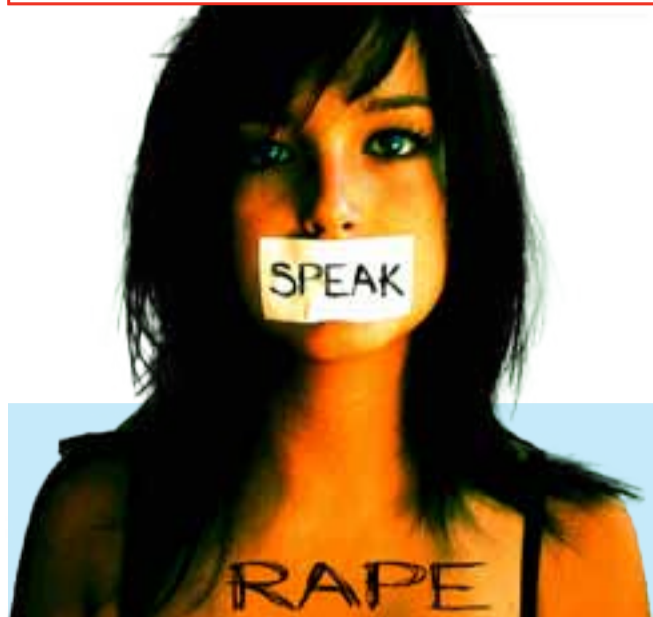


A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly worker



**Socialist Workers
Party: another rape
accusation surfaces**

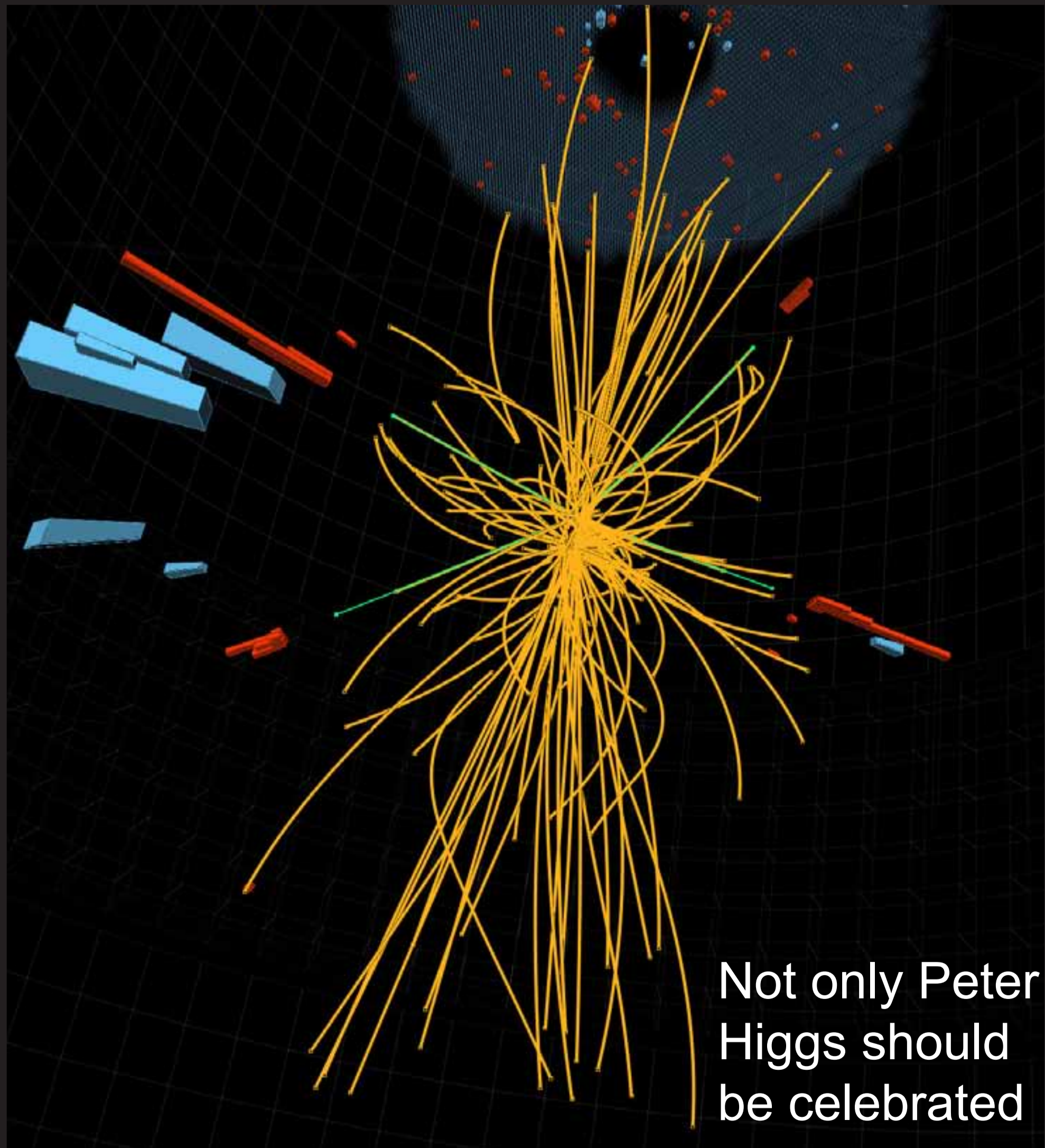
- Letters and debate
- Leveson, libel and lucre
- Mulholland on revolution
- Iran: Geneva negotiations

No 982 Thursday October 17 2013

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

www.cpgb.org.uk

£1/€1.10



Not only Peter
Higgs should
be celebrated

LETTERS



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

Treason

Mike Macnair's 'Rethinking imperialism' (October 3) is third-campist and his long historical analogies are ahistorical. Like his Alliance for Workers' Liberty opponents in the original debate he reports on in 2004, his task is to deny what is specific about modern imperialism, as analysed by Lenin, and to elevate the secondary features to make comparisons.

What is different today is the domination of finance capital and its alliance with transnational corporations and their domination of the entire planet. There is no historical precedent for this, which began with the great depression of 1873 and was completed by the early 20th century. His description of Lenin's position is wrong - in order to allow him to equate it with its opposite, the Stalinist opportunist popular front alliances with the nationalist bourgeoisie, to the detriment of the working class in the oppressed nation and also in the oppressor countries.

Lenin insisted on the split between oppressed and oppressor nations, but the whole point here was that the oppressor nations were the home of finance capital and the monopolies, and the oppressed nations were the victims - including the national bourgeoisie (a "semi-oppressed, semi-oppressing" class, in his marvellously dialectical phrase). Of course, Lenin understood the concept of the aristocracy of labour, and, of course, it is true that more than just a narrow layer in the imperialist countries benefits from the booty of empire. Nonetheless, what is essential is the ideological domination of imperialism over the whole working class and the opportunities that crises like the current one give to revolutionaries to challenge that domination exercised today by the trade union bureaucracies, from Len McCluskey to Bob Crow. But it is absolutely untrue that "the logic of Lenin's analysis is the alliance with the national bourgeoisie in the exploited countries; and in the imperialist countries the broad democratic alliance, including the petty bourgeoisie, against 'monopoly capital'."

This describes unprincipled popular frontism, but Lenin and the early Comintern were very careful to draw a very sharp distinction between the operation of the workers' united front tactic and the anti-imperialist united front, on the one hand, and Menshevik-type class-collaboration, on the other - as practised by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern post-1924. "No mixing of the red and the blue" was Trotsky's line on China, as in the domestic class struggle. Stalin mixed and drowned revolutions in blood in China in 1927 (through centrist opportunism), Germany in 1933 and Spain in 1936-39 (these latter two through a conscious counterrevolutionary strategy).

Ian Donovan too (Letters, October 10) is wrong in thinking that the domestic united front or the anti-imperialist united front (AIUF) is a political alliance, although it must involve a certain political measure of support for both the union bureaucrats and the national bourgeoisie when they are in conflict with capitalism or under imperialist attack. Trotsky did not supersede the AIUF by a generalisation of permanent revolution, because he did not emphasise this in his analysis of why politically capitulating to Chiang Kai-shek led to the Shanghai massacre in 1927; the forces of world imperialism were not involved in that

particular incident. But it is clearly the AIUF that he is defending in his 1937 letter on China to Diego Rivera against the Eiffelite third-campists of the day:

"In my declaration to the bourgeois press, I said that the duty of all the workers' organisations of China was to participate actively and in the front lines of the present war against Japan, without abandoning, for a single moment, their own programme and independent activity.

"But that is 'social patriotism!', the Eiffelites cry. It is capitulation to Chiang Kai-shek! It is the abandonment of the principle of the class struggle! Bolshevism preached revolutionary defeatism in the imperialist war. Now, the war in Spain and the Sino-Japanese war are both imperialist wars. 'Our position on the war in China is the same. The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army.'

"These four lines, taken from an Eiffelite document of September 10 1937, suffice entirely for us to say: we are concerned here with either real traitors or complete imbeciles. But imbecility, raised to this degree, is equal to treason."

Gerry Downing
London

Petty point

I really appreciated Ben Lewis's analysis of ways forward for Die Linke, but take issue with his pigeon-holing of the German Greens as a "petty bourgeois" party ('Principled opposition, not coalition poker', September 26).

By using this epithet, he seems to be indulging in empty Marxist mud-slinging. What is the evidence for stating that members of, and voters for, the German Greens are any more "petty bourgeois" than Die Linke themselves? It's important because 'petty bourgeois' is one of the most common terms Marxists use for dismissing what they dislike, without having to bother analysing it in political terms. If the term is to retain any meaning, it needs to be used accurately. Interestingly, I've heard the very same accusation made about Die Linke - albeit in German, using the German term *kleinbürgerlich*.

The overuse of the term 'petty bourgeois' is for me a ridiculous form of Marxist snobbery, a term that can alienate hundreds of thousands or millions of the oppressed and unemancipated. That is, people whom the left - now meant in a wider, global, non-party sense - should be engaging with.

Let us first agree on a standardised meaning for the term 'petty bourgeois': 'small-scale capitalists such as shopkeepers and workers who manage the production, distribution and/or exchange of commodities and/or services owned by their bourgeois employers' (paraphrased from *Encyclopaedia of Marxism* and the *Communist manifesto*).

If we agree on that definition, then anyone who, through necessity, is on the make - in the burgeoning underclass and precariously employed classes in Germany - drug-dealers, mobile phone-sellers, on-the-ground managers of cleaning services, self-employed English teachers - all these people are 'petty bourgeois'. What purpose is served by snobbery towards all these people, who are just as much limited by the conditions of capitalism as the working class are?

Last point: why is the user interface on the CPGB site built so that you have to send an email to post a comment? Another type of interface would be friendlier and give a stronger impression that the CPGB is also

inviting dialogue.

Henry Holland
email

Inept

I just wanted to say something about the launching of the Communist Platform in Left Unity ('Communist Platform formed', October 10). I think this is totally contradictory to your aims to build Marxist unity, towards building a unified Marxist party. I agree that the Socialist Platform should have allowed amendments and debated democratically, but, by launching your own platform, you have split the Socialist Platform before it has had a chance to develop.

Amendments can be put at the conference coming up, by a branch or by a group of members, so it's not been determined yet if the amendments agreed indicatively at the Socialist Platform meeting couldn't have been agreed at conference. You seem to have walked away from a fight within the Socialist Platform for the sake of your secondary amendments.

I don't agree that those amendments were actually central politically, as even your Communist Platform does not exactly define itself as revolutionary, as opposed to fudged or reformist. The Socialist Platform wanted to define Left Unity as definitely socialist and chose fudge on committing it to be revolutionary. This was a tactical decision, seeing as there is a vocal grouping within Left Unity that refuses to define Left Unity as socialist. It seemed that the Socialist Platform would win a sizeable minority within Left Unity and I thought it was correct to critically support it and put forward revolutionary politics within it.

Your article doesn't even give an opinion on whether you will call for a vote for it. And your previous articles were over-the-top denunciations, which came across as personal attacks. You seem to have split from the Socialist Platform before many in Left Unity have had time to consider your criticism of its operation. You are actually reinforcing the crap caricature of the far-left sects perpetually splitting.

Inept tactics, in my opinion. Are there others in the CPGB or around it who would agree?

Peter B
email

Glass houses

I was very disappointed to follow the latest falling out of comrades on the left between the Socialist Platform and now the Communist Platform.

Such fine-tuning hair-splitting between concepts and words meaning essentially the same thing - but somehow resulting in division, hostility and acrimony - makes the whole of the left look and sound ridiculous. No wonder we measure our support in terms of hundreds rather than hundreds of thousands or even millions.

Even more ridiculous that it was patently obvious that two protagonists in this latest acrimonious fall out - Jack Conrad and Nick Wrack - were in almost complete agreement with each other, given their two speeches printed in the August 29 issue of the *Weekly Worker* ('Communicating across the archipelago of isolation' and 'Self-liberation, not manipulation').

Adam Buick of the Socialist Party of Great Britain seems to think the division is between Leninism and Marxism, and supports the Socialist Platform on the latter basis (Letters, September 26). Well, the unamended Socialist Platform reads, *inter alia*: "Its [ie, capitalism's] state and institutions will have to be replaced by ones that act in the interests of the majority".

In contradiction, the SPGB's position is in fact that the capitalist state has to be 'transformed' or 'converted',

and certainly not 'replaced', let alone 'swept away'.

And what is the SPGB up to, requesting "unity discussions" with the flotsam and jetsam who are bobbing around the Socialist Platform? I thought the SPGB was "hostile" to "all other parties" and would never until recently have even contemplated "unity discussions" with a collection of Trotskyists and 'independent' leftists of dubious lineage and promiscuous political CVs.

Either the SPGB is attempting to make some cheap points - very unlike the SPGB of old - or it has genuinely moved away from some of its key underpinning principles, which have ensured its sectarian and fossilised longevity. The alternative Ashbourne Court SPGB accuses the Clapham version of having been taken over by anarchists, liberals and single-issue campaigners.

Perhaps they should sort out their own differences before trying to score cheap propaganda points in relation to other people's.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Skirts

Missing from your new Communist Platform is a statement confirming the lessons of the Paris Commune, such as:

"The working class cannot simply take control of the capitalist state apparatus and use it to build socialism; rather the working class must smash the existing institutions, which were built for and serve to preserve capitalism and instead conquer higher forms of workers' democracy which correspond to the tasks of building socialism. Those higher forms of democracy may include factory committees, wage and price committees, neighbourhood councils, workers' councils, workers' militia and councils of specially oppressed peoples."

The part stating you will use parliamentary and extraparliamentary means to convince the masses that the capitalist state must be "swept away" skirts this issue, while paving the road to Kautskyan obscurity before the Left Unity party even gets out of the starting gate.

Charles Rachlis
email

New platform

Weekly Worker readers may be interested in the new Republican Socialist Platform of Left Unity:

1. The global financial and economic crisis since 2008 has been transformed by governments imposing austerity policies into a massive redistribution of income and wealth from working people to the rich and powerful.

2. This has led to a 'crisis of democracy', as people have protested against the lack of democracy in their governments. Democratic uprisings and protests have impacted on authoritarian and liberal regimes alike. Since Iceland in 2009, democratic movements spread from Tunisia and Egypt right across the Middle East, and on to Russia and more recently Syria and Turkey. There have also been the Occupy protests in Spain, America and elsewhere. Meanwhile, in Greece the banks have imposed austerity policies on the people, rendering Greek 'democracy' more or less irrelevant.

3. The UK is not a democracy. The country is governed by an oligarchy which rules in the name of the crown through the constitutional laws of the 'crown-in-parliament'. This involves the hegemony of the crown over parliament and the people of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The so-called Glorious Revolution was the beginning of an historic compromise of crown and

parliament forged between 1688 and 1707. This was never intended as a popular democracy. Despite subsequent democratic reforms, a largely unaccountable bureaucracy, with more and more centralised control, has ensured that political power remains concentrated in the institutions of the crown, governing 'from above'.

4. The contradiction between this lack of popular democracy and the official ideology of liberal parliamentarianism has been regularly highlighted by corrupt practices and exposed by protests and popular struggles, most notably over the poll tax and the Iraq war. During the economic and financial crisis, support was freely given by Labour to City institutions, while austerity was imposed by the crown. The subsequent coalition package of cuts and privatisation was never endorsed by the electorate, but cobbled together after the 2010 general election.

5. Today, the public is increasingly disillusioned with 'politics' and alienated by corruption, a lack of democracy and a lack of public accountability. However, people do not necessarily draw radical conclusions from this. The Tory right and UK Independence Party point to Europe as the source of Britain's failing democracy.

6. A progressive resolution of the 'democratic deficit' requires the building of a mass movement for radical democratic reform. The anti-poll tax movement and the mass opposition to the Iraq war contained the seeds of such a movement. In Scotland opposition to the poll tax fed into demands for a Scottish parliament. But in England both movements failed to generalise beyond these particular issues into a 'permanent' democratic movement. In 2011, the Occupy movement reawakened the democratic impulse, from which emerged demands for a new constitution or 'Agreement of the People'.

7. Crucially, the Labour left and Trotskyist parties in the UK have failed to champion the cause of fundamental democratic change. They have occasionally paid lip service to the 'democratic deficit', seemingly unaware of the direct economic and social damage this has inflicted on the lives of working people. In essence, Labourism does not fight for republican democracy, aiming instead to secure reforms by accommodation with the crown. By not fighting for republican democracy, the Trotskyists have been a mirror image of Labourism, posing against it a demand for total 'socialist revolution' in theory, while in their practice not going beyond defending the welfare state.

8. We need a different kind of party to the traditional 'parties' of the left. Such a party would recognise the central importance of the struggle for democracy in mobilising all oppressed sections of society into a mass movement for radical change, a new democratic constitution and a social republic. This party, drawing on the republican and socialist traditions going back to the Levellers and Diggers and inspired by the militant struggles of the Chartists and suffragettes, would seek to build and provide leadership for a broad democratic movement, thus becoming a republican socialist party.

Haider Bilal, Russell Caplan, Jane Clarke, Rada Daniell, Steve Freeman, Mick Hall, Peter Morton, Diane Paice, Danny Thompson, Julie Timbrell, Phil Vellender
RSPlatform@hotmail.co.uk

Transfer request

The better elements of the left in

Britain are again meeting to try and thrash out the programme and structure of a party of the left.

I have been involved with many of the initiatives over the past few years, from the Independent Labour Network, the Socialist Labour Party, the network of Socialist Alliances, becoming the Socialist Alliance, to Respect and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. All have either stumbled or failed to develop for a variety of reasons. Tusc recently gaining only 21 votes in a by-election in Salford.

In my view, the Left Unity conference in November could well be the last occasion, perhaps for a generation, where the left tries to come together on a national scale. In my own borough we are having some success with Lewisham People Before Profit, gaining 23% in a by-election in March and over 400 votes.

My good friend, Toby Abse, and I have submitted a proposal to the pending conference arrangements committee of Left Unity. We are suggesting elections to the proposed national committee are held on the basis of a single transferable vote. An election held on this basis is likely to allow those who hold minority views to have their voice reflected at the highest level of the party. This will avoid a 'winner takes all' approach and hopefully keep within the organisation the range of skills, talents and energy that will be needed to get our project off the ground.

I would urge all readers to give our proposal their support, regardless of which fraction or platform they support.

Nick Long
Catford

Not big enough

I was very pleasantly surprised to read David Douglass's sensible and intelligent letter (October 10). I had been beginning to feel very lonely on the left, believing myself to be the only one who hasn't bought the climate change swindle, hook, line and sinker. I will be sure to purchase a copy of his publication *Clean coal technology, climate change and the miners*.

I am writing simply to thank you for putting such a refreshing alternative on this subject in your paper. Personally, I have never believed anything of the absurd notion that humans could affect the massive complexities of the weather system that is generated by the sun. Common sense alone should tell us that we are simply far too small in comparison to the immensities of the powers involved to have any bearing upon them. One million planet Earths could fit inside the sun.

Sure, I do believe that at the local level we can create havoc, such as pollution in towns and cities and landslides caused by deforestation, but we cannot, have not and never will be big enough to change the climate.

John D Hill
Stockton-on-Tees

Science first

In answer to Dave Douglass, I have no doubt that previous reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change contained information or papers that are dubious.

I acknowledge that the IPCC report is a construct of the dominant ideological trends in society and from our perspective can be criticised for that. However, what cannot possibly be denied is the overwhelming evidence, agreement and consensus about the science of climate change and the effects that this is having on the life of this planet, some of which I mentioned in my article. However, what Dave Douglass wants to show is that the whole of climate science should be junked, because it is a conspiracy theory directed against his favourite industry, coal mining, and the communities that were built around it.

It was not climate science that decimated the coal industry: it was the determination of the Tories to smash a workforce that had brought down previous governments and from its perspective was too powerful. However, coal is certainly 'in the dock' for its contribution towards increasing CO₂ emissions. Until a safe and secure way of burning coal for energy can be developed on a mass scale, we should keep most of it in the ground.

Dave accuses me of 'sexing up' the IPCC report in my article ('The problem is capitalism', October 3). Yes, perhaps I have. As I mentioned, the report does not say anything about feedback loops, and, of course, it works within the paradigm of bourgeois society, so in that sense is 'conservative'. In all these respects, the report can be criticised, including by climate sceptics.

But what sort of world does Dave want to live in? Does he want to be the canary down the coal mine for ever? Is it not better to let the science speak? Yes, be wary of the underlying politics, but Dave is using such politics to rubbish the science. In other words, he is just as bad as those in the ruling class who seek to pervert science for their own purposes. Science, not ideology, should come first - only then can it be wielded as a weapon by the working class, to be utilised to overcome bourgeois intransigence on issues such as climate change.

But Dave and the defenders of coal seem to be trapped by a paranoid fear of a global conspiracy against them, of which the IPCC is presumably a part.

Simon Wells
London

Dilemma

Aside from the usual kinds of cherry-picking and whole-cloth invention that are usually used by denialists of anthropogenic global warming, and that fills the rest of Douglass's letter in order to support false conclusions, his final comment on the potential destruction of coal miners' jobs is very relevant.

Those of us who advocate an end to the use of fossil fuels as the main source of the sudden current acceleration of global warming have also to develop an approach that takes into account the way that millions of workers' jobs are tied to fossil fuels. It's similar to the weapons industry, where thousands of workers' livelihoods are tied up in manufacturing devices and tools that are intended to kill workers around

the world.

There is no solution to this dilemma that fails to advocate replacement of the entire system with one that does not depend for livelihoods on the destruction of lives. The essay that Greg Meyerson and I have published takes that issue directly head on (<http://bravenewclimate.com/2012/04/12/the-nuclear-energy-solution>). But Douglass does not.

Bill Sacks
email

Not fascist

Just a few further remarks to Jack Conrad's commentary on the English Defence League in the podcast of this week's political report, available on the CPGB website. If we remain faithful to theses of the fourth congress of the Comintern, according to which fascist movements are characterised by populism and anti-proletarian street fighting squads, it is not only possible for an organisation to be fascist without being 'Nazi': it is also possible to be 'Nazi' without being fascist.

Prior to fascism's ascent, there existed parties in the German-speaking countries which, for all intents and purposes, had 'Nazi' political programmes that were pan-German nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-Slavic, and anti-Marxist. They sought to build a mass base among petty bourgeois and, to a lesser extent, proletarian layers, yet most of them did not employ reactionary street violence. These were the parties that most strongly influenced the young Hitler, who went on to merge their aims, principles and ideology with the methods of the Italian *fascisti* and the French Action Française.

One such grouping, which existed in Austria and Czechoslovakia from 1919-1933, was the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP). While its programme and theoretical writings lacked none of the elements made famous by the similarly named organisation based in Munich, it operated in a legalistic manner, had a collective leadership and practised a certain degree of internal democracy. After forging stronger links with Hitler's party in 1923, it did become a fascist organisation in the latter's image: ie, it established an SA-styled paramilitary wing called *Verband Volkssport* and adopted the *Führer* principle.

The DNSAP was opposed in Austria by fascist militias such as the Heimwehr, and by militant anti-German, anti-Nazi formations such as the National Fascist Community in Czechoslovakia.

Maciej Zurowski
London

Fighting fund Good on them

A slack week for our fighting fund was lifted by a fantastic £100 donation from comrade TH, who writes: "Here's something to show my relief that I've got my *Weekly Worker* this week!"

He was referring, of course, to the fact that the postal service has not been quite right recently, but at least he received issue 981 on time - without being asked to pay a surcharge too! Hopefully the delivery problems of the last couple of weeks are now behind us for a while.

I say 'for a while' because, as readers know, Royal Mail workers are expected to be out on strike pretty soon, as the newly privatised company starts to step up its attacks on their conditions. We say, good on the postal workers for fighting back - our readers will be with them too, even if it means they don't get their paper.

But none of that will affect the

online edition, obviously, which might see a small increase in readers, I suspect. Talking of which, we had 10,515 of them last week, including VJ, who made use of our PayPal facility to donate a fiver. But, apart from TH's whopping gift (together with a £10 cheque from JG), the bulk of donations came in the way of standing orders. Thank you, TB and EW (£25), DW and JD (£20), AN (£10) and JS (£6).

But I did say it was a slack week apart from TH. Altogether we received £221, taking our total for October up to £642. There are now less than two weeks to raise the £858 we still need to meet our £1,500 target. Post us that cheque while the going is good! ●

Robbie Rix

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

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday October 20, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 1, chapter 24, section 2: 'Erroneous conception of reproduction on a progressively increasing scale'. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology: the human revolution
Tuesday October 22, 6.15pm: 'Egalitarian societies today'. Speaker: Jerome Lewis.
St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (Camden Town tube). £10 waged, £5 low waged, £3 unwaged. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Bonfire of austerity

Thursday October 17, 6pm: London-wide People's Assembly planning meeting, Unite, 128 Theobald's Road, London WC1. Organised by the People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Unite the Resistance

Saturday October 19, 12 noon to 5pm: Conference, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Organised by UTR: www.uniteresist.org.

Safe spaces for women

Saturday October 19, 2pm: Discussion, room 2c, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1. Women only, please. Speakers include Michelle Stanistreet (NUJ) and Maria Exall (CWU and TUC general council). For crèche info: marshajanethompson@yahoo.co.uk. Organised by Women in the Labour Movement: <http://womeninthelabourmovement.wordpress.com>.

Dublin lockout anniversary

Saturday October 19, 2pm: Public meeting, Red Shed (Wakefield Labour Club), Vicarage Street, Wakefield. Organised by West Yorkshire Socialist Historians: www.westyorkshiresocialisthistoriansgroup.wordpress.com.

Discrimination, liberty and fairness

Saturday October 19, 2.30pm to 4pm: Open discussion, Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2. How far should the state interfere on sex-based discrimination? Discussion with Richard Baron. Free admission. Organised by the Bishopsgate Institute: www.bishopsgate.org.uk.

Homophobia in Russia

Monday October 21, 6pm: Meeting with a Russian LGBTQ activist, TUC Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Organised by South East Region TUC LGBT: www.facebook.com/pages/Sertuc-LGBT-network/160878317343520.

Gove versus education

Tuesday October 22, 6pm: Regional People's Assembly forum, Saint John's Church, Grainger Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1. Organised by the North East People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/pages/Peoples-Assembly-North-East/100697570123803.

Zero hours and workfare

Thursday October 24, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1. Organised by Brighton Benefits Campaign and Brighton & Hove Trades Union Council: www.facebook.com/events/401129549988566

Migrants welcome

Thursday October 24, 10.30am: Protest against UKBA 'Go home' campaign, Eaton House, 581 Staines Road, Hounslow, Middlesex. Organised by Southall Black Sisters: www.southallblacksisters.org.uk.

Birmingham People's Assembly

Thursday October 24, 7pm: Launch rally, Second City Suite, 100 Sherlock Street, Birmingham B5. Organised by Birmingham People's Assembly: www.birminghampeoplesassembly.wordpress.com.

World War I - no glory

Friday October 25, 7.30pm: Campaign launch, Saint James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1 - campaigning for peace in music and words. Tickets £13 (£6 concessions). Organised by No Glory in War 1914-18: www.noglory.org.

North London People's Assembly

Saturday October 26, 10am start: Rally, Haringey Cypriot Community Centre, Earham Grove, Wood Green, London N22. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

No borders

Saturday October 26, 11am to 5pm: Campaigning workshops, 23-25 Wharf Street, Wharf Chambers, LS2. How the asylum and immigration system works, what campaigning means and how best to do it. Children's space and lunch provided. Free - donations welcome. Organised by No Borders Leeds: leedsnoborders@riseup.net.

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.

SWP

Another dreadful mess

The behaviour of the SWP brings the whole left into disrepute, writes Peter Manson

As many readers will be aware, the Socialist Workers Party stands accused once more of gross mishandling of a rape allegation. On October 11, an account written by the latest alleged victim was posted on the International Socialist Network website.¹

The ISN was set up by over 100 former SWP members who abandoned the group after the bungling of the 'comrade Delta' case and the central committee's rigging of the subsequent special conference in March 2013. So it is perhaps not surprising that the introduction to the piece declares that this new allegation shows that "the cases of W and X" - the two women who accused Delta - were not "isolated incidents", but systematic in the organisation".

According to the woman, she was raped by a leading local SWP member in December 2012 - just before the furore over the Delta case burst into the open, when a transcript of the session dealing with the Delta case at the January 2013 conference was published online. She says that at first she "refused to accept it and actually felt guilty", but, "after confiding in a comrade who made me realise what really happened", the woman decided to file a complaint with the SWP's disputes committee. The complaint was for "sexual assault" - although "the description of what happened can be nothing but rape", she remarks.

When she lodged her complaint, "It was suggested that a female member in the district would ... act as my intermediary. This intermediary took notes and forwarded them to the disputes committee." The accused comrade was then suspended while the DC looked into the case.

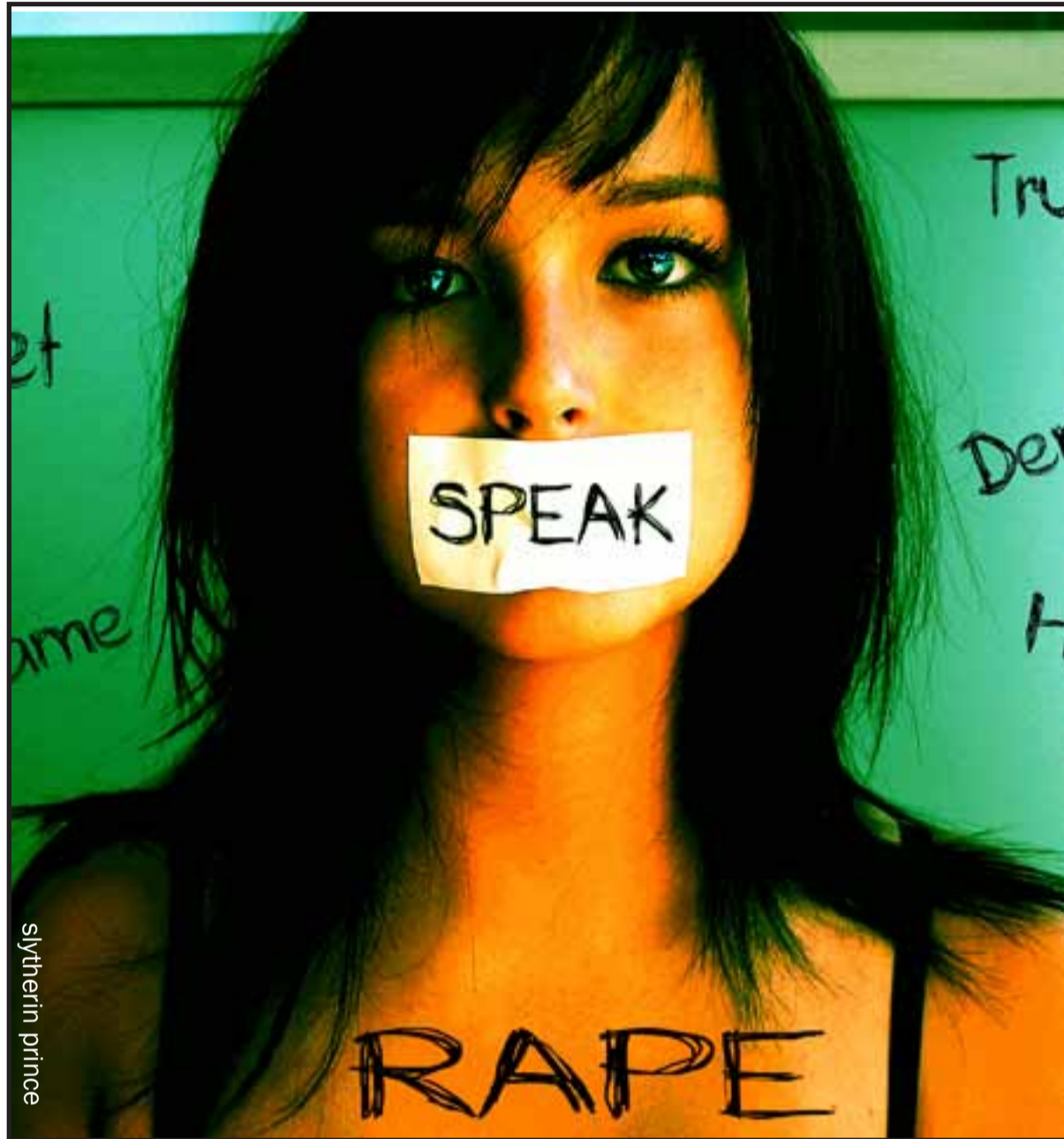
However, when the DC received the notes, it "replied that the complaint had to come from me in my own words". So she made one small amendment to the intermediary's notes and emailed the DC asking for this document to be taken as her formal complaint. Included in this statement were the names of other female comrades, who "would be happy to confirm that they had not only felt uncomfortable in that man's presence, but had also, previous to the assault, mentioned to me that he was acting in a harassing manner towards me".

But she received a reply stating: "You are asking the DC to accept a third party description of what you said to the third party, as the complaint. This is not possible. Currently, the DC has still not received your account of what happened to you, while the defendant has been suspended for the past two weeks. You need to finalise your own complaint."

This surely smacks of a bureaucratic response intended to place obstacles in front of the complainant. Even if we accept that it is a good idea for a political organisation to 'investigate' such a serious crime internally - and this writer most certainly does not - it is clear from what the woman writes that the notes *did* represent her "account" of the incident.

Gagging order

But that was not all. The DC also complained bitterly that the woman had had the audacity to talk about what had happened to her to her local comrades. Its email stated: "Further, on the phone on Wednesday evening, you named three people to whom you have previously disclosed the identity of the defendant ... You have done this even though you have open access to your chosen intermediary. Your actions are breaching the



Told to keep quiet

confidentiality that must surround complaints processes as well as identities and complaint details."

The DC was prepared to "recognise that this is difficult for you", but a gagging order was essential to "protect the well-being, information and confidential identity of involved comrades to the best of our abilities". And, just to rub in the point, the DC's email warned: "This correspondence is confidential between the DC and yourselves" (meaning the complainant and the intermediary).

So someone in desperate need of emotional support is told that she must not even talk about the incident to those most likely to be able to provide it - her immediate comrades, including those also emotionally involved who are likely to empathise with her predicament. As the woman herself points out, "I, as someone who had been through something horrific, was being told that I could not talk to my friends and comrades - that I must only talk to a woman who up until this point I had very little to do with."

She reports that two female comrades from the DC came to her area to interview both the complainant and the accused. The woman says she believed her interview to be part of a formal hearing, but it seems the two DC comrades were only making initial enquiries. To her surprise, at the end of what was "a very long and upsetting interview", she was asked whether she wanted to make an official complaint: "Up until this point I thought that this ... was part of the official hearing."

During the interview she was asked questions like: "What effect would you say drink and drugs had

on you that night?" The woman admits that she cannot remember every last detail of the alleged assault - "not due to intoxication, but rather that I have blocked it out. He spoke to me throughout. However, while I can still hear him talking - feel it in fact - I cannot remember exactly what it was he said."

She was encouraged to drop the case for three reasons: it was "unlikely" the DC would be able to "find either way", especially "taking into account the level of intoxication" (the women comments: "in fact I was stone-cold sober by the time the assault happened, which I repeated throughout"); secondly, she "could not remember everything"; and, thirdly, a formal hearing would be emotionally very difficult.

She was told that "It is, of course, your decision. You do what's best for you". However, "Given such a bleak choice, I decided to drop the complaint. I in no way feel this decision was mine - I was basically told there was no point - something which, as I found out more later on, was most definitely true." Incredibly, she says she found out later that the accused comrade had been shown her statement, "while I have not seen his or even heard from the DC what he had said in response". Meanwhile, her alleged assailant had his suspension lifted and was elected, on a "strong pro-CC line", by the district aggregate as a delegate to the March special conference - "even my intermediary voted for him".

The woman declares: "They made me feel as if I was ridiculous for making a complaint and too damaged a person to really assess what had happened and

how to deal with it. Following the interview I fell into a week-long state of mania." She continues: "During the week that followed I was phoned three times by my intermediary and by members of the DC to essentially make sure I kept quiet."

She claims she was advised: "If anyone asks you about the complaint or why it was dropped just say, 'I don't want to talk about it' and 'It was my decision'." She notes: "Well, actually I do want to talk about it and it wasn't my decision."

Sexist?

Understandably, the woman concludes that "the Socialist Workers Party is a group that is sexist, full of bullies, and above all will cover up rape to protect its male members and reputation." She advises everyone "who is a revolutionary, a socialist, a decent human being" to "have nothing to do with the SWP and its abhorrent practices. Deprive them and all rape apologists of air, do not engage in any way."

For its part, the SWP central committee has acknowledged in the internal *Party Notes* (including the version published on its website) that the DC did deal with a third case.

The CC reports: "An allegation has been made online about the disputes committee approach to a complaint of sexual assault earlier this year. The central committee regards the accusation of pressure on a complainant as extremely serious. The SWP utterly opposes sexism and all forms of oppression.

"The central committee has been told by the disputes committee that a

thorough process was implemented. The CC will ensure that any matters raised around this case are properly dealt with. This case will be discussed during the disputes committee report at the SWP conference."²

The statement ends by once more elevating the question of 'confidentiality' above everything else: "We regret the publication of the names of those allegedly involved online and insist that there should be no repeat of this." In fact the only names given in the piece on the ISN website are those of SWP national secretary Charlie Kimber, former DC chair Pat Stack and the two women from the DC who interviewed the complainant.

The CC insists: "We also deplore the use by some SWP members of the names of comrades allegedly involved, which can have serious consequences for their work and other aspects of their lives. Members should also not link to/share articles that use names in this way."

So if you come across a posting that provides such names, you must pretend you have not seen it, and certainly not mention it to your comrades! What world does the CC inhabit?

The woman is right when she says that the SWP is prepared to "cover up rape" to protect its "reputation". I do not, however, agree that it also wants to protect "its male members" - with the implication that the organisation is 'institutionally sexist', that it somehow structurally discriminates against women. That is clearly nonsense - it is SWP women just as much as men who at every level implement measures of bureaucratic control and are involved in desperate efforts to protect what remains of its shattered reputation.

The problem is that it is not just the SWP that is brought into disrepute - its antics cast a shadow over the entire left, so it is our reputation too that is called into account. On the face of it, it may seem natural for any organisation to seek to play down or deny the seriousness of embarrassing allegations. But in the case of the SWP the problem is increased a hundredfold by the CC's insistence that its disputes committee is perfectly competent to investigate and pronounce on allegations of rape.

It is not. Much as we may dislike the idea, the only body that can look into serious criminal allegations at the moment is the police. Just as at this stage we are forced to use the police and courts if members of our organisations are the victims of murder. What we should not do is undertake an investigation into rape where we are simply unable to "find either way" in any definitive sense.

Instead of honestly advising alleged victims accordingly, the SWP places itself in a position where it appears to have no option but to pretend that nothing has happened. In effect it advised a victim of an alleged rape that she should just drop the whole thing.

It is exactly such manipulative behaviour - putting the interests of the bureaucracy before that of the members and the organisation as a whole - that has caused many to reject both democratic centralism and the very concept of Marxist organisation in favour of the 'broad party' morass ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://internationalsocialistnetwork.org/index.php/ideas-and-arguments/organisation/swp-crisis/253-trigger-warning-rape-in-the-swp-a-comrade-s-testimony-and-experience-of-the-disputes-committee>.

2. *Party Notes* October 14.

LABOUR



Ed Miliband: core vote

Inching to the left

In view of Labour's marginal shift, the new 'broad left' party proposed by Left Unity's Left Party Platform is worse than useless, writes **Stan Keable** of Labour Party Marxists

Labour's recent minor moves to the left are aimed at winning back some of its lost core support. Putting more space between itself and the Tories may aid the election of a Labour government on May 7 2015 - but a Labour government committed to running British capitalism will not bring socialism a single step closer.

Nor will deflecting socialists from the vital task of transforming Labour into a real workers' party. But that is the apparent aim of those like Left Unity's Left Party Platform, which wants to see the establishment of a 'broad left' alternative to Labour, even though prospects for recreating old Labour in a new mass party - however unlikely it already was - will always be undermined by marginal shifts of the type undertaken by Ed Miliband.

Transforming Labour into an umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist organisations and working class bodies of all kinds - a permanent united front of the class - is the central aim of Labour Party Marxists.¹ Not an easy task, and one that requires the organised unity of Marxists, not our present organised *disunity* - the proverbial 57 varieties of competing, and therefore ineffective, revolutionary groups. In the unlikely event that Socialist Platform or the Communist Platform is adopted at the November 30 LU conference, the new party should set about this strategic task - in line with the aims, too, of the Labour Representation Committee, to unite all socialist and workers' organisations in the Labour Party.

Ed Miliband is right to deny the *Daily Mail's* gross exaggeration that Labour has "lurched to the left" (October 12). But the party has certainly inched in that direction. Blairite 'triangulation' - the cynical electioneering technique of tailoring policies to compete for the floating voter and the political centre - seems to have been put aside for the time being and, while the promise to continue economic austerity under Labour still stands, Miliband has announced a number of measures designed to motivate the party's core working class voters to get themselves to the polling booth.

As well as his popular last-minute turn against endorsing a US attack on Syria, we have had pledges to build 200,000 homes a year, repeal the hated bedroom tax and freeze energy prices for 20 months - a hugely popular policy with the millions facing rising prices on fixed incomes or feeling the effects of years of public-sector wage freeze.

Although he rejects his 'Red Ed' label and denies the party's "lurch to the left", Miliband was seen on breakfast TV on his morning walkabout before party conference responding positively to what may well have been a planted question from a member of the public: "What about socialism?" With the Tory press asking whether his conference speech puts us back to 'capitalism versus socialism', Miliband is not afraid to say 'yes' in public to socialism - unlike the Socialist Resistance language police in Left Unity, who prefer to hide their

socialist light under a bushel, so as not to frighten away timid supporters by using nasty words.

Elsewhere, of course, 'Red Ed' makes clear his commitment to so-called 'responsible capitalism' - a utopian illusion. Capital's inherent drive for self-expansion, regardless of the consequences, can overcome all barriers except one - the working class, the class of wage workers which capital creates and reproduces, and whose work creates and reproduces capital.

But his energy price-freeze pledge shows that he is not worshipping the market, as both Blair and Brown did. They took working class support for granted, thinking we had no-one else we could vote for - and eventually five million Labour voters stayed at home and let Cameron into No10. Now Miliband is speaking out against the Tories and getting some people excited by the prospect of a few crumbs.

Whereas Blair courted Murdoch and the Tory press, Miliband is on the offensive to curb the excesses of the media, including harassment by phone-hacking, and has taken on the *Daily Mail* with a vengeance. The *Mail* has followed up its smear attack on Ed via his Marxist father, Ralph, with a similarly dishonest attack on Miliband and Labour via its newly adopted prospective parliamentary candidate for Chippenham, 'Red Andy' Newman, who it represents as an "apologist for Stalin".²

In short, Miliband is working to a different agenda, almost certainly shaped by the deal being worked out behind

closed doors to modify the Labour-trade union link, now that the Falkirk candidate selection showdown has subsided - a compromise designed to leave intact and unaccountable both the dominant Parliamentary Labour Party and the Brewers Green HQ, on the one hand, and the trade union bureaucracy which finances it, on the other. The compromise deal is being settled behind the backs or over the heads of the rank and file. The deal will be endorsed by the special party conference now planned for March 2014.

In Miliband's October reshuffle, the three senior shadow cabinet ministers most associated with Tony Blair - Jim Murphy, Liam Byrne and Stephen Twigg - were demoted in what has been dubbed the "cull of Blairites" (but left MP Diane Abbott was ditched too, presumably for premature opposition to a military attack on Syria).

According to Atul Hatwal on the Labour Uncut website, the appointment of Jon Trickett as 'deputy chair' to lead on party reform tells us that Miliband is not going to appeal "over the heads of union leaders to the rank and file", but "wants to do a deal with the union bosses". The "reform pill" which the unions must swallow if Miliband is not to lose face is "the requirement for trade union levy payers to opt in to paying some of their political levy towards Labour".³

In exchange, "the union block vote at conference will remain, the unions will retain a separate electoral college in the leadership election and the union reservation of 12 places out of 33 on the NEC (compared to six places

reserved for CLP members) will stay". And there will be "an extension and entrenchment of the electoral college at CLP level", justified by "parallel management and voting structures".

Writing on the *Left Futures* website, Jon Lansman reminds us that this kind of rotten compromise was circulated for discussion months ago by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy "as the basis for just such an agreement between Ed Miliband and the trade unions". The CLPD proposals involved "Meeting Ed Miliband's aspiration" to impose (my word - SK) individual opting-in to affiliated membership, and "Meeting trade union aspirations for a continuing collective voice in the affairs of the party they founded, and sustainable levels of voting and representation."⁴

This manoeuvre, politely described as "delinking the collective representation of trade unions in the structures of the party from the involvement of individual trade unionists in the life of the party", may be a happy compromise between entrenched bureaucrats, parliamentary and trade union, who function as masters, rather than servants, of our labour movement. However, it leaves them as unaccountable as before, and sets up collective representation for further erosion ●

Notes

1. www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk/aims-and-principles.
2. *Daily Mail* October 12.
3. www.labour-uncut.co.uk, October 8.
4. 'Labour's reshuffle - and what it means for party reform': www.leftfutures.org, October 8.

FREE SPEECH

Leveson, libel and lucre

The overall result of the combination of Leveson and the Defamation Act is a major attack on freedom of speech and communication, argues **Mike Macnair**

The past 10 days have seen a flurry of media comment about press regulation, triggered by the privy council's adoption of a draft royal charter for press regulation put forward by the government (in response to the Leveson inquiry and the 'Hacked Off' lobbying campaign) and rejection of the alternative draft proposed by the press.

The purpose of the exercise seems to be to increase *judicial* control of the press, and thereby to increase the ability of corporations and the rich to control their public images - but to do so while retaining intact the system of grossly inflated legal fees in defamation, which both deters open criticism of those with 'deep pockets', and allows the media to continue to victimise those who cannot afford the top lawyers.

The pattern is one which has characterised 'reform' for many years now. Every step to increase judicial power carries with it increased corruption and plutocracy, via the 'free market in legal services'. This particular 'free market' is better described as an institutional system of bribery of the lawyers, the professional gatekeepers of justice. But the *obvious* corruption of politics and the media in itself tends to generate illusions in the *concealed* corruption of the legal system, producing more judicialisation, in turn producing more corruption in a descending spiral.

The whole process is a striking example of the normal functioning of the modern British constitution. This is in essence plutocratic: a joint-stock or business corporation of British taxpayers in proportion to their wealth, with special arrangements for the state's creditors. MPs represent not their voters, but contributors to party funds and/or lobbyists in proportion to the money they stump up. Newspapers represent their advertisers.

The British constitution is *not* (as the media claim it is) 'democratic'. *Nor* is it 'bourgeois democratic' - meaning democratic, but parliamentary, not based on workers' councils (as according to common far-left views).

Nor, yet again is the British constitution actually monarchical in any very strong sense (as in views commonplace on a section of the left in the 1980s and still held by comrade Steve Freeman and his co-thinkers): the oath of allegiance to the queen taken by soldiers, the police, etc gives her a *reserve power* in the constitution, not a major role in routine state and political management. In the present case of press regulation, the use of 'royal charter' and the (queen's) privy council (a committee composed of government ministers, ex-ministers, some senior judges, etc) is merely part of the obfuscation of the scheme.

In this particular case there is an unusual degree of legal obfuscation. The charter is to create a quango, which will not itself directly regulate the press. Rather, it will approve sub-quangos (yet to be created), which will be the actual regulators. The scheme also involves the interaction of three recent acts of parliament - the Defamation Act 2013, Crime and the Courts Act 2013 and Arbitration Act 1996 - and the relationship of the Defamation Act 2013 with the pre-existing 'common law' of defamation (in particular libel).

It may be guessed that the object of the layers of obfuscation is to try to trick the judges of the European Court of Human



Judge-made law

Rights at Strasbourg into believing that the scheme is not a violation of the right of freedom of expression under article 10 of the 1952 European Convention on Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers ...

Or, since it is almost certain that the scheme will be litigated to the Strasbourg court as soon as it comes into operation and the issue has dragged its way through the English courts, that it falls within the (broad!) provisos to that article:

The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or the rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

Alternatively, the point may be that the layers of obfuscation allow the *non-celebrity* supporters of Hacked Off to imagine that the scheme will set up a system of redress which *will not* be subject to the 'wealth advantage' which exists in ordinary litigation. The 'sting' or 'small print' on this issue is buried at p21 of the 23-page draft royal charter.

Either way, the level of legal obfuscation here requires a lot of

digging if we are to get at the politics of the issue.

Background

The background to the new 'reform' has two sides. The first will be familiar to readers of this paper: the 'phone-hacking' scandal, and the 2007 smears against the McCanns and 2010 smears against Chris Jeffries in connection with the murder of Joanna Yeates, both resulting from selective information-sharing (or information-trading) by elements in the police. In the phone-hacking scandal, the Press Council, the press's self-regulation watchdog, in 2009 condemned *The Guardian* for ... exposing the activities! The result was the Hacked Off lobby group, the Leveson inquiry and his November 2012 report, and a number of ongoing prosecutions; and thus, indirectly, part of the current proposals.¹

The second, which is considerably more long-running, is the peculiarities of the English law of defamation: libel if the output is in permanent form or broadcast; slander if it is spoken.

This will also be a lot more unfamiliar to most readers. This paper has had a recent expensive encounter with the libel laws as a result of carelessly printing a story which turned out to contain a false, defamatory imputation, for which we apologised, paid damages and (higher) costs. In our discussions of what to do about the complaint, comrades displayed marked ignorance of the law. I will not say that I was surprised or shocked by this, since in the first place I already knew that it is a feature of post-1945 British society that the educated lay public in general has a much weaker understanding of any part of the law than was the case before 1939 and, secondly, even many lawyers are unfamiliar with this particular branch, which is commonly left out of the teaching of 'torts' (civil wrongs).

The result, however, is that rather a lot of legal explanation is needed to reach the political points.

Defamation consists of publishing a statement which tends to lower the plaintiff's reputation among 'right thinking people'. The imputation does not have to be direct: for example, in *Cassidy v Daily Mirror* (1929) the newspaper published a photograph of a married man with a woman described in the caption as his "fiancée". His wife successfully sued for libel: the photograph and caption impliedly suggested that she was engaged in extramarital sex with her husband.

It should be apparent from this case that it is extraordinarily easy to defame someone by mistake. In slander the claimant generally, though not invariably, has to prove actual damage, but in libel this is not necessary. The origin of this rule is in libel's connection at its origins, around 1700, to *criminal* libel, and its censorship role, though modern lawyers give it a variety of spurious apologetic justifications.

Defamation is 'strict liability', meaning that the claimant does not have to prove malice, bad faith or even carelessness. Instead, there are a series of defences available, which the *defendant* has to prove to avoid liability. These, and their names, have been modified by the Defamation Act 2013: the main ones are now 'truth', 'honest opinion', 'publication on a matter of public interest' and 'privilege' (we will have to come back to some of the details later).

The effect of this structure of 'strict liability' plus pleadable defences is the development of a very elaborate body of law about what can be *pleaded* or alleged in the court proceedings, and how - of a type which in other areas was abolished in 1854. In this system the parties lawyers' manoeuvre to trap their opponents in untenable positions.

This leaves defamation proceedings, which retain the old structure of pleadings, governed by tactical arms races between the lawyers. The pleading structure is foreign to most

modern lawyers and, together with the fact that defamation is not widely taught in law schools, this produces the result that there is a small expert sub-group of lawyers who can handle defamation proceedings effectively.

This *de facto* cartel allows extraordinarily high legal fees to be charged - it should be said that all legal fees in the UK are unusually high compared to many other jurisdictions to start with. The 2010 Jackson review of civil litigation costs found average defamation costs to be around three times the damages recovered, and - for a single comparative example - costs estimated in England on two hypothetical claims five times higher than those estimated in Ireland, which has a similar legal system.² A 2008 Oxford Centre for Socio-legal Studies comparative study of defamation costs and litigation funding in 12 European jurisdictions found:

England and Wales was up to four times more expensive than the next most costly jurisdiction, Ireland. Ireland was close to 10 times more expensive than Italy, the third most expensive jurisdiction. If the figure for average costs across the jurisdictions is calculated without including the figures from England and Wales and Ireland, England and Wales is seen to be around 140 times more costly than the average.³

Political and controversial

A United States court in 1997 characterised English libel law as contrary to US public policy and inconsistent with applicable human rights standards (with the result that an English libel judgment was not enforceable in the US).⁴ This is not a novelty: the abusive character of the rules of English libel law has been a matter of political controversy since quite shortly after the tort was created (it appeared around 1700, as a substitute for the statutory system of press censorship which lapsed in 1695, and was already controversial by the 1730s; slander is a couple of centuries older). In the later 1700s notorious judicial bias in favour of government led to a battle for the right of juries to decide whether allegations were defamatory, won in Fox's Libel Act 1792.

Coming a lot closer to the present, in the 1960s-70s there was controversy about the use of 'gagging injunctions' especially by financial fraudsters who could use corporate funds to litigate. Wallersteiner fled overseas the day his gagging injunction was overturned by the court of appeal in *Wallersteiner v Moir* (1974); the fraudulent company controllers in *Bryanston Finance v De Vries* (1976) were able to keep theirs in place until they had finished stripping the company's assets.

As a result of this history, *applying* for a pre-trial injunction in defamation cases can now damage the claimant's reputation, with the result that courts have invented 'super-injunctions', which prohibit even mentioning their existence. Eighteenth century lawyers and politicians, who were not exactly friends of free speech, would have seen super-injunctions as an intolerable and unconstitutional extension of the equity jurisdiction, and a judge who introduced them might well have been impeached. It is even quite likely that the judges of the old court of Star

Chamber, who were openly hostile to the idea of free speech, would have regarded secret applications as an oppressive abuse of the process of the court (which was abolished in 1641). The 2011 controversy about super-injunctions was thus rather mild.

Libel costs were equally fundamental in the 'McLibel' trial of Greenpeace activists who defamed McDonalds - the case lasted from 1987 to 1997 and ended in a pyrrhic victory for McDonalds. In *Steel and Morris v UK* (2005) the Strasbourg court decided that the McLibel defendants had been denied a fair trial, contrary to article 6 of the convention, and their free speech rights under article 10 had been violated, by the lack of "equality of arms" in the trial: ie, because, having been denied legal aid, they were forced to defend themselves without legal assistance. (It now turns out that the libellous leaflet was co-written by a police provocateur...)⁵

Probably the most significant trigger of the 2013 Defamation Act was *British Chiropractic Association v Singh* (2008-10), where the association sued journalist Simon Singh for claiming that it was promoting "bogus" treatments, eventually losing in the court of appeal on the ground that the statement was "fair comment" (now "honest opinion"). Singh's costs alone were by that time £200,000. The case gave rise to a backlash, and commitments in the 2010 elections from all the main parties to legislate on defamation law, and the bill which became the 2013 act was introduced in the Lords in May 2012.

But what the political parties say is never the end of the story in legislation. The parliamentary draftsman's office, staffed by lawyers, intervenes - and its view is that part of its remit is to minimise changes in the law by legislation. The 2013 act makes rather marginal changes to the law of defamation, and may well have the indirect effect of *reducing* the scope of the available defences and - because it is new legislation - *legitimising* the rewritten but continued basic structure of the law, and hence the excessive fees and costs involved.

Leveson

The scheme in progress is an implementation of the Leveson report. The gist of Leveson's argument was that in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal, and so on, press self-regulation in the form of the Press Complaints Commission had palpably failed: it was plainly biased in favour of newspapers, its adjudications had no teeth, and it had failed to engage in any pro-active regulation to enforce its own code of practice. He rejected the idea that, since the conduct complained of was criminal, the problem was a failure to enforce the criminal law.

His solution was a beefed-up form of "self-regulation", the effect of which would be to substantially judicialise the system. In the first place, requirements would be put in place which made the regulators more independent of the press. In the second, the papers would be contractually bound, and the complaints scheme would have the power to impose substantial financial penalties.

The problem Leveson foresaw with this scheme was that some newspaper proprietors might not be willing to participate on these terms. The *Express* group already withdrew from the existing Press Complaints Commission in January 2011.

Leveson's solution to this problem was to provide carrot and stick. Both carrot and stick would operate *through* the assumed continuance of grossly excessive costs in libel and related proceedings. They worked through the legal costs rules. Usually, the winner of legal proceedings gets their costs paid by the loser. Under Leveson's proposal, the *winner* of proceedings in court would lose their costs if there

was an *available* 'authorised' 'self-regulation' remedy which had not been used. Thus the press, so far as it signed up to this 'self-regulation', could insist on complainants who went to court losing their costs even if they won in court (the carrot); but conversely, if papers failed to sign up to the new system, *they* would lose their costs even if they won in court (the stick).

It should be obvious that if court costs in defamation and related proceedings came down to reasonable levels, neither the carrot nor the stick would have a very powerful impact. Leveson's scheme was thus *predicated* on court costs in defamation remaining unreasonably high for the foreseeable future.

In February 2013 Hacked Off's supporters in the House of Lords 'ambushed' the government by inserting an amendment to the Defamation Bill to introduce the Leveson scheme into it. There was, at first, a real chance that the whole bill might be lost; but a deal was reached, under which the Lords amendment was dropped, and the Leveson proposal was instead placed in the Crime and the Courts Bill then in progress. This might be called a 'tack' (anti-democratically adding irrelevant material to a bill, in order to allow it to pass into law without proper debate), were it not for the fact that the Crime and the Courts Bill was already an equally anti-democratic 'omnibus' or 'portmanteau' bill (containing several unrelated subjects, in order to avoid proper debate on at least some of the proposals).

The result in the final act is sections 40-41 and schedule 15, the latter excluding a short list and a limited class of publishers from "relevant publishers". An additional small 'carrot' for the press is provided by sections 34-36, regulating the use of "exemplary damages" (to punish the defendant) in press cases, for most purposes prohibiting them if the defendant is a member of an "approved regulator". Section 40 (2) provides that if the defendant was a member of an "approved regulator" the court must not award costs against the defendant unless (a) the claim could not have been resolved through an arbitration scheme (the carrot) or (b) "it is just and equitable in all the circumstances of the case to award costs against the defendant" - a very large, indeterminate class. Section 40 (3) provides the equivalent 'stick': if the defendant was *not* a member of an approved regulator, but could have been and it would be "reasonable in the circumstances" to have been, the court *must* award costs against the defendant, subject to the same exceptions.

Section 41 defines "relevant publisher" as someone who publishes "news-related material" written by different authors and subject to editorial control; subject to exceptions provided in schedule 15. Under section 42 (7), "news-related material" includes news, information or opinion about public affairs and gossip about celebs. Schedule 15 provides the exclusions from this broad definition. These are: broadcasters (who are separately regulated); "special-interest titles" (trade and hobby journals which carry only incidental news); scientific and academic journals; public bodies and charities; company "house journals"; and "micro-businesses", a category which in spite of the broad subhead is actually limited to multi-author blogs published for *business purposes* and only carrying incidental news, where the business has fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees and less than £2 million turnover; and book publishers.

It is important to be clear about the effect of these provisions. Objections were made at the time of the Leveson report, and again at the time of the Lords ambush in February, to the fact that the proposals - based on the abuses of the *oligopoly mass-circulation press*

- would force small-circulation papers (like the *Weekly Worker*) and even political bloggers (like 'Guido Fawkes' among many others) to sign up to whatever replaced the Press Complaints Commission. This is exactly what the section and its narrow exclusions have done: *no* concessions have been made in response to the objections.

The result will be *in effect* a reinvention of newspaper stamp duty, operated between 1712 and 1855 as a means to try to drive small, dissident papers out of business. The new form of mandatory subscriptions to the "approved regulator" will operate in the same way, because the regulator's costs will arise mainly from the activities of the mass-circulation press, but its burdens will be distributed to all publications.

In addition, the draft charter then contains a real sting in the tail. Under the recognition criteria for the direct regulators (schedule 3, clause 22, p21) the "arbitral process" must comply with the Arbitration Act 1996. Under section 21 of that act, unless the parties - ie, both parties - otherwise agree, "a party ... may be represented in the proceedings by a lawyer or other person chosen by him". The scheme may thus limit *recoverable* costs (section 63), but cannot limit actual *expenditure* on lawyers. The result is to introduce into the arbitration scheme the 'wealth effect' or 'deep pockets wins' 'inequality of arms', which exists in ordinary legal proceedings. For this reason, section 91 of the 1996 act makes compulsory arbitration agreements in consumer contracts invalid, as they are deemed unfair where the claim is a small one.

The 2013 House of Lords ambush supposed that a *quid pro quo* for introducing Leveson's 'reform' could be seen in the Defamation Bill liberalising the law of defamation. In fact, there is no such thing.

Defamation Act

It is pretty clear that in the wake of the *Singh* case the politicians did, genuinely, agree that something serious should be done in the way of defamation reform. They thus *intended* there to be a substantive reform; unlike some other cases, where it is clear that the politicians intend only that something should *seem* to be done.

What has in fact happened, however, is a statutory restatement of parts of the existing law - which may be hoped will give it new legitimacy - with some tinkering at the edges. This observation does not require deep legal analysis. It is, in fact, completely transparent from the 'Explanatory notes' provided with the act, though it is necessary to run through some of the details of the main provisions.⁶

Section 1 (1), requiring "serious harm to the reputation of the claimant", "builds on" *Thornton v Telegraph* (2010) and *Jameel v Dow Jones* (2005). Section 1 (2), the government's response to attempts during the passage of the bill to limit the right of corporations to sue for defamation, requires the defamatory statement to be "likely to cause serious financial loss" to the corporation. It is clear that this will very rarely be an obstacle. Widespread belief in the allegations of fraud in *Wallersteiner v Moir* and *Bryanston Finance v De Vries* would certainly have caused the companies in question serious financial loss: though, as it happens, since the allegations were true but not capable of being proved, preventing publication caused the companies *worse* financial loss. Again, if the allegations in the McLibel case had come to be widely believed, McDonalds would have suffered serious financial loss.

Section 2 on the defence of truth "reflects the current law". Explanatory note 18 states: "In cases where uncertainty arises the current case law would constitute a helpful but not binding guide to interpreting how the new statutory defence should

be applied."

Section 3 on "honest opinion", again, "broadly reflects the current law while simplifying and clarifying certain elements, but does not include the current requirement for the opinion to be on a matter of public interest" - though this requirement was already substantially diluted by the supreme court in *Joseph v Spiller* (2010). In one respect, the section follows *Joseph v Spiller* in *narrowing* the defence relative to *BCA v Singh* and rejecting the older House of Lords decision in *Kemsley v Foot* (1952): by requiring that "the statement complained of indicated, whether in general or specific terms, the basis of the opinion". (In *Kemsley v Foot*, a *Tribune* headline about Beaverbrook, 'Lower than Kemsley' was attacked as a libel on Kemsley, and held to be fair comment, the only 'factual basis' needed being that Kemsley published newspapers. The judges in *Joseph v Spiller* cast doubt on the decision.)

Section 4 on "publication on a matter of public interest" "is based on the existing common law defence established in *Reynolds v Times Newspapers* [2001] and is intended to reflect the principles established in that case and in subsequent case law". And "While abolishing the common law defence means that the courts would be required to apply the words used in the statute, the current case law would constitute a helpful (albeit not binding) guide to interpreting how the new statutory defence should be applied. It is expected the courts would take the existing case law into consideration where appropriate."

Section 5 does formally change the law, by providing a defence to website operators who did not themselves post the material on the site - but only if, should a complaint be made to them, they can provide the complainant with sufficient information about the author to let the complainant bring proceedings against the author. Though the details are left to be provided by regulations, it is already clear that this defence will never or very rarely be available, unless website operators are routinely to demand names and addresses from all those who post or comment, and check these up.

Section 6 provides a new defence of 'privilege' for statements in academic, peer-reviewed journals. It is defeated, like other 'privilege' defences, if the statement is proved actuated by malice. This is a useful but rather marginal reform, since litigation in this context is rare.

Section 7 extends and elaborates the existing statute law which gives defences of "absolute" privilege (not defeated by malice) to statements in court, and "qualified" privilege (defeated by malice) to various reports of events. In recent years a useful, broader common-law defence of "reportage" had emerged to cover the gaps in statutory "qualified privilege". It seems likely that this development will be blocked by those extensions.

Section 8 applies a "single publication rule" for the purposes of limitation of actions (defamation actions must usually be brought within a year of publication). This is also a useful reform.

Section 9 aims to block 'libel tourism' by limiting the jurisdiction of the court to hear claims against persons not domiciled in the UK or EU, "unless the court is satisfied that, of all the places where the statement complained of has been published, England and Wales is clearly the most appropriate place in which to bring an action". The section does not prevent counsel from arguing or the court from deciding that England's more claimant-friendly libel law makes England "most appropriate". Section 10 blocks action against printers and distributors, etc, "unless the court is satisfied that it is not reasonably practicable for an action to be brought against the author,

editor or publisher". Again it is unclear what "not reasonably practicable" means, and will presumably be open to counsel to argue that the lack of financial resources of author, editor or publisher justifies proceeding against printers, distributors, etc.

Section 11 abolishes the presumption of trial by jury. In practice, parties have in the last few years commonly elected for trial by judge alone, for reasons of costs (the modern mode of conducting jury trial, without time limits, is grossly expensive). But the effect is to finally repeal Fox's Libel Act and for the judges to get back the power of the 18th century judiciary to enforce *their* biases in defamation cases. It is to be expected that they will use this power in the same way.

It is possible to simplify the law by codification, and thereby - at least for a time - to reduce costs. But this is not what the act of 2013 has done. This act claims, mostly, to state existing law, and the 'Explanatory notes' *encourage* reference to existing law. It is as if the Theft Act 1968 (which *did* codify the law of theft) had allowed continued use of the case law under the common and statute law of larceny, which the 1968 act replaced. The lawyers have got what *they* wanted - continuation of the existing law with a little tinkering round the edges.

They have probably also got a degree of increased *legitimacy* for the existing law. The Obscene Publications Act 1959 was followed for a while by an *increase* in convictions; similarly, the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which legalised homosexual conduct under restrictive circumstances, was followed by an increase in convictions.

If - as I think they probably did - the politicians wanted something real to be done about defamation, they did not get it. They did not get it because of the strength of the legal professional lobby, and the degree of lawyer control of the drafting process in parliament. This in turn is related to a point I made much earlier in the article: public ignorance of the law, extending to ignorance of the law among those legislators who are not themselves part of the professional lobby. Behind this ignorance is, it seems clear from the evidence of presence and loss of lay legal knowledge, the effective abolition of civil trial by jury *in general* after 1945.

Hacked Off has, on the face of it, got what it wanted - implementation of Leveson. But the sting in the tail of the royal charter means that this will only be in the interests of corporations, the rich and celebs. It turns out that the interests of the *funders* of lobby groups is what is advanced, not the ostensible aims of the group. The same interests lie behind the excessive fees charged by lawyers: it is an underlying principle of the English legal profession that there should in litigation be *inequality* of arms and deep pockets should win. The tyranny of the lawyers *means* the tyranny of their paymasters.

The overall result of the combination of implementing Leveson and the Defamation Act is a major attack on freedom of speech and communication - in the ostensible shape of a 'reform' of the pre-existing law. But this, as I have already said, is the *normal* result of political processes under our plutocratic constitution ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

- The outlines of the scheme are at paras 65-71 of Leveson's executive summary of his report: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1213/hc07/0779/0779.pdf.
- Preliminary report: www.judiciary.gov.uk/JCO%2f2fDocuments%2fGuidance%2fJackson-vol1-low.pdf, pp342, 344-45.
- 'A comparative study of costs in defamation proceedings Across Europe': <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/sites/pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/files/defamationreport.pdf>, p3.
- Telnikoff v Matusevich* 347 Md 561 (1997).
- 'McLibel leaflet was co-written by undercover police officer Bob Lambert' *The Guardian* June 21.
- www.legislation.gov.uk/pa/2013/26/notes/data.pdf.

HISTORY

Class versus people's revolution

The proletariat has a spontaneously collectivist class-consciousness, argues **Marc Mulholland**. But what implications does that have for the winning of working class power?

Let me start by looking at how the left has broadly conceived of the forces which would make a revolution since about the 1790s.

Neil Davidson has defined bourgeois revolution as establishing the conditions that allow capitalism to flourish.¹ That definition does have something to say for it, but does not really capture what bourgeois revolution, or analogues of that term, meant in the 19th century. It does not in my view capture what Marx and Engels or the Second International would have meant by it. They would have seen it much more straightforwardly as what liberals wanted to achieve in the 19th century: ie, political, personal and civic freedom. Political freedom based on some form of representative constitutionalism; civic freedom - being able to associate freely; personal freedom - being able to marry freely, practise your own religion and so on. Marx argued that these freedoms are both produced by capitalism and necessary for the perpetuation, or at least the smooth running, of capitalism.

But 'bourgeois revolution' (insofar as he used the term, which was not very much at all) was envisaged by Marx as broadly constitutionalist - basically analogous to 'political revolution'. Which is not really how Neil Davidson sees it, and that is a fundamental problem with what is otherwise a very impressive book.² The point was, who is to make this revolution?

'Reason' and 'the people'

In the 18th century various enlightenment thinkers would ponder on this and in fact evade the problem by saying that 'reason' would make the revolution.

So, as Jonathan Israel points out, there was a rightwing enlightenment and a leftwing enlightenment.³ In the rightwing enlightenment, as Voltaire says, you convince the absolutist monarch that it is in their interest to have a regime that extends freedom, because that will bring prosperity to the kingdom and consulting more widely will make for better decision-making. The radical or democratic enlightenment basically reckons that convincing one monarch about what is reasonable is not adequate: you need to spread reason. In other words, an enlightened public opinion.

There is not really such a hard and fast division between the left and right enlightenment - it is more about how many people should be enlightened. The most radical enlightened thinkers say that everybody is perfectible. 'Perfectible' not really meaning that we become like gods, but rather that everyone is in an unlimited way open to reason, given the right circumstances, and so you can be educated into citizenship with an orderly, constitutional regime. In some respects reason mattered more than people or class for enlightenment thinkers in the 18th century.

In the early 19th century 'reason' does not disappear altogether, but liberal discourse about 'the people' begins to play a much greater role. And 'the people' was very deliberately defined in non-class terms. Thinkers - particularly in France, such as François Guizot - said that the bourgeoisie makes up the most vital element of 'the people'. It is not crushed by the burden of poverty, and is therefore able to propose rational politics; nor is it so desperately dependent on the rich



François-Noël Babeuf: everyone must be equal

that it has no sense of independence - unlike aristocrats, who want to hang about the royal court all day in a parasitic fashion. So people like Guizot and liberal thinkers such as Thomas Babington Macaulay in England saw the bourgeoisie as the vital component of 'the people'. It consists of creative individuals who build up civil society, develop a relationship with the state whereby it is limited to its main function: the maintenance of order.

Clearly these thinkers were not talking in proto-Marxist terms about the bourgeois revolution. Rather, they are talking about 'the people' and its most active and important part that draws in behind them the great mass. A term used in England was 'the masses against the classes'. 'The classes' here refers to the landed elite in particular, while the 'the masses' is everybody else. And this is the dominant conception of what the radical revolution, what the popular revolution would mean in the early 19th century.

Proletarians

Now, the proletariat is always seen as a big problem for 'liberty' - in the 19th century everybody knew their classical history and they all understood what happened to the Roman republic. Ambitious politicians would go to the pros and say, 'Here's some wine, here's some bread. Now go out and riot on my behalf.' Many

are given jobs, but often they are sucked into the imperial army - which ceases to be an army of independent smallholders who are proud Roman citizens, and instead is made up of soldiers who are there for the highest bidder. The highest bidder, of course, ends up being Caesar, who destroys the Roman republic.

So this is a very strongly held view: people who are not independent, who do not own their own land, who are not able to stand on their own two feet as a master craftsman or whatever, are a danger to political liberty. This traditional image of the proletariat does not disappear altogether, not even in Marxism. But in Marx's thinking, of course, it is the lumpenproletariat that fulfils this role, that acts as the hired hands of reaction.

So the proletariat was always seen as a problem. No-one really sees it as the foundation of liberty. Populist revolutionaries would tend to identify with the small landholders, maybe the craftsmen with an independent workshop. Not the man who sells his labour - and certainly not the woman who sells her labour. These people are seen as dangerous, unstable - tools of reaction if they are anything.

The French Revolution does not turn this upside-down, because to many people it looks like a rerun of the fall of the Roman republic. You have a new Caesar in Bonaparte, and 'Caesarism' and 'Bonapartism' are terms which come

to be used pretty much interchangeably in the 19th century.

There was, of course, François-Noël Babeuf and his 'conspiracy of equals' in the 1790s: basically an attempt to organise a coup to establish a radically egalitarian regime in France. It does not work out - he gets guillotined, as you might imagine. But Babeuf and the people around him are interested in the proletariat. They say that people who do not have the means to make a living are becoming more numerous all the time. The proletarians are a sort of dissolute human dust - either they are organised for the revolution or they will be organised for the reaction.

Because these people have no investment in property, which is in dissolution under the wartime conditions of the mid-1790s, they can be won to a radically egalitarian, anti-property platform. Because Babeuf is dubious about the consciousness of the propertyless proletarians, he is very much in favour of the 'revolutionary educative dictatorship': that is, a dictatorship to educate people into egalitarianism. So you take power, you set up a dictatorship, you run things in an egalitarian way. At first nobody will like it, but they will grow to like it. At least Babeuf was saying that the proletarians are not just people to be used, but people who have a rough-and-ready idea of egalitarianism.

Babeuf in some respects is often seen as the first communist. Certainly the most egalitarian socialist or communist that there had ever been: he would say that if I happen to be too weak or enfeebled to be any good at working in the fields, whereas you are big and strong, you would have to be loaded with weights so that you are no better than me. But he makes a lot of good arguments too. For example, there can be no moral reason why anyone should receive more than anyone else. If someone has been blessed with strength and intelligence, then why should they receive extra material rewards on top of that? However, I suspect that when the early Marx talks about 'crude communism' it is Babeuf he has in mind.

As we go into the 19th century, those without any property who are unable to work directly for their own subsistence are mushrooming in number and becoming centrally important to capitalist production. These are the people who are going into the factories such that exist, and also going into the much smaller trades. On the one hand, factories were emerging, and, on the other, craft work was being proletarianised. So, whereas under the old tradition an apprentice would work for his master and hope eventually to become a master with his own apprentices in turn, now there were day-labourers who could never become a master.

So by the early 19th century the proletarians, who were seen as the riff-raff on the edge of society, are becoming a central part of the economy - very quickly in places like Britain and Belgium, but the same process is also discernibly taking place elsewhere.

By the late 1820s people are acknowledging that Babeuf is a figure who has to be taken seriously.

Utopian socialists

Let me turn now to the utopian socialists (I do not really like Marx's derogatory term, but there is not really a better one). People like Robert Owen, William Thompson - who is the best utopian socialist, because, as Hal Draper points out, he is by far the most

democratically minded - Louis Blanc and Charles Fourier. All these people look at the proletariat as something of an object of pity. They still want a popular revolution, which would be pan-class.

Robert Owen, particularly in the early years, is always making appeals to the great and the good of society to get rid of the market and introduce cooperatives. He addresses meetings of aristocrats - who are actually turning up to listen - and until the 1820s he is a big hit with the very rich in Britain and Ireland, who think it is all very fascinating, even if he is a bit strange.

In one speech he says that, obviously, he would never take advice from a worker - he is not mad, after all - only from the educated. Owen sees the workers as an object of pity who can, however, be made into fully functioning citizens. He is very much a 'blank state' man: there is no set human nature, so if you change the environment you can change the person, and you can have sober, sensible, industrious workers, even if they are not like that now.

Owen never really abandons this dual conception, which is odd, as by the 1830s he really has linked quite closely to the British labour movement - think of the Working People's Bank, the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union and so on. Owen never really changes his mind about anything, but he becomes someone who is taken on board by the workers' movement.

William Thompson is actually much more open than Owen to the idea that not only do the poor need saving from themselves, but they can be agents in their own emancipation - even if he remains doubtful that they can spontaneously come up with a notion of their self-liberation. Thompson believes that the proletariat, although not spontaneously collectivist, is naturally drawn towards democracy, through which it will be educated into collectivism.

Everyone in the 1830s expects revolution. Indeed there is a series of revolutions in Europe, notably France and Belgium. And everyone knows that it is going to come again. So the 1848 revolutions, which detonate in virtually every European country, from Britain to Russia, is also expected. But the question is, 'What kind of revolution is it going to be?'

And the proletarian question is becoming ever more important, particularly in view of the Lyon workers' risings in 1831 and 1834. In 1831 weavers briefly take over the city of Lyon and are crushed, with much blood spilt. What becomes very famous is their slogan, 'Live working or die fighting', which is taken up by quite a lot of people - an interesting phenomenon, as it suggests an innate social consciousness on the part of this new proletariat; this new class of people who do not own their own means of subsistence, yet have their own social-imaginary demand: the right to work. That is, that the ability to work should not be dependent on the market, and therefore that a future social state must guarantee the right to work.

And this is seen by quite a lot of people as important. It may seem obvious to us, but it is a new demand at the time, as opposed to the traditional, populist call for a fair market, or the right to a farm or a workshop. In the end the essential populist demand has always been the right to your own farm. But now there is the right to labour for wages, and this is seen to be a radically and fundamentally

new kind of demand arising from this new class, which people have to accommodate one way or another.

The utopian socialists spend a lot of time debating the good old question of how equal is equality. Saint Simon and his successors come up with the slogan, 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his contribution': So not egalitarian. Fourier is clearly Marx's and Engels' favourite utopian socialist - which is interesting, because he is the most wacky of them all. He talked about big collective enterprises, whose income would be divided into portions of five, four and three. Five goes to labour, four to capital and three to talent. So he is not an egalitarian either.

It is actually Louis Blanc who popularises the slogan, 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs'. Blanc is quite radically egalitarian, at least in the final outcome. He is also pretty democratic - more so than the other socialist utopians, in that he sees universal suffrage as the way ahead. But he does not get treated very seriously by future generations - probably because he ends up being quite a curmudgeonly conservative in old age. He condemns the Paris Commune, for example. Which is not a way to make yourself an immortal of the socialist movement.

These people tend to be called utopian socialists to differentiate them from the communists. The point about them is that they believe in a popular movement, but often they are not very political, and often they want to save the proletariat, not mobilise them.

That is why it is difficult to classify Louis Blanc as a utopian socialist: he was always very political and was actually for the democratic mobilisation of the workers.

Communist consciousness

Communism is identified at the time with people like Louis Auguste Blanqui. Which is interesting, because Blanqui is not even straightforwardly a socialist. Blanqui is a perennial French revolutionary who veers between hating the rich as betrayers of the nation and including the rich in the nation, which he regards as the main unit of emancipation. He is certainly a nationalist. And he equivocates about the rich. Sometimes he says, 'Guillotine them!' At other times he says, well, they're part of the nation.

The reason why the likes of Blanqui are called communist by Marx and Engels is that they are seen as drawing upon the consciousness of the proletariat, as it is in the here and now, and then building upon that. It is not about saving the proletariat: it is about the proletariat driving towards political power to transform society one way or another.

How adequate that actually is as a description of the Blanquists is one thing, but the fact is that this is how Marx and Engels see them. Engels somewhere refers to "instinctive communism",⁴ by which he means what proletarians in their day-to-day life instinctively drive towards. Firstly, political power and therefore also democracy, as that is the only way that proletarians can consolidate political power; and, secondly, some kind of egalitarian reordering of society, the end of the rule of the market and guaranteed work for everyone. This for Marx and Engels is what drives the proletariat towards an instinctive communism.

This question is important because of the debates about the extent to which socialist ideology is brought in from the outside - by the Leninist party or whatever - to the class which is otherwise without it. Whether that view of Leninism is accurate is one thing, but it is not the view of Marx and Engels.

Let me also mention Flora Tristan, who is now mostly seen as a French pioneer feminist, but she - I think very

concisely and coherently - explains why the day-to-day life of the proletariat instinctively leads them towards a collectivist consciousness. But she is almost completely ignored in the literature, partly because she is female. George Lichtheim's *Short history of socialism* is utterly dismissive of her, commenting that her speeches are typical of the 'emotionalism' of women. You should read them: they are not 'emotional' at all.

Marx and Engels, as I have indicated, do believe that there is a spontaneous proletarian consciousness which drives in the direction of the seizure of political power by a class, which in turn drives towards the superseding of the market, which in turn drives towards socialism, which in turn drives towards communism. The role of the leadership, the communists, is not to create this consciousness, but to map out the line of march. What that actually means, I think for Marx in particular, is that the role of leadership is to restrain proletarian class egoism in the struggle more than it is to unleash it.

A lot is written by Marx about how the proletariat has to learn to make alliances with other classes at times. It has to learn to hold back from seizing power in a localist way, from taking over a single city and so on. A lot of the communist role is actually about holding the movement back. You see this in Marx's address to the Communist League in 1848 about the need to maintain the alliance with the petty bourgeoisie. Marx is initially sceptical about the June days uprising in Paris because he thinks it is premature. You can also see this line in the *Critique of the Gotha programme*, where Marx attacks the notion that all the other classes are simply 'one reactionary mass'.

Other thinkers, notably Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, actually do not like the proletariat that much. Proudhon is of the tradition that believes, ideally, to be an independent citizen you should own your own farm or workshop - and it will help if you are a bloke, and French and not Jewish. Certainly he thinks that proletarians are not going away and that they will probably be on the right side come the revolution and you can organise them into collective factories. But he does not like them as a category. Proudhonists, even by the 1860s, have moved away from Proudhon's position, and now increasingly see the working class as a permanent feature of life and indeed as preferable to the peasantry (many of whom voted for Napoleon III).

What is to be done?

Let us now jump forward a bit. Lars T Lih has reopened the debate about Lenin's 1902 pamphlet, *What is to be done?*⁵ First, Lih says that *WITBD*, which came to be seen as the bible of Bolshevik party-building, is in fact much less original than that, and that Lenin is much more in the mainstream of the Second International.

And the Second International straightforwardly sees social democracy as a merger between the workers' movement and the socialist intelligentsia, as Lih correctly points out. Kautsky argues that the working class is the only class which is "instinctively socialist". Another phrase he uses in his response to Bernstein is the "spontaneous emergence of socialist aspirations".

So Kautsky is very clear-cut: the working class spontaneously develops in a socialist direction and all that the socialist intelligentsia need to do is help form this. And Kautsky, more than Marx and Engels, takes an interest in how you stop the movement from going too far, too quickly. As he famously says of the Social Democracy in Germany, the SPD, it is a revolutionary party, but

not a party which makes revolutions. The idea being that, if anything, you hold things back without provoking counter-violence from the state until you are ready. And he takes that from Engels, who says the same thing: we will not 'grow into power', which no-one but Bernstein and the revisionists believe, but if we can avoid provoking the Bismarckian regime, we will get to a position where there will most likely be a fight for power, and in preparation for that the emphasis is on building the movement. And that means holding back the bold and audacious youth - indeed the *Jungen* were thrown out of the SPD in 1892.

As Lars Lih says, there is a similar view in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. But I think there is a difference actually, in that Plekhanov, for example, who founds the socialist movement in Russia, comes from a populist tradition used to seeing the peasants as the people who would transform society, because they are natural collectivists. Plekhanov decides that this is not so convincing any more and abandons it. But he does keep alive the populist tradition of maintaining quite a sharp divide between the socialists, the socialist intelligentsia and the people.

You could say that it is a difference of degree between the Russian movement and the German movement, but historically one can argue that, in retrospect, it is quite a significant difference.

What is to be done? is the pamphlet that famously becomes the foundation stone for the Leninist myth: which is that Lenin thought socialist consciousness could not be generated by the proletariat and had to be brought in from the outside. This is the standard view of *WITBD*, but I think Lars T Lih shows that is not the case. *WITBD* was misunderstood partly because a lot of the pamphlet is not amazingly well written, and partly because the context of the debate going on at the time is not taken into account.

What Lenin is actually saying it is that *social democratic* consciousness - that is, a fully developed *party* consciousness - has to be brought in from the outside. But what does he mean by a fully developed party consciousness? What he meant is workers need to learn that they have to hold back their own class demands in order to cooperate with other classes in the struggle for political liberty. That is really what that pamphlet is about.

Lenin is engaging in debate with the 'economists', a socialist tendency insisting that the proletariat are natural socialists, not natural liberals. Therefore the role of social democrats is to nurture the movement, which will spontaneously develop in a *socialist* direction, different from that of the liberals. The liberals will strive for the bourgeois constitutionalist state on the basis of a bourgeois class movement. Socialists should support the bourgeois liberal movement from the outside, but the proletariat are not part of that struggle. Proletarian consciousness emerges and evolves spontaneously in a socialist direction. Workers are not natural liberals - that is fundamentally what the economists were arguing.

Therefore what Lenin is really trying to say in *WITBD* is that, 'No, a revolutionary party will organise the proletariat and teach the proletariat that it must be involved with the struggle for the liberal constitutional state.' That is, it must be part of a movement for bourgeois demands.

That is controversial at the time - it is argued that it is going against proletarian class-consciousness. But Lenin is saying, 'No, a proper political, *party* class-consciousness involves the proletariat cooperating with other classes and holding back their own demands when they need to. That is not spontaneous, that is why you need a party.' He writes: "Working class consciousness cannot be genuine

political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny."

This is where bad composition complicates things though:

The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every other social class* in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population.⁶

What he is saying is that the proletariat will only have a full political consciousness when they learn to pay attention to all other classes. That is not spontaneous, and that is why they need a party.

Trotsky is much more of a straightforward economist actually. He is much more inclined to think that the proletariat cannot think outside of its own class box, which is why Trotsky argues that if the workers ever take power politically they will just advance straight towards socialism. It cannot look through the spectacles of other classes. The proletariat will operate in its own interest and through its own consciousness if it ever takes power, which is what Trotsky means with his theory of permanent revolution.

So Lenin, in a rather confusing way, is saying that the workers need to learn that they are part of a much wider popular movement and they are not trying to achieve their own revolution. They are trying to achieve a bourgeois revolution. But Trotsky says workers are not going to operate like that. If they take power they are not going to carry out the demands of another class: they are going to carry out their own. Which means you are left with a problem: a state trying to introduce socialism in a country which is not ready for it, which must lead either to disaster or to international revolution. And, as we all know, it leads to disaster.

Trotsky is actually consistent in this up to the end of his career. In his last major work, the *Transitional Programme* (1938), the idea is that when workers get mobilised they develop in the course of their own struggle a socialist consciousness. It just happens - it is in their nature.

'False consciousness'

The last point I would like to make on the 19th century debates about proletarian consciousness is that everyone on the left, the centre and the right thinks that workers are spontaneously inclined towards something like socialism. So the debate always is, how do you relate then to a wider movement for popular liberation when you do not have constitutional democracy, or if it is under threat? How do you get the working class *not* to behave in an egoistical class manner?

But we tend to look back now and think that they were debating something else. So we talk about 'false consciousness' and so on. But in the 19th and much of the 20th century people *do not* talk about false consciousness, because they do not think that there is a false consciousness problem. They know that workers tend towards an instinctive collectivism and that a great number vote for the left.

So where does the idea that workers have a false consciousness come from? In some countries, particularly Britain and the USA, which are obviously important, there are discussions around racism, anti-Irish sentiment and so on. But in the wider socialist movement these

countries are seen as strange exceptions, and the lack of worker socialism there a temporary aberration. More important for socialist debates is the Bolshevik revolution, which forces some theorists, particularly Lukács, to redefine what class-consciousness means.

Lukács basically redefines class-consciousness to mean the willingness to form a local soviet or to go out and shoot the local bourgeoisie. To carry out a Leninist revolution, in other words. Later on he focuses more on the party, but in general class-consciousness for Lukács is now re-defined as 'Leninism'.

Now this is a very specific form of class-consciousness. It is far from the general sense where the social imagination of the worker tends towards a collectivism transcending the market. Lukács cannot say that this is class-consciousness, because that is clearly what the great mass of social democratic workers think who join and vote for the 'chauvinist', 'treacherous' social democratic parties. Such voters clearly imagine something beyond capitalism. So he redefines class-consciousness as a subset of the socialist movement: Leninism.

And then if you are *not* a Leninist you are suffering from 'false consciousness' and to explain this Leninists need elaborate theories of reification and so on. These theories may be very good and interesting in and of themselves, but Lukács in general is just trying to theorise a pragmatic Leninism.

Lenin has a debate with the 'renegade Kautsky', as we all know. And in that debate Kautsky says that the workers are spontaneously socialist and Lenin does not disagree. He does not deal with the point, but he does not disagree either. Lenin does not say you need the party to generate a socialist consciousness. But this bothers a theoretician like Lukács, who says that, actually, capitalism generates a *non-Leninist consciousness*: therefore workers need the only true, Leninist class-consciousness; capitalism reifies people: therefore they need a party.

However, following World War II, the Anglo-American exception is starting to look frighteningly like the norm: which is that workers do *not* spontaneously imagine a future beyond capitalism. They do *not* think in collectivist ways.

Why does this change occur? People write books about Bernstein as if he is saying that workers are not spontaneously socialist. Bernstein does not say that, because it would have been a crazy thing to say in 1890s Germany, when at every election there were more and more proletarian votes for the party. The idea that workers are not spontaneously socialist is clearly not the problem. The problem is that there are not enough of these workers and that by talking about revolution you are alienating potential class allies. In other words, we tend to look back and reconfigure the arguments in ways that did not exist at the time.

But have we now got to the point where workers do *not* have a spontaneously collectivist consciousness? I think that is a misreading of where we are, although it is a much more understandable argument now. But it is an argument that has been projected back onto previous debates - including the debate on the nature of the Leninist party ●

Notes

1. N Davidson *How revolutionary were the bourgeois revolutions?* London 2012.
2. See my review, 'How liberal were the bourgeois revolutions?' *Weekly Worker* October 10.
3. J Israel *Radical enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750* Oxford 2002.
4. Preface to the English edition of the *Communist manifesto* (1888): www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/preface.htm.
5. LT Lih *Lenin rediscovered: 'What is to be done?' in context* London 2008.
6. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iii.htm. My emphasis.

IRAN

Step up solidarity

The apparent thaw in US-Iran relations could offer new opportunities for the workers' movement, argues **Yassamine Mather**

After weeks of speculation about Iran-US relations and the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme, Iran's foreign minister and his deputy finally made their initial proposals clear on October 15-16 in closed talks with the 'P5+1' countries in Geneva. Those proposals will come in stages, coinciding with a gradual reduction of western sanctions. Despite Iran's denials it is clear that at some stage during this process Iran will reduce the level of uranium enrichment and may "allow unannounced visits to its nuclear sites as a 'last step'".¹

Ali Larijani, the speaker of the Iranian parliament who is close to supreme leader Ali Khamenei, had hinted in an interview with CNN that Iran might concede to P5+1 demands for stopping the enrichment of uranium, or at least that Iran is willing to discuss the thorny issue of its 'surplus' enriched uranium. However, he seemed to contradict this a few days later with a statement "clarifying that current achievements in the nuclear programme cannot be reversed", but it looks like Khamenei has swallowed the poison and a variation of the above is part of Iran's proposal. Larijani was also quoted by Associated Press as saying that Iran has ample enriched uranium to use as a bargaining chip with the west. Later the quote was labelled "false", "fundamentally inaccurate" and "baseless" by his official office in the majles (parliament).

In early October there were reports that Iran might volunteer to close its Fordo plant. However, the head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, Ali Akbar Salehi, strongly rejected "western media reports", adding that the underground uranium enrichment facility is essential to the country's nuclear programme: "The closure of the Fordo site is a sheer lie."

Never mind Iranian officials speaking with one voice - it is clear that each voice has two or three opinions! But this apparent disarray is in fact part of the supreme leader's strategy to claim victory if the talks achieve any reduction in the current level of sanctions, while remaining deeply pessimistic about the discussions. The regime has put all its hopes in an immediate relaxation, at least in terms of the country's banking and finance systems, as well as the lifting of insurance and shipping restrictions that would allow an increase in the country's oil exports.

However, given the fact that sanctions have clearly brought about a U-turn in Tehran, it is unlikely that they will be lifted shortly. Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu and US hawks are clearly warning against any relaxation. On October 10, in calls to David Cameron and French president François Hollande, Netanyahu is supposed to have warned that "Only our pressure brought Iran to this point, and only the continuation of that pressure and its strengthening can bring them to dismantle their nuclear programme."²

The Israeli premier was given a unique opportunity to speak directly to the Iranian people in a long interview with the BBC Persian service on October 3. And he managed to do something that former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad never achieved: unite Iranians against the Zionist government. In condescending, arrogant comments that were supposed to mobilise young Iranians in support of the Zionist regime, the Israeli premier

told Iranians they "deserve better" than their current government adding the now infamous statement: "I think if the Iranian people had their way, they'd be wearing blue jeans, they'd have western music, they'd have free elections."³

The response was unprecedented. Social media and the blogosphere was inundated with pictures of Iranians wearing jeans. Thousands of Iranians took to social media to publish photographs of prominent Iranians, including some of the supreme leaders' closest allies, so attired. In fact it would be no exaggeration to say that poking fun at the Israeli prime minister has become a favourite online pastime for Iranians over the last couple of weeks. One presumes his advisers must be eating humble pie.

However, all this has not stopped Netanyahu, nor has it lead to any moderation in his utterances. By October 13, as the prospects of some progress in the Geneva talks loomed, he was comparing himself to Winston Churchill and presenting himself as virtually the sole opponent of 'appeasement' of the Iranian 'fascists'.

U-turns

One has to ask, what brought about Iran's U-turn? And what happened to the US policy that Iran must be punished?

The Iranian retreat is easier to explain - although, contrary to all the claims of the US and its allies, sanctions have not affected the private fortunes of Iran's clerical leaders or their immediate relatives. However, it is clear that the country is facing a major economic crisis, leaving its rulers powerless, and the current situation is unsustainable. This week, the central bank announced that the rate of inflation had exceeded 40%. According to its figures, "The cost of food and drink rose by 51%, shoes by 60%, and utilities, water and fuel by 21%. Healthcare was 43% more expensive and transport 45%."⁴

Manufacturing is at a standstill. Whereas in the heyday of its growth many had commented that the rise in car output was stunning, today the collapse of the industry is just as marked. This year alone car production is down by 40% and production is 10% of what it was before the latest round of sanctions. Workers in this industry say they go to work even if they are not paid - in the hope that the industry will pick up once sanctions are lifted. The car industry, like aerospace, has been deprived of many essential engineering software packages, which are listed as computing software capable of having 'dual use'. For example, a package called Abaqus, used extensively in the car and aerospace industries for mesh analysis, allows testing for cracks. But because it could also be used for the same tests to nuclear reactors it cannot be exported to Iran. The same is true of many other industries.

Meanwhile, thousands of workers are not being paid. Last week there were dozens of workers' protests up and down the country, including at the Kian tyre factory near Tehran, where the slogan was: "Our families are hungry". In Boroujerd in western Iran more than 1,000 public-service workers in municipal services have not been paid for two months. But, as I have said time and time again, why is a country that claims it has no money to pay its public-sector workers paying billions of dollars for black-market nuclear devices?

If Iran's apparent agreement to scale down its nuclear programme was predictable, there is a lot of speculation about the reasons for what looks like a softening of the US position. A comrade in Hands Off the People of Iran has offered a possible explanation. Having traditionally relied on Saudi Arabia, Qatar and their Sunni allies, the US might be concerned that these countries have no control over Islamic military groups they finance in the

region, Libya and Syria being obvious example of this phenomenon. So the US might be pursuing a twin-track policy of establishing better relations with Shia Iran (a country that has firm control of the Islamist groups associated with it), while maintaining its links with the Sunni states.

In Iran speculation about US inconsistencies dominate sections of the media. The state TV network, Jaam-e-Jam, has gone so far as to quote this writer on its website, when it reproduced part of what I had said on the weekly news/analysis programme of the BBC Persian service.⁵ (Incidentally it describes the Persian service as a den of spies, part of a Zionist conspiracy and paid for by MI5 on other pages of its website). Inevitably only those sections of the programme where I referred to the US and the effect of sanctions are reported: the rest of the discussion, when I talked about Iran's ambitions in the region and the regime's need for crises in order to survive, did not make it onto Jaam-e-Jam's web pages. This in itself shows the desperation of the Iranian regime - it is not as though it is unaware of my life-long opposition.

And the battle between conservatives and 'reformists' has moved up a gear, with foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif claiming that false reporting of his comments about president Hassan Rowhani's visit to New York has caused him so much stress that he was almost paralysed on the eve of the Geneva talks. To prove it, Zarif tweeted a picture of himself lying in bed with backache. But our Twitter-using foreign minister is a firm believer in secrecy. No details of Iran's presentation in Geneva have been made available to the Iranian people.

The other contentious issue inside Iran is the debate around the slogan, 'Death to America'. In line with the needs of Rowhani, former president Hashemi Rafsanjani revealed that

Iran's first supreme leader, Ruhollah Khomeini once commented - in private - that people should abandon the slogan. 'Death to America' became popular with both Islamists and their reformist apologists, the 'official communist' Tudeh party and the Majority Fedayeen, in 1979 and the early 1980s. In fact the radical left always opposed it, because it is non-political and was deliberately chosen to undermine the left's anti-imperialist slogans.

According to Rafsanjani, Khomeini had confessed: "I did not agree with the call for anyone's death during public meetings. For example, in our meetings, 'Death to Banisadr' was a popular chant and I told people not to chant it after Friday prayers. There was 'Death to Bazargan' and I told them not to say that ... As for 'Death to America', I said the same thing. I personally am opposed to strong and offensive rhetoric - I do not find it constructive."⁶

It was inevitable that Rafsanjani's comments would raise fierce opposition inside Iran. Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, said that the Iranian people just would not believe that Khomeini did not approve of the slogan. In fact after a week of attacks on him, Rafsanjani decided to backtrack. He said that the republication of one of his interviews in which he had recalled Khomeini's comments had been a "mistake".⁷ Rafsanjani did not, however, deny the truth of what he had said.

Solidarity

What does all this mean for solidarity work? Clearly there is a possibility that some sanctions will be lifted in the next few weeks. This will not change the economic situation much for the majority of Iranians. However, if workers can get back to their jobs, if some of the money owed in salaries is paid, we might see an upsurge in the class struggle. Similarly, if the threat of foreign attack is lifted, we might see student demonstrations against the religious dictatorship once more - in fact we saw a glimpse of such protests this week as Rowhani was addressing students in one of Iran's main campuses.

Now more than ever Iranian workers, students, women and minority nationalities need international working class solidarity. At a time when all eyes are on Iranian government officials and the prisoners of the green movement, we must redouble our efforts to secure the unconditional, immediate release of all labour activists, for the right of workers to set up their own organisations, and in support of workers' struggles for the payment of the wages they are owed.

In other words, Hopi's work has only just started ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.org.uk

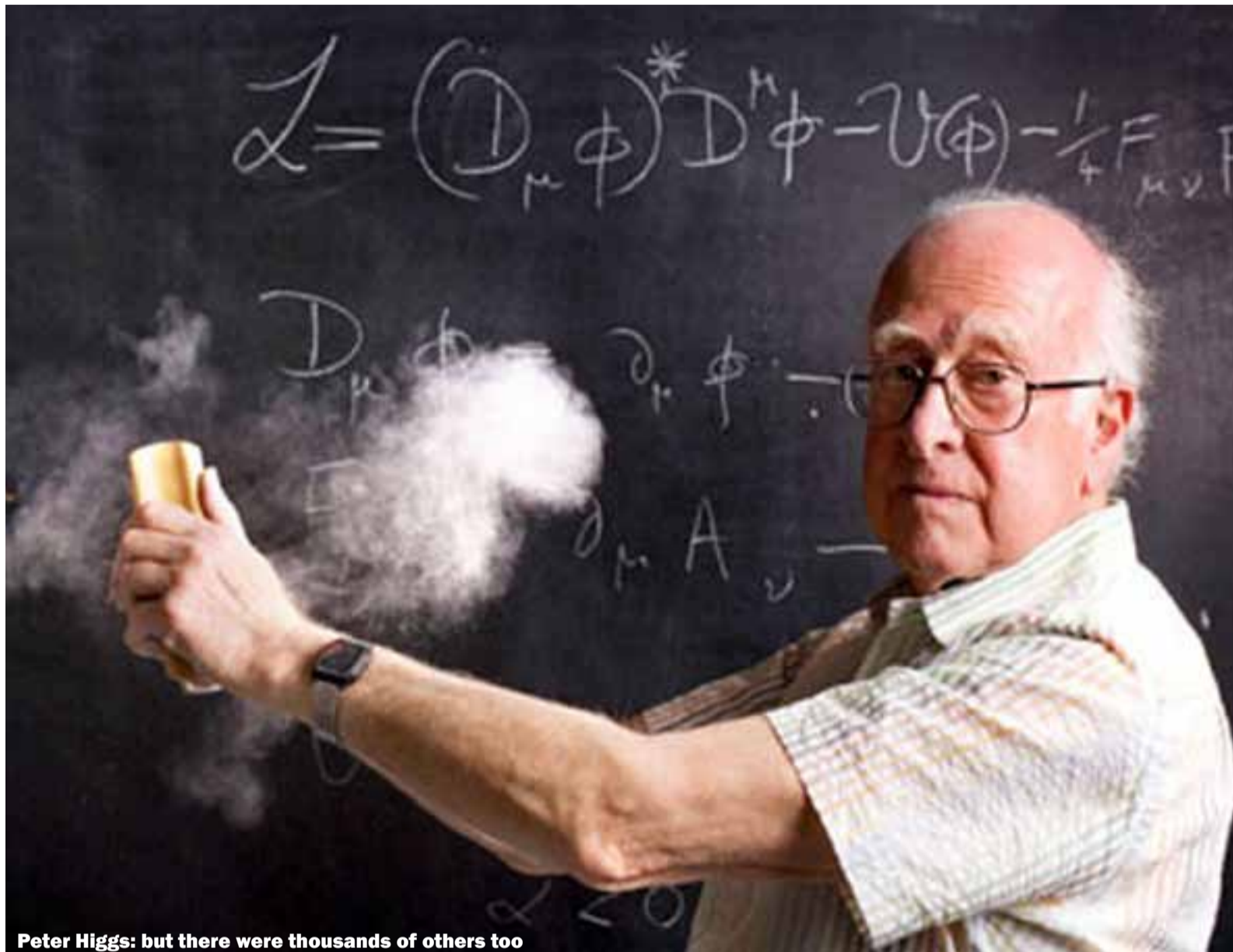
Notes

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24542216.
2. www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.552031.
3. www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=5991.
4. www.irandailybrief.com/2013/10/08/cbi-annual-inflation-rate-exceeded-40/#sthash.qAq1E1fw.dpuf.
5. Iranian state TV: www.jamnews.ir/TextVersion-Detail/234097.
6. www.majalla.com/eng/2013/10/article55245894. Abolhassan Banisadr was the first president of the Islamic Republic, while Mehdi Bazargan was the regime's first prime minister.
7. www.aawsat.net/2013/10/article55319235.



Revolutionary Guards: do not believe

NOBEL PRIZE



Peter Higgs: but there were thousands of others too

Science and collaboration

The 'standard model' has been confirmed, writes Anthony Rose. But it is not only Peter Higgs who should be celebrated

As readers may know, this year's Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to professors Peter Higgs and François Englert for their theoretical work on what has come to be known as the 'Higgs mechanism', following the discovery of the 'Higgs boson' in experiments conducted by the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) at its Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Switzerland last year.

In order to provide a brief explanation of the work that resulted in this award, and why it is so significant, first a little background will be required. Our current theory of particle physics is the beautiful, if blandly named, 'standard model'. This provides a unified description of the fundamental particles and interactions that make up the universe, and is one of the most significant achievements of modern science. It has required decades of work from both the theoretical and the experimental physics community to reach the level of precision that exists today, and last year's discovery of a new boson (elementary particle) using the Atlas and CMS particle detectors, consistent with the long-predicted Higgs boson, could potentially be the missing piece of the standard model puzzle that physicists have been searching for since it was postulated in the 1960s.

The billions of pounds spent on the construction and operation of the LHC and the particle detectors is just the latest episode of a decades-long quest to establish the limitations of this model, which has so far seen its predictions confirmed as correct time and time again.

According to the standard model, there are two types of fundamental

particles. The first of these are the particles that make up matter (known as fermions) and the second type mediate the forces we observe in nature (bosons). This theory was first developed in the 1960s, beginning with Sheldon Glashow's discovery of a way to combine the electromagnetic and weak nuclear force into a single theory of the electroweak interaction. In 1964, realistic models for the breaking of the electroweak symmetry were formulated by Englert and Brout (who died in 2011, and would otherwise be sharing this prize with his long-time colleague, Higgs, and Guralnik, Hagen, and Kibble).

They proposed the existence of a new field that permeates the universe (we now know this as the Higgs field) and put forward the theory that particles acquire mass via their interactions with this field. This is why last year's discovery of the Higgs boson is so important to the story - to prove that the Higgs field exists we can dump enough energy into it to 'excite it', with the resulting (detectable) boson being the excitation of the field. The Higgs mechanism was a comprehensive solution to the problem of how to break the electroweak symmetry, but without experimental evidence it was just the (overwhelmingly) most likely, as there were in fact several alternative candidates.

The most crucial consequence of this symmetry breaking is that it allowed for the photon (the particle associated to the electromagnetic force) to remain massless, while the W and Z bosons (which mediate the weak force) could acquire mass, as required nature. This was a critical development in our understanding

of the universe. In 1967 the Higgs mechanism was incorporated into the electroweak theory by Steven Weinberg and Abdus Salam. These two, along with Glashow, shared the 1979 Nobel Prize in physics for their work in the formulation of the standard model. A quick count suggests that following last week's announcement there are now 16 Nobel Prizes recognising work associated with the development of this theory.

One question that has been raised countless times over the past two years or so, as physicists speculated on when (not if!) the Higgs boson would yield a Nobel Prize, was how the committee was going to split the award. There is a convention for the prize not to be awarded to more than three people, and also to recognise individuals rather than collaborations. The problem with this approach is that it simply does not allow for the prize to accurately reflect the way that fundamental science is often carried out. From the theoretical standpoint, the discovery of the Higgs mechanism was built upon contributions from far more than just Englert and Higgs. It is widely known that there was very important input from physicists such as Philip Anderson, Robert Brout, Gerald Guralnik, Carl Richard Hagen and Tom Kibble. This year's Nobel Prize, however, does not acknowledge the work of any of these people.

The discovery of the Higgs boson itself was also a phenomenally difficult task, and was the result of hundreds of thousands of hours' work from those building and operating the LHC and its detectors, and those analysing the data. The discovery required many billions of protons to be accelerated to

close to the speed of light, at the highest energies ever achieved in a laboratory, before being caused to collide inside enormous particle detectors. There are around 3,000 physicists working on each of the Atlas and CMS experiments (the two general purpose detectors that dedicated a large fraction of their effort to searching for evidence of the Higgs boson), and several hundred more accelerator physicists who are responsible for the operation of the LHC.

The experimental collaborations do have a spokesperson, and various other past prizes have been given to the person that happened to be in this position at the time of the award, but every paper published is the work of a huge number of people, and the name of every member of the collaboration is actually listed on each one (in some cases the author list is longer than the paper itself!).

The work of Peter Higgs and François Englert was undoubtedly incredibly significant, and it is right that they have been recognised for their important insights into fundamental physics. The award should be considered to represent something much wider than the work of two individuals, however, and instead we should remember that often scientific breakthroughs such as this are the culmination of decades of intellectual effort by a huge number of people. While it may be impossible for any scientific award to accurately reflect the contribution from all of those that have played a part, we should remember that every scientist necessarily builds upon the work, and relies upon the direct or indirect collaboration, of countless others ●

What we fight for

- Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.
- There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.
- Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.
- Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.
- Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.
- The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.
- Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.
- Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.
- The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.
- We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.
- Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.
- Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.
- Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

weekly worker

**Fascism comes
in red, white
and blue**

The ballad of Tommy Robinson

The left is in the habit of not thinking, notes Paul Demarty. Nowhere more so than when it comes to the far right

In one of the more surprising developments on the British far right of late, Tommy Robinson - the *nom de guerre* of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon - has abruptly departed the organisation from which his name has been hitherto inseparable, the English Defence League.

He has taken with him his long-time associate and deputy, Kevin Carroll - exactly where the pair will wash up is still unknown. Robinson's reasons for leaving the EDL are, shall we say, unconvincing. He is apparently disappointed that the group has been taken over by "extremists", under most known definitions of which Robinson would fit comfortably. Here is a former British National Party member and far-right veteran, whose time as the EDL's most prominent spokesman (he has never officially been its leader) has seen the group become the foremost street-fighting fascist formation in Britain, with smaller offshoots in Scotland and Wales, complaining that the group has been taken over by neo-Nazis and associated oddballs ...

In truth, the EDL is no more dominated now by sieg-heiling neo-Nazis than it was last week, or the week before, when to all appearances Robinson was still 'EDL till I die'. Such elements - contrary to establishment hysteria - were always relatively marginal compared to their counterparts in the BNP and elsewhere; the EDL has been appropriately red, white and blue since the day of its birth. Its 'extremism' was barely distinguishable, idea for idea, from certain neoconservative ideologues of the 'clash of civilisations' and the unique tyrannical perfidy of the Muslim faith: Sam Harris springs to mind, among others.

The difference between the latter and Robinson's former outfit was tactical - Robinson and his lieutenants spurned the fatuous op-ed and the under-researched popular non-fiction in favour of street violence. The EDL may never have owned up to a strategy of physical confrontations, but violence followed its set-piece marches around the country like a bad smell. There is no doubt that the nihilistic anger of alienated football casuals, the most atomised members of the white working class and the usual petty bourgeois and lumpen elements was being stoked and provoked by the EDL's leaders. Random beatings were the only logical result.

Robinson's conversion to the mainstream is unconvincing on more mundane counts as well. Interviews since have been fulsomely apologetic in the same measure as they are non-specific on significant points. The man still clearly dislikes Islam with some venom. He now officially disdains neo-Nazis equally, but we shall see what soundbites he comes out with, or indeed where he goes politically.

For now, as is well known, he has taken up with the Quilliam foundation, a peculiar anti-jihadist think-tank founded by various lapsed hardcore Islamists, chief among them Ed Husain (whose memoir, *The Islamist*,

was widely feted upon its release) and Maajid Nawaz (who has been at Robinson's side constantly in the past week). Both are former members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamist organisation that has frequently made headlines in this country, particularly regarding its success on campuses.

Quilliam takes its name from William Henry (later Abdullah) Quilliam, an English convert to Islam who founded this country's first mosque in 1889 (ironically, given the foundation's anti-Islamism, he was a firm believer in a worldwide caliphate). It is one of many organisations to have sustained itself primarily on the basis of post-9/11 state handouts, under the Prevent strategy and its successors, in order to fight the spread of 'extremism' among young Muslims.

It is difficult to divine exactly what Quilliam *does* on a day-to-day basis; whatever it is, it gobbles up public money. Certainly, like many think-tanks, it has a taste for the publicity stunt. Nawaz must have been chuffed to find Tommy Robinson falling into his lap. He and his allies' hatred of the Islamists has something, alas, of the zeal of the convert about it; even though he and Husain were both radicalised by global events in which Muslims were butchered, neither can find anyone to blame other than the radical preachers who put an Islam-versus-the-west spin on things, rather than the perpetrators of the horrors themselves. They thus naturally resemble all 'convenient' defectors in world history.

Then, along comes Robinson - quite the prize! He is proof positive that, whatever its particular focus, Quilliam opposes all extremism, and will fight to keep people off whatever dark path they may find in politics; by neutering Robinson's hysterical anti-Islam slant, Quilliam can dispel, for a

moment, the stench of the Uncle Tom that hangs around it.

It is a mutually beneficial arrangement, then, but we cannot imagine it will be sustained. Robinson will need his own outlet; whether he has the requisite writing chops to find it as a journalist, whether he will be welcome in the Conservative Party or even the UK Independence Party, remains to be seen; but his ego is too big for a minor counter-jihadist think-tank.

After all, without his street-fighting wing, Robinson is left with only his views; and his views have never been particularly remarkable on the spectrum of British reaction. He exaggerates the threat posed by political Islam; but so have the Tories and Labour alike in the last decade or so. He calls for a stronger sense of national identity and curbs on 'multiculturalism' - again, like all mainstream rightwing politicians. His only difference with them was his refusal to condemn the street thuggery of his supporters.

This is

something the left has never grasped about the EDL, one way or another. In its early days, it was suggested that it was the street fighting wing of the BNP. It was not - Nick Griffin has always despised them as rivals, and expelled people for associating with them (after all, he was for a suit-based strategy, rather than boots on the street). Yet it fulfilled a convenient purpose; after all, the BNP are 'Nazis' in particularly the Socialist Workers Party imagination, and so the EDL could also be labelled in that way.

This has always been nonsense. Of course, various forms of fascist and neo-Nazi ideologues have attached themselves to the EDL, but where they have won influence they have been marginalised (several splits have taken place over the years). The EDL is unproblematically a *fascist* organisation, but its ideology has never been Aryanism, anti-Semitism and crackpot social Darwinism. It has been good old British common sense (that is, *Daily Mailism*), cranked up to 11.

The SWP has always presented the most extreme form of this misunderstanding, thanks to its phobia of nuance (that oldest of obstacles to getting people terribly excited *right now*), with its absurd misuse of the 'Nazi' label. But it lurks in anti-fascist ideology more generally - the notion that fascists possess ideas that are necessarily outside of political normality, and are thus more perniciously threatening than the bourgeois state, is utterly false.

For an object lesson in its falsity we need look no further than the EDL, which was born of chauvinistic 'Support our troops'

sentiment, received a much needed shot in the arm after the murder of Lee Rigby, and has ever been the most assiduous cultivator of the British (and specifically English) national mythos. It is also the only significant organisation to organise street intimidation of the left and minorities since the BNP's electoral turn in the late 90s - that is, the *foremost fascist organisation in this country*.

Moreover, this is absolutely typical of fascism, which has only rarely thrived on imported national myths. With the *partial* exception of Golden Dawn in Greece - which has achieved considerable, and worrying, success in spite of its obvious Nazi inspiration - successful fascist movements must be plausibly indigenous. You cannot rally the English petty bourgeois *enragés* to a flag as polymorphously foreign as the swastika.

And so, as the left struggles to make up its mind whether to continue no-platforming Tommy Robinson and demand he be denied airtime on the BBC and so on, an acute dilemma presents itself. We may believe the suspicions of many a commentator that Robinson's conversion is barely plausible; but without the EDL he is just another rightwing Tory. It was never his voice on the radio that fed the fetid ideological atmosphere that begat the EDL and its like; but the output of the *Mail*, *The Sun* and every other reactionary mouthpiece the left unaccountably fails to no-platform.

Yes, Robinson's ideas are a threat - but, whether or not he has physical force behind him, it is stupid to imagine these ideas can be defeated by sweeping him off the street, or still less organising miserable counter-demonstrations in every hamlet he decides to descend upon. For those ideas are nothing more or less than British national chauvinism; and the struggle against it is necessarily for internationalism and the class perspective ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.org.uk



Where next?

Subscribe here

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can. Your paper needs you!

Standing order

	6m	1yr	Inst.
UK	£30/£35	£60/£70	£200/£220
Europe	£43/£50	£86/£100	£240/£264
Rest of world	£65/£75	£130/£150	£480/£528

New UK subscribers offer: 3 months for £10

I enclose payment:

Sub £/€ _____

Donation £/€ _____

Total £/€ _____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Email _____ Tel _____

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' to:
Weekly Worker, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

To _____ Bank plc _____

Branch Address _____

Post code _____

Re Account Name _____

Sort code _____ Account No _____

Please pay to **Weekly Worker**, Lloyds TSB A/C No 00744310
sort code 30-99-64, the sum of £ _____ every month*/3 months*
until further notice, commencing on _____

This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)

Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____

Date _____ Address _____