

DONT TREAD ON ME

# weekly worker

**Jim Creegan on the Tea  
Party and the mid-term  
elections in the US**

- Diane Abbott campaign
- CNWP ghost
- Communist unity 1920
- Revolutionary jazz

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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ENEMY  
WITHIN





# LETTERS



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

## Reactionary

Firstly, I confess admiration for the mental contortion required to assume that I do not like pictures of women or displays of female flesh because they might 'cause' male lust (Letters, September 16 and 23). I think nothing of the sort. Men's sexuality is their own responsibility and is not 'provoked' by anything women do or don't wear. I am also surprised by the misunderstanding of the term 'fetishism', especially since I pointed out this was meant in the same way that Karl Marx (of whom comrades may have heard) used the word in his idea of commodity fetishism.

Peter Manson might find John Berger's *Ways of seeing*, a highly influential book, useful in considering representations of women as he approaches discussion of the visual arts from a socialist perspective. You say that this debate started about the burqa (Letters, September 9), but my original letter was not about the burqa. As it happens, my opinion on the French burqa ban is similar to yours, but this was not the subject of my letter. You also reach other conclusions which I find surprising; I already knew that communists want an end to the gulf between public and private spheres. I did say that the current public/private distinction is part of bourgeois society, so it would be remarkable if French republican ideals in the public sphere were anything more than tokenistic - like the laughable idea that Britain is a democracy. I didn't think I had to spell it out.

My original letter (June 21) was about an issue of the *Weekly Worker* (June 14) that contained several examples of overt sexism. You seem to think I believe this to be a matter of chance but, in fact, I am perfectly well aware that it was the result of deliberate choice. That is the reason for my criticism, as you will see if you read the letter. I did make some helpful suggestions of possible alternatives - for example, a photograph contrasting the freedom of men to strip off and jump in a river with the forced covering of women in black burqas, or using a photo of a kerb-crawling man instead of a bit of a woman's body to illustrate your article on prostitution. Consumers of the 'sex' industry are usually men; this very often also seems to be the case in those found guilty of violence against prostituted women. So a picture of such a man would admirably illustrate the actual, immediate source of women's vulnerability. It is arguable that prostituted women are vulnerable to male violence as a direct consequence of the dynamics of prostitution itself. Since we are agreed that men's sexual violence is neither natural nor inevitable, there must be another cause. Many readers would find your explanation interesting.

While I understand that you would be more comfortable debating women's oppression on the familiar territory of the operation of the state or capitalism, that was not my intention. I wanted to discuss your choice of imagery and research material and the general lack of seriousness with which you approach the subject - in marked contrast to your discussion of other topics, including visual arts. Sadly, it seems that I am unusual in finding those articles politically interesting. Many of your recent contributors show a refreshing freedom from the traditional requirements of ever having read anything on the subject before adding their own opinion, based on the most ignorant, reactionary and bigoted views available.

I am, of course, grateful for the guidance on what should and should not form the correct parameters of debate on women's oppression.

It has been suggested that this oppression could include being told what to think by those with no previous interest, experience or education in the subject. There is a marked contrast between the response to this debate and the deafening silence greeting the attempts to justify the shooting of his ex-partner by a man with a history of domestic violence and the sexual assault of an eight-year-old girl. It would also be interesting to consider what the reaction to an equivalent debate on racism would be.

It seems that many of your contributors believe themselves to be making an original contribution to this debate. Sadly, we have a long history of "attempts to create defensiveness through trivialisation ... the first gambit which greets threatening arguments" (Nina Power, 'The woman, animalised', *The Guardian*, September 24). It is unfortunate that you seem content to allow your paper to be used in the promotion of such reactionary views.

**Heather Downs**  
Email

## Chauvinists

James Turley ('Slow death of Cuban "socialism"', September 23) may have missed our initial contribution on the changes in Cuba; it was posted on our website on September 22, the day before his article appeared. He will now be able to read that and a more extended analysis in the latest issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, which will be available by the time this letter is published, as will those readers who want to get a real understanding of the processes taking place in Cuba at the present time.

Although these articles specifically address the likes of Rory Carroll of *The Guardian*, they also deal with the points that Turley himself raises, since, in common with virtually all Trotskyists in Britain, these reactionary bourgeois journalists are amongst the sources he will have used to write his piece. He finds, if I recall rightly, Cuban sources to be tainted - a convenient bit of chauvinism to cover for the absence of original thought. And, anyway, will there be any real difference in the coverage of these changes between the *Weekly Worker*, *Socialist Worker*, *The Socialist*, *Workers' Liberty* and *Socialist Resistance*? I think not; they will all drink at the poisoned well called Samuel Farber, where they do not use the likes of Carroll.

However, what I want to deal with are not so much the specifics about Cuba as the more general questions of socialism, imperialism and revolution. The first is Turley's statement that we (the Revolutionary Communist Group) "were lured away from Trotskyism by the revolutionary excitement surrounding Cuba and national liberation movements." No, we were lured away by the utterly reactionary positions that Trotskyists had in relation to the Irish liberation struggle, and then in relation to the anti-apartheid struggle, and then in relation to the Labour Party. We understood, through our political work and by our reading of Lenin, that the essence of building a revolutionary movement in this country is anti-imperialism and that there can be no question of building a socialist movement unless we oppose social imperialists all along the line (*Imperialism and the split in socialism*). It was a rediscovery of those of Lenin's positions which the British Trotskyists reject: on imperialism; on the division of the world into oppressed and oppressor nations; on the right of nations of self-determination; on the material basis for a split in the working class in imperialist nations; on the different tasks facing the working class in oppressor and oppressed nations.

You see, when the chips are down,

the Trotskyists - and I, of course, include the *Weekly Worker* in this category - line up with the imperialist Labour Party and perform some sickening intellectual contortions in order to do so. We saw this in the drivel written by Alex John with its puerile headline ('Vote preference one for Abbott ... and fuck warmongering ex-ministers', September 9), where, like the SWP, he cites Lenin's description of Labour as a bourgeois workers' party and when, like the SWP, he, as a member of the CPGB, completely rejects Lenin's position on the material basis of opportunism. Talk about illusions: the idea that there are socialists in the Labour Party, not just common or garden opportunists with a ready socialist phrase for the gullible Trotskyists; the belief that it has a working class base when, nearly 25 years ago, Whitty reported that 60% of its members had a degree or equivalent, and that before the Blair levy of the 1990s and the membership slump of the last 10 years; the notion that communists do not want to destroy the Labour Party - of course we do, just as Lenin wanted to destroy the Mensheviks. This article is just reactionary guff - but with a purpose because, of course, the *Weekly Worker* likes to keep in with 'comrade' John McDonnell. I hope that your readers appreciate the way in which the *Weekly Worker* fawns over this utterly backward nonentity and reserves its bile for revolutionaries who have changed history and who continue to do so. Does anyone seriously imagine that Chavez will turn out like Batista, as Turley suggests? Only a wretched died-in-the-wool reactionary British Trotskyist could even think of making the comparison.

The *Weekly Worker* (like the SWP, AWL, SPEW, etc) sets a very different standard for revolutionary movements in the oppressed nations from that they apply to themselves in imperialist Britain. Here it is okay to support a racist, imperialist anti-working class party led by war criminals in a general election - but, when it comes to the Bolivarian revolution, or the Cuban revolution, nothing is ever good enough for our Trotskyists. Because popular meetings in Cuba do not call for the overthrow of socialism, or decide they should give up because there isn't socialism elsewhere, Turley has to dismiss this: "carefully monitored forms of public participation in politics are unthreatening enough to be allowed." Rory Carroll would be proud of such a line. You can try to dignify this by calling it Trotskyism; I call it by its real name - chauvinism.

And we see it time and again: when revolutionaries rush on ahead in the oppressed nations, there are the great British Trotskyists who have built absolutely nothing saying 'you cannot do this, the revolution has to be international, you have to wait for us'. And when the revolutionary movements don't wait - well, there is no fury like a British Trotskyist scorned. Out comes permanent revolution, the impossibility of building socialism in one country, Stalinist this, petty bourgeois that. In reality, it means that British Trotskyists never support any revolutionary movement anywhere because they are such wretched doctrinaires.

The other point we realised when we 'turned away' from Trotskyism was that it had a material basis in the class relations of British imperialism. Its backward ideas express the interests of a petty bourgeois stratum whose privileged position depends on British imperialism's parasitic relationship to the rest of the world. That is why they instinctively oppose revolutionary movements (with suitably radical phrases, of course) which might upset the relationship, declaring that they can't possibly or indeed shouldn't win, and endorse the Labour Party whose

*raison d'être* is defending British imperialism.

Turning to the situation in Cuba: no, we don't think it will be a "harder sell" since, as materialists, we understand the difficulties in moving towards socialism and can see the honesty and openness with which the Cuban communists deal with them. They have no blueprint; there is very little historical experience they can draw on. Instead they have to steadily build up the cultural level of the Cuban people to ensure that they can strengthen the democratic processes that they have in place; they have to seek allies internationally as a defence against US imperialism and its ruthless economic blockade; and they have to deal with the serious economic problems they face through a constant dialogue with the people. They cannot wait until the revolution spreads to "strategically important sections of the advanced capitalist world" because, if they have to wait for the Trotskyists, they will have to wait forever.

So, James Turley and the *Weekly Worker*, you can have your racist, imperialist, anti-working class Labour Party with all its mythical left workers, with its comrade John McDonnells and its Diane Abbotts, and you can have all your comrade Trotskyists. We will gladly take Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, the Cuban and Bolivarian revolutions, whatever difficulties they face, and know that we are on the side of the overwhelming majority of revolutionaries and communists in the world in keeping to this choice.

**Robert Clough**  
Email

## Slander

The idea that Hugo Chavez is like Batista is nothing less than bizarre. US imperialism supported Batista, who didn't nationalise things out of fear of CIA assassination attempts and US military action.

Sometimes there's too much paranoia about army officers, especially Third World army officers. Chavez is merely following the footsteps of the Julius Caesar of people's history (not gentlemen's history), armed with a combinatorial programme derived from Proudhon's cooperatives and communal power, Lassalle's 'state aid' over economic 'self-help' as a means of agitating for political action, and Bismarck's social welfare (plus social conservatism on the video games front).

The recent failure of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela to obtain a two-thirds legislative majority points to one conclusion: the need for a multi-party system that is managed towards a deliberated, radicalised, substantively populist and leftwing orientation.

I just hope this failure won't hamper efforts to form a new international, something to which Batista never committed.

**Jacob Richter**  
Email

## Cuba

James Turley's article on Cuba states that "Socialism is enabled by the extension of democratic planning through the commanding heights of the economy, under a radically democratic political regime. Under those circumstances - so Marxists wager - the mom-and-pop petty bourgeois enterprise will simply be unable to compete, and will quietly be absorbed into the mainstream economy."

If I were a mom 'n' pop enterprise, I would view with suspicion the prospect of 'quiet absorption'. Is the *Weekly Worker* seriously suggesting that fish and chip shops would be absorbed into a state monopoly serving regulation fish suppers? That shoe

repairers become the fifth emergency service? That hairdressers are replaced by that familiar schoolyard jibe - the council haircut?

In fact absorption is already taking place under capitalism. McDonald's is squeezing the greasy spoons, butchers shops have disappeared and been replaced by butchers behind the meat counter at Morrisons. Pubs cannot compete with supermarkets and are closing at the rate of one per day. A good demand would be to regulate breweries to sell pub beer at equitable prices and to lift the anti-democratic smoking ban which has sharply hit trade.

We should not, of course, campaign against the expansion of Tesco where there is perceived demand. Despite the hectoring of Jamie Oliver, working class families will always plump for cheap chicken. But we should support the opportunity for small enterprises to operate on a fairer footing as cheap credit for small businesses is a burning issue right now.

The movements of the petty bourgeoisie can never be substituted for the lead role of a revolutionary party amongst the advanced layers of the working class (though, of course, the Pabloite centrism that infected the Trotskyist movement after World War II collapsed into this method). However, a strong part of the programme aimed at the petty bourgeoisie can win over elements and prevent this class being won to fascism. Already, Griffin is speaking of the 'banksters'.

**Jason Taverner**  
Email

## 'Dead Kurds'

Regarding the nonsense letter by Yahya Tekin ('No ally of ours' September 23), unquestionably there are some fascist elements in the systematic structure of the Turkish government, specifically in its military wing. But calling "fascist" the current AKP government that has just allowed a referendum in its political system only showcases Tekin's illogical political perception. Tekin gives a complete misinterpretation of events, in contrast to comrade Esen Uslu's 'Much to do about nothing' (September 16).

The Kurdish movement is not a "Trojan horse in the communist movement in Turkey" as he claims. Looking at the family tree of communism in Turkey, however wrong they may have been politically and ideologically, it is impossible to list on paper all the Kurdish Marxist leaders and martyrs who sacrificed their entire lives for a communist future in Kurdistan, Turkey and the wider Middle East. The Kurdish independence movement gave birth to tens of communist and socialist organisations in that country. However, in return for all those sacrifices there wasn't a genuine appreciation from Turkish 'communists', a simple practical recognition of the rights of the Kurdish nation to self-determination. What was on offer was the constant nationalistic and chauvinistic denouncement of Kurdish separatism or even autonomy within Turkey in the name of the 'mass proletariat'. In consequence the majority of the left in Kurdistan began distancing themselves from the Turkish communist movement. The politics of Turkish communists is a disastrous one. Observing the political climate realistically, it is crystal clear that the left in Turkey has nothing to offer the Kurds apart from national chauvinism; even imperialism offered more in the case of the Kurdistan regional government in Iraq (KRG) than the 'programmes' of these so-called communist and socialist sects in Turkey and other occupied regions of Kurdistan.

In addition to that, it is an absolute act of foolishness to state that



policies of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) have been welcomed by the ruling AKP. BDP previously was HADEP; when it was completely shut down it changed its name to Democratic Society Party (DTP). Once again declared illegal in December 2009, this time its Kurdish elected MPs and mayors were arrested *en masse* and imprisoned. The party is now BDP as the others are illegal. Isn't it insanity for a communist to characterise government attacks on BDP as the latter being "welcomed and tolerated", despite national oppression and repression of political freedom? I suppose when his kind of 'communism' rules, we then have to become "dead Kurds" again for the sake of the 'mass proletariat'.

Tekin alleges that the Kurdish movement is contributing to US plans in Turkey as, in his view, the BDP demands separation from Turkey. Well the Kurds must have their basic democratic rights, as everyone else, to choose their own fate. But in reality, and unfortunately, BDP is not a separatist organisation - which is one of the central weaknesses of Kurdish politics in Turkey, similar to other Kurdish organisations in greater Kurdistan. So, I suggest you don't worry for now, as BDP will not be dividing the fatherland - even though that is the will of the entire Kurdish nation. On the other hand, calling the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) "a gang of murderers" is the exact position of US imperialism and the European bourgeoisie on the struggle of this oppressed nation. PKK is listed as a terrorist organisation by the US, EU and Nato. Since Turkey joined, Nato practically waged war against them with its high tech military weapons. This is despite the use of phosphorous weapons and chemical gas on Turkey-Iraq borders - reported in the alternative and some less mainstream global media. Yet still the PKK proposes peace declarations one after another along with one-sided ceasefires. The party sent invited delegates to peace talks and in return the delegates received life sentences when they arrived in Turkey. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that it is quite difficult to consume the philosophy of the oppressed coherently when you are still a fist of Kemalist fascism. So who is inheriting pro-imperialist policies in the region? The BDP, which is attacked by the Turkish government on daily basis, and the 'terrorist' PKK that fights Nato? Or Tekin's politics and those like him who Lenin once described as "chauvinists and lackeys of bloodstained and filthy imperialist monarchies"?

**Shaswar Jalal**  
 Email

## Careful

Mike Macnair ('Disorientated establishment promoted popemania', September 23) concludes that Cameron and the Tory press welcomed the papal visit and its irrationalist message as there is hope that by promoting an increased role of religion in politics, churches will take up the tasks of social solidarity that the state is about to dump. Further, it will lead to a new conservatism well to the right of Thatcher, with a new irrationalist political ideology.

Whilst I do not disagree with the idea that the right has tried, and will continue to try, to use religion to its advantage, it is important to remember that the Catholic church is not homogeneous and not all Catholics are conservatives. There are many in the Catholic church who rejected neoliberalism as a political ideology and who currently reject the budget cuts and the erosion of the welfare state. We should try and forge alliances with all those who want to fight the conservatives and the cuts,

and be careful not to alienate potential allies with crude anti-Catholicism.  
**Michelle Euston**  
 London

## Coward

Rowan Williams is inconsistent. Although he says in he is willing to accept a gay celibate bishop, he blocked the appointment of the celibate gay cleric, Jeffrey John, as bishop of Reading.

This is what the archbishop of Canterbury told *The Times*: "To put it very simply, there's no problem about a gay person who's a bishop. It's about the fact that there are traditionally, historically, standards that the clergy are expected to observe. So there's always a question about the personal life of the clergy."

Before he became archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan supported gay inclusion and equality. Now he victimises gay clergy like Jeffrey John and goes out of his way to retain within the Anglican communion some of the most hateful Christian homophobes in the world. In his calculation, church unity is more important than the human rights of lesbian and gay people. His attacks on pro-gay Anglicans have been far stronger than his muted criticisms of Anglican leaders who advocate discrimination against gay people.

An archbishop is supposed to be a moral leader. On gay human rights, Rowan is a follower. He's an appeaser of homophobes. He'd never make similar compromises over racism within the church. Why the double standards?

Rowan is a deeply conflicted soul. He's torn between his kind, liberal inner heart and a seemingly heartless collusion with Anglican advocates of anti-gay prejudice and discrimination. It is two-faced for him to believe one thing in private and say something different in public. He is not being true to himself. He's allowed himself to become a prisoner of the conservative, homophobic Lambeth Palace mafia.

Rowan is speaking with a forked tongue on the issue of gay clergy and equality. He looks weak and cowardly compared to the inspired moral leadership against homophobia voiced by archbishop Desmond Tutu.  
**Peter Tatchell**  
 OutRage!

## Inevitable

With regard to Angel Formoso's letter ('Long live Joe', September 16), I would like to make the following brief observation.

The paradoxical nature of the victory of the socialist revolution in Russia made it inevitable that concessions such as the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty and the introduction of the New Economic Policy would have to be made to imperialism to buy time in the hope of revolution in Western Europe.

In a similar vein, for comrade Formoso to argue against the use of ex-Czarist army officers in the formation of the Red Army is theoretically skating on thin ice. Socialism develops and evolves out of capitalism. It is therefore natural enough - whether in an economic, military or administrative sense - for a revolution to take advantage of the expertise and technical advances made by capitalist development.

Failure to do so in this particular instance would almost certainly have led to defeat of the revolution at the hands of the invading counterrevolutionary forces during the civil war.  
**Colin McGhie**  
 Glasgow

## Growth

As the Labour Party Conference got under way in Manchester, deputy leader Harriet Harman was able to announce that more than 32,000

people had joined the party since the general election on May 6. Indeed, within a week of the Tory-Lib Dem coalition taking office, 10,000 had already joined. As things stand now, Labour Party membership has grown by over a fifth since Gordon Brown lost the election.

Of those who have joined Labour since May, around half are Labour supporters who have decided to join for the first time or to rejoin. Another 30% of those joining used to be supporters or possibly even members of the Liberal Democrats. Harman's tally left around 20% of new members' political origin unaccounted for. Since his election as leader, Ed Miliband reported that the party has been gaining one new member every minute.

Looking at the results of the election for Labour Party leader, there were 9,314 votes for Diane Abbott from party members and 25,938 from union members in their respective sections. Broadly, these votes are a measure of the left within the Labour Party. While she may have received some votes largely because she is a woman and/or because she is black, in the main what she garnered will have been from the left. This is especially so for the 562 party members and 4,594 union members who refused to give any second preference votes at all. It is arguable that these voters may represent a hard core of the left that sees the other four candidates in a similar way to that expressed in this paper ('Vote preference one for Abbott ... and fuck the warmongering ex-ministers' September 9 2010).

Whatever the interpretation of Abbott's voters' orientations, in the round they do represent within their ranks the bulk of the left. And it is this left that should be establishing a coordinated and fighting Marxist element within the Labour Party. The fact that over 25,000 trade unionists voted for her while only 9,314 party members did shows clearly one of the tasks for the future of the Labour left: those trade unionists need to be persuaded to join the Labour Party.

A left that can only muster a little over 7% of party members to vote for Abbott is poor, but it is still significant. However, a Labour left bolstered by the tens of thousands outside the party's ranks who voted for her would not only be a force to be reckoned with: on present membership figures it could be a major current. Part of the struggle to build the working class element as the Marxist bloc within Labour has to include recruiting from among those on the left who as yet see no way to be effective as Marxists within the party. This is the dynamic whose functioning we need to grasp.

Of course, left support for Abbott in the trade unions may not be easily translated into a solid left within the Labour Party, let alone becoming its Marxist core overnight. No, Labour Party Marxists have to work hard within the party to convince numerous other members to cohere around a Marxist project. This needs patient and dedicated work by Labour Party comrades to convince those currently inside its ranks, as well as outside, that a coming together of Labour Party Marxists is possible. If we can achieve this we shall see many on the left joining the party because they see it as a legitimate and worthwhile arena for struggle for working class ideology. It will become a right and proper place for Marxists in Britain to congregate.

Some comrades on the left are opposed in principle to joining and working in the Labour Party, though the objective principle in question remains elusive. It is as slippery as an eel. As far as the labour and working class movement in Britain is concerned, though, there should be no difference in our attitude as Marxists to working in any of its bodies ●  
**Jim Gilbert**  
 Isle of Wight

# ACTION

### Communist Forums

**London:** 'Capitalist crisis and the communist alternative', Saturday November 9, 12 noon, University of London Union, Malet street, WC1E 7HY  
**Leeds:** Using Jack Conrad's Remaking Europe as a Study guide:  
**Saturday October 2:** Sachin Sharma - 'Imperialism: Policy or Stage', early 20th century theories of imperialism.  
**Manchester:** www.communiststudents.org.uk.  
**Oxford:** Study group, every Monday evening, studying David Harvey's Limits to capital.  
**Details:** oxfordcommunists@googlemail.com.  
**South Wales:** Call Bob for details: 07816 480679.

### CPGB podcasts

Every Monday: we upload a podcast of commentary on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: http://cpgb.podbean.com.

### Communist Students

For meetings in your area, contact info@communiststudents.org.uk or check out www.communiststudents.org.uk.

### Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology series - 'The human revolution'. Tuesdays 6.45pm to 9pm, St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (Camden tube).  
**October 5:** Chris Knight - 'The revolutionary origins of society'. www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

### Stuff your cuts

**Sunday October 3, 12 noon:** Demonstration, outside Tory Party conference, central Birmingham. Protest against being made to pay to pay for a crisis we did not cause.  
 Organised by Right to Work: 07986 085162

### Anti-imperialist film club

**Sunday October 3, 7pm:** Monthly film show, The Compass Pub, corner of Chapel Market and Penton Street, Angel Islington, London N1. Screening of *Che Guevara* (Discovery Channel documentary) to mark 43rd anniversary of his execution, followed by discussion of the issues raised. Free entry.  
 Organised by Rock around the Blockade: office@ratb.org.uk.

### Stifling debate

**Monday October 4, 6.45pm:** Meeting, The Gallery, 70-77 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London EC1 (nearest tube: Farringdon). Libel laws and the price of free speech with Michael Harris (public affairs manager of the Libel Reform Organisation) and Padraig Reidy (news editor of Index on Censorship). Entrance £3, £2 concessions.  
 Organised by UK Friends Monde Diplo: friendsmondediplo@yahoo.co.uk.

### Rally for change

Thursday October 7, 7-9pm, Stratford Circus, Theatre Square, E15 1BN  
 Speakers include Bob Crow RMT, Jean Lamber (Green Party), Alex Kenny (NUT), Junaid Ahmed (London Muslim Centre) and Imran Khan

### Scottish Morning Star Conference

**Monday October 11, 11am:** Conference, STUC offices, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Organising working class resistance. Speakers include John McDonnell MP, Pat Stuart, Bill Butler MSP, Bill Kidd MSP, Richard Leonard, Cllr Jim Bollan, Stephen Smellie, Steven Boyd, Marc Livingstone.

### Stop the War

**Saturday October 30, 10am:** Annual National Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn). Speakers include Tony Benn, Seumas Milne (*Guardian* journalist) and Joy Gordon (author of *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*).  
 Organised by Stop the War: office@stopwar.org.uk.

### Defend public services

**Saturday November 6, 10am:** Conference, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1 (nearest tube: Tottenham Court Road). One day conference for trade unionists in the South East TUC region with keynote speakers and workshops.  
 Organised by SERTUC: 020 7467 1220.

### Miscarriage of justice day

**Saturday October 9, 10am - 4.30pm:** Meeting, The Dragon Hall, 17 Stukeley Street, Covent Garden, London WC2 (nearest tube Holborn). Speakers include Dr Andrew Green, Steve Grey, Gabe Tan, Melda Wilkes and chaired by Bruce Kent.  
 Organised by Miscarriages of Justice: mojuk@mojuk.org.uk.

### Refugee and migrant rights

**Saturday October 9, 10am -2pm:** Conference, STUC, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Networking and action planning event, bringing together a wide range of groups. Discussion and workshops.  
 Organised by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns: ncadc.org.uk.

### 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.



## USA

# Tea Party: rumblings on the frenzied right

**Jim Creegan** reports from the United States on the polarisation of politics and an increasingly frenzied middle class

**T**onight the ruling class knows. They have seen it now. There is a people's revolution. The people have had enough." Thus spoke millionaire estate agent Carl Paladino at his victory rally on September 14, after burying the official Republican candidate for governor of New York in that state's primary contest, contrary to all expectations. Paladino, who had the endorsement of Sarah Palin and the Tea Party, will carry the Republican banner into the general election against the Democratic nominee in November.

Following his victory, Paladino's e-mail postings to his business and political associates have come to public attention. In addition to depictions of bestiality, they contain an image of an African tribal dance over the heading "Obama Inauguration Rehearsal" and a photographically altered picture of Obama in the garish outfit of a 70s-style pimp walking hand in hand with Michele, attired as his 'ho'. (Political supporters have dismissed criticisms of these electronic postcards as humourless elitist snobbery toward the high jinks of your average white guy next door.) Paladino also described the Democratic head of the New York state assembly as 'an antichrist or a Hitler'. He has advocated sending welfare recipients to prison in order to teach them habits of personal hygiene. The 'ruling class' of his victory speech was not the one familiar to Marxists; he was referring instead to the politicians in the state capital at Albany, to whom he has threatened, figuratively, "to take a baseball bat." Paladino fancies himself a contemporary version of Howard Beale, the 'mad-as-hell' news anchor portrayed by Peter Finch in Sidney Lumet's 1976 film, *Network*. Paladino's anger, like that of all Tea Partiers, is directed at politicians, not the capitalists they now serve more openly than at any time since the gilded age that followed the civil war.

Paladino is one of eight Tea Party candidates for major office to defeat leadership-backed rivals in recent Republican primaries. Another, Christine O'Donnell, who won the senatorial primary in Delaware on the same day, is a former Christian crusader against the evils of masturbation. She has publicly stated her beliefs that the earth is 6,000 years old and that inter-species breeding techniques have produced mice with fully functioning human brains. Comedian Bill Maher played a tape of a 1999 appearance by O'Donnell on his talk show, on which she admitted to having "dabbled into witchcraft" (although she never actually joined a coven, she said), and gone with a date to a blood-sprinkled satanic altar. To avoid questions concerning these youthful dabbings, O'Donnell abruptly cancelled appearances on news programmes scheduled for the following Sunday.

A third, and slightly less flamboyant candidate, Nevada's Sharron Angle, will face the Democratic senate majority leader Harry Reid in the general election. She is on record as



**Carl Paladino: millions behind him**

favouring the "phasing out" of social security and medicare (government retirement and old-age medical insurance schemes, respectively) and replacing them with private plans. She has said that unemployment insurance 'spoils' workers, and should be reduced from its already inadequate levels. Not to be outdone, Rand Paul, the Republican candidate for the senate in Kentucky, said on national television that he would have had a hard time voting for the civil rights act of 1964 had he been in congress at the time. Paul added that he had no problem with the provision of the bill that banned racial discrimination in government venues, but thought that outlawing segregation in privately-owned facilities like hotels and restaurants violates the sanctity of private property. He found himself attempting for the next few weeks to tamp down the media uproar caused by this remark.

These electoral upsets have sent the national Republican leadership into spasms. Some argue that the positions espoused by Tea Party candidates, however popular amongst the small fraction of the electorate consisting of Republican primary voters, can never appeal widely enough to carry the party to victory in a general election. Many Democratic politicians agree, regarding early Tea Party triumphs as a gift that will help them in November, especially in eastern-seaboard states. The Democrats are already running television adverts depicting the Republican *parvenus* as 'wing nuts'. But other top Republicans correctly

recognise the Tea Party as the fastest growing and most energetic force in American politics during this election season, and are adjusting their rhetoric and congressional votes accordingly; they especially want to avoid the dreaded epithet reserved by the party's extreme right for any elected official suspected of 'moderation' (eg, being soft on environmental protection or abortion rights). The epithet is RINO: Republican In Name Only.

The changed political climate has allowed at least one Republican bigwig to vie for distinction in a field thus far dominated by Democrats: public vacillation. On the night of the two most recent Tea Party triumphs, Fox network viewers witnessed a set-to between George W Bush's master campaign strategist, Karl Rove, and paleo-reactionary news-show host, Sean Hannity, normally an amicable pair. Rove strongly denounced the winner of the Delaware primaries, Christine O'Donnell, as 'nutty' and lacking in the qualities required of a winning candidate, only to provoke an impassioned defence of the anti-self-abuse firebrand from Hannity. Taken to task the next day the rightwing radio demagogue Rush Limbaugh - the man many call the real head of the Republicans today - for disloyalty to his party, a chastened Rove returned to television that night to qualify his strictures and endorse O'Donnell.

Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the house of representatives and rumoured presidential hopeful, is also frothing along with the Tea Party.

He recently praised as profoundly insightful a magazine article by Dinesh D'Souza. D'Souza writes that Obama inherited his politics from his Kenyan father (whom the president hardly knew). "Incredibly," writes this far-right ideologue of East Indian descent, "the US is being ruled according to the dreams of a Luo tribesman of the 1950s. This philandering, inebriated African socialist, who raged against the world for denying him the realization of his anti-colonial ambitions, is now setting the nation's agenda through the reincarnation of his dreams in his son" (quoted in *The New York Times*, September 15).

In a prologue to the primary elections, approximately 100,000 Tea Partiers filled the mall that stretches between the Lincoln memorial and the Washington monument in the nation's capital on August 28. This 'restore America' rally, staged at the summons of the movement's television and radio guru, Glenn Beck, took place on the same date, and in the same location, as Martin Luther King's march for jobs and freedom, at which he delivered his 'I have a dream' speech 47 years earlier. A niece of King's even adorned a speakers' platform dominated by Beck and Sarah Palin. The politics of the march were deliberately toned down. Beck had previously urged participants not to carry harsh anti-Obama placards like those on display at earlier events, and speakers emphasised religious and broadly patriotic themes - support for troops overseas, homilies about the founding fathers - over so-called partisan politics. But even the misappropriation of the symbols of the civil rights struggle could not eliminate the racial insults that gush irrepressibly from the Tea Party's depths like gobs of oil from the BP spill, some intentional and others completely unselfconscious. In the latter category was a guide to Washington for the marchers, written by one of the event's organisers, which advised visitors that "Most taxi drivers and many waiters/waitresses ... are immigrants, frequently from east Africa or Arab countries. As a rule, African immigrants do not like for you to assume they are African-Americans" (quoted in *Newsweek* blog August 25 2010).

## A new normal

The above developments are symptomatic of the deep anxiety, often boiling over into rage, with which the country approaches mid-term elections, to be held on November 2. The main political beneficiary of this mood is the Republican right. The question is not whether the Democrats will lose congressional seats, but rather how many. Some opinion polls are showing a 12-point preference for Republicans among likely voters. With all 435 seats in the house of representatives up for a vote, the betting is that the Democrats will lose their 39-seat majority there. In the senate, where Democrats hold an effective majority of 58 out of 100 seats, prospects are more uncertain,

but the 60-seat, filibuster-proof 'super-majority' that rode into that chamber on Obama's coattails two years ago is now definitely a thing of the past.

In that the Tea Partiers are standing as Republicans rather than as independents, and that an important part of the electorate is responding to the perceived failures of the governing party by voting for the other party, the Republican-Democrat duopoly is still in intact. It is functioning to contain discontent within channels that make it not only manageable, but in this case positively beneficial, for the ruling class. But for all their easily ridiculed stupidity, the Tea Partiers grasp one thing traditional centrist politicians miss: that the two-party system is fraying around the edges; that it is increasingly difficult to win elections by using the tried-and-true American political formula of appealing to the status quo against the dangers posed by 'extremists'. The status quo is rapidly becoming too inhospitable to be appealed to.

It is now a media commonplace that the economic crisis of 2008 ushered in a 'new normal'. Several statistics suggest its contours. Corporate profits have rebounded handsomely from the crash of 2008, and are expected to reach a record high of nearly nine percent next year. In response to these rosy projections, the prices of stock-market shares have climbed steadily. These robust profits, however, do not come from expanded sales. They rather represent the savings firms have made from post-crash 'economies', such as huge redundancies, and greater productivity (read: intensified work) from those who remain on the job. The unemployment rate has hovered around 10% for over a year, an alarming statistic in a country where six percent was previously considered on the high side and unemployment insurance is meagre compared with western Europe. The total number of unemployed, now at more than 14 million, is as great in terms of absolute numbers (though not as a percentage of the workforce) as during the great depression. To this must be added 1.1 million too discouraged to look for work, and another 8.9 million 'employed part-time for economic reasons' (read: cannot find enough work - *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* September 2010).

Landlord repossessions are at an all time high, as boarded up houses and shops are becoming a familiar sight in middle class neighbourhoods, not just in urban ghettos, where they were always part of the landscape. Figures from the 2010 census reveal that one in seven Americans, one in five children, and one in four black people (over 40 million all told) now live beneath the official poverty line - percentages as high as in 1964, when Lyndon Johnson's 'great society' programmes promised to eradicate the blight of poverty forever. And in a country driven more than any other by dreams of avarice, median household income was five percent lower in 2009 than in 1999 - the first decade of overall living-standard regression within



the memory of almost everyone now alive. Executive suites may fret about a ‘double-dip’ recession that would wipe out their recovered profits; the rest of the country is hardly aware of any ascent from the initial dip.

## Look down in anger

The Tea Party arises out of this deteriorating situation, but theirs is not the rage of its principal victims. A *New York Times*/CBS poll published in April showed Tea Partiers to be considerably less plebeian than many observers (including this one) had previously thought. The self-identified supporters of the movement in the poll’s sample were 59% male, 75% over age 45, and 89% white. Thirty-seven percent held university degrees, as opposed to 25% of all American adults, and 20% reported a yearly household income of \$100,000 or more, compared to only 14% of population at large.

A few other results are worth noting. Most respondents said that they themselves felt secure financially, but were worried that a member of their household would be out of a job within the next year. In addition, ‘more than half say the policies of the administration favour the poor, and 25% think that the administration favours blacks over whites - compared with 11% of the general public.’ The largest number of respondents said the Tea Party’s goal should be shrinking the size of government, but supported maintaining social security and medicare programmes at current levels, and thought that cuts should be only in areas of ‘wasteful’ spending (all figures and citations - *New York Times* April 15).

The above survey presents a picture of a relatively comfortable segment of the white population, middle aged or older. While it did not specify the respondents’ geographical location, the attitudes expressed are less typical of urban professionals in the country’s coastal cities than of those who reside either in suburbs or in the towns and cities of the inter-coastal heartland. They are not hit hard by the sour economy, but are far down enough on the social ladder to be keenly aware of the distress of those who are, and fear it could affect their families at some future point. Their instinctive response, however, is not solidarity with the distressed, but a determination not to become part of them. They are resolved to hold on to what they have, for themselves and their children, at all costs. Now as ever in the US, their class prejudice is colour-tinged. There may be white people among the unemployed, evicted and debt-burdened, but such misfortunes are still seen by this cohort as things that befall ‘them’, not ‘us’, and if society is fracturing more deeply along a class axis, they want to end up on the right side of the fault line.

But can they ever feel secure with a black man in the white house? Many remember the 1970s as the decade of forced bussing to achieve racial balance in the schools, and ‘affirmative-action’ preference for minorities in hiring and university admissions. If these things took place under white presidents, how can they conceivably rely on Barack Obama to prevent the have-nots from gaining at the expense of the have-somes?

The survey also sheds light on the motives behind the Tea Party’s anti-‘big-government’ rhetoric. Opposition to government despotism has an old provenance in this country, going back to the war of independence, whose symbolism the Tea Party has appropriated. A flag of the rebellious colonists picturing a coiled snake along with the legend, “Don’t Tread on Me”, has become the unofficial Tea Party emblem. But

when queried, movement supporters can usually point to nothing more outrageous than Obama’s healthcare reform bill as an instance of the tyranny against which they are in full cry. Obama’s real acts of despotism - ‘extraordinary rendition’, imprisonment without trial and assertion of the right to assassinate US citizens deemed ‘enemy combatants’ - are things they would probably support if they thought about them at all. Most respondents to the *New York Times* survey (in contradistinction to some of the candidates who supposedly represent them) had no objection to government spending - on social security and medicare - from which they benefit. ‘Wasteful spending’, on the other hand, is a designation reserved for money that goes to someone else, like blacks and poor people. Tea Partiers are no more concerned with public thrift than they were when George W Bush was running up record deficits without their apparent notice. Their new-found fixation with federal balance sheets may at first appear identical to the quite different budgetary concerns of the Wall Street bankers, from whom they borrow their slogans. But at bottom it is a genteel camouflage for the same fear and loathing that drives them to call Obama a socialist, a pimp and the son of a philandering Luo tribesman. These epithets are euphemisms for another word they dare not use in public.

## Aliens abound

If the United States stands out among nations for its continuing racialism directed against black people, it holds no such distinction when it comes to the kindred scourges of anti-immigrant bigotry and Islamophobia - contagions that are now sweeping the entire western world. But the US is no laggard in the secretion of these toxins, either.

In April, Jan Brewer, governor of Arizona, signed into state law a bill that would require legal aliens to carry their residence papers with them at all times, and permit police to demand these papers of anyone they may stop or arrest if they have a ‘reasonable suspicion’ that the detainee may be an illegal alien. Suspicion being an intangible thing, the law was instantly understood as a licence for police to harass Arizona’s large Mexican population, even though the rate of illegal border crossing has diminished slightly in recent years. Liberal and minority organisations throughout the country were appalled, and called for a commercial boycott of the state. But the law drew solid support from a majority of Arizonans, and, according to polls, from a majority of Americans as well. The Obama administration successfully intervened in federal court to block the law’s implementation pending appeal by the state of Arizona, on grounds that it encroached on Washington’s authority to enforce immigration law.

But, in the meanwhile, the law became a *cause célèbre* of the Republican right. It was

endorsed by Arizona’s own senator John McCain, and leading Republican senators from other states - Grassley, Graham and Kyle - who threw aside their worship of the US constitution to call for the repeal of the 14th amendment. Adopted after the civil war to ensure full legal status to emancipated slaves, the amendment confers citizenship upon anyone (except the children of foreign diplomats) born in the United States, and accords them the full protection of its laws. The intent behind repeal is to deny this status to the American-born offspring of illegal aliens. Arizona’s Maricopa county, near Phoenix, is also the home of a national Tea Party celebrity, Joe Arpaio. Advertising himself as America’s toughest sheriff, Arpaio made his reputation by housing prisoners in tents amid stifling desert heat, and parading them through the streets in bright pink underwear.

Grabbing more headlines over the summer than Arizona aliens, however, is the controversy surrounding the proposed ‘ground-zero mosque’, as the right has dubbed it, even though it is not, strictly speaking, either at ground zero or a mosque. The proposed building location, now occupied by an old warehouse, is two city blocks away from the site of the September 11 attack, and is not intended to be a mosque, but a 15-storey Islamic community centre containing a prayer room. Its imam, Feisal Abdul Rauf, is not only an adherent of Sufism, a mild, mystical branch of Islam, but has conducted religious sensitivity training for the FBI, and has just toured the middle east promoting ‘American values’ in the pay of the state department. A genuine mosque has existed near the proposed site, in New York’s financial district, for many years. Muslims, moreover, comprise only about two percent of the American population, and are therefore more inclined than in Europe to avow their patriotism.

None of these considerations prevented rightwing bloggers from stirring up opposition to the building’s construction, soon followed by Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post* and his national Fox News television network. The Zionist establishment then added its voice in the person of Abraham Foxman, the head of the Anti-Defamation League of B’Nai Brith, which ostensibly opposes all racial end ethnic prejudice, not merely discrimination against Jews. The Zionist leadership wields more influence in New York, with its big Jewish population, than

in the country as a whole. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has driven many Jews who were once liberal or leftist-

inclined to the right over the decades, as is evidenced by their prominence among the so-called neocons who promoted the invasion of Iraq. Sarah Palin also got into the act with her famous twitter, urging mosque opponents to “repudiate” the notion that imam Rauf is a man of peace. Unsubstantiated claims were then made to the effect that Rauf had taken donations from terrorists.

Thousands of people demonstrated both for and against the so-called mosque’s construction this past September 11. The anti-mosque demonstrators were a motley collection of Christian fundamentalists, Zionists and hell’s angels biker types, with a sprinkling of anti-Muslim Hindus. Seven out of ten residents of New York City oppose the mosque’s construction, although most who live in the borough of Manhattan, and New York State as a whole, have no problem with the project.

New York’s billionaire Republican mayor, Michael Bloomberg, has thus far stood by his decision to allow construction to go forward. Certain Democrats have been less resolute. Barack Obama, after defending the mosque on grounds of religious freedom, backtracked the next day, saying he had only intended to extol freedom of worship in the abstract, without taking a position on whether the mosque actually had the right to exist on its proposed site. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the senate majority leader, who is facing a close contest with Tea Partier Sharron Angle in November, said that the mosque should be built somewhere else. Reid is a centrist Democrat. Howard Dean, however, is the darling of the party’s ‘progressive’ wing, who made a bid for the presidential nomination in 2004, and served until recently as chairman of the Democratic national committee. Was it pressure from the powerful Zionist lobby in his party that persuaded Dean, who is not now standing for any public office, to opine on Keith Olbermann’s *Countdown* that the whole issue was highly complicated, and that the views of religious freedom advocates and anti-Islamic bigots should be evenly weighed in pursuit of some sort of compromise? The officially endorsed Republican primary candidate for governor, Rick Lazio, made opposition to the mosque the central plank in his campaign platform. He lost, as we have seen, to the Tea Party’s Carl Paladino, who not only opposes building a mosque near the old World Trade Center location, but, in contradiction to his professed libertarian principles, vows if elected to initiate a government seizure of the proposed site to prevent building the Islamic centre on it.

Most publicly prominent opponents of the so-called mosque of course deny accusations of Islamophobia. They rather invoke the ‘sensitivities’ of those who lost family members in the 9/11 attacks, even though some of those families find the mosque unobjectionable. As for those who oppose it, their sensitivities could only be injured on the assumption that they hold all Muslims collectively responsible for the crime of 9/11.

Others are less inhibited about expressing their true feelings, like supervisors and workers at a meatpacking company who cursed their fellow Somali employees for

being Muslims, threw blood, meat and bones at them, and interrupted their prayer breaks - one of a rising number of such workplace incidents throughout the

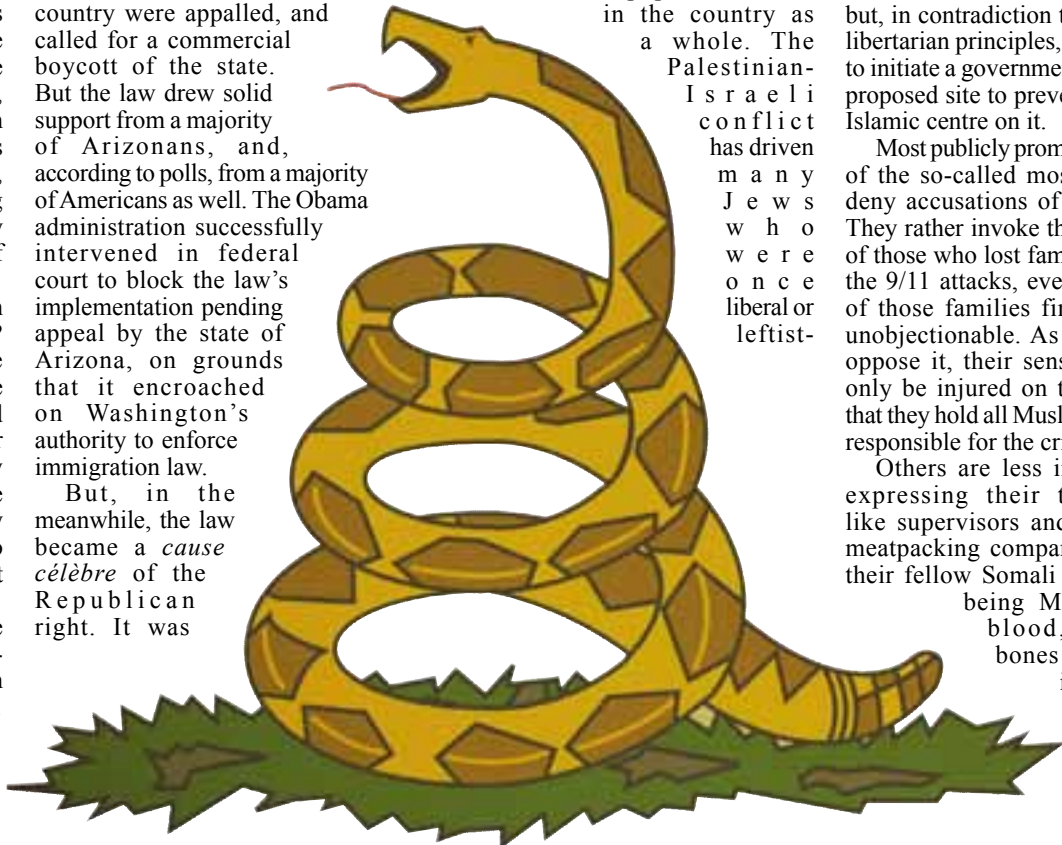
country (*New York Times*, September 24). The true spirit of the anti-mosque campaign was also grasped by Terry Jones, the Florida preacher who threatened to hold a public *Koran* burning at his church on September 11, until persuaded to cancel his plans by a personal phone call from Robert Gates, secretary of defence, who argued that such an act would endanger US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The campaign’s true spirit was also evinced by a drunken and mentally unstable young man named Robert Enright, who had made a film in Afghanistan about the hardships of American soldiers stationed there. On August 24 in New York City, Enright slashed a Bangladeshi taxi driver, Ahmed Sharif, across the hand, arms and neck with a pocket knife, after inquiring as to whether he was a Muslim.

## Pre-emptive rage

The rise of the Tea Party right is primarily a consequence of the ‘great recession’ that began in 2008. Hence its emphasis on economic anxieties, as opposed to the social issues - abortion and gay marriage - that only a short time ago were far-right staples, but now seem to have lost their charge. The Tea Party does not, however, represent the anger of the hardest hit. At its core is a kind of pre-emptive rage among those who think they have a good deal to lose from redistributive measures, and are profoundly uncomfortable at even the mildest hint of them. ‘Social justice’ is the phrase they most revile. They seethe at the mention of past government initiatives aimed at lessening the economic gap between black and white. Their fear is further fed by the impending disappearance of the country’s white majority and the waning of American power in the world. Yet, because the Tea Party is now the only organised force expressing any kind of rage at all, it has to an extent become a magnet for the more widespread and inchoate anger of many for whom the American dream of rising material expectations is becoming obsolescent.

The Tea Party confronts the Republican leadership with a certain dilemma. It has re-energised the party as a whole, and mouthing its slogans is the surest way to get votes in many areas and restore Republican prestige after the debacle of the Bush presidency. But it is hard to do so without defending the patent lies and public idiocies issuing from the mouths of the movement’s leading candidates, something over which Karl Rove has expressed great discomfort. Unqualified endorsement would also mean associating the Republicans with the Tea Party’s barely concealed appeal to racist and anti-immigrant sentiment. The Republicans long ago wrote off the possibility of building a base among blacks, and have routinely trafficked in racial innuendo. They have, however, made some inroads among hispanic voters on the basis of social conservatism and the pentecostal protestantism that is now spreading among latinos. Inflaming hatred of immigrants would threaten to seal the party off forever from the fastest growing ethnic constituency in the United States, and make it the exclusive party of the most backward elements of what will soon become the white minority. Right now the opportunist vote-getting impulse seems on the ascendant.

The Tea Party’s rise also presents a general conundrum. Why has it emerged as the only mass current to challenge the political status quo in a time of deepening crisis? This question cannot be answered without understanding two other things: the marked shift of ruling class opinion away from Obama over the past year, and the role of the Democratic Party in preventing any kind of counter-mobilisation. These questions will be taken up in a future article ●



DONT TREAD ON ME



## LABOUR

# Welcome to the old new enemy within

New Labour is officially dead and Labourite class collaborationism has a new name, argues **Eddie Ford**

**S**o, 'Red' Ed - as he is ludicrously called - won the battle of the Milibands, but only by a 1.3% sliver of victory. After four rounds of voting under Labour's electoral college - which is divided into three equally weighted sections comprising the MP/MEPs, ordinary constituency Labour Party (CLP) members and those belonging to affiliated organisations like the trade unions - Ed Miliband won with 175,519 votes, whilst brother David Miliband received 147,220 votes. Fairly predictably, the other candidates - Ed Balls, Andy Burnham and Diane Abbott - were hardly in the running. A victory by anybody other than a Miliband was near unthinkable.

Of course, David Miliband was the candidate of the 'no turning back' wing of the party represented by the likes of Harriet Harman and Peter Mandelson, who saw him as the natural successor and heir to Tony Blair - the latter having all but blessed the elder Miliband in his autobiography, *A Journey*. Mandelson sniffily commented that Ed Miliband had failed to address the "concerns" of people who are not "automatic" Labour voters - obviously wanting a repeat of 1994, where Blair effortlessly won the election. In other words, Mandelson, Harman and Alan Johnson wanted the safest pair of hands possible for big business and the markets - which for them was David. Both are sons of Ralph Miliband, author of the seminal Marxist study, *Parliamentary socialism* (idiotically branded as "ultra leftist" by some comrades in the Socialist Party in England and Wales) which of course comprehensively debunked the myth that the Labour Party as an organisation had ever been socialist at any point in its history, acutely noting that it "always owed more to Methodism than Marxism".

Anyway, in the end, Ed Miliband won the biggest number of affiliate/trade union first preference votes (35%), having previously secured the backing of three of the four biggest trade unions - Unite, Unison and the GMB. As for David Miliband, he in turn got the highest percentage of CLP first preference votes (43.9%). Meanwhile, Socialist Campaign Group member Diane Abbott took third place in the first round - with 9,314 party members out of 126,874 (7.34%) voting for her as their first preference, and 562 of that 9,314 opting not to give a second preference. Then in the unions, 25,938 union members out of 211,234 (12.28%) chose Abbott for first preference, while 4594 of that 25,938 did not give a second preference. When it came to the vote of the 266 parliamentary MPs, Abbott's share was only 2.6%.

Overall, there were 36,562 spoilt ballot papers - amounting to almost 10% of the total ballots cast (338,374). This is probably best explained by the fact that trade union voters did not tick, or notice, a small box at the bottom of the page to confirm they were Labour Party members.

What to make of all this? Well, the first impression is that the left vote in this election was around 35,000 - that is, 9,314 in the LP and 25,938 political levy-paying trade union members.



**Ed Miliband: the new generation**

However, seeing how many or most Labour Party members could vote in both ways, this means that there is an indeterminable overlap between those two sections of votes. However, this still means that there was a left vote in this election of upwards of 25,000 and possibly in the region of 30,000. Arguably, if you really wanted to put a positive spin upon events, there was a hard core left represented by the 562 LP members and 4,594 trade union members who gave no second preference vote - a *de facto* protest vote. But an obvious strong qualification has to be added here, as not all of Abbott's first preferences votes will have come from the left - such as those voting purely for tokenistic or 'political correct' reasons (because she's black, a woman, etc).

Still, when all is said and done, Diane Abbott did very badly: she and the Labour left, insofar as she was a representative of the Labour left, were routed. Hardly surprising really, given the fact that in the form of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, they pathetically could not even support each other. Rather, the inability of the 13-strong SCG to muster, organise and discipline even its own members provides a near perfect snapshot of the current dire state of the Labour left as a whole. Indeed, in some respects, you could say that the Labour left got the candidate they deserved - a terrible one.

Damningly, only 7 out of the 13 SCG MPs gave Abbott their first preference vote - Katy Clark, Jeremy Corbyn, Kelvin Hopkins, John McDonnell, Linda Riordan, and Mike Wood. Good for them. Shame on the others.

Having said that, Diane Abbott was not the *chosen* candidate of the Labour left - that title really goes to fellow SCGer, John McDonnell. As we all know, she only got onto the ballot paper because MPs supporting David Miliband ensured that she did, doubtlessly calculating that if she took enough left votes away from Ed, it would allow their man to win in the first round. Hence Harriet Harman, Jack Straw and even David Miliband himself nominated Abbott to be one of the candidates - piously claiming to be acting in the interests of 'fairness', 'democracy', 'equality'. Paradoxical as it may seem, although she was the only left candidate - in clear contradistinction to the four former ministers - Abbott was also the rightwing's 'spoiler' candidate in what proved to be a vain attempt to ensure victory for their chosen one.

Needless to say, Abbott's campaign

hardly captured the imagination of the party rank and file - and the same goes for trade union members, even if she did perform better there come the election. Abbott's poor showing was thrown into sharp relief by the parallel elections to select Labour's candidate for London mayor - where the rightwing's Oona King was trounced by Ken Livingstone.

Naturally, the Tory Party and the rightwing press are mischievously playing up Ed Miliband's bogus 'red' credentials - he is a creature or 'puppet' of the trade union bosses, and so on. Hence Conservative Party chairman, Baroness Warsi, "congratulated" Miliband for becoming Labour Party leader but asserted on the BBC that because he owed his victory to trade union votes - quite true of course - she feared that this would lead to an "abandonment of the centre ground" by Labour. Needless to say, the Tories and the rightwing press will increasingly conjure up the spectre of the union bogeymen, especially when resistance to the cuts grows - which it inevitably will.

It would be stupid to deny that Ed Miliband is marginally to the left of brother David - or that his election means nothing more than Blairite business as usual. After all, by his slight feint to the left Ed Miliband got himself elected - to the annoyance, though hardly hair-pulling despair, of Blair, Mandelson, Harman and all the rest of them. So, in that sense, the Labour entryists of the Grantite Socialist Appeal - the British section of the International Marxist Tendency - are not wrong to argue that Ed Miliband's election was "against the wishes of the British establishment".

Yes, in the words of the Socialist Workers Party, it is "very positive that the man chosen by Peter Mandelson and Tony Blair isn't Labour's leader." Or as Counterfire - the Reesite split from the SWP - put it, Ed's victory was a "defeat for Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson, the 'New Labour' establishment, rightwing commentators, and big business donors who funded David Miliband's campaign."

Indeed Ed Miliband himself has declared that the "era of New Labour is over" and that he is part of the "new generation".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, during his speech at the Labour Party conference on September 28, he catalogued some of the "errors" of the previous Labour government - namely, that the Iraq war was "wrong". He also told conference delegates that he understood their "anger" at a Labour government that

"claimed it could end boom and bust" and had not "stood up to the old ways in the City, which said deregulation was the answer". New Labour became "naive" about the markets and "we must never again give the impression that we know the price of everything and the value of nothing". In the name of the "new generation" he concluded by calling for the "good society".

So Ed Miliband's election does signify a break with New Labour. Chances are, he will appear on demonstrations, protests, etc against the coalition government's cuts. Clearly, he will not be so overtly hostile to the unions as the Blairites. They could hardly disguise their contempt for unions, bedazzled as they were by business entrepreneurs and multi-millionaires.

However, the essence of Miliband's "new generation" and "new politics" are captured by Bertolt Brecht poem, *Parade of the old new*, where we read: "I stood on a hill and I saw the Old approaching, but it came as the New ... The New went fettered and in rags; they revealed its splendid limbs. And the procession moved through the night, but what they thought was the light of dawn was the light of fires in the sky. And the cry: Here comes the New, it's all new, salute the New, be new like us! would have been easier to hear if all had not been drowned in a thunder of guns." New Labour is dead, long live Old New Labour.

Unfortunately, Ed Miliband is no Marxist - unlike his father. He is committed to capitalism and therefore represents the politics of the class enemy within the labour movement. He could not move fast enough to flaunt his pro-establishment credentials, contemptuously dismissing the "red Ed" moniker as "tiresome rubbish" - who could disagree? And to make it clear that there would be no "lurch to the left" under his stewardship, he declared: "I am for the centre ground of politics". Furthermore, typically of the old new politics, Miliband promised to address the "big injustices facing the middle classes" - as if this were the great majority of the population in Britain. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Most of those whom the media, mainstream politicians and rightwing academics call the middle classes are members of the working class, eg, nurses, teachers, office workers and computer technicians.

Naturally, Ed Miliband was keen to reassure us that he was his "own man" and would lead a "responsible opposition" which would cooperate with the government where it could. For instance, Labour "won't oppose every cut the coalition proposes" - pointing out, more honestly this time, that "there will be cuts" and "there would have been if we had been in government".

Self-evidently, as Diane Abbott's failed leadership bid graphically reminded us, the Labour left is a truly sorry sight, an incredibly reduced body compared to the past - and we are hardly talking about the ancient past here. Right up until the 1980s there was a relatively sizeable and militant Labour left, a force - to one degree or another - to be reckoned with by the

Labour leadership. But now, surely beyond doubt, the Labour left is at its lowest ebb historically. Frankly, it is not impossible for any self-respecting socialist to regard individuals such as Peter Hain, Jon Cruddas, etc, as any part of the left - however generously you want to define the term. The reality is that, in purely Labour Party terms, they are centrists - with leftwing pretensions. All you can seriously talk about in terms of a Parliamentary Labour Party left is the Socialist Campaign Group - which, if truth be told, is more dead than alive both politically and organisationally. Its website has not been updated since October 2008 and you need a very good memory indeed to remember when the last edition of its 'monthly' paper, *Socialist Campaign Group News*, came out.

For a perfect example of the totally directionless Labour left, look no further than Dennis Skinner, the supposed epitome of the 'hard left' - he voted David Miliband! The spineless logic was, presumably, that Miliband would have more popular appeal out there in the country - and of course the Murdoch press; therefore he was the man to go for if your only project is to 'beat the Tories' come what may at the next general election. Such wretched reasoning reveals a remarkable lack of belief in your own politics: *bending* to manipulated popular opinion, as opposed to trying to shape or lead it. Dennis Skinner *et al* act as unflattering testimony to the state of the Labour left.

As these things stand today, we are in a situation where the trade union leaders or bureaucrats - the 'awkward squad' that so excites the rightwing press - are in formal terms way to the left of the parliamentary or constituency Labour Party. Many trade union leaders call themselves leftwing or even Marxist. Now these people are claiming credit for the election of 'red' Ed - and of course are quite right to do so. But, just like the Labour left, these trade union leaders have a debilitating lack of ambition - most of them aspire to is to be treated "equally" with the likes of the Confederation of British Industry. What incredibly low horizons. Not even a hint of fighting for an *alternative* vision of society, of the working class ruling society! At the very least, as far as communists are concerned, they should have used their undoubted influence - the very influence complained about by Baroness Warsi - in order to *force* the leadership to allow John McDonnell to stand.

Though we backed her leadership bid, the CPGB never had illusions in Diane Abbott - quite the opposite. We critically supported her election campaign to make a space for *Marxist* politics within the Labour Party, a bourgeois workers' party, as part of our strategic aim to overcome Labourism. ●

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## Notes

1. www.marxist.com/britain-ed-miliband-wins-labour-leadership-contest.htm.
2. *Socialist Worker* October 2.
3. www.counterfire.org/index.php/features/38-opinion/6758-ed-miliband-labour-and-the-battles-ahead.
4. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/andrew\_marr\_show/9034485.stm.



# On the anti-war side

It is always important to accurately assess the strengths, weaknesses and failings of political allies and opponents alike. Unfortunately, however, our CPGB anti-Diane Abbott comrades are so determined to paint her a pro-war, pro-cuts Labourite, virtually identical to - god help us - Ed Miliband, that they are in serious danger of losing total touch with reality.

Replying to my article, 'Debating the Labour leadership contest' (September 16), 10 anti-Abbott comrades criticise me for attempting to "turn Diane Abbott into the anti-war candidate we all know she is not" ('Diane Abbott: class matters', September 23). What is more, I am accused of trying to "cover up her sell-out over her vote over the Iraq war in 2009", when they say she voted for "a motion that calls for the continuing role of British forces and highlighting the hard work of occupying troops".

As I explained in my article, the vote was not "over the Iraq war", but over the timing of an announcement of an enquiry into the 2003 invasion. On March 26 2009, when the vote was taken, all but a handful of British troops had already been withdrawn - by the end of May only 150 remained as Iraq army training instructors and they too were pulled out before the end of July, on the insistence of the Iraqi parliament. Gordon Brown had announced this timetable on December 15 2008. So it does seem a little odd to describe the amendment (not "motion") that Abbott voted for as one that "calls for the continuing role of British forces".

It was because the end of the occupation was now a recognised fact and, said the Conservatives, there were no more ongoing military operations which might be 'compromised' by an enquiry, the details of such an enquiry ought to be announced immediately. The Labour amendment insisted that the matter must be delayed until

combat troops had been completely withdrawn a few weeks later. That was the context of the amendment's reference to "the heroic efforts of the British armed forces in Iraq, who have a continuing role".

MPs were voting on the timing of the announcement, not on the nature of the occupation. As I admitted in my article, I do not know why Abbott voted for the Labour amendment (other Labour lefts voted against and for the Tory motion), but it is certainly stretching things to say that the fact she did so demonstrates her "lack of anti-war credentials", as the comrades did in their previous contribution ('No vote for Abbott', September 16). You might just as well say that the Tories voted against the amendment because they *opposed* the occupation and the "heroic efforts" of the troops.

I would have thought a more accurate measure of Diane Abbott's attitude to the Iraq war could be gleaned from Commons votes that were actually directly related to the invasion. There were three of these - November 25 2002, February 26 2003 and March 18 2003 - when Tony Blair was asking for MPs' endorsement of the Bush-Blair policy of bringing Saddam Hussein into line "by all means necessary" for his failure to destroy his (non-existent) 'weapons of mass destruction'. On each occasion, Abbott voted with the minority of Labour MPs who opposed the war threats. Back in November 2002, there were only 30 of them, but, because of the mass anti-war upsurge, this number grew to 86 by March 18 2003, two days before the invasion.

Abbott also supported the obstructive amendments on each occasion and had been part of a protest by rebel Labour MPs on September 9 2002, when they forced a vote on a technicality because of the government's obfuscation over the WMD 'dodgy dossier'. In the following years Abbott

featured on many a Stop the War Coalition platform and, according to the STWC, has "often spoken at Stop the War events" (<http://stopwar.org.uk/content/view/full/1874/27>).

A few more words need to be said about those obstructive amendments in the Commons. The first, on November 25 2002, demanded that there be no military action against Saddam without a United Nations mandate and a Commons vote. For communists this is all very dubious, implying that a second UN resolution would have made the invasion legitimate and perhaps could then have been endorsed in parliament. Similarly the February 26 2003 amendment, which found "the case for military action as yet unproven", implied that the imperialists have a general right to launch invasions and slaughter many thousands, if only they put together a convincing "case".

However, I would not condemn the likes of Diane Abbott, John McDonnell and George Galloway for voting for these amendments. They were, after all, desperately trying to block the imperialists' warmongering in parliament using parliamentary methods. It is not exactly easy for minorities to have such amendments debated and it is often necessary to negotiate with MPs from other parties just to get them onto the agenda. And the main party supporting these obstructive and delaying amendments was the Liberal Democrats - a factor that had to be taken into account.

None of that, however, justifies their voting for the amendment of March 18. This was so heavily influenced by the Lib Dems that its 'anti-war' content was completely negated. After reiterating that "the case for war against Iraq has not yet been established", it went on to state: "in the event that hostilities do commence, [this house] *pledges* its total support

for the British forces engaged in the Middle East, expresses its admiration for their courage, skill and devotion to duty, and hopes that their tasks will be swiftly concluded with minimal casualties on all sides."

There was absolutely no need for the Labour left to vote for this counterproductive amendment, as Abbott, McDonnell, Galloway *et al* all did. It was a much clearer and more foolish error than Abbott's 2009 vote to delay the enquiry, to which our comrades object so strongly. Labour anti-war MPs should have contented themselves with voting against the government motion, and given up on any common amendment. Perhaps they thought it was the price they had to pay to keep the Lib Dems on board; or perhaps they hoped their "support for British forces" would be taken as an empathetic gesture to individual soldiers rather than as a go-ahead for the military machine - but there I go again, acting as 'attorney' for unprincipled Labour lefts and their 'collapse into social chauvinism'.

In any event, now that I have drawn this amendment to the attention of our anti-Abbott comrades, I am sure they will stop insisting on making a false distinction between her and John McDonnell. Both MPs voted in an identical manner over Iraq in 2002-03. They were both in the anti-war camp at that time, over the following years and up to the present.

To be consistent, the comrades should extend their leftist moralism to McDonnell and declare him to be unsupportable too. In fact they should say that we cannot give critical support to any of the current crop of Labour lefts because of their undoubted nationalism and

backing for 'our boys and girls'. They should also declare that it was wrong for the CPGB to support George Galloway when he courageously urged British military personnel to mutiny by refusing to obey "illegal orders" in April 2003. Blair may have hauled him before a kangaroo court and had him expelled him from the Labour Party, and his stand may have given the anti-war movement a big boost. But anyone could see that he was actually playing into the imperialists' hands by implying that 'legal orders' are just fine.

There again, perhaps our anti-Abbott CPGB comrades should accept that *all* anti-war left Labourites have severe limitations. However, they can be allies in the fight against the Blairite, openly pro-capitalist wing of the party and in the struggle to open it up to Marxist ideas ●

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## CNWP: dead men's shoes

The September 26 extended steering committee of the Campaign for a New Workers' Party is, I believe, the first for a rather long time. Launched in March 2006 with much fanfare and a couple of hundred or more attending, the CNWP has become a ghostly affair. The steering committee had 22 comrades present. But they represented decline. Not growth. Essentially, the meeting proved to be a debate between the minuscule remnant that calls itself the Socialist Alliance and Socialist Party in England and Wales tops.

The SA argued that the CNWP was going nowhere. Worse, people were being tempted back into the Labour Party. Pete McLaren - CNWP press officer and the leading figure in the SA - quoted his experience in Rugby. The local Labour Representation Committee was making progress in persuading people to rejoin Labour. He went on to frustratedly complain that people were not joining the CNWP because they didn't know what they were joining or which direction it was going in. People were more likely to join if the CNWP made a clear commitment to a party project as soon as possible. He proposed, on behalf of the SA, a motion for a six point plan to provide the CNWP with a federal democratic constitution, which should be discussed at the

next CNWP Conference. Steve Freeman, also of the SA, criticised the motion because it did not mention programme - a necessity, in his view, for a party project to succeed - but was otherwise in full agreement.

Both SA speakers expressed doubts about the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - the electoral front supported by Bob Crow and which joined SPEW together with the Socialist Workers Party in the May 2010 general election. In particular its lack of commitment to internal democracy and the incompetent way it was launched - setting itself up only two months before polling day. Dave Church, from Walsall Democratic Labour Party and the SA, admitted that he had defended the undemocratic nature of Tusc on the grounds that it was impossible, given time constraints, to organise in any other way - but, he said, this is not going to be an acceptable excuse next time. He called for SPEW to vote against the SA motion - out of common honesty. He felt sure that they had no intention of implementing any of it - if it was agreed. None the less the SA motion was carried unanimously along with an anodyne SPEW motion dismissing the Labour Party as unreclaimable, opposing the cuts and the BNP, calling for a democratic republic and scrapping Trident. Uncontroversial, except, as

Steve Freeman pointed out, it did not say anything about the bankers. Just a sloppy oversight; but perhaps an indication that this meeting was called on the fly without much forethought.

While on the subject of forethought, the CNWP is planning a conference in March 2011, but if the TUC calls a national demonstration in that month, as seems likely, the comrades propose to put the conference off until June, when Dave Nellist expects they can get many more people to attend. The SA motion will be allocated a slot where it will be debated and voted on. If passed it will be taken to the founding conference of the new workers party - for which there is no proposed date.

Hanna Sell, SPEW's deputy general secretary, gave a little speech which concentrated on the Tory cuts and the inevitability of a working class fightback once their enormity was realised. Labour was ideologically committed to the Tory cuts, albeit at a slower rate. She gave examples of Labour councils enthusiastically pushing the cuts through. Amusingly, in Waltham Forest the Labour council has passed a cuts budget with the Tories and Liberal Democrats voting against them. In her opinion there is no way Labour can organise an anti-cuts fightback. Especially, she

said, taking into account the derisory vote gained by Diane Abbott, the (not very) left Labour MP, in the leadership election. The Labour left is all but dead, the comrade insisted. Despite the recent increase in Labour membership (many are disgruntled Lib Dems, not leftwing) the overall trend for Labour Party membership is, she insists, still downwards.

The CNWP, on the other hand, was well poised to take part in all (not just socialist) anti-cuts campaigns. The time is coming for the CNWP to step into the dead man's shoes of Labourism - my words, not hers. In reply to the SA's frustration at the progress being made, comrade Sell claimed to share it. But it would be impossible to launch a party now as sufficient progress has not been made in winning over the trade unions. Unfortunately the dead man has not taken his shoes off yet.

Clive Heemskirk, deputy editor of SPEW's monthly journal *Socialism Today*, led off on the progress being made in SPEW's top down approach of winning the trade union bureaucracy away from the Labour Party. Tusc, he said has not retreated from its position at the May general election and is preparing to fight Labour at the next general election. It would not support Labour candidates such as John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. However, Tusc would not stand against them. Towards this end

a conference has been called for all Tusc anti-cuts candidates on January 15, where motions will be allowed. So it is unfair to describe Tusc as undemocratic, he maintained.

Dave Nellist, a SPEW councillor, added that at the next CNWP steering committee Nick Wrack - ex-Respect national organiser, ex-SWP and ex-editor of *Militant* - will be delivering a paper on how to involve independent socialists. Also, the RMT has substantially increased its financial contributions to political work against the Labour Party over the years. Others, like the PCS, might soon follow suit. At the end of the meeting Dave Nellist made another plea for patience, saying that it took Kier Hardy 50 years of campaigning to complete his fight for the Labour Party, but he was hopeful that in as little as five years we might have a new workers party.

Comrade Nellist clarified his organisation's attitude to the Labour left for me. Citing Coventry, he reported that Diane Abbott received only 31 votes to Dave Miliband's nearly 300 from constituency Labour Party membership. This was the normal pattern across the country. He did not expect the Labour Party to produce any anti-cuts campaigns. But the project for the CNWP is to replace the Labour Party, not prop it up ●

**Phil Kent**



## REVIEW

# Revolutionary jazz and the cultural shifts of the 1970s

Soul Jazz Records **Freedom, rhythm and sound - revolutionary jazz and the civil rights movement**  
2 CDs, £11.99

**"N**o America, no jazz", said jazz legend Art Blakey, "I've seen people try to connect it to other countries, for instance to Africa, but it doesn't have a damn thing to do with Africa." His statement would not have raised an eyebrow in 1950s America. Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie played the odd benefit gig for the emerging civil rights movement, but by and large race was not an issue in culturally liberal jazz circles.

Long dismissed as vulgar, low class entertainment and associated with vaudeville shows, speakeasies and the brothels of the American South, jazz had been successfully purged of its threatening connotations with hypersexuality and 'blackness' during the swing age. What had once been the stuff of media-driven moral panics and denounced as "a sensual teasing of the strings of passion" by the likes of Dr Henry Van Dyke had undergone a transformation into the good, clean mainstream dance sound of the 1940s. The beast had been tamed and was no longer perceived as an affront to family values.

By the late 1950s, however, John Coltrane and others developed more complex, tonally loose, and self-consciously artistic strands of jazz. The notion of musical 'genius' appealed to the bohemian individualism of hipster and beatnik subcultures, but the new bebop and free jazz styles also found an audience with American leftists, who at the time widely regarded rock 'n' roll as the ultimate in crass commercialism. Art Blakey himself laid some of the groundwork for the sounds of the coming decade when integrating African and other 'world music' styles into jazz. It may have seemed to Blakey like open-minded experimentation rather than an ideological statement, but his highly influential album *The African beat* (1962) was taken as a musical rallying call by angry black Americans.

As the assimilationist civil rights movement faded out, black separatist organisations such as the Nation of Islam gained influence. Towards the end of the decade, black dance music shifted from Motown's family-friendly sound of young America to more aggressively rhythmic, self-consciously 'black' sounding funk. Likewise, many jazz musicians were affected by the emerging 'black power' movement and infused their music with notions of 'Afrocentrism', cultural revolt and defiant ethnic pride.

*Freedom rhythm & sound - revolutionary jazz and the civil rights movement 1963-82* offers a glimpse at those jazz artists whose creativity was, to a considerable extent, driven by the ideas of 'black power'. Taking Coltrane and Blakey as a starting point, they focussed on those qualities in jazz that, in their perception, made it intrinsically 'black' and 'revolutionary'. African influences were now utilised to agitate for ethnic nationalism, urging American blacks to seek their 'true roots' in Africa, the continent that had seen the transportation of millions of slaves across the Atlantic to the Americas. Coltrane and co may have used extreme improvisation and dissonance as expressions of their individualistic freedom, but the new generation appreciated their

deconstructive potential. They created an often groundbreaking, often disrespectfully genre-bending, and sometimes alarmingly menacing soundtrack for black power, race riots, and the like - revolution, man.

What *Freedom rhythm & sound* presents under the 'revolutionary jazz' umbrella is an eclectic affair. This is unavoidable partly because it covers an extended time span beginning in 1963 and ending in 1982, when 'black power' had long exhausted itself and most jazz radicals had headed for the New York City loft jazz scene. But part of the reason is surely found in the eclecticism of the 'black power' movement itself, which included everything from religious black nationalist groups such as the Nation of Islam, black Marxist organisations focussing on industrial action, such as the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) through to semi-Maoist adventurists such as the Black Panther Party.

Consequently, spiritually charged gospel chants such as the Art Ensemble of Chicago's *Old time religion* rub shoulders with Afro-centric journeys into an idealised past, eg, The Artistic Heritage Ensemble's *The African look*. Sometimes the song titles don't do the musical vision justice: *Africa* by Oliver Lake/NTU kicks off - predictably enough - with tribal poly-rhythms, but the chaos unleashed by the brass section a few minutes in spells red alert in capital letters. And it would be hard to find a more threatening **s o u n d i n g , e a r d r u m g r i n d i n g p i e c e o f a v a n t - j a z z t h a n G a t t o B a r b i e r i & D o l l a r B r a n d ' s**

mundanely entitled *81st street*.

The Stanton Davis Ghetto's Afrobeat thumper *Space-A Nova* leans towards Fela Kuti style Nigerian funk rather than anything to do with jazz. Likewise, Archie Shepp's excellent *Attica Blues* is a soul number; it was included here because it was originally recorded in response to the 1971 Attica prison riots, sparked off by the killing of Black Panther and Marxist author George Jackson by prison guards in San Quentin jail. Yes, the album contains some real nuggets, including *Blues for brother George Jackson*. But rather than documenting the linear evolution of a genre powered by the artists' revolutionary sentiments, it dips into a cross-style cocktail that is part avant-garde (*3/4's of 4/4* by Amina Claudine Meyers) and part pedestrian (Sun Ra's 1982 off-peak snoozer *Nuclear War* with its particularly daft lyrics: "nuclear war, it's a motherfucker"). In cases such as Ralph Thomas's *Big spliff* or Errol Parker's *Street ends*, it's difficult to tell the difference from arguably 'groovy', but not exactly revolutionary European soft porn soundtracks of the early 70s.

In his liner notes, Soul Jazz Records' Stuart Baker appears particularly enthralled by the black radicals' economic initiative and DIY spirit. Afro-futurist free jazz prodigy Sun Ra is lauded for setting up his own independent label El Saturn Records as early as 1955 - that's 21 years before the Buzzcocks' self-released *Spiral scratch* single. Fascinated by the movement's courage to work "outside of the music industry mainstream", Baker points to the countless independent jazz labels improvised during the 60s and 70s. Add to that the informal

distribution networks that dominated the scene - ie selling your own records at gigs - and we inevitably feel invited to draw parallels with the wonderful world of punk. A mainstay in the British media ever since its inception and subject to periodical revivals, punk was a useful training ground for future movers and shakers in the music, media, graphic design and fashion industries. In spite of their radical posturing, the original punks were ultimately capitalist innovators, united only in their contempt of 'rules' and 'herd mentality'.

Can the 'revolutionary' jazz movement's embrace of petty production and ownership also be reduced to maverick entrepreneurial spirit? In truth, it was a question of necessity. While keen to market Woodstock era rock music with counter-cultural slogans of revolution and sticking it to the man, major labels were fairly conservative when it came to jazz. An avant-garde artist who openly embraced 'black power' had slim chances of getting snapped up by Warner or EMI like some punk groups were a decade later. While the majors stuck to the two or three already established styles of jazz, independent labels represented much more authentically what black academic Marxist Cedric Robinson once defined as popular culture ("stories about the world and human experience") as opposed to mass culture ("stories about the world and human experience which are manufactured for the masses by the elites").<sup>2</sup> However, black separatist ideas were often sufficient motivation to turn one's back on the corporate music biz and go it alone.

Of all the local scenes and collectives documented on *Freedom rhythm & sound*, the radical Los Angeles jazz community represented here by Horace Tapscott & the Pan African Peoples Arkestra might be of the greatest interest to *Weekly Worker* readers. That is because its arts umbrella, the Union of Gods Musicians and Artists Ascension, rubbed shoulders with the most arresting element of the black power melting pot, the Black Panther Party. While the UGMAA was a religious, black nationalist collective, the Black Panthers viewed themselves as a Marxist-Leninist party and an alternative to ethnocentric, petty capitalist aspirations.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, both organisations shared the same building: "It was guns upstairs, musicians in the basement", as Tapscott recalls. Relations were friendly enough for Tapscott to produce Black Panther spokeswoman Elaine Brown's awesome agit-soul album *Seize the time* at the UGMAA studio. His track alongside the Pan African Peoples Arkestra, *Peyote song No. III* is among the strangest selections on *Freedom Rhythm & Sound*: an unnerving, dissonant instrumental piece that comes across like a surreal 1970s cop thriller soundtrack - or alternatively, a funkier version of Komed's music for *Rosemary's baby* as if enjoyed when coming down from LSD.

The recordings contained on *Freedom rhythm & sound* sold modestly upon their original release. But the aspiration to economic self-determination

Sun Ra: pharaonic





was inherent to the artists' vision, unconsciously anticipating something that Angela Davis later cited as an inevitable by-product of black power: the rise of a 'black bourgeoisie' and petty-bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup> Davis's mentor Herbert Marcuse predicted it as early as 1958. By the early 70s, magazines such as *Black enterprise*<sup>5</sup> were common fare in the US, and James Brown had no problem capturing the zeitgeist with *Say it loud (I'm black and I'm proud)* while campaigning for Richard Nixon's presidency. In the absence of a pronounced class perspective, the focus on ethnic identity ensured that the broadest sections of the black power movement adopted the capitalist model of self-empowerment as their own.

Soul Jazz Records were excited enough about the creativity of the original record sleeves as to dedicate a coffee table book, also entitled *Freedom, rhythm & sound* and available now, to the cover artwork. The pharaonic

imagery found in many of the images further underlines that to many black power advocates, this was a movement against white tyranny only.

The limitations of cultural nationalism also meant that 'black power' politics could easily be sucked up, chewed up and spat back out in the shape of left-liberal identity politics. Today, ex-Panthers confine their culture wars to the realms of academia and single-issue campaigns. The US president is black, and multiculturalism - essentially an update of the American 'melting pot' myth - is celebrated by broad sections of the political and cultural establishments. But despite the existence of a black middle-class, the economic situation of American working class blacks today is far more severe than it was in the 1960s-70s.

The institutionalisation of identity politics into the liberal canon and academia is mirrored in the way jazz, including its radical strands, has been co-opted anew. In 1987, the

genre was "designated as a rare and valuable national treasure", through a bill passed by the US house of representatives. And Stuart Baker of Soul Jazz Records rejoices: "Today, jazz and education often go hand in hand". Citing government funding and grants for jazz musicians in the US, he concludes that "music in American colleges is widely taught in a way that would have been unimaginable 40 years ago".

The more avant-garde strands of jazz, meanwhile, have been rebranded as 'high culture' and provide food for small talk at snooty soirees, where to namedrop John Coltrane is to demonstrate that one has mastered the necessary codes of high-class social interaction. Not for nothing did prodigious avant-garde jazzier John Zorn once greet a festival audience with the words "jazz snobs eat shit".

There is no doubt, however, that the radical jazz movement produced some wildly innovative and credible

music. Its initiative allowed voices to be heard that would have otherwise been given a cold shoulder by the media industries. With its huge collectives, fundraisers and performances in community centres, it breathed a sense of solidarity and rootedness into the communities that was a far cry from punk's petty-bourgeois individualism. *Freedom rhythm & sound* is at times a hugely enjoyable document of an era when jazz music was powered by a desire to revolt, overthrow and rebuild. It makes one wonder what music, what art, and what culture a future society will give birth to - a society where not just racism, but all oppression is but an ugly memory of the past ●

**Maciej Zurowski**

## Notes

1. See excerpt from 'Jazz: a history of America's music' at <http://morehistorywithramsey.blogspot.com/2009/01/20s-music-for-week-5.html>.

2. See 1999 interview with Cedric Robinson at <http://flag.blackened.net/ias/5robinsoninterview.htm>.

3. Often portrayed as a plain black nationalist outfit with Marxist pretensions, the early Black Panther Party viewed itself as being at war with a power structure that happened to be white while rejecting outright racialism. In his programmatic book *Seize the time*, party co-founder Bobby Seale stated, "In our view it is a class struggle between the massive proletarian working class and the small, minority ruling class. Working-class people of all colours must unite against the exploitative, oppressive ruling class. So let me emphasize again - we believe our fight is a class struggle and not a race struggle." However, due to the inevitable overlap with other black power organisations and a rudimentary 10-point programme that failed to extend its immediate demands (full employment, etc) to non-black workers, the Black Panthers subsequently attracted black radicals and nationalists of various ideological shades.

4. See 1997 interview with Angela Davis at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/interviews/davis.html>.

5. Founded in 1970, *Black enterprise* is published monthly until the present day. Its official website can be found at <http://www.blackenterprise.com>.

## Communist Students

# Marxism as a guide to action

As the new term started, Manchester CS found that the mood has changed on campus, writes **Chris Strafford**

As students flooded back the Manchester branch of Communist Students was out to greet them. Apart from the usual conversations about Stalin, the Soviet Union and Cuba, many wanted to discuss the cuts, not just in higher education but across society. Here our comrades, who were running four stalls, excelled at explaining that the Marxist project is more than just fighting against the coming cuts but is about moving beyond the status-quo. Contrasted against the economicistic dumbing down on offer from other socialist groups on campus, we gained a good hearing and fantastic support, signing up over 140 to our University of Manchester student society and 30 at Manchester Metropolitan University.

On Wednesday September 22 we held a meeting on 'Communism and human nature' where 23 students attended. The discussion was introduced by Liam Conway who explained what CS is about, the centrality of Marxist

ideas, unity and breaking the divide between communist thought and action. The main part of the meeting was addressed by Ronan McNabb, who dismantled the myth that capitalism is natural and that socialist planning is against some natural order. He spoke of primitive communist societies and how cooperation and solidarity is the basis of human society. Comrade McNabb attacked social Darwinism as an insult to Charles Darwin's monumental contribution and underlined that humans, whilst still being animals, have evolved to break themselves out of their genes and organise the world in a way we choose.

The discussion that followed was wide ranging, as you would expect at a start of term discussion. We looked at the anarchist Piotr Kropotkin's contribution to our understanding of evolution, whether genes determine our behaviour, Richard Dawkins, social Darwinism and what socialist

planning actually means. SWP member Dominic Williams kicked off a much needed discussion on the formation of socialist consciousness; he contrasted CS's Marxist discussion circles and the activism of his organisation. Many in the room pointed out that whilst demonstrations, stunts and selling papers might be important, socialist transformation of society is based on the assimilation of the ideas of Marxism and the communist programme. Whilst others on the left seek to play down or ignore Marxist education and propaganda; communists should be unashamedly presenting our ideas. During the discussion students showed that they believed it essential for ideas to be at the centre of any political movement serious about change; and that you cannot fight capitalism successfully without understanding why and what the alternative is.

At the end of the freshers week members of CS attended a 25 strong

anti-cuts meeting. Last year we had built a decent anti-cuts group that was committed to free education, working with the unions and run on a democratic basis. Over the summer the union executive altered all of this. The meeting was presented with a fully formed campaign where the use of "consensus" decision making was used to thwart opportunities to strengthen and widen the political scope of the campaign. Unity was presented as the only thing that mattered. Last year CS and SWP members argued successfully for democracy, free education and worker-student unity. This year the SWP did a complete U-turn, lining

up with the student union officials to shut down debate. It has already been decided that the key action we would be building for would be the NUS national demo, which would be de-politicised to the point of attracting students with drink offers.

In the coming months Manchester CS will look to replicate our successes of last academic year where we built and organised the postal workers solidarity group and fought to move the anti-cuts groups beyond just opposing this or that cut to higher education but linking it to the other struggles we face, the fight for free-education, democracy and most importantly socialism ●

## Fighting fund

## Global scope

Too many comrades are celebrating the election of Ed Miliband. Testimony, if ever there was, to how far adrift the left has become. Just because the right wing stupidly dubs him 'Red Ed', there is no need for us to do the same. Of course, it is good to see the back of Dave Miliband. But if the working class is going to successfully resist the cuts and fight back with its own agenda we must do more than choose the butcher.

On the subject of the Labour Party, comrade PP, who sent us in an excellent donation of £30, commends us for the way the paper is prepared to be quite open about the differences among CPGB members over whether or not to vote for Diane Abbott. "You put the other groups to shame" he comments.

Naturally we will be giving over further space in the coming weeks and months to the Abbott issue - so that the politics behind it can be fully debated. And, it ought to be stressed, we do not regard this as a purely internal debate. Other comrades are more than welcome to take sides or make their own contribution,

either in the form of letters or articles.

Anyway, onto our £1,250 monthly fighting fund. Albeit with a couple days of the month to go, it stands at £1,202. Besides comrade PP, thanks are due to SB (£15), DO (£20), TB (£10) and JT (£50). So just under £50 below target, and I have every confidence that we will make up this shortfall next month. Indeed, we have to, if we want to keep on producing the paper.

Nowadays, of course, most of our readers are through the internet. Last week there were 9,062 of them in total. Incidentally, I have been asked where our e-readership comes from. Frankly, I have not the slightest idea. But having an accurate national breakdown would be more than an interesting exercise. From word of mouth I get the strong impression that our readership is truly global in scope ●

**Robbie Rix**

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**Communist Students: clear message**



## OUR HISTORY

# Laying the foundations

Left sectarianism had to be overcome to win communist unity in 1920

Fraught negotiations aimed at bringing together the British Socialist Party, Socialist Labour Party and Workers Socialist Federation into a united Communist Party had been going on since May 1919. After nearly two years little progress had been made. The SLP was implacably opposed to the BSP's stance that the new Communist Party should fight for mass influence through the tactic of affiliation to the Labour Party. In the name of 'revolutionary purity' the SLP leadership rejected all compromises on this - it was made into a barrier preventing unification. In the same vein, Sylvia Pankhurst's WSF not only rejected Labour Party affiliation, but stood opposed to all parliamentary activity. Even the intervention of Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership in Russia, making clear their support for such flexible tactics, did not shift the sectarians.

But in April 1920, things began to change for the better. William Paul, Arthur MacManus and Tom Bell - the SLP's team in the unity negotiations (that is until they were repudiated by the party's doctrinaire leadership) - broke the logjam. They called an unofficial conference in Nottingham, timed to coincide with the SLP's official 7th annual conference, on April 3-4.

The unofficial conference represented the most active members of the SLP, in particular those prominent in the mass movement. The pro-unity SLPers agreed to call themselves the Communist Unity Group and adopted a manifesto committing them to working for the "unity of all elements scattered throughout the various groups and parties as the first essential to the

formation of a Communist Party in Britain."

In the light of this very important development, unity negotiations at last began to bear fruit. The meetings of April 24 and May 9 agreed that the tactical questions of Labour affiliation and parliamentary activity should be decided after unity, rather than be a precondition for it. And on May 29 the representatives of the BSP and the CUG, along with a less enthusiastic and a far smaller WSF, felt ready to call a fusion convention. This is how the BSP's paper reported the news:

## Communist unity *The Call* No217, June 3 1920

Considerable progress towards the establishment of a united Communist Party was made at a further meeting of the unity conference in London last Saturday. Those present were: JF Hodgson, AA Watts and Fred Willis (representing the BSP), Thos Bell, Arthur MacManus, and Wm Paul (representing the Communist Unity Group formed by members of the SLP), and Sylvia Pankhurst, Nora Smyth, and Melvina Walker (representing the WSF).

A national convention is to be held to establish the Communist Party to which all organisations, branches of organisations, groups, and local societies accepting the three cardinal principles of unity (dictatorship of the proletariat, the soviet system, and the Third International) are to be invited to send delegates. This convention will also decide the tactical question of the relations of the Communist Party to the Labour Party. Meanwhile various sub-committees will deal with the general arrangements for the convention, prepare suggestions for the constitution, platform, and organisation of the Communist Party, and go into the details of the amalgamation of the existing organisations. All the bodies participating in summoning the convention are pledged to accept the decisions of the con-

vention and to merge their organisations in the Communist Party, and representation at the convention will imply that organisations, branches, and groups represented will also accept its decisions and become parts of the Communist Party. The convention will be held in London, and the date provisionally fixed for Sunday, August 1.

The delegates of the BSP and the Communist Unity Group were acting on mandates from their respective bodies. The participation of the WSF delegates was stated to be conditional upon a referendum of their membership now being taken.

Progress, but things were certainly not going to be plain sailing from now on. Sylvia Pankhurst and her WSF took a stand for petty bourgeois leftism and - in her isolation - she turned to the SLP, an organisation that was being thrown into crisis by the challenge of unity, becoming increasingly erratic and irrelevant to the momentous events unfolding:

## Unity, ourselves and others *The Call* No218, June 10 1920

Last week's issue of *The Socialist* contains a letter sent by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst to the SLP, in which she discusses the advisability, or otherwise, of taking part in this convention. It is a long letter (about 2,000 words), but it can be summed up very briefly. Miss Pankhurst considers the question of participation under the separate headings of advantages and disadvantages. The advantages, says Miss Pankhurst, are that the delegates may be induced to accept her own particular point of view, in which case all would be well. The disadvantages are that they may not, and then, of course, all would be very far from well. But, she concludes naively, in the latter unfortunate event those agreeing with her need not consider themselves bound by the decisions of the conference - and, so again, all would be well.

The reply of the National Executive Committee of the SLP to Miss Pankhurst's letter is what was to be expected. It is rigid and doctrinaire, but quite honest.

These Calvinists of the socialist movement will have nothing to do with the proposed convention. They do not favour Miss Pankhurst's brilliant tactic of running away from the unity proceedings in the event of not being able to stampede them, but they make one suggestion which, to put it mildly, is surprising. They invite the WSF to join with them in calling a conference of their own. And to invite thereto representatives of the South Wales Socialist Society, the Irish

Communist Party, the British Section International Socialist Labour Party, and the *Socialist Party of Great Britain*.<sup>2</sup> I should like to have seen Miss Pankhurst's face when she saw this suggestion.

The SPGB stands for what it calls revolutionary parliamentary action as opposed to industrial action. It has as much right to its opinions as any other body, and we do not quarrel with its members for holding them, but to ask it to take part in a conference which would presumably endorse the soviet system, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and industrial mass action, is something which - like the peace of god - passes all understanding.

Apparently Miss Pankhurst thought so too. The reply of the SLP to her letter is dated May 27. On June 4, she issued an invitation to all organisations who accept non-parliamentarism as a basis of unity, to attend a meeting for the purpose of deciding whether or not to be present at the conference our own unity committee is engaged in calling. Neither the SLP nor the SPGB will be represented at Miss Pankhurst's gathering, we presume, unless the voice of the charmer has been so alluring as to outweigh even the sterner call of principle.

For ourselves, we are willing to leave the less important matters of immediate tactics to the free play of opinion in the rank and file of a united Communist Party when formed. To rally the workers of this country to the banner so gloriously raised by our Russian comrades is all important at this juncture - all else is sound and fury signifying less than nothing.

**Fred Willis**

On the basis of genuine communist principle and in contrast to the pathetic shenanigans of the SLP and WSF, the BSP and CUG - who between them represented the bulk of proto-communist forces in Britain - were drawing closer together. From July 15 1920 *The Call* gave over, weekly, a full page for the CUG to use as it saw fit. Since its formation the CUG had "felt the need of a paper that would enable us, without let or hindrance, not only to express our views on matters of general policy, but to publicly refute the lies and slanders against us from time to time". However, because of the self-proclaimed "transitory nature" of the group the comrades preferred to husband resources in "deference to the larger object of a united Communist Party". The CUG used its page in *The Call* to good effect in pursuit of that aim:

## Headquarter notes

*The Call* No223, July 15 1920

In the discussions that took place in the initial stages of our unity negotiations, Wales figured largely through the South Wales Socialist Society. We at no time lost sight of the fact, and indeed had it repeatedly brought home to us in correspondence from many of our Welsh comrades, that the SWSS by no means adequately represented communist opinion in Wales. We were scarcely prepared, however, for the news that it had "gone west". Yet such, we are assured, is actually the case.

From its ashes, and from some late SLP Branches, there has arisen what we think will prove a more substantial organisation, in the shape of a South Wales Communist Council. This council counts eight definite groups, while the Neath Socialist Society has just affiliated, and others are expected to follow - all for the Communist Party. We can appreciate the disappointment of the WSF, which always counted on the SWSS to back her up. It was no small surprise to find her secretary writing to the Council, soliciting support for her latest adventure. Needless to say there was "nothing doing." *Let this be the reply to all such seductive attempts coming from 400 Old Ford Road.*<sup>3</sup>

## Towards the Communist Party *The Call* No223, July 15 1920

History teaches that every crisis capitalism has to go through is a test period. The strain at such a period, however, is not confined to the purely commercial credit of its national groups. It is as much a test upon the loyalty and convictions of the revolutionists towards their communist principles. It is just at such periods when it is brought home to us that our Labour politicians of the Thomas and Henderson type are indeed the watchdogs of capitalist interests. The former, apprehensive of the dangerous situation capitalism is drifting into, is even now appealing to the government to reduce the cost of living and so help to stave off "the turmoil and agitation that upsets everything and everybody." But, since there is nothing in common between communism and capitalism, the latter's difficulty must be the former's opportunity. Here, then, is where the test will be applied to the communists. Are we to go on pottering about as a great many fragmentary groups; our efforts rendered sterile and fatuous by our sectionalism? Or are we capable of rising to the occasion, and, concentrating all our resources, make a strong national effort worthy of the principles we profess?

July 31 will be your opportunity for making an effective reply. At the National Convention will be laid the foundations of a Communist Party that will seriously challenge the powers of capitalism. The Communist Party will, by its industrial, political, and social activity, foster the spirit of revolution. When Lloyd George told his German confreres at Spa to deal with the communists as his French brothers did in 1871 - ie shoot them like dogs - he not only made a deadly thrust at Labour Party democracy, but he threw down a challenge to the communists of Britain.<sup>4</sup>

We shall not be worthy of the name if we do not pick that challenge up and prepare for the coming struggle •

## Notes

1. Printed on June 3 along with an SLP reply.
2. The Socialist Party of Great Britain was founded in 1904 as a split from the Social Democratic Federation and continues to this day. Amongst other issues, the split was partly a reaction to the SDF's involvement in the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labour Party.
3. Headquarters of the WSF.
4. The Spa Conference was a meeting between the representatives of Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia in the Belgian town of Spa, between July 5-16 1920.



Sylvia Pankhurst: seductive



PALESTINE

Campaign to end BBC bias on Palestine

The BBC’s shameful coverage of the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla is a betrayal of its charter



On August 16 BBC Panorama’s ‘Death on the Med’ was, in its own words, ‘given unique access’ to the Israeli Naval Commandos, who attacked the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, killing nine activists on the Mavi Marmara.<sup>1</sup>

In return, the BBC broadcast what amounted to a half hour justification of the murder of nine aid workers and the wounding of 50 more aboard the flotilla on May 31. The victims of Israel’s murderous attack were portrayed as the ones guilty of violence. The BBC even broadcast a clearly faked clip, purporting to show activists from the Flotilla saying “go back to Auschwitz”. Even the IDF admitted on June 5th that this was not from the Mavi Marmara as originally claimed.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the world expressed incredulity at Israel’s claim that its commandos had acted in self defence, BBC news broadcast, without comment, Benjamin Netanyahu’s claim that “Israel did all it could to avoid violence”.

BBC News 24 broadcast repeatedly and uncritically Israeli film “evidence” of their commandos being attacked despite its having edited out the initial lethal attack. This was both unethical and immoral, especially given that Israel’s military had stolen all photographic evidence to the contrary, recording equipment and the personal possessions of witnesses to Israel’s attack. The BBC’s behaviour is an invitation to other states to behave likewise.

Anyone relying on BBC news would not have heard world famous Swedish novelist Henning Mankell recount the beatings inflicted on activists after they were detained<sup>3</sup>. They were also not shown the photographs smuggled past Israeli pirates showing activists giving medical treatment to Israel’s commandos.

Knowledge of Israel’s routinely violent attacks on Palestinians and peaceful protestors would have provided meaningful context to the attack on the flotilla, for example the blinding in one eye of American Jewish protestor Emily Henochowitz who was protesting the attack on the flotilla at the Qalandiya check-point in the occupied West Bank.<sup>4</sup> Instead a BBC correspondent stated on May 31: “Of course the Israeli military is very well experienced at dealing with crowd control.”

If Iran or North Korea had carried out a lethal attack, in international waters, on a ship flying another country’s flag, can one imagine BBC broadcasting uncritical interviews with the killers?

The BBC’s behaviour reflects a consistently pro-Israeli bias in its coverage of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. A report to

the corporation’s governors in April 2006<sup>5</sup> stated that “BBC coverage does not consistently constitute a full and fair account of the conflict but rather, in important respects, presents an incomplete and in that sense misleading picture.” The report noted that historical and other context was frequently absent and coverage failed to reflect “the fact that one side is in control and the other lives under occupation.” It also found that “the death of an Israeli killed by the Palestinian side was more likely to be reported by the BBC than the death of a Palestinian killed by the Israeli side.”

BBC’s news coverage consistently fails to present the context of events in its coverage. Why did Panorama not investigate the attack from the standpoint of those who were killed and injured instead of allowing itself to be bought off with ‘unique access’ to the killers? And why was Panorama’s ‘Death on the Med’ able to gain exclusive interviews with Israel’s naval commandos when the Israeli government had told the UN inquiry and its own Turkel Commission that they will not allow them to testify?

We wish to see the BBC stand up to threats from Israel instead of caving in, as occurred when the government of Ariel Sharon targeted correspondents Orla Guerin and Jeremy Bowen.<sup>6</sup> Let us see no more of the blatant bias exhibited by the BBC’s refusal, in January 2009, to broadcast the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal for Gaza ●

Notes

- 1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/default.stm>.
- 2. <http://tinyurl.com/2dvq6ph>.
- 3. [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/02/gaza-flotilla-raid-gunfire-ship-blood](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/02/gaza-flotilla-raid-gunfire-ship-blood).
- 4. [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/21/emily-henochowicz-israel-gaza-protest](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/21/emily-henochowicz-israel-gaza-protest).
- 5. [www.bbcgovernorsarchive.co.uk/docs/reviews/panel\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.bbcgovernorsarchive.co.uk/docs/reviews/panel_report_final.pdf).
- 6. ‘BBC says sorry to Israel’, *The Guardian* March 12 2005; ‘BBC appoints Middle East tsar’ *The Guardian* November 11 2003).

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What we fight for

- Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.
- The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but 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 have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose the US-UK occupation of Iraq and stand against all imperialist wars 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’. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.

■ 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. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ 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.

■ All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.

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# weekly worker

## Willing accomplices of the Tories

# The band played on

**T**he Liverpool conference of the Liberal Democrat Party, as expected, was a strained affair, revealing many of the tensions at the heart of the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition.

The Lib Dems went into the conference with collapsing poll ratings and a worried, mutinous mood among activists. Though the formation of the coalition was merely the continuation of the cynical political strategy they already pursue at a local level - that is, saying whatever necessary to get into coalition government before proceeding to toe their partners' lines - the prospect of taking responsibility for the most bloodthirsty Tory policies in the post-war era has left many in the Lib Dem ranks with cold feet.

So it was no surprise to see a few left poses on display in Liverpool - such as Vince Cable's 'controversial' (really?) speech, to which we shall return later. There was even a conference vote against one of the Tories' flagship policies - 'free schools', a backdoor method of privatising the management of schools painted in feel-good parent-power colours. The Lib Dem leadership attempted to water down the motion so that its MPs would not be required to actively campaign against it. Their amendment was overwhelmingly rejected, and the motion duly passed.

On the other side of the coin, there were endless exhortations to 'stay the course' in government. That was certainly the line being peddled by leader and deputy PM Nick Clegg. His speech, vetted in advance by David Cameron, was fulsome in its endorsement of the coalition's most notable policy - enormous and brutal public spending cuts. "Hold your nerve and we will have changed Britain for good," he told the delegates - presumably in the same sense that the American military changed Nagasaki for good.

He also warned against breaking the unity of the coalition, 'hanging dirty washing in public' and so forth - which, it must be said, puts him in a bit of a pickle over free schools. A good proportion of those who foisted opposition to Cameron and Michael Gove's plans on him are local notables, many in long-standing council positions, or working in education themselves (the mover, Peter Downes, was a councillor and retired headteacher). Either he alienates important sections of the Lib Dems' support with proven electoral records, or he starts raising hell and draws the ire of the Tories. No doubt he will devise a cunning plan to get out of this predicament, whose final shape one awaits with interest.

You would have thought that the Lib Dems' local power bases would already be quaking in their boots looking at the polls. After all, it is they - not Clegg, Cable and co, barring some calamity in the next few months - who are to go to the voters early next year, and they will be a prime target for a protest vote drubbing. Yet they apparently remain fairly confident of survival. *The Guardian's* Polly Toynbee was told by Warren Bradley, the Lib Dem

leader on Liverpool council, that "the people of Liverpool won't be swayed by national politics" (September 20) - a statement quite extraordinary in its combination of insulting cynicism and political naivety.

Despite misgivings - and Bradley was one of the angriest Lib Dem rebels over the Building Schools for the Future fiasco - the party is happy to sail on, with the leadership, into the electoral iceberg. They will no doubt have been assuaged somewhat, not just by their victory on schools policy, but also by Vince Cable's forthright rhetoric in his own conference speech.

"I make no apology," he told the assembled throng, "for attacking spivs and gamblers who did more harm to the British economy than Bob Crow could achieve in his wildest Trotskyite fantasies, while paying themselves outrageous bonuses underwritten by the taxpayer. There is much public anger about banks and it is well deserved." He also, of course, trotted out the familiar homilies about the necessity of spending cuts with such an enormous deficit; that, while deficit financing is necessary in an "emergency", it all has to be paid back.

While he claimed that cuts had to be balanced by stimulus, having the nerve to cite John Maynard Keynes - bourgeois economics's most consistent advocate of deficit financing, who would no doubt have claimed in the words of Marx that if this was a Keynesian speech, he was no Keynesian - there was no evidence that this was any more than empty verbiage. Despite being sold to the electorate as a fine economic mind, he does not seem able to grasp the effect on growth of throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of public sector jobs. Ireland, which has imposed its own foul austerity programme, is now in a double-dip recession. Cable, for all his Keynes citations, seems pretty cavalier about the fate of Britain on that score.

It is, of course, the 'spivs and gamblers' section of his speech that has aroused the most fevered

discussions - and not because he was ignorant enough to call Bob Crow a Trotskyite, which no doubt caused some purple-faced consternation at RMT headquarters. The City was prompt in its denunciations; Cable was even declared to be a Marxist in sections of the bourgeois press.

This is a frankly comical denunciation - even many Tories were to be found laying into 'spivs' as the financial crisis broke a couple of years ago. As far as Cable goes, he seems inordinately careful to link his disparaging comments about bankers to the more uppity sections of the workers' movement - the "Trotskyite fantasies" of Bob Crow follow the characterisation of irresponsible financiers as "pin-stripe Scargills" during the election campaign. With comrades like these ...

Yet there is a serious side to this too. As the new Labour leader Ed Miliband's campaign picked up steam, and a sneaky victory over brother David appeared more likely, the denunciations of him began in earnest. He was branded 'Red Ed' - a tool of the unions, a poster boy for the very people Vince Cable most fears. On closer examination, of course, this claim is equally ludicrous - Ed Miliband served in the New Labour government, was obviously very close to Gordon Brown from the early days of that project, and has been attacked for failing to mince his words cravenly enough before audiences of trade unionists. Now that it no longer matters, he criticises the Iraq war. Not exactly a rabble-rousing tribune of the people, then - but still the victim of red-baiting.

While we have no particular interest in defending the dubious honour of Vince Cable or Ed Miliband, this rhetoric from the right-wing media amounts to a considerable extension of the fairly common practice of red-baiting. The model appears to be the United States, where to advocate any kind of extension of the healthcare or welfare system, no matter how modest, has long been tantamount to 'communism'. This atmosphere

has become all the more oppressive in recent times, with the increasingly irrational Tea Party movement peddling bizarre conspiracy theories to large sections of the US population.

This may, in fact, be a sign of things to come here. Should Ed Miliband lead Labour to victory in the next election - a big 'if', of course - he will not have to break with very much of Tory policy for the same fate to befall him. The conditions for a British Tea Party are ripe, except that the party of the right is already in charge. Such are the dynamics of class polarisation in times of crisis. The workers' movement urgently needs to organise itself in a serious enough fashion to beat back the vicious attacks - material and political - it can expect in the coming years.

The same dynamics underlie the peculiar course of the Liberal Democrats in the short years of their current existence. Their political strategy, as noted, has consisted of sneaking votes away from either of the main parties according to convenience. It could talk left in, say, Walthamstow, and talk right in Henley on Thames. The accession of Labour to

power in 1997 disrupted this strategy somewhat, as the Lib Dem policy platform seemed in many respects - over economic matters, and especially over the Iraq war - to be to the *left* of Labour's; it could no longer play piggy in the middle in national politics (although, in an utterly degraded local government system, it could do so at that level). Disputes emerged between the left and right wings of the party - Clegg and Cable, it should be noted, were very much in the latter camp.

Now the Lib Dems are underwriting a government of crisis; the battles to come will be bloody. Clegg and Cable are right - the Lib Dems cannot be half-in and half-out of government, but have to make a choice. It is an easy one for the leaders; they will probably be rewarded with 'non-aggression pacts' with the Tories at the next election. Those unlucky enough not to be deemed sufficiently important for salvation face electoral wipe-out. A side must be chosen; the Lib Dems have picked government, and with it, political suicide ●

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**Vince Cable:  
no leftist**



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