such skills. The document includes in its aims and objectives "making the case for a defence diversification agency, because we have a moral duty, and strategic defence and international commitments, to make Britain and the world a safer place."⁶ It states:

As a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Britain should therefore give a lead in discharging its obligations by not seeking a replacement for Trident, as we are committed to accelerate concrete progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Corbyn's anti-nuclear policy has attracted a lot of attention, with the rightwing press doing its best to ridicule it. However, there is nothing ultra-left about such proposals. In fact, as some journalists have admitted in the last few weeks, senior military figures have argued that the UK's nuclear weapons are 'militarily useless' and its possession of such weapons encourages other countries to seek a similar arsenal, so undermining efforts being made to advance the cause of international nuclear disarmament. In 2009, field marshal Lord Bramall and generals Lord Ramsbotham and Sir Hugh Beach labelled Trident "irrelevant".⁷

In my experience the majority of nuclear scientists and engineers would agree with such an approach, so the proposal is indeed fairly mainstream - it should, of course, be supported. The Scottish National Party campaigned on similar lines in this year's general election campaign and the party's defence spokesperson, Angus Robertson, pledged that an SNP group of MPs holding the balance of power in the House of Commons after May's general election would make halting the renewal of Trident an "absolute priority" - and health and education would be the SNP's "first call" on the billions of pounds freed up.⁸

Under such circumstances, it is extremely worrying that, according

to *The Daily Telegraph*, Corbyn's advisors have suggested that "scrapping Trident and leaving Nato" should be placed on the back-burner.⁹ On this I agree entirely with CND chair and Left Unity national secretary Kate Hudson, when she writes: "Now is the time to stick to principles." She states:

Trident cannot be put on the 'back burner' because a decision on whether or not Trident is to be replaced is expected in parliament in early 2016. Labour will have to vote on it, and Labour needs a policy which represents the majority view of the population - which happens to be the view of Jeremy Corbyn: Trident should not be replaced. This is not something that can be deferred. This is without doubt a question for the first 100 days and it should not be fudged because a relatively small number of powerful Labour figures are attached to a cold war system of weapons of mass destruction.

If Jeremy's advisors are trying to sanitise Jeremy, push him into the middle ground and drop policies that will challenge the Labour establishment, then they are doing him a grave disservice. Nothing is to be gained from 'triangulating' with the right. Maybe they want to keep Andy Burnham on side, but dropping a fundamental issue because he threatens to leave a shadow cabinet over it is just plain ludicrous. If anyone thinks that the party establishment will be satisfied with a few policy concessions - like Trident, for example - then they are seriously mistaken. They will come back and back for more, and eventually nothing will be left but a few gestures to those at the bottom of the pile.¹⁰

At the start of the leadership campaign Corbyn made it clear that he was calling for a withdrawal of the UK from Nato. However, by late August this was in doubt. According to reports that appeared on August 27, he appeared to water down his position by claiming that there is no "appetite" among the public to oppose Nato. When challenged by Andy Burnham on whether he would pull out, Corbyn said he would have a "serious debate about the powers of Nato", but was silent on withdrawal. Instead it appears he will argue for Nato to "restrict its role".

Admittedly, "I have criticisms of Nato - it's a cold war organisation and it should have been wound up in 1990, along with the Warsaw Pact." However, "I think there has to be a debate about the powers of Nato, the democratic accountability of Nato and why it's given itself a global role."

It is regrettable that so early in the process we are witnessing a compromise on this issue. You do not need to be on the radical left to be concerned about the international role played by Nato in maintaining the imperialist world order.

Hamas and Hezbollah

First of all, we should point out that Hamas and Hezbollah are very different organisations. Hamas is currently an ally of Saudi Arabia and in fact is in the process of considering a peace proposal put forward by Tony Blair. According to *The Daily Telegraph* (August 19), Blair is "holding secret talks with Hamas", which "are apparently aimed at securing a deal that would guarantee Israel an eight- or 10-year truce in exchange for the Gaza Strip blockade, that has been in place since 2007, being lifted".¹¹

Corbyn has always made it clear he does not agree with Hamas or Hezbollah, but has said: "I think to

bring about a peace process you have to talk to people with whom you may profoundly disagree."¹² It isn't clear how the Blairites justify attacks on Corbyn for commenting that any peace deal must involve discussions with Hamas. True, on this Corbyn was years ahead of Blair! The same could be said of Hezbollah. And, as far as I know, unlike sections of the British radical left Corbyn never used the dreadful slogan, "We are all Hezbollah".¹³

Since 2008, Hezbollah has been part of the Lebanese government, elected by the Shia population in the south as well as parts of Beirut. In other words, a call for talks with elected members of the Lebanese parliament and government is not exactly an extremist position. However, the fact that the press is paying so much attention to these statements shows how far Zionist propaganda and a pro-US international agenda has dominated the British political scene for the last few decades.

When it comes to Palestine or Lebanon, we cannot and should not expect left Labourites to propose radical solutions. It will be up to the Marxist left to argue for revolutionary positions in support of the Palestinian Arab cause, while at the same time opposing the anti-Corbyn, pro-imperialist positions of the rightwing press.

Iran

Jeremy Corbyn has consistently called for the immediate scrapping of sanctions on Iran, and for many years he had called for an end to the "demonisation" of that country by the west. Now that is more or less the mainstream US/European position - once more it could be said that Corbyn was ahead of his time on this issue. Following the signing of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 powers, European foreign ministers, including Philip Hammond, and prime ministers and heads of states are now queuing up to visit the country. Angela Merkel is about to go there, and president Barack Obama is likely to meet his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rowhani, when he visits New York later this year.

Having said that, it probably was not a good idea for Corbyn to do a trailer for a chat show on Press TV in July. Corbyn's aids later made the claim that he was not aware of the connection between Press TV and the Iranian government.

But in general Corbyn's anti-war position on Iran has to be lauded. As I have written before, he was also one of only two MPs (the other being John McDonnell) who have consistently defended Iranian workers against the attacks of the Tehran regime. It is a shame that in order to maintain peace with the rest of the STWC leadership he failed to take a principled position regarding the ban imposed on Hands Off the People of Iran. At the time his silence on the subject was taken as support for STWC's apologist position regarding Iran's Islamic Republic. Presumably, the conciliatory Corbyn did not want to confront others on the STWC leadership.

At this time, the radical left must combine robust defence of Corbyn's progressive international statements with a commitment to move the arguments beyond the rightwing, Eurocentric colonial approach of mainstream press and media, and so open up a genuine debate about war, the world order and both the legal and illegal means. Some of these arguments will be beyond the comprehension of many who traditionally lead a bourgeois workers' party, yet they remain vital if we want to change the dominant discourse about the 'third world', about current conflicts in Africa and the Middle East and about jihadist political Islam and ways of disarming and defeating it ●

Notes

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2011/may/03/osama-bin-laden-trial-al-qaeda>.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13279532.
3. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/former-lib-dem-leader-said-the-same-thing-as-jeremy-corbyn-about-bin-ladens-killing-10479663.html.
4. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqn0bm4E9yw.
5. 'The war and the law' *Weekly Worker* September 24 2003.
6. www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/06/jeremy-corbyn-plans-uk-nuclear-disarmament-70-years-hiroshima.
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12. www.channel4.com/news/jeremy-corbyn-i-wanted-hamas-to-be-part-of-the-debate.
13. The slogan, used in pro-Lebanon demonstrations, ignores the fact that Hezbollah is associated with the Iranian organisation of the same name: ie, club-wielding government militia used to attack workers' protests.

Fighting fund

Extra something

Not content with his existing regular donation to the *Weekly Worker* on top of his subscription, comrade MD has set up a new monthly payment of £15 - and, just to make sure, has added a further £5 on the same day! Now there's someone who is really concerned about this paper - and we are grateful for it, believe me.

On top of MD's £20, there were two other PayPal gifts this week - thank you, NW (£20) and DT (£10). They were among the 3,849 online readers of our paper last week. And the post brought in two cheques from PL (£40) and YJ (£25), plus a postal order (yes, they are still going) from KH for £10. Finally seven of our standing order contributors came up with the goods, as usual, and their contributions added £135 to the tally for September's fighting fund.

All that takes the running total up to £674 towards our £1,750 target. But I am confident we

will reach that, judging from the response we have been getting from our readers to our coverage of the Corbyn campaign in particular.

For example, PL writes: "I really liked your exposition of 'Corbynomics'. More, please." Take a look at Yasmine Mather's article this week, comrade. And the *Weekly Worker* will be prominent at the weekend's big events - the demonstration in solidarity with migrants and the victory party for a certain Labour leadership contender!

If you appreciate the role of the *Weekly Worker* and you bump into one of our sellers, you know what to do! Yes, throw in an extra something for our fighting fund! ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

MONARCHY

Bedrock of the British state

Instead of Platonic republicanism, Jeremy Corbyn should prioritise the fight to abolish the monarchy, says **Eddie Ford**

Over the last week the media have been exhorting us to celebrate the fact that Elizabeth Windsor is now Britain's longest ever reigning monarch. She has ruled *over* us for 63 years and seven months, overtaking her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria - who we remember with equal affection, it goes without saying.

Naturally, given her great modesty and dedication to duty - as we are *constantly* told - little fuss was made on September 9, the day on which she broke the record. Well, apart from a flotilla of historic vessels, leisure cruisers and passenger boats on the Thames taking part in a procession between Tower Bridge and parliament, with the bridge lifting as a "sign of respect" and the HMS Belfast sounding a four-gun salute. Nor should we forget that the BT Tower repeatedly scrolled the message, "Long may she reign", and official business in the Commons being postponed for half an hour so that monarchist MPs and others could "pay tribute" to the queen. Handily, the *Totally Thames* website gave us tips on how to create a "wave of applause" in honour of the queen, as the flotilla passes by - also reminding us that for the standard adult price of only £39 you can get a "close-up" view of the procession, not to mention a glass of sparkling wine, canapés and a two-course lunch.¹

As for the queen herself, now aged 89, she spent the day on official duties in Scotland. Joined by her Greek-born husband and professional bigot, Prince Phillip (aka the Duke of Edinburgh), she opened the £294 million Scottish Borders Railway and made a steam train journey with first Scottish National Party minister Nicola Sturgeon - the latter flaunting her radical, anti-establishment politics yet again. Of course, at this time of year the queen takes her traditional summer break at her modest Scottish residence, Balmoral. Magnanimously, she gave permission for TV crews from around the world to broadcast live from the garden of Buckingham Palace for the very first time. Meanwhile, her appalling son and theoretical future monarch, Charles Windsor (Prince of Wales), spent the day at Dumfries House, the stately home in Ayrshire he "saved for the nation" - where he was interviewed by Ant and Dec, renowned for their merciless interrogation of establishment figures.

Perhaps disappointingly for some, Elizabeth Windsor is not actually the world's longest living monarch. That position goes to Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who has reigned for six years longer, while Sobhuza II of Swaziland reigned for 82 years until he died in 1982. However, her image does appear on more coins and notes than any other individual on the planet. Hardly surprising, given that she is the official head of state for several countries - Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, Barbados, The Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, St Lucia, St Vincent ...

Toadying

Naturally, the occasion has been used to bombard us with propaganda about how lucky we are to have such a person as head of state and, more generally, how grateful we should be to live under a constitutional monarchy. Former prime minister John Major asininely told us that the queen is "above and beyond" politics - which supposedly explains why she is so popular: never involved in the grubby, dirty, day-to-



Elizabeth Windsor: put the lot of them out to grass

day business of government.

Capturing the tone near perfectly was the BBC's toadying royal correspondent, Nicholas Witchell. In an article entitled, 'A constant amid gale-force changes', Witchell identifies her most important qualities: "steadfast, constant, dutiful" - before going on to say that it is hard to imagine a Britain without the figure who has been a "backdrop" throughout the lives of the overwhelming majority of the population.² He invites us to recall the dark days of post-war Britain and rationing, in which "deference and class distinction" were still strong - how terrible - and where we still had the death sentence and homosexuality was illegal.

Back in 1952, Witchell continues, Winston Churchill occupied Downing Street, Joseph Stalin the Kremlin and Harry S Truman the White House - all *elderly* men whose political careers were coming to an end. Then suddenly, almost magically, Britain had a young, 25-year-old woman on the throne - heralding an Elizabethan era of change, to the point that the Britain of 2015 is "hard to recognise" today: Despite a succession of family traumas, including the tragic death of Diana Spencer in a car crash, writes Witchell, the queen has been a "permanent anchor" throughout it all, embodying the "timeless virtues of stoicism and duty" - few will fault this record-breaking monarch, he thinks. Thank heavens the age of deference is over.

Getting even more carried away, if anything, was *The Spectator* - which gushed about the "golden age of prosperity, which has been the second Elizabethan age", and how Britain has "achieved something almost unprecedented in the history of human societies": that is, the "peaceful unwinding of an empire which, with a few exceptions, has been neither violent nor tragic" (September 5). That the crown has "never been stronger", we read, is "largely down to the strength of character" of the queen herself - the people whom "she has served with such

devotion" have every reason to "wish that the second Elizabethan age lasts many more years".

But, actually, far more revolting than naked monarchist apologetics have been the articles from self-professed republicans, who nevertheless praise the monarch for bringing stability and doing "great service" to the nation. Hence Cole Moreton in *The Independent* writes that "even republicans like me" have to admit that there is "much to admire" about an 89-year-old who is so "obviously dedicated to her work" (September 5). Yes, admittedly:

It's all a bit medieval, isn't it? Undemocratic, you might say. Unjust. Not at all in tune with the sort of country I would like to live in: namely one that sees all its citizens as equal and behaves accordingly.

Obviously, hereditary public office goes against every democratic principle and a republic is an "attractive thought", says Moreton - until you "contemplate what a couple of wild-eyed former prime ministers might have made of the job if they had been elected president Thatcher or president Blair". Perish the thought, so: "God bless you, Ma'am, for sparing us that."

Expressing similar sentiments in the same paper is John Rentoul - who also claims to be a republican, ever since reading in 1975 *My queen and I*, a republican pamphlet by Labour MP Willie Hamilton. But he believes the queen "should be allowed to serve out her time". Very reasonable. Then what comes next? For him, the succession might be the time or an "unwinding of the mystique and myths around the real person of the monarch" - he hopes that Charles "scales back" the royal operation and tries to "promote equality of respect among all citizens". In fact, Rentoul confesses, as long as the monarchy has no power, there is "nothing too terrible about inherited

titles and a bit of harmless pageantry". Brings some gaiety and eccentricity to the nation.

Republican democracy

Meanwhile,

Rabid Bolshevik Jeremy Corbyn is planning to assassinate the royal family or at least make them pay the bedroom tax. Come the revolution on May 5 2020, the leading members of the monarchy together would be lined up and shot against the tobacco-stained walls of an NHS hospital ... However, in a nod to austerity, Corbyn would use just one bullet to kill top royals such as the queen, Phil, Chaz and Andy.³

At least according to the spoof website, *News Thump*. Alas, comrade Corbyn is not as intransigently republican as the above suggests. Yes, the comrade says he is a republican, but apparently abolition of the monarchy "can wait" because - wait for it - his "priority" is "social justice". Quite how you can have social justice when a particular family descended from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha can inherit political power and obscene privilege is a matter to be explained. Corbyn also says that he would like the UK to be a republic, but "it's not a battle that I am fighting".⁴

True, in 1995 he seconded the 'Commonwealth of Britain Bill' brought forward by Tony Benn, which called for the transformation of the UK into a "democratic, federal and secular Commonwealth of Britain", with an elected president, devolution, abolition of the House of Lords and an equal representation of men and women in parliament.⁵ More recently, Corbyn has talked about stripping (or weakening) the queen's royal prerogative - powers the comrade correctly described at a leadership hustings as a "very convenient way of bypassing parliament". According to him, the royal prerogative should be "subject to parliamentary vote and veto

if necessary". Then last week *The Daily Telegraph* tried to whip up a little scandal about his declaration that he would not serve on the privy council - which would be a first for a Labour leader (or indeed any leader of the official opposition).⁶ More signs of Corbyn's dangerous republican proclivities?

Yet, regrettably, that republicanism seems Platonic - it is a worthy ideal, it seems, but not something for the here and now. There are far more important things to do. However, communists take a radically different position. We *prioritise* the fight for republicanism because for us it is essential that the working class becomes the most *consistent* fighter for extreme democracy in every sphere of society. Fighting for a democratic republic is part and parcel of the struggle to democratise all aspects of society. We are opposed to aristocracy and elitism in all its guises, whether in the workplace, trade union, university, parliament - or, for that matter, amongst the left, with its confessional sects and self-perpetuating central committees. But if we are indifferent to the continued existence of the monarchy - accepting our status as 'subjects of the realm' - then how can we challenge the bourgeoisie and become a new ruling class? We remain slaves.

Clearly, the constitutional monarchy serves as a bedrock for the British state - and the status quo as a whole. For the ruling class, it symbolises the mythological unity of the British people and the nation - a unity that supposedly transcends all divisions, not least those of class. The prime minister and the leader of the opposition may exchange ritualised insults across the floor of the House of Commons, but these clashes are of minor importance, when compared to the underlying common interest of this imagined British family - or so we are led to believe by the establishment and its cynical media.

This explains why we in the CPGB place so much emphasis on the fight to abolish the constitutional monarchy *system*, not just the actual monarch. By which we mean sweeping away the House of Lords, getting rid of the presidential prime minister and all forms of prime ministerial patronage, introducing a single-chamber parliament with proportional representation, annual elections, MPs' salaries set at the level of a skilled worker, and so on. We also demand the disestablishment of the Church of England, the replacement of the standing army by a people's militia and a federal Britain. That is, republicanism forms an intrinsic part of our communist *minimum programme*. And it does so because such demands directly raise the question of the state itself - of how we are ruled. And by logical extension the *form* working class power will take.

We urge Corbyn to reconsider his stance. The Labour Party needs to commit itself to radical, republican democracy - something that would really put the cat amongst the pigeons ●

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Notes

1. <http://totallythames.org/events/info/a-royal-river-salute>.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34172529.
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MIGRATION

Open the borders

The refugee crisis has highlighted once again the inhumanity of the bourgeoisie's insistence that free movement must be controlled. Peter Manson examines the response of the left

At all costs, 'we' must have the right to determine who is or is not allowed to enter 'our' territory. That is the insistence of both the narrow nationalists like UK prime minister David Cameron and his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán, and the supporters of a more closely integrated European Union, the cheerleaders of 'Fortress Europe'.

The current refugee crisis - resulting from the devastation wreaked in the Middle East and north Africa by a series of imperialist wars and interventions and the largely reactionary response they have provoked - has utterly exposed the bankruptcy of bourgeois thinking on border controls and revealed deep divisions among leaders of the various states.

According to the EU Dublin regulation, refugees are supposed to apply for asylum in the EU country where they first arrive, but, as German vice-chancellor Sigmar Gabriel explained, his country needs "more workers". Which is why Germany was encouraging migrants who had reached southern, eastern and central Europe to travel onwards - Germany was expecting to take in some 800,000 refugees this year and could handle up to half a million a year afterwards. In response Orbán, who had been denying migrants, including those who had valid train tickets, the right to travel to Germany, declared that their welfare was a "German problem". This provoked a comment from UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, who said: "In a crisis, national interests always prevail over European ideology." He has a point when it comes to bourgeois politicians.

Up to the last couple of weeks empathy and solidarity for the plight of those attempting to flee civil war, unrest, dire poverty and repression in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and so on was very much a minority sentiment. Yes, the deaths of hundreds of migrants in the Mediterranean or in sealed trucks made the headlines, but the mainstream response was to point the finger at the 'people traffickers' (as if those providing unsafe or inadequate means of transport are more culpable than those who wish to deny it altogether). Meanwhile the presence of just two-three thousand young men in Calais attempting to enter Britain by whatever means was the cause for antipathy, not concern for the welfare of people looking for a better life.

Of course, what really sparked the change in mood was the publication of images of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, whose body was washed up on a Turkish shore after the boat on which his family was travelling to Europe sank, as so many others had before it. A young, innocent life had been destroyed simply because of the establishment consensus decreeing that the overwhelming majority of refugees must stay put.

Cameron declared that "as a father" he was "deeply moved" by the images. But the answer was not for Britain to take "more and more" people. In fact calls for Britain to take its "fair share" of the migrants now stuck somewhere in Europe were actually "encouraging" people to make the "potentially lethal" journey across the Mediterranean.

But the likes of Cameron could demonstrate their human concern by contrasting their reaction to the death of Aylan with that of, for example, Peter Bucklitsch, the former Ukip council candidate who said that the boy was

clearly "well clothed and fed". In other words, his parents were not destitute and so there was no reason for them to want to flee Syria. They were just "greedy for the good life in Europe".

It is in fact true that those who place their fate in the hands of the 'people traffickers' are generally not among the most poverty-stricken of the migrants - those crossings in vessels that are less than seaworthy do not come cheap and many of the refugees who make it to Europe are clearly well educated. Yet the fact that such families are prepared to embark upon such journeys with little more than the clothes they are wearing says a lot about the precarity of their lives in their country of origin. The point, however, is that everyone should have the right to seek a better life, not just those at the very bottom of the pile.

The speculation had been that Cameron would commit to taking around 10,000 refugees, but, with France's François Hollande pledging more than twice that the day before, Cameron announced on September 8 that Britain would relocate 20,000 refugees "by 2020".

In the same speech to parliament, Cameron took the opportunity to report that in August two British members of Islamic State had been killed by an unmanned drone in Syria. He claimed they had been plotting to launch murderous attacks in Britain and in fact one of them, Reyaad Khan, had intended to assassinate the queen. So the attack was an act of "self-defence" or, as the headline in *The Daily Telegraph* put it, the jihadists had been killed "to save the queen" (September 8).

The revelation of the August attack was an attempt to demonstrate that the way to end the refugee crisis was by military action. Yes, they really want us to believe that yet more of the same disastrous imperialist intervention that has wreaked havoc across the entire region will this time put everything to rights. Former defence minister Anna Soubry claimed it had been a "very, very big mistake" when parliament voted not to launch a military intervention in Syria in 2013. Not that this stopped the latest drone strike.

Left response

Unsurprisingly, both the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain and the Socialist Party in England and Wales have been less than persuasive in their responses to the latest crisis. The reason for this is the fact that both buy into the mainstream consensus that immigration is a problem and that it must be 'controlled'.

SPEW deputy general secretary Hannah Sell, speaking to the January 24 conference of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, defended the proposal to include in Tusc's electoral programme opposition only to "racist" immigration controls: "We can't just make the bald demand" for no controls at all, she said. That was not the way to win support amongst workers.

Comrade Sell has just published an article outlining SPEW's position in relation to the current crisis, entitled 'Solidarity with refugees - defend the right to asylum'. The words of the headline - like those in the article - are carefully chosen: SPEW's "solidarity" is with "refugees", as opposed to migrants, and it defends the right to "asylum", not migration.

True, in the future, everyone will be able to live wherever they choose:



Racism is not the real problem: it is border controls

A socialist society would harness the wealth, science and technique created by capitalism in order to meet the needs of the majority worldwide. Only on that basis would it be possible to have a world where people are free to move if they wish to, but are not forced to do so by the nightmare conditions they face at home.

In the meantime, however, comrade Sell clearly implies that only 'genuine' refugees should have the right to migrate. And she proposes a better way of rooting out the impostors:

Control of decisions whether to grant asylum cannot be left in the hands of this callous government. We demand that elected committees of ordinary working people, including representatives of migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases and grant asylum.¹

Very radical, don't you think?

There needs to be a political response in ending direct and proxy western military interventions in the Middle East, while assisting peoples of countries outside the EU to determine their own future, free of economic control by transnational corporations.³

But who should have the right to migrate? I am afraid we are not told. Although, as with SPEW, the strong implication is that only *bone fide* asylum-seekers or refugees need apply. After all, "Britain will take in just 20,000 refugees over the next five years" despite the "recommendations made last year by the UN High Commission for Refugees ...", which stated that Britain should offer help to 30,000 people.⁴

Thankfully, the approach of the Socialist Workers Party is much more principled - a pity the comrades insist on confusing the question of border controls with "racism", as if the two are synonymous. For instance, *Socialist Worker's* lead story on September 1 was headed: "Stop this murder" and underneath it was stated: "Open the borders. Let them in." All migrants "have every right to try and find a better and safer life for themselves and their children" was the conclusion. Quite right. But the online version of the headline inserted "racist" before "murder".⁵

There was an attempt to justify this the following week in a box headed: "Are immigration controls racist?" The answer is apparently 'yes', because

... all immigration controls encourage the idea that there are certain groups of people who shouldn't live here. And that usually means people from eastern Europe, or black and Asian people. This gives cops and bosses a green light to discriminate against them. It paves the way for racist attacks on people who 'don't belong in Britain'.

I do not find this very convincing. The "certain groups of people who shouldn't live here" are actually just about everybody apart from those already in the country. But, once again, the conclusion is correct: "We think people should be able to go where they like - whatever the reason."⁶

As I write, the lead on Left Unity's website is the article written by Simon Hardy, who "calls for solidarity and open borders". He points out: "Left Unity has a position of opposing all immigration controls and borders" and adds: "As socialists we do not make a distinction between the rights of refugees and the rights of people to escape poverty. We are all human beings and we must have solidarity with each other."⁷

You can criticise LU for all sorts of failings, but one of its welcome strengths has been the position adopted on this question ●

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Notes

1. www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21365/08-09-2015/solidarity-with-refugees-defend-the-right-to-asylum.
2. *Morning Star* September 2.
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ECONOMY

Will they succeed?

Will the euro survive?

All bets are off, writes **Michael Roberts**. This article is based on his presentation to the CPGB's Communist University in August

As I write, it would appear that there has been a limited recovery in euro zone economic growth. Italy and Spain have accelerating rates of real growth in terms of gross domestic product, albeit still very modest. The Italian economy expanded by 0.3% in the second quarter of 2015 - that takes the annual rate to 0.7%. And Italy's jobless rate sank to 12% in July, according to preliminary data - the lowest since the same month in 2013. Overall, euro zone manufacturing activity is making a modest improvement.

But this recovery is six years since 2009. The euro zone has experienced a deep recession, followed by stagnation and a very weak recovery. The euro zone economy is now some 11% below where it would have been without the global financial crash and the ensuing great recession, and the gap is widening.

This proves that the euro crisis, as it has come to be called, was mainly a product of the slump in global capitalism in 2008-09 and the subsequent failure to recover much is the same. Profitability in most capitalist economies is still well below the peak of 2007 (the US is the only exception).

I have correlated the change in profitability for the 'distressed' euro zone economies since the end of the great recession with real GDP growth since then. The trend line is positively sloped. So, the bigger the increase in profitability of the capitalist sector of each euro zone economy, the greater the economic recovery.

Estonia and Ireland have seen

the biggest recovery in profitability (through austerity and cutting wages and living standards for the population, along with massive emigration of the unemployed). As a result, they have had the best GDP recoveries - such as they are. Where the recovery in profitability has been weak or non-existent, then real GDP has contracted the most since 2009 (Greece).

Special features

But there are special features involved in the euro crisis. This is evident from the fact that the biggest losers among capitalist economies from the great recession and the ensuing weak recovery were the southern states of Europe: Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Capitalism is a combined, but uneven, process of development. It is combined in the sense of extending the division of labour and economies of scale and involving the law of value in all sectors, as in 'globalisation'. But that expansion is uneven and unequal by its very mode, as the stronger seek to gain market share over the weaker.

The euro project aimed at integrating all European capitalist economies into one unit to compete with the US and Asia in world capitalism with a single market and a rival currency. But one policy on inflation, one short-term interest rate and one currency for all members is not enough to overcome the centrifugal forces of capitalist uneven development, especially when growth for all stops and there is a slump.

The professed aim from the beginning of the euro in 1999 was that

the weaker economies would converge with the stronger in GDP per capita, fiscal and external imbalances. But the opposite has happened instead, as the International Monetary Fund explained recently, when it said:

During the years that followed the euro's introduction, financial integration proceeded rapidly and markets and governments hailed it as a sign of success. The widespread belief was that it would benefit both south and north - capital was finally able to flow to where it would best be used and foster real convergence.

But in fact a lasting convergence in productivity did not materialise across the European Union. Instead, a competitiveness divide emerged. As the financial crisis gripped the euro area in 2010, these and other problems came to the fore ... In fact, there has been little absolute real convergence in the euro area. Those euro area countries that had low per capita incomes in 1999 did not have the highest per capita growth rate.¹

The imbalances widened and have not converged. Fig 1 shows who has gained or lost in GDP terms relative to the euro zone average since the euro began. It is northern Europe (and Ireland) that has gained, while southern Europe has fallen further behind.

Self-defeating

At the same time as looking towards more integration, the European

Central Bank, the EU Commission and the governments of the euro zone proclaimed that 'austerity' was the only way Europe could escape from the great recession. Cutting public spending would force convergence. Supporters of austerity like to cite the example of the Baltic states, such as Estonia, as showing that these policies could quickly restore profitability and growth. The government there adopted neoliberal policies forcefully. Estonian unemployment fell back from 20% in early 2010 to 10% and the economy grew at over 8% in 2011. But Estonia's real GDP is still some 9% below its peak in 2007, having fallen over 17% from peak to trough.

There have been six years of austerity and very little progress has been achieved in restoring growth or even meeting the fiscal and public debt targets and, more important, in reducing the imbalances within the euro zone on labour costs or external trade to make the weaker more 'competitive'.

The recession in the euro zone has made fiscal austerity programmes self-defeating. As the denominator for fiscal deficit or debt to GDP has shrunk, the ratios have risen, despite huge cuts in government spending and higher taxes. France, which promised to get below the 3% budget deficit to GDP target set by the euro zone leaders, is forecast to hit 3.7% in 2015, while Spain, which has been granted two separate delays in its timetable to hit the target, is projected to see its deficit rise from 5.9% of GDP in 2014 to 6.6% in 2015.

Overall, the euro zone sovereign debt ratio will hit another all-time high of 95.9% of GDP this year.

Actually, the real aim of 'austerity' is not to 'balance the government books', but to achieve a sharp fall in real wages and cuts in corporate taxes, and thus raise the share of profit. The adjusted wage share in national income - defined there as compensation per employee as percentage of GDP at factor cost per person employed - is the cost to the capitalist economy of employing the workforce (wages and benefits) as a percentage of the new value created each year. Every capitalist economy had managed to reduce labour's share of the new value created since 2009. Labour has been paying for this crisis everywhere.

Not surprisingly, it has been the workers of the Baltic states and the distressed euro zone states of Greece, Ireland, Cyprus, Spain and Portugal who have taken the biggest hit to wage share in GDP. In these countries, real wages have fallen, unemployment has rocketed and hundreds of thousands have left their homeland to look for work somewhere else. That has enabled companies in those countries to sharply increase the rate of exploitation of their reduced workforce, although so far that has not been enough in most countries to restore profitability to levels seen before the great recession and thus sustain sufficiently high new investment to get unemployment down and these economies onto a sustained path of growth.

In all these countries, governments

What we fight for

are implementing an agenda of 'labour market reform', spending cuts and privatisations designed to hit labour's share in the national output - there is more misery to come. Italy's 'Blairite' leader, Matteo Renzi, is pledged to such neoliberal measures. France's François Hollande has had a Damascene conversion to a neoliberal agenda and Slovenia's 'social democrat' coalition is imposing similar measures.

One of the striking contributions to the fall in labour's share of new value has been from emigration. It has become an important contribution to reducing costs for the capitalist sector in the larger economies like Spain. Before the crisis, Spain was the largest recipient of immigrants to its workforce: from Latin America, Portugal and north Africa. Now that has been completely reversed.

In 2008, one year after the start of the crisis, Spain still recorded 310,000 more migrant arrivals than departures. That number fell to just 13,000 the following year, before turning negative in 2010. In 2012 there were more than 140,000 more departures than arrivals, and the pace of the exodus is picking up fast. According to the national statistics office, the foreign-born population now stands at 6.6 million, down from more than seven million just two years ago.

The Estonian labour force has been decimated, as thousands have left this tiny country to seek work elsewhere in Europe. Estonia also received over €3.4 billion in EU structural funds to finance infrastructure spending and employment. In this way, wage costs have been lowered and profits raised.

The poster child for 'successful austerity', Ireland, achieved an export-led recovery by getting rid of its 'excess' workforce in a similar way. Irish emigration is now back at levels not seen since the dark days of late 1980s.

Euro zone unemployment has now fallen to a three-and-a-half-year low. But it is still at 10.9%, with 25% in Greece and 22.2% in Spain. Indeed, there were rises in three countries in the latest data for this June: France, where it rose from 10.3% to 10.4%, Finland - where unemployment climbed from 8.7% to 9.7%, and Austria, where it rose from 5.7% to 5.8%.

Keynesian solution?

The crisis in the euro zone has been blamed by some on the left on the rigidity of the single currency area and on the strident 'austerity' policies of the leader of the euro zone, Germany. But the euro crisis is only partly a result of the policies of austerity being pursued, not only by the EU institutions, but also by states outside the euro zone like the UK. Alternative Keynesian policies of fiscal stimulus and/or devaluation where applied have done little to end the slump and still made households suffer income losses. Austerity means a loss of jobs and services and thus income. Keynesian policies mean a loss of real income through higher prices, a falling currency and eventually rising interest rates.

Take Iceland, a tiny country outside the EU, let alone the euro zone. The widely supported Keynesian policy of devaluation of the currency, a policy not available to the member-states of the euro zone, has still meant a 40% decline in average real incomes in dollar terms and nearly 20% in krona terms since 2007.

Under capitalism, what matters is not government spending as such, but restoring profitability in the productive sectors. In Iceland, the rate of profit plummeted from 2005 and eventually the island's property boom burst, and along with it the banks collapsed in 2008-09. Devaluation of the currency started in 2008, but profitability in 2012 remains well under the peak level of 2004, although there has been a slow recovery in profitability from

2008 onwards. In Greece, profitability stayed up until the global crisis took hold and then it plummeted and only stopped falling last year. Profitability in 'austerity' Greece and 'Keynesian' Iceland is now about the same relative to 2005 levels. So you could say that either policy has been equally useless.

No escape for Greece

But the euro leaders have failed to solve the imbalances within the euro zone. Greece exemplifies this in the extreme. It cannot escape the debt deflation trap that it has descended into. Gross public and private debt relative to GDP has risen to record proportions and is still rising. Greek companies have the highest debt-to-equity ratio of modern economies at 235%, more than twice the euro zone corporate average. These debt ratios are rising because nominal GDP growth remains non-existent, while the cost of servicing debt continues to rise.

This is Greece's third macro-economic adjustment programme in five years, after the first in 2010 and second in 2011. It looks just as likely to fail as the last two in restoring Greek 'debt sustainability', let alone economic growth, employment and living standards.

Under the new 'bailout' package agreed by the Syriza government under duress, the Greeks are being subject to further severe austerity in trying to run surpluses on the government account (before interest payments) rising to 3.5% of GDP. Both the IMF and the EU Commission reckon that the Greek government debt ratio - currently around 180% of GDP - will probably rise to over 200% before there is any sign of a fall and will anyway stay well above any level that is considered 'sustainable'.

The only possible escape for Greece would be if euro zone economic growth were to accelerate and thus revive the

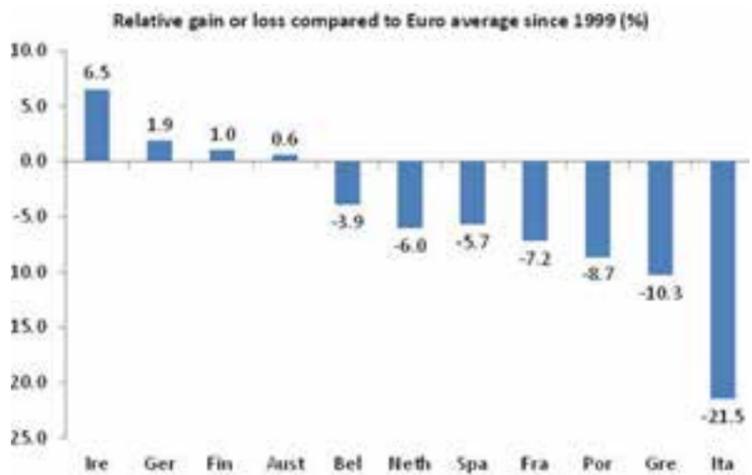
Greece needs to break with the euro and the German-led troika bailout packages. Greece should restore the drachma and then devalue to boost exports and inflate away the real value of debt. In short, Greece should 'do an Argentina' and default on its public debts. Two-thirds of the outstanding Greek government debt is held by the euro zone bailout mechanisms and the IMF. The other third is mainly held by the Greek banks.

Two things spring from this alternative policy. First, was the Argentina option of 2002 a success? The experience of Argentina was partly exceptional and eventually proved unsuccessful.² Second, if the euro crisis is a crisis of capitalism and not just a problem of the euro as 'too strong' a currency, then devaluation and debt default on its own would only be a temporary palliative for Greek capitalism - and no more palatable for working people than euro-defined austerity, as it would mean hyperinflation and a collapse of businesses laden with euro debt. The current renewal of Argentina's crisis has confirmed that prognosis.³

If there is no political upheaval that overthrows pro-austerity governments, then eventually enough capital value will be destroyed through bankruptcies, unemployment and an investment strike to raise profitability in surviving euro zone corporations and the 'whole crap' can start again - after huge human cost.

Even this may not be possible for Greek capitalism - which is not just on its knees, but is prostrate, with life-support mechanisms not working. Greece is not tiny like Estonia, but it is a relatively small capitalist economy, dependent on trade, mainly of processed minerals, pharmaceuticals and food, as well as services like tourism. Greek capitalism is still encumbered by inefficient oligarchic capital, so investment is not recovering.

The Germans do not want to



Greek economy - a rising tide lifts all boats. But, despite the signs of recovery outlined at the start of this article, the signs of euro zone growth much above 1% a year are not good.

And anyway, the euro group and its credit institutions, as well as the IMF, want the debt ratio to fall and their previous loans paid back. The target for 2030 is a 60%-of-GDP limit for all euro zone members. But, even if Greek governments apply austerity right through to then, the public debt to GDP will still be above 100%.

Moreover, there is no way the Greeks can 'return to the market' to raise money to repay the IMF and the euro institutions. The market will charge at least 6%, according to the IMF, and that is impossible for the Greeks to pay. So this 'bailout' would have to be followed by another and another, as far as the Greek and German eyes can see.

What is the alternative then? Well, up to now Keynesian economists and many on the left have advocated that

cough up any more money, but they will probably agree to relax the terms of repayment of debt, perhaps by rolling over that debt perpetually - after all, the UK did not pay back all its World War II debts to America until 2002! But just relaxing the repayment burden does not restore Greek capitalism. Unless the euro zone leaders write off the loans to Greece and/or the region as a whole makes a dramatic economic recovery in the next year or so and this revival 'trickles down' to Greece, Greek capitalism will remain imprisoned.

Where next?

The global slump dramatically increased the divergent forces within the euro, threatening to break it apart. The fragmentation of capital flows between the strong and weak euro zone states exploded. The capitalist sector of the richer economies like Germany stopped lending directly to the weaker capitalist sectors in Greece and Slovenia, etc. As a result, in order

to maintain a single currency for all, the official monetary authority, the ECB, and the national central banks had to provide the loans instead.

Those who wish to preserve the euro project like the EU Commission, the majority of EU politicians and most capitalist corporations, recognise that the only way to do so is to extend the process towards more integration. That means a 'banking union', so that all the banks in the euro zone are subject to control by the Euro institutions like the ECB and not national government regulators. That is underway and begins in earnest in January 2016.

Better still would be the establishment of a full 'fiscal union', so that taxes and spending are controlled by euro zone institutions and deficits in one Economic and Monetary Union state are automatically met by transfers from surplus states. That is the nature of a federated state like Canada, the US or Australia. These transfers reach 28% of US GDP, compared to the controlled and conditional transfers under EU budgets and bailouts of less than 10% of one state's GDP.

But the euro zone does not have such a fiscal union and there is little prospect of one. Instead, after much kicking and screaming, the Germans and the EU agreed to set up some fiscal transfer funds - first the European Financial Stability Facility and then the European Stability Mechanism. But these do not deliver automatic fiscal union transfers; they are contingent on meeting fiscal targets in a troika (EU, IMF, ECB) programme, and national governments still set their own budgets. And there is growing opposition in Germany and northern Europe to shelling out cash for what they see as wayward countries who cannot get their public finances in order.

There are two ways a capitalist economy can get out of slump. The first is by raising the rate of exploitation of the workforce enough to drive up profits and renew investment. The second is to liquidate weak and unprofitable capital (ie, companies) or write off old machinery, equipment and plant from company books (ie, devalue the stock of capital). Of course, capitalists attempt to do both in order to restore profits and profitability after a slump.

This is taking a long time in the current crisis since the bottom of the great recession in mid-2009. Progress in devaluing and deleveraging the stock of capital and debt built up before even being delayed by easy monetary policy.

Can the people of Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Slovenia and Ireland endure more years of austerity, creating a whole 'lost generation' of unemployed young people, as has already happened in Greece and will happen in Spain, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia?

The electorate is losing patience and is angry, as the 2014 Euro elections showed. The EU leaders and strategists of capital need economic growth to return quickly or further political explosions are likely. And yet, given the current level of profitability, that may take too long before, perhaps, the world economy drops into another slump. Then all bets are off on the survival of the euro ●

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com and has a Facebook site at www.facebook.com/pages/Michael-Roberts-blog/925340197491022.

Notes

1. <http://blog-imfdirect.imf.org/2013/02/15/euro-toward-a-more-perfect-union>.
2. See <http://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2012/05/10/eurozone-debtmonetary-union-and-argentina>.
3. See <http://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/argentina-paul-krugman-and-the-great-recession>.

■ 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

**We need
our own
media**

Meet the new boss ...

Rebekah Brooks has returned to the helm. William Kane welcomes her back

Last week, something quietly important happened in the British press. Rebekah Brooks replaced Mike Darcey as the CEO of News UK, the British tentacle of Rupert Murdoch's global media empire.

The significance of this move has hardly gone unnoticed. Brooks, in earlier times, was the individual closest to Murdoch within his business, with the exception of his blood relations. Yet, for a moment, that was all thrown into doubt. The revelation that journalists at the late and unlamented *News of the World* had hacked the voicemail of missing teenager Milly Dowler, unwittingly giving police and family false hope that she was still alive, blew a simmering scandal wide open, and exposed rampant criminality in Murdoch newsrooms for the shabbiest of ends. News International CEO at the time, Brooks was eventually forced to resign, pocketing a cool £16 million payoff for her troubles.

In the four intervening years, there have been multiple police investigations, the Leveson inquiry, an overhaul of press regulation and the sensational trial that saw her acquitted, while former subordinate and lover Andy Coulson was sent down, on charges arising from the hacking scandal. The Murdoch operation survived, however; and it is as strong as it ever was. Bringing Rebekah back is the aging tyrant's victory gesture. Once she was his right hand; now she is his middle finger.

Darcey's departure was one of the worst kept secrets in the recent history of the business. *Private Eye*, *The Guardian* (in the form of well-connected media commentator Roy Greenslade) and others had been openly speculating on the matter for months, the only question being who would replace him. Darcey came into the job as the dust settled in 2012; he is a safe pair of hands from central casting. But some of his initiatives have backfired - particularly the decision to put *The Sun* website behind a paywall.

The only question was exactly who would replace him, which ultimately came down to Brooks and former general counsel Will Lewis. Neither would have been spotless appointments. Brooks, despite her acquittal of all charges at the 'trial of the century', is still implicated in the bad old days, should any further revelations appear. The former head of security at News International, Mark Hanna - who was exonerated in the same trial as Brooks - has fallen out bitterly with the Murdochs, and has promised to spill the beans on more skulduggery. We shall see what he comes up with, but the threat should not be considered idle: we already know from revelations at the trial that Hanna was roped into all manner of dubious activities that a less charitable jury might have considered amounted to perversion of the course of justice.

Lewis is damaged by the 2011 fracas in a different way. As the allegations mounted up in the early part of that year, he formed a faction at the top of News International which wanted to cooperate much more fully with the

authorities - taking the hit to avoid something truly explosive coming out, like the Dowler hack. He was opposed by Brooks and James Murdoch.

After the closure of the *News of the World*, Lewis prevailed, more or less by default. He set about shopping his own journalists and revealing their confidential sources to police. In the world of journalism, revealing sources is, of course, something like a cardinal breach of the Hippocratic oath. It is fair to say that this act, which from a certain point of view is more reprehensible than phone-hacking *as such*, has not been forgotten by hacks on the ground, who may occasionally be heard speaking of potential danger to Lewis's bodily integrity, should he return from his comfortable exile in charge of Dow Jones in New York.

Business as usual?

So Brooks it was.

She will return to an organisation very much changed, although perhaps not in the ways advertised on the brochure. Wapping has been ditched, its famous fortress torn down to make way, in the spirit of the age, for luxury apartments; Brooks reported for duty at the 'baby Shard' - a carbuncular mass of glass at London Bridge. A great many new 'procedures' and 'guidelines' have been foisted indiscriminately on all News employees: every six months or so, the working stiff is required to play a facile edutainment game to refresh her memory of News Corp's anti-bribery policy, like a booster vaccination.

The point of all this is, naturally, to better lubricate the downhill motion of shit. Oh yes, the bosses have learnt from the hacking scandal: never again shall such unpleasantness be allowed to creep to the door of the C-suite. The legal department will always be able to blame people further down the ladder. The hubris, the air of invincibility around *The Sun* office is gone. The appointment of Tony Gallagher as editor is being interpreted as an intent to bring the paper upmarket (relatively speaking): Gallagher is a *Mail* man through and through, and had some success bringing its brand of rancorous populism to *The Daily Telegraph* (bailing out at the beginning of the recent period of total chaos at that paper).

In other ways, there is a sense of business as usual - or a return to the *status quo ante*. Leveson's recommendations on press regulation were in effect

stillborn, victim to industry boycott and political paralysis - the old, discredited Press Complaints Commission was replaced by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipsa), which is not so terribly different, bar the fact that it is effectively boycotted by the *Financial Times*, *Independent* and *Guardian*.

Explosive at the time, the phone-hacking scandal failed to garner the scalps it truly deserved, one or two bent Met chiefs aside. It is not unreasonable to suggest that, if David Cameron could survive the year beginning June 2011, there is no reason why his polo partner, Brooks, should not: but the revelation of flagrantly corrupt relations between then culture minister Jeremy Hunt and Murdoch's lobbyists failed even to end Hunt's career, who was shuffled off to health.

Instead, the scandal was subtly narrowed - in the hands of Brian Leveson and the dodgy celebrity clique that runs Hacked Off, and, with the encouragement of politicians tired of being held to ransom by the likes of Murdoch, it became merely a story of dubious journalistic ethics, and thus a face-off between the press and the judiciary.

The obvious result was the Ipsa stalemate. Behind the scenes, however, the corrupt cash nexus was buried. The phone-hacking scandal was not the story of the crime, but the cover-up. It was the pulling together of the 'Chipping Norton set', the generous hospitality offered to top cop Paul Stephenson, the dirty culture of back-scratching, which - as the revelations piled up - turned to a culture of back-stabbing. It was only by putting a scare into every element of the establishment that we got a glimpse of how they operate when nobody is looking.

Once it turned into *just* a story about the press, the paradoxical but inevitable result was that the press should return, sooner or later, to its old strength. For the bourgeois press performs a social function, welding together the interests of the capitalist class (which funds it through advertising subsidies), the policy of bourgeois political parties and the perceived interests of the subordinate classes, including the proletariat, but principally in this connection the petty bourgeoisie.

In order for this to work, it is necessary for the whole thing *not* to appear to be corrupt. *The Sun* must be able to present itself, with some level of plausibility, as the voice of the salt-of-the-earth underdog against

an unfeeling, politically correct elite. The glory of the summer of 2011 was that the seam was cracked open, and the peculiarly tight integration of the different parts of the British establishment was glimpsed by us all - surprising in some of its details even those of us who already knew they were 'all in it together'.

Once it becomes about journalistic misbehaviour, however, something odd happens. An opportunity arises for politicians to take the moral high ground; that great modern circus, an interminable public inquiry, is set up; scapegoats are found. The *systemic* quality of the scandal can be obscured, and in the end it becomes a mundane matter of the police - stunned into action by public shame - rounding up the miscreants. Once this is achieved, the dust will soon settle; and those who escaped a diet of porridge, even (like our Rebekah) only narrowly, may be rehabilitated at their employers' leisure.

Alternative media

The return of Brooks to the British press is a timely reminder that it takes more than simply one courageous journalistic crusade (and credit, once again, must be allotted to Nick Davies and his colleagues for bringing some rare dignity to the profession) to shake up this state of affairs. Above all else, it takes the development of a meaningful alternative to the capitalist media; one socially rooted not in the interests of the capitalist class, but in the need the masses have for the *truth*.

In a certain sense - as the Silicon Valley entrepreneurs so feared by old-school press barons like to say - the time is ripe for disruption. The bourgeois press is presently reliant for its revenues on ad sales - a race to the bottom started in earnest by one R Murdoch in the 1980s. However, as print readerships decline, so does the value of print advertising; but the discrepancy is hardly made up by digital advertising, which is cheap to the point of being worthless (and increasingly so, given the popularity of ad-blocking software and the like).

The Sun payroll is an example of an attempt to find new revenue models in lean times, but that experiment has failed: it is one thing to charge for *The Times* or *Financial Times*, but quite another for celebrity gossip available on any number of websites.

A more common solution is what is called 'native advertising', and used to be called 'advertorial' - that

is, adverts that take the form of news articles, sponsored by some company. The problem is that this corrodes the thing that the phone-hacking scandal exploded - the *trust*, however qualified, that people have in news copy. In the old days, it was simple: that bit on the left of the page was obviously an article, and that bit on the right was obviously an ad. How can you *trust* the editorial integrity of a newspaper whose copy is randomly and non-transparently trying to sell you something? (The *Telegraph* has sold its soul - such as it was - to this sort of thing, and its circulation has correspondingly plummeted.)

Imagine, for one joyful moment, a working class press: one sustained not by capitalist largesse, but the self-sacrifice of the movement it serves. The question does not even arise. There is no problem with pissing off advertisers who do not exist, nor is there posed the great game of half-bribing, half-blackmailing bourgeois political careerists until they are on message. The way is open to what ought to be the point of journalism - *to tell the truth*. The laugh you just stifled is not a consequence of the inherent nature of the profession, but the criminal ends to which it is put in capitalist society, where Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Nick Davies and Glenn Greenwald will always be the embattled exceptions to the toadying rule.

We are about to enter a period in British politics where there will be a leftwinger - of a soft, reformist sort, but a card-carrying communist so far as the extant dailies are concerned - in an uncomfortably public position in British political life. We may expect Jeremy Corbyn to be given the Ed Miliband treatment and then some, which consisted primarily in complete and stony silence whenever any potentially popular policies are proposed, alternating with hysterical ridicule whenever some small (in some cases, entirely imaginary) slip is made. We cannot rely on *The Guardian* or - heaven forbid - the 'Bolshevik Broadcasting Corporation' to redress this imbalance.

The opportunity is there - our opponents are on weaker ground than they admit. The need is there, for obvious reasons. We must transcend the shabby condition of *Socialist Worker* and the like, and the coma-inducing house journals of the trade unions, and create a workers' media fit for purpose. Otherwise, there truly will be no getting rid of the Rebekah Brookses of the world ●

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