

weekly worker



Tommy Robinson's Unite the Kingdom: part display of xenophobic hatred, part elegy for an imagined past, part call to arms

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No 1553 September 18 2025

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10

YES, A PARTY OF OUR OWN ... NOT A POPULAR FRONT PARTY WITH ZACK POLANSKI'S GREENS



LETTERS



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

Robinson danger

It was with depressing familiarity that I witnessed the outnumbering, and even kettling, by rightwing forces of anti-racists in central London on Saturday September 13.

The far-right march numbered around 300,000 from drone footage. The Met police estimate of 110,000 is a gross understatement. It is telling that the police are deliberately downplaying rightwing numbers, as they used to with our left demos - the anti-racists present were outnumbered 30 to 1 at least.

In such circumstances, mere survival was probably the best option for our side and, thanks to the police (not a good thing for the left), we retreated to Green Park station after being 'toyed with' by the soccer-hooligan hard core for hours who had surrounded us. The essentially liberal anti-fascism of the SWP-controlled Stand Up to Racism group met its Waterloo. The 'Don't alienate the liberals and vicars' strategy was found seriously wanting, with SUtR/SWP leader Lewis Nielsen blandly stating after the debacle, "We must become a movement of leaders!" and labelling Tommy Robinson (who has Sir Winston Churchill and Spitfire tattoos) a "fascist".

For Nielsen (and many other SWP full-timers) wages and rent depends on keeping union funders sweet (SUtR even allows Zionists to join under union advice). No radical pro-worker strategic departure can be expected from Nielsen, as long as the money keeps flowing.

An interesting recent article was written by Dave Renton (anti-fascist activist, lawyer and former SWP member who left over the 'Comrade Delta' affair). He lambasted the entire current strategy of labelling the UK 'right of the Tories' movement as 'Nazi'.

Also the painfully slow launch of the Corbyn/Sultana project has had an effect. Those 700,000 sign-ups would have made a real difference over the summer. Instead they are names languishing on a database.

While the old maxim of 'The UK far right always mobilises at a time of Labour government betrayal' holds true, whether this time they actual end up winning is open to question and may happen.

Pol O Caoimh
email

Robinson win

The first duty of revolutionaries is to tell the truth, no matter how bitter. And the truth is that in London on September 13 Tommy Robinson's side won hands down. His rightwing demonstration, 'Unite the Kingdom', gathered hundreds of thousands of people (if not a million), while the counter-demonstration organised by Stand Up to Racism barely reached 10,000.

The right was emboldened, confident and ready for a showdown. The counter-demonstration was tiny, frail, wishy-washy and ended up being trapped. There is no point in sugarcoating it: this was a devastating defeat for our side, terrifying for all the oppressed in this country and a sinister warning of what is to come. This must be a wake-up call for all leftists! Whoever will try to hide the truth and minimise this defeat is simply doing a disservice to the cause of anti-racism and socialism. One point must be clear: whatever the left has been doing for years is simply not working.

And what is not working is the liberal politics of Stand Up to Racism, which have dominated the fight against the right and whose total impotence was on full display today. The whole demonstration was organised on the basis of liberal platitudes like "Refugees are welcome here", "No borders", "Love, not hate", etc. And, correspondingly, the whole thing was a pathetic peace crawl, suitable for NGOs, Labourite feminists and peaceniks, which makes the left look hippy-dippy and unserious.

The demo barely had any stewards. As it got close to Trafalgar Square, and as rightwingers were staging one provocation after the other, there was no organised force to protect the demo. This is because it was built like a carnival, not a fighting force. And also because Stand Up to Racism entirely relies on the police to protect its demonstrations - another liberal illusion which is, in fact, an admission of bankruptcy. No wonder minority workers stayed away.

The demonstration was also not organised as a pole of working class struggle. Yes, the banners of every trade union in the country were there. But anyone who was there knows that it was retirees and leftists carrying them. One has to be wilfully blind to ignore the fact that most workers were on Tommy Robinson's side. This is again the result of the complete bankruptcy of liberal politics. For years, the strategy of Stand Up to Racism has been to yell "racist" and "fascist" at any worker expressing concern about immigration and the refugee crisis. Such a strategy has only pushed workers into the arms of the right.

And the cherry on the cake was the line-up of speakers: Labour MPs Diane Abbott and John McDonnell, trade union bureaucrats from the NEU, PCS, Aslef and the TUC, who all support the Starmer government! These people are for the government and part of the establishment! Is it any surprise then that most working people associate the left with the defenders of the status quo?! Liberal platitudes and moralism, reliance on the police and an open alliance with supporters of the government. This is what is pushing millions of working people to Tommy Robinson and Nigel Farage.

Now, it is easy to throw rocks at Stand Up to Racism. They and the SWP do deserve a sharp condemnation for having led the fight against the right into the blind alley of liberal politics. But what have the other left groups been doing? How have they tried to fight this orientation? The RCP, SAlt, FRFI, the CPB, the CPGB, the SP, etc. This is a defeat for all of us. But the truth is that these groups refuse to confront the liberalism of the left - the source of today's disaster. This must stop.

The country has shifted to the right and the whole left is in denial about it. It is time to wake up! To have a fight about the causes of this and what to do about it. At a minimum, all left groups must work together for the next counter-protest, with the aim of forming a militant and solid bloc to stand up to the right - in the best tradition of the united front. Above all else, we need to win back the working class to our side.

On September 13, the Spartacist League formed a modest, but real, pole of militancy in the demonstration. We marched under the banner, "Smash racist thugs, reject Farage, break with Starmer", together with one reading "Ditch the liberals, win the workers". We chanted "Peace and love won't stop the fascists - mobilise the working

masses", together with slogans against Starmer. (Unsurprisingly, some rightwing demonstrators were disarmed by our slogans against Starmer. Turns out, when you frontally oppose the government, you actually can undercut Robinson's support.)

Because the truth is that most people on Robinson's side were not fascists. You can only imagine when, in a few months, actual Nazis get organised to smash our side. We must not wait to find out. Time is running out for socialists. Either we change course or we sink with the liberals. September 13 must be a brutal wake-up call.

Eibhlín McColgan
Workers Hammer

Productive YP

Last week's meeting of Your Party: Swansea and the Neath Valley - one of the two groups established in and around the city - was quite small in numbers, but useful and productive.

What struck me, and as I argued in the meeting, was the acceptance of the importance relating to delegate-based representation and voting, as opposed to 'one member, one vote' (OMOV) as a principal method of voting. People generally agree - by consensus at least - that OMOV 'atomises' individuals and is not a democratic form of internal organisational or party democracy.

I also argued that the eventual name of YP doesn't really matter. What does matter is what it stands for - its demands and its programme. I said in the meeting that power in 21st-century capitalist Britain does not simply lie in parliament, but in boardrooms of multinationals and in the corridors of the British state. With this in mind, I proposed that the future organisation, whatever its name, must have republican demands in its programme: abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, openness and transparency of state dealings, the accountability of elected representatives, to name but a few.

There was some discussion about how useful it would be in this initial period of development if we could also meet with other local groups in order to share ideas of how best to organise and to discuss political perspectives on the way forward. I, of course, supported this.

With the national YP founding conference now likely to take place late this year, this is important, given that Wales is hosting its own Wales-wide conference at the end of October. An important initiative. But a problem potentially exists. The conference will undoubtedly discuss the role YP will have in Wales and perhaps a first test of this will come in next year's elections to the Senedd. Can YP stand? Without a UK founding conference, what would it stand on? What would be its politics?

Anyway, overall the meeting was useful. The branch agreed to meet fortnightly.

Bob Davies
email

Basic YP tasks

This is the proposal we are discussing for Your Party in Norfolk. I think this is worthy of considering in overcoming many of the structural problems and bottlenecks. Or simply the best of a bad set of proposals:

"We the undersigned call for a founding conference to be limited to the following:

1. Conduct all the formalities necessary to get the party registered.
2. Elect a temporary committee to conduct business until the follow-up meeting.

3. To only agree on:

- (a) the name of the party;
- (b) the definition of a member;
- (c) the size of branches/constituencies with the suggestion they be no larger than 2,000 and geographically proximate;
- (d) allow for the election of regional officers of the branch via local mass meetings and majority votes to make it possible to provide the list of members to that branch;
- (e) the number of delegates from each branch to the follow-up meeting, with the suggestion that the number of delegates be three;
- (f) agree a binding date for the follow-up, multi-day, delegate-based meeting that alone can decide issues, such as the structure of the party, policies, as well as elect a democratically endorsed leadership.

In between the conferences, policy papers can be circulated for amending and voting on."

Brian Green
Norfolk

YP democracy?

At the recent Cambridge YP meeting I became very disillusioned and demoralised. There was a vote to give an unelected leadership increased power, albeit supposedly temporary until September 24, but it could easily be extended.

This motion dismissed having an elected leadership and called for "short practical steps" (in reality, impractical) "to bring people back into the conversation". ("Conversation" was a key word, as opposed to full debate and open discussion of anything controversial. Shock, horror - the kids might disagree with each other!).

The motion declared "the community assembly on September 20 to be a 'listening only' session". Listening to who? The unelected leadership? It will be an "open invite". To who? Liberals, experts, the chosen sect? Who decides on the "open invite" and for what purpose? There's no sign that this apolitical "listening only" session will lead to anyone learning anything, since there won't be any debate - just listening to your 'betters'.

Although apparently there will be a "weekly engagement dashboard (transparency means trust)", I suspect this will be anything but engaging or transparent. There's also a paragraph stating that the current unelected team will publish the number attending for the last four weeks and "If attendance at the start of meeting is below the four-week average, the moderator should defer motions to the next meeting." A bureaucratic clause to block democracy.

The last part says it will "publish a Community Assembly Pack ... by September 23" and that "All interim measures [will] end September 24 2025 and feed into a new successor structure". So this will outline what gets discussed and what does not.

I obviously voted against this, but sadly, in a spirit of Bonapartism the majority voted in favour - in favour of abolishing democracy in Your Party Cambridge. I think 34 voted for and about 15 of us voted against (six of these were SWP comrades).

Whilst I was ignored most of the time by the chair, lots of speakers complained by raising the red herring of how old the trade union way of working is and the approach we need is different. Yes, unions are bureaucratic and economic (which is the real issue), but the approach of these speakers was just as bureaucratic and less democratic, with no mention of class relations. I also got the general impression that

the supporters of the motion were rather anti-trade unionist for all the wrong reasons.

Justin Constantinou
Cambridge

YP resolution

I suggest that Your Party comrades propose something like the following motion to their local meetings. I did in Sheffield and our 200-strong branch meeting on September 17 overwhelmingly voted for it. A powerful statement of rank and file sentiment. Here it is in full:

1. This meeting of Your Party supporters notes:

(a) It has been announced that participants at the launch conference taking place in November 2025 will be chosen randomly by a lottery system (sortition). Only they will be able to move amendments to the four documents produced by the current leadership (policy statement, constitution, rules, strategy document). The proposed regional assemblies are "deliberative" and non-voting. The final documents are to be voted on via online polling.

(b) In the absence of a membership structure, numerous proto-branches of Your Party have emerged across the country, mobilising thousands of signatories.

(c) A formal membership scheme will be launched "in September", allowing for the quick establishment of branches everywhere.

2. This meeting believes:

(a) It is essential to establish Your Party on a foundation of democratic practice, ensuring the maximum participation of local supporters and branches.

(b) Sortition is not democratic.

(c) We favour a system where delegates are elected by the branches, utilising the 'single transferable vote' system with the Droop quota (Scottish STV). This would ensure pluralistic representation proportional to the diversity of opinion within each branch, thereby providing the most democratic means of organising participation and ensuring delegates' direct accountability to their local branches.

(d) Branches and a designated threshold of members (eg, 100) should be empowered to submit motions and amendments to the regional meetings and the launch conference in order to guarantee their active participation.

(e) The regional meetings should be able to vote on amendments, which would then have to be heard at the launch conference.

3. This meeting therefore urges the national leadership of Your Party to:

(a) Recognise all existing proto-branches as having been established in good faith and to list them on the Your Party website with contact details and dates of forthcoming meetings, in order to enable the widest possible supporter participation.

(b) Assist in the establishment of new branches in areas where none currently exist.

(c) Distribute to all local signatories information about forthcoming branch meetings, including emailing supporters in each branch's defined geographic area.

(d) Facilitate the forthcoming regional meetings voting on amendments, which would be binding and go to the launch conference.

(e) Organise all future conferences on the basis of delegates elected from local branches using the single transferable vote under the Droop quota (Scottish STV).

Please play your part in ensuring Your Party will be based on genuine democracy.

Tina Becker
email

RIGHT

Nationalist tsunami

Big numbers attended Tommy Robinson’s Unite the Kingdom protest. Part display of xenophobic hatred, part elegy for an imagined past, part call to arms. The left needs to rethink its strategy, argues Eddie Ford

Maybe 150,000 turned up in central London for Tommy Robinson’s ‘Unite the Kingdom’ demonstration on September 13 - some estimates put it even higher. Whatever the exact number, it was certainly very large - especially as the demo was called at very short notice.

Robinson himself is claiming “three million patriots” marched through London’s streets in the “biggest protest march in British history”, and his supporters have hailed it as a “patriotic tsunami”.¹ This number is obviously untrue, but such lying is par for the course for Robinson. The biggest demonstration ever is widely thought to have been the Stop the War protest in February 2003 against the Iraq War with between one and two million people.

But the nationalist right has every reason to be boastful, as the demonstration clearly reflected the mood of an increasingly large section of the population. By contrast, the counter-protest organised by the Socialist Workers Party’s favourite front, Stand Up to Racism, was overwhelmed by Robinson’s (the official police figure is 5,000, with SUtR claiming 20,000).

In its “festival of free speech”, which the far right claims to champion both in the UK and US, the huge crowds waved Union Jack and St George flags, and the rally began with members of the Destiny Church from New Zealand performing a traditional haka dance and a song about “making the west look like the Middle East” - then displayed the flags of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State and Palestine to huge boos from the crowd, which they ritualistically tore in half to equally loud cheers.

Afterwards, they listened to speakers extolling racist conspiracy theories, ranting on their Islamophobia and general nationalist paranoia. The former French presidential candidate and prominent YouTuber, Éric Zemmour, told protestors they were subjected to “the great replacement of our European people by peoples coming from the south and of Muslim culture”, adding: “You and we are being colonised by our former colonies” - which he outlines in great detail in his notorious 2014 essay, *Le suicide français*, not to mention his 2006 book, *Le premier sexe*, warning against the feminisation or “devirilisation” of society.

Failure

Elon Musk had top billing via video link, telling the crowd about the “destruction of Britain” through “massive, uncontrolled migration”, and the “unreal” failure of government to “protect innocent people, including children who are getting gang-raped”, calling for “the dissolution of the UK parliament”. Then the billionaire - or is he now a *trillionaire*?² - got to his real theme that “the left are the party of murder” in an obvious reference to the killing of Charlie Kirk and, upping the rhetoric, declared: “Whether you choose violence or not, violence is coming to you” - which means that “you either fight back or you die”.

These were comments that forced Sir Keir Starmer to release a statement condemning such talk as “dangerous and inflammatory”, which “threatens violence and intimidation on our streets” - adding how he does not

think “the British public will have any truck with that kind of language”.³ But that is clearly not the case for a significant segment of the British people, who have been attracted to this sort of rhetoric - eager as they are to express their loathing of Starmer and the British establishment. A favourite chant of the crowd was “Keir Starmer’s a wanker” to the tune of the ‘Seven nation army’ song, and their chants included “Oh Tommy!”, “Whose street? Our street”, “Allah? Allah? Who the fuck is Allah?” ... and so on.

But the star of the day was Robinson himself, of course. From the stage he announced that “Britain has finally awoken” and “this is never going away”, saying that the British courts had ruled in Epping council’s failed case against the home office that the rights of undocumented migrants like Somalians, Afghans and Pakistanis “supersede” those of the British public - “the people that built this nation”. At one point he played a video that included images of convicted members of a grooming gang, followed by a video of a white woman crying, which went down well with his audience. Meanwhile, books “co-authored” by Robinson with titles like *Manifesto: free speech, real democracy, peaceful disobedience* and *Mohammed’s Koran: why Muslims kill for Islam*, did a brisk trade.

People aired a number of grievances. One sign read, “Why are white people despised when our tax money pays for everything?”, whilst another simply stated, “Send them back”, and the person holding it said he came to “stand up for what we believe in - the religion and identity of our country”. Interestingly, religion played quite a big part on the demonstration, which was not just the preserve of drunken racist boneheads or fascists, even if a few people did shout “Fucking Jews!” and “Heil fucking Hitler!”. People carried wooden crosses and lit-up crucifixes and, when the crowd arrived at Whitehall, they were led from the stage in a chant of “Christ is king” and then a public recital of the ‘Lord’s Prayer’.⁴

We need to start off by saying how *not* to respond. Screaming “Nazi scum! Nazi scum! Off our street!” to 150,000 or more people is utterly hopeless - as is the idea of demanding they be no-platformed, a weapon that could just as easily be used against the left.

How are you going to no-platform a social movement? A mass movement that not only takes the form of Tommy Robinson, of course - albeit a famous outlier - but also Reform UK, which is consistently way ahead of the other parties in the opinion polls.

Yet the craziness continues, with the left no-platforming *itself* over the trans question at the moment - totally losing the plot. For a rather different perspective that undermines left orthodoxy, the *Weekly Worker* featured a series of articles a little while ago looking at how communists in Germany *debated* with the Nazis in the early 20s. What is truly significant about reading the reports of these debates is the fact that they were called off by the Nazis because they were losing the argument. We in the CPGB are certainly not uncritical of the KPD, but any criticism is not

directed at them for debating with the Nazis. It is not a principle that you must debate with fascists, but equally you do not rule it out either.

More to the point, no-platforming the sort of people who attended Unite the Kingdom on the basis that they are Nazi German nationalists misses the mark spectacularly. Quite obviously, the vast majority of them are *English or British chauvinists* who have heroes such as Boudicca, Horatio Nelson, Winston Churchill, Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher, not Adolf Hitler. Robinson imagines himself to be a true Brit standing up for traditional British values ... king, church, country.

We need to recognise him and his movement for what it is and not what it is not: goose-stepping, Nazi advocates of *Mein Kampf*. They are British and Britain can produce fascism just as much as Germany or Austria - or any country for that matter.

Argument

There were so many on Tommy Robinson’s demonstration that it overflowed along the Embankment and trapped the left on both ends of Whitehall, with the police kindly helping them get home. That is the sober reality, which should act as a wake-up call to start *thinking*.

But tragically the left shows no sign of that. One of the instant responses was that we need the involvement of celebrities like Lady Gaga! Another bizarre suggestion is that we paint *black* the red cross on the St George’s flag that are appearing everywhere on roundabouts and on the sides of buildings - what sort of message does that send out? That we are Breton nationalists? The Kroaz Du features a black cross on a white background.

The SWP’s *Party Notes* talks of the need to “win the argument”. But this argument is not with Unite the Kingdom marchers or Reform voters. No, it is with the left and the need to get more and more people “on the streets, counter protests and unity events”.⁵

The street, street strategy means Palestine activists, YP people, trade union militants, Labour MPs ... but also, in the name of ‘broad as possible’, welcoming Zionist racists onto SUtR demonstrations, after all that is what Lewis Nielson’s paymasters in the trade union bureaucracy want. But as we saw on September 13 and we see with Reform riding high at 30% in opinion polls ... it does not work.

Effectively, the SWP proposes to leave Unite the Kingdom marchers and Reform voters to Tommy Robinson, Nigel Farage and Elon Musk. Effectively, the SWP moralistically dismisses them as irredeemable bigots. Effectively, the SWP constitutes SUtR as the defenders of the old liberal order ... an old order that is in visible decay ●

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Notes

1. [express.co.uk/news/uk/2108358/tommy-robinson-clashes-police-media-unite-the-kingdom-london](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2108358/tommy-robinson-clashes-police-media-unite-the-kingdom-london).
2. [newsweek.com/tesla-musk-billionaire-trillionaire-2126187](https://www.newsweek.com/tesla-musk-billionaire-trillionaire-2126187).
3. theonlondoneconomic.com/politics/keir-starmer-condemns-inflammatory-elon-musk-message-to-far-right-protestors-397933.
4. news.sky.com/story/why-tommy-robinson-rally-was-different-to-any-other-13430517.
5. *Party Notes* September 15 2025.

ACTION

Don’t buy apartheid
Saturday September 20: Nationwide day of action. Boycott Israeli goods, boycott Coca-Cola brands. Supermarkets selling these products profit from Israel’s genocide, colonisation and military occupation. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/20-sept-dont-buy-apartheid-day-of-action.

March with striking Birmingham bin workers
Saturday September 20, 9.30am: Assemble outside Unite office, 30 Jennens Road, Birmingham B7. March to Council Chambers, Victoria Square B1. The strike continues - government-appointed commissioners scuppered a deal that could have ended the dispute. Organised by Unite the Union: www.facebook.com/events/1119878589607130.

Alan Bush: introduction to a radical composer
Saturday September 20, 10.30am to 4pm: Lecture and exhibition, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Ben Lunn (Workers’ Music Association) speaks on Alan Bush’s polemical works and their implications and influence today. Followed by an archival radio production of *The sugar reapers*. Entrance by free ticket. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/508.

Billionaires have broken Britain
Saturday September 20, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Portland Place, London W1. Three demands: tax the super-rich; protect workers, not billionaires; make polluters pay. Organised by Make Them Pay: www.makethempay.org.uk.

Kick out Trump’s nukes
Saturday September 20, 1pm: Demonstration. Assemble at the Main Gate of RAF Lakenheath, Brandon IP27. US nuclear weapons have arrived at the Lakenheath Nato base in Suffolk. Tell Trump neither he nor his nuclear bombs are welcome here! Coaches available from London, Oxford, Norwich and the West Midlands. Organised by CND: cnduk.org/events.

Rally for rent controls
Monday September 22, 6pm: Lobby of MSPs, Scottish Parliament Building, Horse Wynd, Edinburgh EH8. Tenants need rent controls across Scotland. Don’t allow landlords to water down the legislation. Organised by Living Rent: www.livingrent.org/rally_for_rent_controls_2025.

Welfare, not warfare
Wednesday September 24, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Littleworth Community Centre, 6A Saint Thomas Street, Stafford ST16. Stop Starmer’s militarism, defend the right to protest. Registration free. Organised by Stop the War Stafford: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/welfare-not-warfare-public-meeting-5.

Sounds of solidarity with bin strikers
Friday September 26, 6pm until late: Family-friendly live music event, Nortons Bar, Meriden Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B5. Help raise funds for the strikers and support their fight. Tickets £5.50. Organised by West Midlands Fire Brigades Union: www.facebook.com/events/1347621353738705.

Shame on Starmer, shame on Labour
Saturday September 27, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble at St George’s Plateau, opposite Lime Street station, Liverpool L1. Labour is complicit in Israel’s genocide. Starmer’s government facilitates arms sales to Israel and welcomed Israel’s war criminal president. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: stopwar.org.uk/events/national-demo-at-the-labour-party-conference.

Building anti-capitalism in the new left party
Saturday September 27, 1.30pm: Public meeting, Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester M1. Discuss how to make Your Party democratic, anti-oppression, for class and community power, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. Organised by Manchester RS21: revsoc21.uk/events.

Hands off Cuba!
Sunday September 28, 5.30pm: Rally and fundraiser, The Casa, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool L1. Defend Cuba’s internationalism and raise money for the Cuba Vive medical appeal. Free entry. Organised by Cuba Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/CubaSolidarityCampaign.

Genocide abroad, democide at home
Monday September 29, 12 noon: Protest outside Labour Party Conference. Assemble at Wheel of Liverpool, Keel Wharf, Liverpool L3. Labour policies are killing disabled people. Organised by Disabled People Against Cuts: dpac.uk.net.

Perspectives on human origins
Tuesday September 30, 6.30pm: Talks on social and biological anthropology, UCL Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1, and online. This meeting: ‘How to resist alpha males’. Speakers: Chris Knight and Camilla Power. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/761259880199352.

The world transformed
Thursday October 9 to Sunday October 12: Political festival, venues in Hulme, Manchester M15. Over 120 sessions covering critical discussion on left strategy. Four-day ticket: £50 (£25). Organised by The World Transformed: theworldtransformed.org/twt25.

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.

SLEAZE

Endless embarrassments

Angela Rayner, Peter Mandelson and Boris Johnson are not isolated cases. We live under a regime of institutional corruption. **Mike Macnair** looks for the roots of successive scandals

In the last fortnight, Sir Keir Starmer has had the misfortune to lose both his deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner, and the British ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson, to scandals. The scandals are very different. Rayner mistakenly believed that a tax dodge to avoid stamp duty land tax would work, when it did not. The context of a politician who has trumpeted her working class background and promoting class interests buying a second home in Hove, while resident in a grace-and-favour apartment in London, was what made this story her political death. It relates to the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal;¹ and *The Times* for September 16 has taken the Rayner story as the starting point to revive this, digging up a number of Labour ministers who have claimed as expenses the additional council tax on second homes.²

Mandelson turned out to have carried on (warmly) corresponding with and backing Jeffrey Epstein (1953-2019) after Epstein's 2008 conviction for procuring a child for prostitution. It used to be said that the Tories suffered from sex scandals and Labour from money scandals, but in recent years both have had both, and Mandelson's fall due to links to Epstein is, in effect, an indirect sex scandal. Another is the resignation of Starmer's 'director of strategy', Paul Ovenden, over schoolboy-ish abusive sex jokes about Diane Abbott, while working as a Labour press officer in 2017.³

It is a fair guess - no more - that what lies immediately behind these stories is that someone in the 'Blairite' faction of the Labour Party briefed sections of the Tory press about Rayner's second-home purchase in order to discredit her; and that someone in the party outside the 'Blairites' took revenge by pointing the Tory press at Mandelson's continued friendship with Epstein after 2008 and at Ovenden's 2017 messages (part of a stash leaked five years ago).

Dominic O'Connell in *The Times*'s business pages for September 13 took the occasion of Mandelson's fall to quote an October 2010 email from Mandelson to Jes Staley - at the time head of JP Morgan's investment banking division - which Staley forwarded to Epstein and which was later disclosed in litigation about Epstein's operations between the British Virgin Islands government, JP Morgan and Staley.⁴ It is worth quoting again here: "In Congo-Brazzaville last week, I talked at length with president Sassou-Nguesso, including about the [Zanaga iron] mine. The government is reaching a final decision on whether to issue a full mining licence ... no obligation, but if there is someone in JP Morgan who might want to talk to me privately about this, please shout ..."

The Mandelson-Staley emails forwarded to Epstein illustrate a shadowy world of 'fixers' operating through friendship networks in the borderlands of business (especially the financial sector) and government.⁶ This is closer to the core of the problem.

Scandals arising out of this sort of stuff have been repeated. The Gordon Brown government had to suspend several ex-ministers from the Parliamentary Labour Party for lobbying activities.⁷ The Con-Dem coalition of 2010-15 was slightly less affected.⁸ But the Johnson



Sometimes it's cash, mostly it's quiet favours

administration (2019-22) was full of them. Rishi Sunak's government was affected too.⁹

Part of the problem is that no British government can actually 'deliver'. The underlying reality is that the UK as a 'firm' in the world market has been losing money since the Thatcher years. In part, the scale of losses in the productive economy is covered by the scale of exports of financial and managerial services; but there is still a deficit, which is covered by selling assets to foreign (mainly US) capital, and by borrowing, on the basis that the UK is a low-regulation and low-tax regime, and the home of the 'London laundromat' for dirty money. Large parts of the productive economy depend on subsidies from the financial sector.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the young commonly do not vote due to cynicism about politics; the elderly *do* vote, and subsidies to homeowners through non-valuation for council tax, to pensioners, and so on, are politically untouchable. The result is that political parties constantly make promises they cannot deliver.

Institutional

More generally, however, we live under a regime of institutional corruption. It is the *continuity* of the 'old corruption' targeted by the radicals of the late 18th and early 19th century, and of the 'moneyed interest', which concerned both the Tories and "country Whigs" on the right and 'Old Cause' Commonwealthmen or republicans on the left, in the early 18th century.

The scandals do not result from the moral failings of individual politicians: they are an institutional feature of the British constitution, created by the revolution of 1688 and what followed. When we look beyond Britain's borders, we can see that political issues about corruption and sleaze of *this type* are common to capitalist governments everywhere.

I emphasise *of this type* because the feudal middle ages had its own forms of scandalous political

corruption, but these were about permanent patron-client chains ('bastard feudalism' and 'nepotism'), not the scandals about alleged corrupt *bargains*, which we find in capitalist politics. The bureaucratic so-called socialist regimes were medieval in this respect.

Why do they do it? This inevitably has two sides. There have to be people who are willing to pay big money for disproportionate influence over politicians' decisions. And there have to be politicians who are willing to accept big money, even though they know that this will involve giving 'favourable treatment' to the donors.

Businesses and rich individuals pay for political favours. They do not necessarily expect an immediate pay-off - if they did, the payment would be corrupt within the existing law. But they do expect favourable *consideration*, when issues come up in the future which will affect them.

Why they do it is, in fact, obvious. The idea that a corporation has no conscience is an old one, dating back to lord chancellor Sir Thomas Egerton and chief justice Sir Edward Coke in the early 17th century. The directors are expected, and required by law, to subordinate other moral considerations to maximising the company's profits. If they can reasonably expect that making payments to politicians will lead to benefits, they will make those payments.

Market politics

Rich individuals expect to be able to pay for benefits for themselves. That is the point of getting rich. They also *tend* to think that their wealth reflects their superior ability and moral strength rather than (as is usually the case) luck. A consequence is that from their point of view they *should* get more consideration from government than the undeserving poor: after all, they pay more taxes, and their superior abilities mean that they *should* run the country. Bribing politicians is from this point of view merely 'correcting' the 'unfortunate mistake' of universal suffrage.

If you believe in the free market, why not have a free market in political and state services? Then we could all pay for what we can afford: a driver could slip a tenner to a policeman to avoid prosecution for speeding; a local drug-dealer could pay off a chief superintendent to keep his business under the radar; businesses and developers could pay off local councillors for help with planning matters; and the big donors to Labour and the Tories could openly pay for whatever it is they pay for.

Britain functioned to a considerable extent in this way in the 18th century, as did the US well into this century, and some 'third world' countries do so to this day. In essence, a free-marketeer might say: 'What we have done with anti-corruption legislation from the 19th century on is to distort the market by imposing entry barriers', so that *only* big corporations and the very rich can pay, and only senior politicians (through their control of 'their' parties) can be paid.

Capitalism as such is not a zero-sum game. In boom periods it is a *positive-sum* game: total social wealth increases, and enough of it 'trickles down' to sufficient members of the lower orders that there is mass political consent to capitalism. This is the basis of free-market ideology in both its systematic and its common-sense forms. In slump periods capitalism is a negative-sum game: total social wealth decreases, and with it political consent to capitalism. But, as long as people keep clinging to boom-period politics (Labourites, etc) or look to nostalgia politics as an alternative (political Islamists, Christian revivalists, nationalists, Reform UK, etc), capitalism can hang on until the next boom.

Paying for favours from the state, however, *is* a zero-sum game and everyone understands that it is. The driver who this week pays off a copper to avoid prosecution for speeding next week runs down a child on a zebra crossing. The drug dealer who pays off the cops is matched by his competitors,

who suffer either prosecution or personal violence to drive them out of the business. If councillors are 'influenced' to compulsory-purchase land for the benefit of developers, the right of property itself is undermined (many US commentators argue that the 2005 US Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v New London* does just this). How can anyone be sure the local councillors, or in extreme cases the judges, will *stay* paid? For every individual firm which gets a contract through 'favourable consideration' after party donations, there is another firm which did *not* get the contract.

Corruption and sleaze is therefore *both* necessarily endemic in the capitalist political order and necessarily politically illegitimate. It is endemic because it grows out of capitalism itself. It is illegitimate because, if it becomes perfectly generalised, each property owner will no longer be able to rely on the state to protect their property. They will have to employ their own goons and develop their own permanent patronage networks - a return to feudalism.

Payees

In the imperialist countries, the role of *small-scale* corruption has been much reduced since the 19th century. The key to this reduction has been the proletarianisation of state officials. They are paid a living wage (in the case of senior officials a very generous salary) and are expected to be content with it, and not to seek to elevate themselves into the ranks of the capitalists by bribetaking. The state is distanced from business - imperfectly - by rules like those controlling movement to and fro between business and the civil service (it is striking that both Tony Blair and David Cameron weakened these rules). Any future reduction of corruption will necessarily involve the same method: to extend the proletariat - those who live on a wage - at the expense of private business and 'contracting out'.

The politicians who take party donations from business and the

rich present a somewhat different problem. This is because they are not, or only to a limited extent, in it for personal gain.

In order to understand this we need to abstract from the mechanisms of capitalist control of politics those which do *not* work through the electoral system - the judicial power, the monarchy's relationship to the police and armed forces, and the ultimate veto power of the USA - in order to focus on those that do: the cost of election campaigns, capitalist control of media outlets, and the patronage powers of central executive government. In this framework it will be possible to see how Labour politicians have come to think that relationships to business and the rich are essential to winning office and thereby achieving even slight advantages for their constituents.

Labour is a good example, because the Tories and Liberals both have back in their early history explicit opposition to corruption. Moreover, nobody ever stands for election on the platform that politicians *ought* to be bought, or that their own party is the party of City yuppies and fat-cat company directors: there are no votes in it. Capitalist parties - ie, ones dominated by capitalist funding - always *start as* something else: big business has little interest in funding marginal parties, except for temporary tactical advantage (as in the case of the Social Democratic Party of the 1980s).

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that in order to reduce corruption, legislation made major cuts in the parties' national spending on election campaigns. Labour politicians in the early 2000s resisted such proposals. Why? The whole debate was conducted on the assumption that spending money on advertising - giving visibility and coverage - can make a difference to election campaigns. This is not entirely clear where the difference in spending is marginal - say, between Labour and Tories - but it is pretty clearly true where the differences are on a large scale. The Social Democratic Party of the 1980s, the Lib Dems in 2010, and Ukip, the Brexit party and Reform UK more recently, showed that lots of media exposure can produce dramatic results in election performance.

Now suppose the national advertising spending of both parties was dramatically curtailed. The national media exposure of the two parties would then depend wholly on the extent to which the media was willing to give them exposure. And here there is a dramatic difference. Murdoch controls the *Times* and *Sun*. The *Telegraph* is a traditionally Tory paper, as are the *Mail* and *Express*, and most of the locals. The *Mirror* has *traditionally* been Labour, but that was at least partly an artefact of Robert Maxwell's relationship with the party and cannot now be taken for granted. Both the *Independent* and the *Guardian* are by instinct Liberal Democrat papers, though they will, in the absence of the Lib Dems breaking through to be the main alternative to the Tories, support a sufficiently rightwing Labour leadership.

It used to be claimed that this difference reflected the 'natural Tory majority': ie, that the Tory press predominated because of popular demand. Since the later 1980s this has been plainly untrue. The Tory press predominates because of *advertising revenue* and subsidies to papers by their owners from other, more profitable businesses: and because *owners* prefer their papers to be Tory (or, now, Reform) or at least not to be clearly committed to Labour. The Tories (and now Reform) thus get large amounts of *free* advertising from their press.

In this situation it is entirely understandable that the Labour leadership wanted to be free to raise and spend very large sums on advertising. But these very large sums inevitably have to come from rich individuals and from corporations. Even if the unions were prepared to cough up on a much larger scale than they have recently, their resources are relatively weaker than they were before Thatcherism: union membership is down, especially in the better-paid sectors in private industry; conversely, the Thatcher governments' tax and regulatory 'reforms' and the effects of financial globalisation have shifted much more liquid wealth, available for spending on donations, into the hands of corporations and wealthy individuals.

Again, there is nothing inherently new about this. *Before* universal suffrage and before the anti-corruption reforms of the mid-19th century, it was necessary when standing for election to offer direct bribes, 'entertainments', etc to the electors. The result was that the parliament was very roughly a 'shareholders' meeting', with the very rich directly present in the House of Lords, and others represented in the Commons in proportion to their wealth - reflected in their ability to bribe electors. What has changed is the concentration of capital and the mediation of the process through the advertising industry and capitalist-owned mass media.

Before the flood

Labour has been a pro-capitalist party - by way of its loyalty to the British constitution and the national interest - since it was founded. But its *full* embrace of business and the rich as funders, and therefore cronyism stories and those like the Mandelson case, was new under Blair. Yet the capitalist domination of the press is a long-standing feature of British politics, and Labour nonetheless managed to win elections. How?

The answer is that the Labour Party had - and to a very limited extent still has - means of communicating with the broad mass of the working class which are not dependent on the capitalist-dominated media.

The first of these means is the trade unions. As I say, they have been massively weakened since 1979, and a significant part of this is things that they did to themselves, or rather that the Labour and union leaderships did to them, under the 1974-79 Labour government. The acceptance of the regime of industrial tribunals weakened the immediate link between union membership, shop stewards and employer disciplinary action, and thereby weakened the stewards' - and hence the unions' - ability to deliver immediate resistance to speed-up, unsafe working, etc. The systems of deduction of union dues from wages or payment by bank standing order similarly weakened the relation between the local organisations and their members; they also rendered the unions effectively incapable of maintaining illegal action. Thatcherism and financial globalisation merely accelerated the processes by reducing the workforce employed in the traditional industrial and geographical bastions of the trade union movement.

But *before* the changes of 1974-79, the base of trade unions was not their legality, but the immediate relationships between member, shop steward and branch, branch and region, and so on. These relations were a means by which the case for voting Labour could be passed on in spite of *The Sun* and all the rest.

The second means is the Labour presence in local government and - going along with it - the ward

organisations of the party, the loosely associated trades and Labour clubs, and their connection, through the general committees, with the local trade union movement. In the high period of the growth of the party, Labour inherited the proud civic traditions of the old Liberals. The councillors could deliver real improvements to their constituents within the framework of capitalist legality. All this has changed as a result of a combination of actions by the state and the party leadership: the public spending controls of the 1970s; increasingly aggressive judicial review from the same period, reviving a tradition the Poplar councillors had faced in the 1920s; imposing central, legally regulated duties on local government, giving central government control of an increasing share of local government budgets; and, finally, the assaults of the Tories in the 1980s.

These changes have driven local authorities *towards* distance from their constituents and *towards* corrupt relations with property developers (etc), reducing the councillors' ability to speak to the masses. But they also made it increasingly difficult for local authorities to do anything at all without central government support; and the Thatcher and Major administrations dishonestly manipulated the system of central financial support to tighten the squeeze. By the early 1990s, the Labour councillors and local party branches behind them were utterly desperate for a friendly government, and willing to give up anything to get it. In 1997 they got a 'friendly' government - but Blairism turned out to be a continuation of Thatcher's squeeze on local government, merely redirecting a bit of the financial support towards Labour councils.

Meanwhile, the Labour leadership has increasingly sought to impose its will on the local organisations and deprive them of the voice they had - even if it was only a voice - in the national conference. And it has materially weakened them by moving to a national membership system and payment of dues by standing order. With each step it has weakened the ability of the Labour Party to address workers outside of and against the capitalist-dominated media.

Of course, the Tories *also* had their local councillors, their constituency associations and their network of clubs, etc. But they were willing to sacrifice all this under Thatcher in the hope of getting rid of the Labour Party or at least bringing it fully under corrupt central control. The sacrifice was real: Thatcher's local government reforms and the accompanying offensive of the barristers had the effect of breaking the mechanisms which drew new activists at the base into Tory politics, and the Tory councillors' links with their constituent voters, so that the defeat in 1997 left the party immensely weakened (today the threat of Reform UK reflects the same process). But the Tories calculated it was worth it: after all, they owned the press. By 1994 it was clear that this could not save them from defeat in the next election, and the media swung behind Blair to secure Thatcher's legacy.

Unintended

No-one set out to create an endless succession of corruption and cronyism scandals. What they set out to create is "improved British competitiveness": to give more power back to management, and to redistribute wealth, so as to make the rich work harder by paying them more and make the poor work harder by paying them less. This required a struggle *against* political democracy, in which the partial democracy of the

Tory Party was sacrificed to the need to destroy the partial democracy of the Labour Party and the trade unions. It is the consequence of this struggle that we now have more obvious corruption and cronyism, and a cynical electorate decreasingly willing to vote.

At the centre of the problem of corruption in countries with universal suffrage is capitalist control of the major means of political communication - the mass media. This control is *opposed to political democracy*. It would be obvious if what was going on was paying the House speaker for the right to speak (or to be the first or last person called in debate) in the Commons, that this was anti-democratic. It would be equally obvious if at a union conference the employers set up a rival public-address system to drown out the speakers. Capitalist control of the media has the same effect on a larger scale. The significance of scandals is that they bring this fact sharply to the surface.

It may be said that this is not new. It formed part of the argument of Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders in 1918-20 for the suppression of the capitalist, Menshevik, etc press and the nationalisation of the presses, etc, placing the means of political communication in the hand of the state. For example, the *Thesis and report on bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat* for the First Congress of the Comintern (1919), which stated:

8. 'Freedom of the press' is another of the principal slogans of 'pure democracy'. And here, too, the workers know - and socialists everywhere have explained millions of times - that this freedom is a deception, because the best printing presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists and, while capitalist rule over the press remains - a rule that is manifested throughout the whole world all the more strikingly, sharply and cynically - the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America, for example ...

Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the communists are building, and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing presses and public stocks of paper.¹¹

What is wrong with this policy should be apparent from what followed. Without freedom of information and communication, the state created by the working class frees itself from the working class and becomes, first, the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship, and in the end a capitalist political regime (Putin's Russia, etc).

What to do?

Our *Draft programme* contains no proposals on the problem, though it is one which was discussed widely in the Labour Party in the 1970s and 80s. These Labour left discussions generally pointed towards the sort of nationalist regulatory regimes of control of media ownership found in some continental countries. It should be clear enough that this leads only to a form of censorship and does not affect the underlying capitalist control of the press.

The democratic-republican solution to the problem of

capitalist ownership is not media nationalisation. It is to eliminate capitalist *subsidies* to news media, both directly and in the form of commercial advertising. If the media was forced to rely on sales and subscriptions for the whole of its income, it might well be the case that there was still a mass market for the Tory media even after the working class had taken power in the form of a democratic republic and the accompanying destruction of the deeper structures of the capitalists' political power. There would certainly be a niche market for it. But this would not in itself be a form of capitalist political power, since it would not be power created by the ownership of the means of production.

There is, of course, no immediate practical chance of obtaining legislation against cross-subsidy and advertising in news media. But what certainly is possible, because it has been done before, is for the workers' movement to break the capitalist monopoly of the means of information. To do so does not mean in the first place setting up a competing commercial national daily run by the Labour or trade union bureaucracy or their nominees: this has been tried before and the result is utterly boring. The core of the answer is to revive democratic face-to-face and door-to-door politics at the base: the original basis of the workers' movement and a practice still successfully exploited by the Lib Dems and the Greens.

But to do this requires breaking with the control of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy in local party politics and in the unions themselves. And it requires abandoning the illusion that it is possible to get a democratic and pro-worker government through playing the game dictated by the capitalist-controlled media. More than anything else, it requires the struggle for a workers' *party* which is able to openly identify the capitalist character of the media and the extent to which this corrupts political life in general.

That in turn implies, in present conditions, a party which is willing to be anti-constitutional and to stand openly for the working class to take political power. In other words, a Communist Party ●

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Notes

1. See, for example, J Turley 'Scams, yoghurts and loopholes' *Weekly Worker* May 13 2009 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/769/scams-yoghurts-and-loopholes); M Macnair 'Against rightist populism' June 3 2009 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/772/against-rightist-populism); E Ford 'Crocodile tears over salary recommendation' July 18 2013 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/971/crocodile-tears-over-salary-recommendation); P Demarty 'Rightwing press rocks the boat' April 10 2014 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1005/rightwing-press-rocks-the-boat).
2. 'Ministers claim back double council tax'.
3. 'Senior Starmer aide quits over lurid Diane Abbott comments' *The Times* September 16.
4. On the Staley-Epstein relationship see www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jun/26/high-flyer-to-pariah-saga-jeffrey-epstein-banker-jes-staley.
5. 'Mandelson's downfall highlights a troubling trend among the elite'.
6. Wikipedia's article on Mandelson has more in this vein: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Mandelson.
7. J Moody 'Whoring for business' *Weekly Worker* March 25 2010 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/810/whoring-for-business).
8. Eg, E Ford 'Establishment hypocrisy and Miss Whiplash' *Weekly Worker* August 6 2015 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1070/establishment-hypocrisy-and-miss-whiplash).
9. Eg, E Ford 'Deserting the ship' *Weekly Worker* October 26 2023 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1464/deserting-the-ship).
10. M Macnair 'Class composition in a snapshot' (part 2) *Weekly Worker* August 28 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1550/class-composition-in-a-snapshot).
11. On the "London laundromat" phrase see, for instance, www.transparency.org.uk/news/trust-issues-tackling-final-frontier-secret-property-ownership (May 2025).
11. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/comintern.htm>.

LEFT

Re, re, revolutionary on demos; re, re, reformist in elections

No popular front with Greens

Though the Green Party has no ‘socialist ideology’, SPEW calls for it to affiliate to Your Party. The SWP calls for election deals and voting for ‘principled leftwing Greens’. **Jack Conrad** calls for independent, class politics

‘What we think’, *The Socialist*’s editorial, says the Greens should be “invited to affiliate” by Your Party (otherwise known as the Jeremy Corbyn Party).¹ An outrageous suggestion, not because of the sure-fire certainty that, if ever made, any such invitation would be flatly rejected. After all the Greens boast of being on track to get 30 MPs at the next general election and wanting to “replace the Labour Party”.² No, what is *politically* outrageous is the suggestion itself.

Class lines are abandoned, forgotten or rejected ... and in pursuit of what? A Labour Party mark two, a popular front, cross-class, *federal* party and the forlorn hope of receiving an official YP invitation to affiliate! Such a thoroughly misconceived *strategy* - and that is what it is - inevitably culminates in paying no more than lip service to establishing “an independent working class party”.³ That is, sadly, what the much vaunted ‘transitional method’ amounts to in practice. Paradoxically, tactics become all.⁴

The Socialist’s ‘Polanski wins Green leadership’ editorial must be regarded as an authoritative statement on behalf of the Socialist Party in England and Wales (which, of course, publishes, finances and tightly controls the paper). Perhaps the final edit was done by the six-strong ‘newspaper team’: Josh Asker, Mark Best, Chris Newby, Scott Jones, Ian Pattison and Paula Mitchell (normally all HQ-based full-timers). But, whoever actually wrote the damned piece, while editor Josh Asker carries a particular responsibility, we must place prime blame for what is *class treachery* on SPEW’s leadership as a whole.⁵

The editorial comes, needless to say, in the immediate aftermath of Zack Polanski’s stunning victory in the Green Party. He trounced his MP rivals, Adrian Ramsay and

Ellie Chowns - running on a joint ticket - by a massive 85% to 15% margin. Membership, note, now stands at around 85,000 and there was a 37% turnout. A figure which includes many recent, thoroughly disorientated, leftwing joiners. Polanski’s leadership bid was also backed by James Meadway in the *Morning Star* and *The Guardian*’s house-trained leftwinger, Owen Jones.⁶

A former Liberal Democrat, Polanski became what he calls an “eco-populist” in the 2020s - a sobriquet which amalgamates standard environmental concerns with asks for a wealth tax, public ownership and criticism of Nato. Polanski thinks that Donald Trump means the Greens’ commitment to Nato is now “out of date” and should be replaced by a European defence pact.⁷

Of course, taxing the rich and renationalisation hardly amount to socialism. Taxation costs the capitalists, when it comes to their bottom line - but tax revenues maintain the capitalist state, without which the capitalists cannot maintain their rule.⁸ Nor is renationalisation akin to the expropriation and workers’ control we favour. Wage-slavery continues. As for a European defence pact, it would defend - and advance - the interests of European capitalism in exploiting and robbing the world.

With good reason then, as *The Socialist* says, the “Greens are not a party rooted in or emanating from the workers’ movement The party also - consciously - does not have a socialist ideology, a vision of an alternative system to capitalism.”

History

In fact, the Greens are historically rooted in Young England conservatism and Malthusian overpopulation theories, propounded by the likes of Paul R Ehrlich. In

January 1972 Edward Goldsmith published ‘A blueprint for survival’ in his magazine, *The Ecologist*. Shortly thereafter issued in book form by Penguin, it sold 750,000 copies. Goldsmith and fellow author Robert Allen have, perhaps unfairly, been described as ‘blackshirts with green welly boots’. They argued for cutting the British population by 50%, repatriating immigrants, small-scale farms, tight-knit communities, living in harmony with nature, establishing a social order based on the patriarchal family and something resembling the Indian caste system.⁹ More than a whiff of Jorian Jenks (farmer, environmental pioneer and genuine 1930s fascist).¹⁰

On such foundations, Michael Benfield, Freda Sanders, Tony Whittaker and Lesley Whittaker established the PEOPLE party in November 1972. Goldsmith merged his Movement for Survival with PEOPLE and became one of its leading figures. A year later it morphed into the Ecology Party and, 10 years after that, the Green Party (UK).

Today, the Green Party in England and Wales has moved considerably to the left. Its 2024 general election manifesto, *Real hope, real change*, contains more than a few worthwhile demands: public ownership of energy, water and railways, build council houses, end the right to buy, abolish all the post-1979 anti-trade union laws, proportional representation, self-determination for Scotland and Wales, brand Israel guilty of genocide.¹¹ Considerably more radical than Sir Keir’s 2024 offer for sure and this duly produced a crop of leftwing ‘big name’ endorsements: eg, Jennie Formby, Jamie Driscoll, George Monbiot, Owen Jones, Grace Blakeley, Laura Parker¹² ... and in the ‘small name’ league, the blogger Phil Burton-Cartledge, formerly of this parish.¹³

Hence rightwing accusations

that the Greens are a ‘watermelon party’: green on the outside, red on the inside. A tired joke: Green perspectives remain firmly located within the narrow confines of capitalist society.

True, there is an implicit rejection of monopoly capitalism, state hypertrophy and the ecologically destructive logic of production for the sake of production. However, sole traders, local businesses, mutual banks, cooperative enterprises are upheld as the alternative. Towards that end the Bank of England is to be given a mandate to fund the transition to a “fairer”, green capitalism based on small and medium businesses: apparently the “lifeblood of our economy and our communities”.¹⁴ Finance capital is, at least in the imagination, reined in, but continues, albeit in *responsible* form. Essentially the same happens with industrial capital.

Electurally, the Greens are disproportionately young, student, female, well-educated and renting.¹⁵ Programmatically, however, the Green Party are unmistakably a petty bourgeois party which wants to reform capitalism in the interests of the petty bourgeoisie ... and that, if the need arises, makes it eminently buyable by the big bourgeoisie. Already there are a few bigish donors.¹⁶ But, the more MPs and the nearer to coalition politics they come, there will be those “no strings” donations generously provided by billionaires.

Note, in 2021, Germany’s Greens “received more large donations than Angela Merkel’s party”.¹⁷ In government from 2021 to 2024 they distinguished themselves from their social democratic and free democrat partners by their militarism, greenwashing and neo-liberalism. They unconditionally supported Israeli war in Gaza. Green foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, and Green vice chancellor, Robert

Habeck, even rejected calls for a “humanitarian ceasefire”.¹⁸ When it came to Nato’s proxy war in Ukraine the Greens spearheaded demands for the delivery of heavy weapons and escalation.

Federalism

So why on earth does SPEW want the Greens invited to affiliate to YP/JCP?

Psychoanalysis might possibly suggest that the answer lies in a collective desire to return to the comforting womb of Labourism ... and, as the Labour Party itself is now, wrongly, spurned as just another capitalist party, we have the repetitive, obsessive and self-destructive commitment to various Labour Party mark two projects and elevating federalism into a *cardinal principle*.¹⁹ Not that we would propose a course of therapeutic treatment. No, we would urge comrades to study, openly rebel and join us in the struggle for a mass Communist Party.

A mark two Labour Party and federalism as a cardinal principle also sees SPEW calling for YP trade union affiliation, even describing trade unions - and therefore under current conditions the trade union bureaucracy - as not just representing “the interests of their members in the workplace, but the general interests of working class people”.²⁰ A categorical error, which reveals a profound ignorance of the ABCs of Marxism.²¹

In the absence of communist leadership - and strict accountability - trade unions will, at best, represent the sectional interests of their members in securing better terms in the sale of labour-power. At worst trade unions represent the sectional interests of the trade union bureaucracy itself!

No, it is the Marxist party, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party - call it what you will - which *alone* can represent the general interests of the working

class: not just in relation to this or that employer, but in relation to all classes in society. Alone such a party is built around a principled minimum-maximum programme. Alone such a party combines democracy with centralism. Alone such a party imposes collective control over elected officials - in parliament, in the council chamber and in trade union committee rooms.

As an *exception*, we can advocate federalism at a state level: eg, a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales. We can also accept as a historic fact the Labour Party as a federal party made up of affiliated trade unions, cooperatives and socialist organisations (and demand an end to the anti-communist bans and proscriptions). But *our* overriding principle is democratic centralism. Without that we have little chance of overthrowing and superseding capitalism.

James Schneider, an important Corbyn insider, has also argued for a “federated organisation”, albeit in order to lay the “foundations” for some sort of left-populist party.²² With that in mind he proposes to work “constructively” with the Greens, even holding joint primaries to choose candidates.²³ Class lines are abandoned, forgotten or rejected once again.

Not that Polanski reciprocates. Asked if the Greens might hypothetically stand down candidates in a pact with the YP/JCP, he said: “It’s not my starting point, because at the moment I’m not quite sure what Zarah Sultana’s and Jeremy Corbyn’s platform is going to be.” However, Polanski said he expected the Green programme to be more radical and would need to be shown “very strong arguments” for any formal pact. A more likely outcome would be cooperation over which seats each party targeted.²⁴

Threefold

Exactly what the SWP proposes. Socialists and Greens will “need to avoid running against each other in some constituencies to boot out Labour. But there should be no blanket policy of standing aside for all Greens - only principled leftwing ones.”²⁵ By the way, this formulation reveals that the SWP argue not just for “standing aside” for so-called “principled leftwing” Greens ... but, one presumes, voting for them. Class lines are abandoned, forgotten or rejected.

And what about Labour? It does, after all, remain, no matter how attenuated, a bourgeois workers’ party, crucially through trade union affiliations. What about the Labour left? Should we seek to “boot out” Labour leftwingers? The SWP appears to be just as confused as SPEW.

This can be seen in spades with *Socialist Worker* editor Tomáš Tengely-Evans. Writing an ‘in-depth’ article, he rightly excoriates Sir Keir Starmer and his government over welfare cuts, the priority given to Britain’s war machine, the blind eye turned to the Gaza genocide, the scapegoating of illegal migrants.²⁶ This, he says, stems from the very DNA of Labourism. It is not simply the result of the centrality given to the election of a Labour government (what might be called electoralism).

Besides treating the Labour Party as a lucrative career ladder, receiving all manner of juicy bribes and fear of falling foul of an omnipresent capitalist mass media, there is, amongst Labourites, a thoroughly internalised commitment to the existing state and its constitution. When it comes down to it, that means subordination to what is commonly called the national interest (ie, the continuation of capitalist exploitation).

Time and again this has seen Labour governments junk even mild-mannered election promises in the name of ‘fiscal responsibility’ and restoring national economic fortunes. So it was with the first two minority governments of Ramsay MacDonald. So it was with Clement Attlee’s majority government and those of Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Sir Keir Starmer that followed.

However, the problem with comrade Tengely-Evans’ account is threefold.

Firstly, he, along with the SWP as a whole, is committed to the YP/JCP being no more than an umbrella. We take that as just another way of presenting ‘federalism’, albeit not as a cardinal principle. Secondly, while comrade Tengely-Evans sees the Labour right as committed to the nation-state, he sees the Labour left as committed to the working class: “the contradiction between class and nation within Labour leads to the party’s left-right divide”. Another categorical error, this time an SWP one, which again reveals a profound ignorance of the ABCs of Marxism.

The Labour left, even in exile, is just as committed to the nation-state as the Labour right. Their ‘socialism’, if you can call it that nowadays, remains very much of the national sort. Jeremy Corbyn’s *For the many, not the few* (2017) promised and promoted the illusion that the country could be taken back to a future where the social democratic consensus once again reigns. But, while Corbyn peppered his programme with countless references to peace and justice and the occasional reference to class, there can be no doubt about his commitment to the nation-state. Comrade Tengely-Evans either does not understand that salient fact or he wants to flatter, make excuses, provide political cover for YP - crucially Jeremy Corbyn himself. After all, his politics are still 100% Labour left.

Thirdly, comrade Tengely-Evans seems to have turned being organisationally outside the ranks of the Labour Party into a cardinal principle, presumably because *today* that describes the SWP and Corbyn, Sultana, etc. He seems totally unaware that the first generation of SWP leaders, under the initial guise of the Socialist Review Group, then the International Socialists, were to be found deeply ensconced in the bowels of the Labour Party throughout the 1950s and well into the late 1960s. Supposedly, they were under no “illusion ... about transforming the Labour Party into a revolutionary party”. They were there to maintain “regular contact with people in the labour movement” ... and “to recruit”, mainly from Labour’s youth section.²⁷

While comrade Tengely-Evans is surely living proof of the SWP’s current philistinism, there can be no doubt about its origins. Tony Cliff - the SWP’s founder leader - prided himself in having “one rule”, a rule he “always followed”: do not read the “sectarian literature” of rival organisations. He took great satisfaction in “never” having read Gerry Healy’s paper, nor that of the Mandeliste International Marxist Group (now Anticapitalist Resistance). Instead he “avidly read” the “wider left press”, not least *Tribune*, which had “significant influence on the left in general”.²⁸ Note, Healy’s Socialist Labour League was then the biggest Trotskyite organisation in Britain and for a time controlled Labour’s youth section, the Young Socialists. Frankly, one cannot imagine a Lenin or a Trotsky adopting such a stupid rule, let alone religiously sticking to it.

It has to be admitted, that the SWP’s third generation of leaders

- comrades Tomáš Tengely-Evans, Lewis Nielson and Joseph Choonara - are hardly distinguishable from left Labourism ... certainly when it comes to elections. Look at the platform which their Maxine Bowler stood on as an *independent* candidate for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough in July 2024: Palestine, Palestine, Palestine ... that and vague opposition to government “anti-migrant racism, attacks on working class people, and all their rotten policies”.²⁹ Recycled left Labourism, in other words.

Real class struggle

Meanwhile, in the pages of *Socialist Worker*, chosen SWP writers, eg, comrade Tengely-Evans, will, when it suits, pose as r-r-revolutionaries by proclaiming that the “*real* struggle of the working class” is “more important than winning elections”.³⁰ As if elections cannot be made into a form of the *real* class struggle. Frankly, such a statement either displays a complete lack self-awareness - that or it reveals out-and-out hypocrisy. The reader can judge.

It’s not just the third generation of SWP leaders. The second generation - John Rees, Lindsey German, Alex Callinicos and Martin Smith - ensured that the Socialist Alliance of the early 2000s limited itself to almost entirely economic demands, when it came to our “priority pledges”. Indeed, whereas we in the CPGB wanted democratic questions - such as a federal republic, self-determination for Scotland and Wales, Irish unity, the abolition of the monarchy, upholding free speech, replacing the standing army with a popular militia and opposing calls for a British withdrawal from the EU - in order to *distinguish* ourselves from bog-standard left Labourism - the SWP used its majority to present the Socialist Alliance as ‘old Labour’ during election campaigns.

Officially it characterised the Socialist Alliance as a “united front between revolutionary socialists and left Labourites”.³¹ Suffice to say, there were precious few actual ‘old Labour’ exiles. ‘Independent’ comrades, such as Mike Marqusee, Dave Church, Nick Wrack and Anna Chen, generally self-identified themselves as Marxists of one sort or another. But the largely imaginary ‘old Labour’ exiles set the programmatic limits of the Socialist Alliance.

Worse was to come. In the Respect “united front between revolutionary socialists and Muslim activists” the SWP once again used its majority - this time to vote down motions advocating international socialism, republicanism, replacing the standing army with a popular militia, abortion rights, opposition to migration controls, etc. The electorate must not be put off. Such was the SWP’s almost Blairite argument. This time it was, though, George Galloway, Yvonne Ridley, Salma Yaqoob, the Muslim Association of Britain and various British-Asian businessmen who set the programmatic limits ... the result being that Respect stood on a left Labourite platform in elections.

Tribunes

For communists, standing in parliamentary elections and using our MPs as ‘tribunes of the oppressed’ to expose government lies, secrets and intrigues is most definitely a *real* form of the class struggle. Our forces can thereby be educated, organised ... and “multiplied”.³²

If we were to rank different forms of the class struggle in terms of their importance, we would place routine economic struggles at the bottom and making revolution at the top, elections coming somewhere in the middle. Meanwhile, Tweedledum-Tweedledee elections, where voters

are asked to choose between lesser evils, serve the ruling class to fool most of the people, most of the time.

But, if we can get our act together, if we can form a real, as opposed to a fake, Communist Party, elections can become one of our most effective weapons, especially in non-revolutionary times.³³ Hence we “consider it obligatory for the Communist Party” to stand candidates, not least because we want to use “every avenue” to propagate our ideas, in the struggle to form the working class into a class for itself, a class that is ready to take state power.³⁴ Indeed success in elections could quite conceivably be the antechamber for social revolution ●

Notes

1. ‘What we think’ *The Socialist* September 11-17 2025.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd0d0d08jnjo.
3. See C Joyce ‘Trotsky’s transitional method: how to win workers and youth for socialism?’ (www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/121337/21-02-2024/trotskystransitional-method-how-to-win-workers-and-youth-for-socialism).
4. For the last of my many critiques of the so-called ‘transitional method’ see ‘Programmatic starting point’ *Weekly Worker* February 27 2025.
5. Gensee Hannah Sell and SPEW’s exec should definitely not escape blame. We are told, after all, that the “editorial team works closely with the executive committee of the Socialist Party and others at the national centre to check the content of articles when necessary” (www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27528/20-06-2018/how-do-we-produce-the-socialist). One presumes that includes editorials on the Greens and YP.
6. *Morning Star* July 4 2025; *The Guardian* March 7 2025.
7. *Byline Times* May 8 2025.
8. Under capitalist conditions we support the abolition of indirect taxes and a system of progressive taxation on income and wealth. Incidentally, David Harvey claims that Marx on taxation “remains an empty box in his theorising” (D Harvey *Marx, Capital and the madness of economic reason* Oxford 2017, p15). Not entirely untrue: Marx’s book on *The state*, as projected in the *Grundrisse*, proved stillborn, along with the books on *Landed property*, *Wage labour*, *Foreign trade* and the *World market*. Nonetheless, Marx, Engels and their close collaborator, Wilhelm Wolff - whom Marx dedicated *Capital* Vol 1 to - had a good deal to say on the matter of taxes in their journalism and letters (See D Ireland ‘What Marxist tax policies actually look like’ - brill.com/view/journals/hima/27/2/article-p188 6.xml).
9. See E Goldsmith and R Allen *A blueprint for survival* Harmondsworth 1972.
10. See PM Coupland *Farming, fascism and ecology: a life of Jorian Jenks* London 2017.

11. greenparty.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Green-Party-2024-General-Election-Manifesto-Long-version-with-cover.pdf.
12. bright-green.org/2024/06/19/who-are-the-high-profile-figures-who-have-endorsed-the-greens.
13. averypublicsociologist.blogspot.com/2024/06/the-green-partys-leftism.html.
14. A phrase repeated 69 times in the 2024 Green Party manifesto - greenparty.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Green-Party-2024-General-Election-Manifesto-Long-version-with-cover.pdf.
15. yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49978-how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-general-election.
16. donation.watch/en/unitedkingdom/party/GPEW/donors.
17. *The Guardian* September 7 2021.
18. www.thefightforberlin.com/greens-germany-neoliberal.
19. See S Freud *Beyond the pleasure principle* London 1961.
20. ‘What we think’ *The Socialist* September 3-9 2025.
21. Most famously, of course, Lenin’s ‘What is to be done?’, where he describes the “[t]rade unionist politics of the working class” as the “*bourgeois* politics of the working class” (V1 Lenin *CW* Vol 5 Moscow 1977, p426).
22. newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/building-the-party.
23. Novara Media, July 25 2025.
24. *The Guardian* September 3 2025.
25. *Socialist Worker* September 10-16 2025.
26. T Tengely-Evans ‘Why the left must break from Labourism’ *Socialist Worker* March 26 2025.
27. T Cliff *A world to win: life of a revolutionary* London 2000, pp59-60.
28. T Cliff *A world to win: life of a revolutionary* London 2000, p62.
29. *Socialist Worker* May 31 2024.
30. Revealingly this formulation almost instantly disappeared online. It was changed in the print version from this: “A break from Labourism would mean seeing working class struggle as more important than winning elections. It means subordinating electoral calculations to boosting the *real* struggles of the working class” (my emphasis - T Tengely-Evans ‘Why the left must break from Labourism’ *Socialist Worker* March 26 2025). After being up online for no more than a few days, it became this: “A break from Labourism would mean seeing working class struggle as most important in winning change. It means subordinating electoral and parliamentary calculations to boosting the confidence and organisation of the working class to fight” (socialistworker.co.uk/in-depth/labourism-is-holding-us-back-the-left-must-break-with-it). Presumably, some senior comrade(s) saw Tomáš’s screamingly obvious blunder and went ballistic. Humiliatingly, TTE had to agree to the change formulated by the *real* editor(s).
31. See J Conrad *Towards a Socialist Alliance party* London 2001, p25.
32. J Conrad *In the enemy camp* London 1993, p18.
33. Despite the absurd claims of this, that or the other confessional sect, there is, of course, no real Communist Party today (certainly not the *Morning Star*’s CPB, the Brarite CPGB-ML or the Woods-Sewell RCP).
34. J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991, p97.

Fighting fund

Extra, extra, extra

We’re still quite a bit below the going rate, when it comes to this week’s *Weekly Worker* fighting fund, so I really hope that more comrades will play their part, so we can reach our monthly £2,750 target for September.

Most readers will know that we absolutely depend on the support we get from them, as well as from our own comrades, to see us over the line, so please do what you can! Over the last week, for instance, we received bank transfers/standing orders from PB (£80), MM (£75), AG (£50), TR (£40), TW (£25), OG (£24), and CC and JL (£10 each). In addition, the following comrades clicked on the PayPal button: PM (£50), JV (£7), together with comrades SO, RD, AR, GP and RD, who all chipped in with a fiver. Finally, JH (£4) came up with a bit of cash. Thanks to everyone! And an extra: JC came up with £5 in payment of a bet with comrade Raphael over the date of the JCP/YP conference launch ... he thought that it couldn’t possibility be in November now.

All that comes to £405, taking our running total up to £1,131, with less than two weeks to go to raise the £1,419 we still need! Lots of comrades have told us how much they appreciate the role of this paper - including when it comes to the JCP/YP. In fact, we have been sending extra batches of the *Weekly Worker* to supporters up and down the country for them to distribute/sell at local branch meetings.

If anyone reading this fancies joining the others, just email editor@weeklyworker.co.uk, and we can send you a batch too ... tell us how many you want.

But, in the meanwhile, don’t forget that we urgently need to reach our monthly target, so please play your part if you can! Check the link below to see how you can do that ●

Robbie Rix

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YOUR PARTY

Straight from Momentum playbook

Branches are to be ignored and the mass of members treated to token regional meetings and pointless break-out sessions. **Carla Roberts** examines the plans for November's founding conference

As soon as we published widespread 'news' that the launch conference of Your Party had "definitely" been pushed back to 2026, new rumours started circulating, according to which it would "absolutely" take place in November 2025.

On September 15, the official email was sent to all membership applicants, laying out the plans for a launch conference in "late November". Date aside, the plans unfortunately confirm what we had been warning about for some time: this will be an entirely undemocratic affair, tightly controlled by those at the top (see box for details).

There will be four documents: a "political statement", a constitution, rules and a document on "organisational strategy". The email gushes that "members will be able to comment, suggest changes and track how each document develops". An online platform has been developed for this purpose.

However, the devil is in the detail: *Actual changes* (rather than a flurry of weird and wonderful 'comments' and 'suggested changes') can only be proposed through amendments presented by the "thousands" of participants at the launch conference. The regional assemblies taking place in October will only be "deliberative" - talking shops without any votes taken. The timeline shows that those currently running the show *might* accept *some* of the proposed changes coming from the assemblies and the online platform - or they might not. The "revised documents" will be published in October.

Leadership aims

We hear that the leadership aims for a conference with a massive 6,000 participants, chosen semi-randomly by lottery, but also ensuring "fair balance of gender, region and background". We dread to think what this "background" might consist of - it reads like a nod to identity politics. The participants will *definitely not* be chosen because of their political views or plans for Your Party's future or because their proposed amendments to the four documents are the most popular. And obviously they will not have been chosen democratically by the (proto)branches, which is what we argue for.

We want the best campaigners, the most experienced fighters, the most determined socialists deciding the future of the party - not the so-called 'representative' ones (who are, by definition, average). What are the chances that a relatively inexperienced group of people might end up supporting the lowest-common-denominator policies pushed by those above? Especially if you imagine Jeremy Corbyn getting up and telling them that he hopes they support the proposals. (No doubt, there will be special rules for Corbyn and other VIPs, who will be able to participate without having to throw their name into the sortition hat.)

As we have pointed out, this is the opposite of genuine democracy. The participants at launch conference are isolated individuals, entirely unaccountable to anybody. Most will not know each other. As conference participants are only selected in November, there is practically no chance for them to cohere with one another - the names surely will not be published in any case. We are talking about 6,000 individuals



Jon Lansman: back to Zionism

acting as individuals. What if all 6,000 participants want to move just one amendment each? Clearly, the conference arrangements committee will be in an incredibly powerful position - not just to choose among the amendments, but also when it comes to how to present them, where to feature them in the agenda, selecting who is allowed to speak, etc. The final online vote on the four documents will just be a formality to seal the deal.

As an important aside, we have no idea if these plans are supported by both factions at the top. Has this sham been produced with the agreement of Zarah Sultana, for example? She has moved to the left recently, but also seems to have been taken in by the illusion that hundreds of thousands of isolated people voting at home in a Zoomocracy could in any way be described as the epitome of democracy. She has been entirely quiet on social media, which does not fill us with much hope that she is putting up any resistance to these plans. She is also going on a national speaking tour with Corbyn.¹

This whole charade reminds us a lot of Momentum, which - we should remember - used to be vibrant and democratic, with autonomous branches organising the left's work in the Labour Party. A first national democratic conference was supposed to take place in 2017, with elected delegates discussing the leadership and the policies. A conference

arrangements committee had been elected, regional meetings were being organised, etc. It was becoming clear, however, that founder Jon Lansman would lose control at conference, after he surrendered to the anti-Semitism smear campaign in the Labour Party. Things really kicked off when he removed Jackie Walker as Momentum vice-chair.

So Lansman launched an "online survey" to ask all members to support his plans to abolish all democratic structures in Momentum - in the name of 'One member, one vote'! As we wrote at the time, "the result was a forgone conclusion".² In plebiscites the dictator gets to choose the question put before those below and, barring accidents, they get the result they want. Not only were the questions loaded and leading: they were also disgracefully backed up by emails sent in the names of Jeremy Corbyn, Clive Lewis and Diane Abbott. Topping it all it was team Momentum doing the count. A coup in other words.

Lansman's coup

So, with a victorious 80.6% voting for OMOV, at a stroke, the national committee, steering committee and regional committees were abolished. The plans for a democratic decision-making conference were cancelled and a constitution was installed that barred from membership of Momentum all those who had been expelled from the Labour Party.

This is how Momentum was turned into a well-financed phone bank - and an entirely useless political project.

Clearly, those currently running Your Party have learned an important lesson from that experience - an entirely negative, anti-democratic one. Genuine democracy means there will be vibrant branches that can present possible challenges to the leadership. James Schneider, we should remember, was heavily involved in running Momentum and is now drafting Your Party's constitution. There is a real danger that sortition and atomised online voting will be enshrined long-term, especially if used 'successfully' at the launch conference and without any criticism or protest from below.

What will this constitution say about the dozens of proto-branches that have already sprung up? We would argue that they should be officially recognised as forming the basis of future local organisations.

What about the organised left? We hear that Corbyn's right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, in particular wants to avoid the "Marxist sects" playing any kind of role. Should she be successful and double membership is banned, the result will be obvious: Not only does it enshrine a witch-hunting culture, although groups like the Socialist Workers Party would, of course, continue to participate; it would disguise its membership behind

this or that campaign (something the SWP has been practising for decades.) It will not stop sectarian behaviour in meetings, but it will enshrine bureaucratic control from above and should be opposed by all democrats and socialists.

However, it is amazing how many people on the left have already started to excuse this lack of democracy - some even support it. Oh well, there just wasn't enough time to set up proper branches. At least young and inexperienced comrades will get a chance to go to conference. Let's just get on with it and change things later - we have to trust Jeremy Corbyn. There is also the widespread argument that at least sortition will keep the SWP or Counterfire from electing all the delegates. And, yes, we have heard of many proto-branches that have been 'hijacked' by those two groups in particular. This might in fact also be one of the reasons those at the top have gone for sortition.

We criticise the SWP - a lot. But we entirely reject the idea of embracing bureaucratic manoeuvres to keep them out. For a start, it keeps *all* organised trends out and creates a culture against organising horizontally. However, a number of political platforms and campaigns have already sprung up, as happens in any democratic organisation. Just like the Democratic Socialists of America, we should embrace and celebrate the right to organise caucuses as a vital part of building any sort of genuine working class party.

Democracy is the only way to fight against sectarianism and bureaucratic control. We favour using systems like the single transferable vote for elections to ensure that minority views are not silenced and that no single organisation ends up with all the delegates or the whole steering committee.

Sadly, the lack of democracy in Your Party is not an unfortunate by-product of time pressures or organisational questions, but a reflection of the deep and ongoing Labourism and distrust of democracy by those currently running the show ●

Notes

1. www.yourparty.uk/events.
2. 'Reduced to a corpse?' *Weekly Worker* January 12 2017: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1137/reduced-to-a-corpse.

Launch conference lottery

■ Founding conference is to take place in late November, with around 6,000 participants. We hear this will be either in Birmingham or Liverpool, from Friday evening through to Sunday afternoon and that participants will sit "on circular tables, allowing informal as well as formal discussion".

■ Participants are to be chosen by lottery "to ensure a fair balance of gender, region and background".

■ There will be no full programme, but "draft versions of our four core founding documents - our Political Statement, Constitution, Rules, and Organisational Strategy. These documents will be drafts in the truest sense, ready to be edited and evolved. Members will be able to comment, suggest changes, and track how each document develops." We hear too that the political statement is to be drafted by the "Independent Alliance MPs and the team around the MPs".

■ The draft constitution, is likely to be drafted by James Schneider and will be hosted on an online platform. This will be structured by headings from Max Shanly's draft constitution.

■ "Alongside this online process, Your Party will host huge regional *deliberative* meetings [our emphasis], where thousands of members come together to listen to each other, break bread and debate the founding documents face to face. From Norwich to Newcastle, we'll foster a political culture of healthy discussion and disagreement, enabling thousands to weigh in with their ideas, questions and concerns." Note that there will not be any votes - in other words, these will be talking shops that might (or might not) vote on amendments, which might (or might not) be tabled for debate at conference.

■ "In November, thousands of in-person founding conference delegates will be chosen by lottery. These delegates will have a big responsibility - to debate the founding documents, propose amendments and vote on them at the conference."

■ "The final decision will be up to all members through an online, secure, 'one member, one vote' system."

■ There will probably be no leadership election at the founding conference.

ORWELL

The road from Eton College

Seventy-five years after George Orwell's death, Paul Flowers, in the fourth part of his series, focuses on the establishment's ideological misuse of *Animal farm*

World War II entered a new phase after the German assault upon the Soviet Union in June 1941. One immediate result was that the USSR rapidly changed in people's perception from being a near-ally of Nazi Germany into a staunch and respected ally of Britain. After December 1941 the same happened in the USA as well. The rehabilitation of Stalin and the Soviet Union was not so much a return to the fellow-travelling days of the late 1930s, but part of the wartime ideology in Britain. It went much further, with the British government being obliged to give official approval to the USSR - an endorsement which was simultaneously fulsome and uneasy.¹

Whilst respect for the Soviet Union in its fight against Nazi Germany was to a large degree a refracted form of British patriotism - one account stated that "criticism of the USSR became tantamount to treason"² - it could not avoid being conflated with the idea of the perceived superiority of a planned economy, and even with the idea of socialism.³ Only a tiny handful of people at various obscure points across the political spectrum refrained from joining in the Stalin worship. George Orwell was one of them.⁴

Peak prospect

It was almost typical of Orwell that at the peak of British respect for the Soviet Union he should write a novel that was a sharp polemic against Britain's wartime ally. Needless to say, he had considerable problems getting *Animal farm* published,⁵ and even when it was released by Secker and Warburg, it was shorn of its polemical foreword, thus helping to rob it of its contemporary relevance.

The unpublished foreword to *Animal farm* showed Orwell's great concern about "the prevailing orthodoxy" of the "uncritical admiration of Soviet Russia", which he considered was encouraging extremely unwelcome and ominous tendencies amongst British intellectuals. He flailed out at the "veiled censorship" operating in their circles:

At any given moment there is an orthodoxy - a body of ideas which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question. It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that or the other, but it is 'not done' to say it - just as in mid-Victorian times it was 'not done' to mention trousers in the presence of a lady. Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the highbrow periodicals.⁶

He stated that, from the early 1930s, the bulk of British intellectuals had consistently accepted the Soviet viewpoint "with complete disregard to historical truth or intellectual decency". One could not obtain "intelligent criticism or even, in some cases, plain honesty" from writers and journalists who were "under no direct pressure to falsify their opinions". Moreover, "throughout that time, criticism of the Soviet regime from the left



Foreign office paid for comic version, CIA for the cartoon film

could only obtain a hearing with difficulty". Most of all, he decried the trend amongst intellectuals towards restricting the expression of oppositional ideas that were seen as "objectively" aiding an enemy - a process leading towards the destruction of "all independence of thought", and to a "totalitarian outlook".⁷

Although, as we shall see, Orwell was well aware that the tendency towards self-censorship went a lot further than the radical intelligentsia, here he was aiming his criticisms specifically at the leftwing intellectuals who refused to criticise the Soviet regime, when it committed acts that would be roundly condemned if perpetrated by another. For Orwell, the "willingness to criticise Russia and Stalin" was "the test of intellectual honesty".⁸ His message to pro-Stalin intellectuals was brutal: "Do remember that dishonesty and cowardice always have to be paid for. Don't imagine that for years on end you can make yourself the boot-licking propagandist of the Soviet regime, or any other regime, and then suddenly return to mental decency. Once a whore, always a whore."⁹

Predicament

As for the novel itself, there can be no doubt that *Animal farm* is based upon the experience of the Soviet Union - from the Russian Revolution, through the emergence and victory of Stalinism, to the wartime years. Some of the characters are eponymous. The taciturn, devious and ambitious Napoleon is clearly Stalin, and the more inventive and vivacious Snowball is an equally obvious Trotsky - although he "was not considered to have the same depth of character" as Napoleon, which is an odd characterisation.¹⁰

There is, however, no porcine Lenin, as Major (Marx) dies just before the animals take over the farm, although the displaying of Major's skull is reminiscent of the rituals around the embalmed Bolshevik leader. The pigs as a whole represent the Bolshevik Party, the thuggish dogs are the secret police and the other animals mainly represent the Soviet working class and peasantry.

Although Orwell's sympathies are clearly with the animals, and their revolution against Farmer Jones is celebrated, his overall view of them is not particularly complimentary. The pigs - the most intelligent and the only literate creatures - move immediately into a commanding position because of their superior intelligence, and become an increasingly ruthless

ruling élite. The sheep are the most stupid, unable to command even the basics of the animalist credo, and are merely able mindlessly to bleat slogans at official command. Boxer, the big carthorse, is practically illiterate, and represses his occasional worries that things are going awry with his mantras of "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right". Even though the animals attempt unsuccessfully to prevent the exhausted Boxer from being taken to the knacker, they willingly believe the pigs' tale that he died at the vet. Not surprisingly, many commentators, both friendly and hostile, have accused Orwell of having a low opinion of the working class.¹¹

Despite the fact that the humans - that is to say, the capitalists - in *Animal farm* are from start to finish presented in a deeply negative light, it is not surprising that the novel was and continues to be championed by liberals and conservatives for anti-socialist purposes.¹² The moral of this book appears to be that, however awful the old rulers are, revolutions merely lead to the emergence of new and possibly more oppressive elites.¹³

At the end of the book, a by-now bipedal and clothed Napoleon shows a delegation of humans around the farm. He tells them that the old revolutionary symbols and rituals have been abolished. It is clear that the other animals know their place. Having greatly cheered his visitors, they sit down to celebrate, only to come near to blows when they find themselves cheating at cards. The animals peering through the windows see that the pigs and men have become interchangeable: "...it was impossible to say which was which".¹⁴

The main problem with *Animal farm* is that there is no analysis of how a ruling elite came into existence. The development of the pigs from a leadership into a ruling elite is just a given: it is as if any leadership will inevitably become a ruling elite, once it seizes power.¹⁵ Orwell attempted to reassure the American libertarian, Dwight MacDonald, stating that he was referring to a revolution led by "unconsciously power-hungry people", and insisting that the moral of the book was: "You can't have a revolution unless you make it for yourself; there is no such thing as a benevolent dictatorship."¹⁶ But that is not how the book is usually interpreted, and MacDonald's qualms would not have arisen were it otherwise.¹⁷

Stanley Plastrik, an American socialist, even wondered if Orwell had renounced socialism: "Is not the anti-socialist or liberal reader

entitled to draw the conclusion that the tale is meant as a parable on the utopian character of the socialist cause? We believe so, although Orwell has not had the political conviction or courage to make this clear, perhaps reflecting the very uncertainty reigning in his head."¹⁸

Of course, using different sorts of animals to represent social strata ensures that there will be insurmountable barriers from the very start. A cat or dog, let alone a goose or duck, cannot become a pig, whatever the objective conditions; but a revolutionary can become a bureaucrat, a revolutionary leadership can become an elite.

No renunciation

And that is what happened in the Soviet Union. It is Orwell's inability to explain the rise of a post-revolutionary elite which led to his book being championed by liberals and conservatives. Although he was worried about this,¹⁹ *Animal farm* became popular with liberals and conservatives precisely because it sees the pigs' ascendancy into a ruling elite as an ineluctable process. If it did not, it could not be used as an anti-socialist work.

Animal farm did not represent any renunciation on the part of Orwell of the socialist cause. Rather, it was intended to show the need for a libertarian brand of socialism.²⁰ His opposition to both capitalism and totalitarian collectivism remained constant. Reviewing Hayek's anti-socialist tract *The road to serfdom*, Orwell noted:

Capitalism leads to dole queues, the scramble for markets, and war. Collectivism leads to concentration camps, leader worship and war. There is no way out of this unless a planned economy can be somehow combined with the freedom of the intellect, which can only happen if the concept of right and wrong is restored to politics.²¹

This predicament was to be the axis around which much of Orwell's future writings would revolve ●

Notes

1. P Addison *The road to 1945: British politics and the Second World War* London 1982, pp127-63.
2. FS Northedge and A Wells *Britain and Soviet communism: the impact of a revolution* Basingstoke 1982, p151.
3. A Calder *The people's war: Britain 1939-1945* London 1992, pp260ff, 298, 348ff. The government's fears about this are described in PMH Bell *John Bull and the bear: British public opinion, foreign policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* London 1990, pp42, 67. The membership of the CPGB rose from 22,783 in December 1941 to 56,000 in December 1942, although it dropped off

- to 45,535 by March 1945 (see N Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1941-1951* London 1991, p252).
4. Even then, Orwell praised the Soviet system in his BBC wireless broadcast on May 2 1942: see WJ West *Orwell: the war commentaries* New York 1986, pp85-87. He did, however, later write off his BBC work as "bilge" (G Orwell, 'Letter to Stafford Cottman' *Collected essays, journalism and letters* (CEJL) Vol 4, Harmondsworth 1984, p180).
5. For the problems Orwell encountered with publishers, see B Crick *George Orwell: a life* Harmondsworth 1982, pp452ff.
6. *New Statesman* August 18 1995. Orwell suffered the indignity of having a book review rejected by the *Manchester Evening News* in March 1944 because it was critical of the Soviet Union: see B Crick *George Orwell: a life* Harmondsworth 1982, p463. Paul Addison wrote of the "near monopoly which communists and fellow-travellers possessed over the supply of information and publicity material about Russia" during the war: see P Addison *The road To 1945: British politics and the Second World War* London 1982, p138.
7. *New Statesman* August 18 1995.
8. G Orwell 'Letter to John Middleton Murry' *CEJL* Vol 3, p237.
9. G Orwell 'As I please', September 1944 *CEJL* Vol 3, p263. Nonetheless, Orwell stated that if, as he thought likely, intellectual opinion were to turn against Stalin, "I should not regard this as an advance ... What is needed is the right to print what one believes to be true, without having to fear bullying or blackmail from any side." (G Orwell, 'Annotations to Randall Swingler, "The right to free expression"' *CW* Vol 18, London 1998, p443; see also *New Statesman* August 18 1995).
10. G Orwell *Animal farm* Harmondsworth 1973, p15. Orwell originally portrayed "all the animals, including Napoleon," as having "flung themselves on their faces", when the windmill was blown up, but at the last moment before publishing he replaced the word "including" by "except", on the grounds that Stalin did remain in Moscow in June 1941 during the German advance: see G Orwell 'Letter to Roger Senhouse' *CEJL* Vol 3, p407. We now know that Orwell's original portrayal was more accurate, as Stalin seems to have experienced a serious breakdown and went into hiding for a few days.
11. For friendly appraisals, see J Molyneux 'Animal farm revisited', in P Flowers (ed) *George Orwell: enigmatic socialist* London 2005; for hostile appraisals, see J Walsh ('George Orwell' *Marxist Quarterly* January 1956), who shows what the CPGB thought of him.
12. Anne Applebaum, a young conservative writer, contended: "It is one of the best books on the psychology of revolutions. It acts as a kind of blueprint for the way revolutions actually happen, and, as I observe more revolutions in my later life, it becomes more accurate." *The Independent* August 14 1995.
13. John Mander considered that there was a dichotomy in Orwell's thinking, in that "there must always be revolutions", but that "all revolutions are totally useless" (J Mander 'Orwell in the sixties', the writer and commitment Westport 1975, p96). Patrick Reilly agreed, and stated that "*Animal Farm* and 1984 are authenticated by the fact that their creator did not want them to be true" (P Reilly 1984: *past, present and future* Boston 1986, p267).
14. G Orwell *Animal farm* Harmondsworth 1973, pp119-20.
15. Well before *Animal farm*, Orwell had betrayed a fatalistic streak regarding revolutionary leaderships: "It would seem that what you get over and over again is a movement of the proletariat which is promptly canalised and betrayed by astute people at the top, and then the growth of a new governing class" (*New English Weekly* June 16 1938).
16. G Orwell 'Letter to Dwight MacDonald' *CW* Vol 18, p507.
17. In 1947 Frank Ridley of the Independent Labour Party warned that socialists had to be very careful when criticising Stalinism, stating that *Animal farm*, "justifiable enough in itself", was "a godsend to Wall Street imperialism in mobilising public opinion against Russia" at a time when the USA was "preparing to attack the Soviet Union". He even went so far as to see Orwell as one of "the 'left' propagandists of Wall Street", alongside the US social democrats (*Left* June 1947).
18. *Labor Action* September 30 1946.
19. See Alfred Ayers' comments in S Wadhams *Remembering Orwell* Markham 1984, p68.
20. See Fenner Brockway's comments in S Wadhams *Remembering Orwell* Markham 1984, p150.
21. G Orwell, 'Review' *CEJL* Vol 3, p144. Note that Orwell did not include alongside "the freedom of the intellect" the popular control of the means of production as an essential anti-totalitarian criterion.

AGGREGATE

Working within Your Party

The strategy of ‘seizing the initiative’ by proposing hypothetical actions in the hope that others will agree is a common mistake on the far left. It leads to multiple competing initiatives. **Farzad Kamangar** reports

Our September 14 aggregate started by discussing a motion proposed by comrade Carla Roberts regarding CPGB candidate members. She said that, in the absence of a default time for candidate membership, some new comrades felt they were in limbo or that the wait to become a member was too long. She proposed a trial period of three months.

Speaking on behalf of the PCC, Jack Conrad suggested that three months was too short and that both the candidate member and the organisation needed a longer trial period, adding that six months would be better.

As some comrades were raising their hands for further contributions, comrade Conrad asked the meeting to vote on a procedural motion to end this debate and go immediately to a vote on the issue. That was agreed and the motion was then put to a vote and the six-month trial period, as opposed to three months in the original version, was adopted.

The second, main part of the meeting saw the continuation of the discussion that started at the August 24 aggregate around the CPGB’s intervention in the proposed new Jeremy Corbyn Party. The group of comrades who had proposed amendments had since withdrawn a major plank, with a view to further discussion, including “efforts to strengthen links with others in Your Party with a view to explore a Communist Caucus”.

The motion had stated that we need to ensure the *Weekly Worker* plays a leading role in cohering communist forces in YP by providing a strong and consistent pole of principled Marxist politics, which seeks to counter the inevitable pull to the right. It should feature and engage actively (though always critically) with this trend - by for example, by inviting non-members in as editors. The *Weekly Worker* could be the main pole of Marxist politics and debate and an education programme should be launched on key debates (opposition vs government, pacifism vs internationalism, Labourism vs Marxist partyism, etc).

Following some email exchanges, the main mover withdrew the motion, adding: “Reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that my clearly inadequate and flawed efforts to help build and grow the CPGB are having the opposite effect. Rather than discussing what to do, we are focusing on what not to do (ie, anything I suggest)”.

The PCC decided to ask Mike Macnair to rewrite the motion, taking out comments and statements with which we disagreed. Some obvious comments were that the CPGB cannot ensure a leading role for the *Weekly Worker*; that currently we do not see any realistic prospects for communist unity within YP; on the other hand, the possibility of tactical unity regarding democratic elections, representation, opposition to Bonapartism, etc, exists and we should explore it further.

Our aims

Starting the debate to propose the motion, comrade Macnair gave this background and pointed out that comrade Roberts’ initial proposal was to specifically add two named individuals to the editorial team. The amended version weakened this into a vague promise to consider adding unspecified people from



A Bonaparte, not on a white horse, but a bicycle

other groups in the future. While backing down from the original idea was correct, this new version is meaningless, because it does not identify who these collaborators would be.

This entire issue was tangled up with pre-existing concerns about a “bad culture” within the discussion. The strategy of ‘seizing the initiative’ by proposing hypothetical actions you hope others will agree to is a common mistake on the far left. It leads to multiple competing initiatives and is ineffective, said comrade Macnair. Our alternative approach is to clearly state our own positions. This defines our common ground and differences with others, which then allows for productive engagement (eg, debates, interventions in meetings), based on concrete principles, not vague hypotheticals.

He argued that comrade Roberts’ proposed concrete proposals risked becoming standard far-left practice. He agreed that slogans of the day can be useful, but we need to respond to the very concrete circumstances. (Having *only* such agitational slogans was part of Nicolai Bukharin’s argument at Comintern’s 4th Congress against having a minimum programme ... and Tony Cliff’s argument against having any programme. But the choice of agitational slogans does

have to depend on very concrete circumstances.) The PCC motion is designed to produce an orienting framework, within which specific agitational slogans could be shaped.

Jack Conrad said that the PCC proposal was “fairly straightforward and unremarkable”: it proposed to cooperate with those we can work with on a principled basis. This can include, for example, joint slates or stand-down agreements. The major amendments proposed and withdrawn at the August aggregate and now withdrawn by comrade Roberts presented us with the automatic default practice of the far left: first form your front, then simplify your politics in the hope of drawing others in. There is a “swirl” of small groups making such proposals in YP/JCP. But we do not even know the structures of the new party, which will shape tactics. He agreed with comrade Macnair that it was likely to be like Momentum, very top-down-controlled.

Creating fronts was forced on us in the Labour Party by the regime of bans and proscriptions, while in the Socialist Labour Party the CPGB was banned on day one. In Left Unity we were originally part of the Socialist Platform along with Nick Wrack, but split when it was made clear that his platform was unamendable. In YP/JCP for the moment we should act openly as the

CPGB. The *Weekly Worker* will be our main weapon for intervention.

Culture

Comrade Conrad said that in the major amendment offered in August and in comrade Roberts’ proposals he detected an attack on our ‘culture’ - the criticism of comrade Macnair for using the phrase, “useful idiots”, in his article on the Supreme Court on the trans question, for example. In this context, the amendment appeared liquidationist and the proposal to coopt unnamed people onto the *Weekly Worker* editorial team seemed linked to that.

Responding to these comments, comrade Roberts said that the PCC motion was not merely unremarkable: it was pointless. Her original proposals were in response to a brief period of political fluidity, in which pro-communist forces in YP/JCP might have come together to take the initiative as a caucus. There *had been* a huge political vacuum, and the PCC had failed even to get a leaflet out, and even now could not explain what the key political issues in YP/JCP are. The CPGB was doing nothing, and the opportunity was now gone.

She dismissed claims that by proposing additional non-CPGB contributors to the *Weekly Worker* editorial board there was any attempt at undermining the current members

or the PCC; later in the chat she added that what she meant was adding comrades who would edit the ‘YP section’ of the *Weekly Worker*. However, as we currently have no intention of including such a section, it was not clear how that would work. She dismissed allegations that she was agreeing with those who accuse the CPGB of a “bad culture” - in her emails and comments she was just expressing her opinion on the subject. The CPGB was, in her view, becoming irrelevant by failing to act.

Anne McShane, an Irish CPGB supporter, said that comrade Conrad’s proposal at the beginning of the meeting to go to the vote on three months or six months for candidate membership was an example of the “bad culture” people complained of - leaders should not be impatient. She did not agree with the proposal to coopt people onto the editorial team, but the opposition comes across as “a legacy issue” - holding back from real engagement for fear of being contaminated by opportunism. The PCC motion was okay, but lacked specifics, she added. And characterising comrades as “liquidationist” was wrong.

Paul Cooper said that he largely agreed with the PCC proposal on promoting ourselves through the paper, rather than imagining

a common caucus with centrists such as RS21. The proposals about the paper seemed to be a hold-over from the Forging Communist Unity discussions. However, there was a problem in the CPGB's work with a need to more aggressively recruit and reach out - for example, on social media. Developing a *Weekly Worker* supporters' network would be desirable.

Ian Spencer said that we needed a sense of urgency in the wake of 150,000 people waving Union flags and George crosses in central London the previous day. This will embolden the far right, and YP/JCP meetings are now at risk of far-right attacks. In this context, the PCC's response to comrade Roberts' proposals is just "waiting" - a "bunker mentality", he said.

Martin Greenfield, an Australian guest, said that from reading the *Weekly Worker* there was a very clear call to get involved in YP/JCP. CPGB comrades are not the only 'outsiders' in the process: John Rees's remarks on his Facebook page illustrate that he is too. The PCC motion has the strength of leaving open tactical alliances, rather than prioritising particular groups or individuals.

Peter Manson said that he agreed with a lot of what comrade Greenfield had said. The PCC motion indicated overall aims. Since the YP/JCP is not yet formed, precise tactics cannot be worked out. The original proposals to add members to the editorial team were nonsense, he said: it would only be an appropriate course of action if we were about to unify in a common Marxist party.

Jim Cook supported the motion, and agreed with comrades Greenfield and Manson. He said that the global situation is one of sharp development towards the right. Back in the 1960s-70s the organised left grew rapidly, but it did so in a context of a strongly organised and militant industrial working class.

Fluid conditions

Jack Conrad, in a second intervention, said that he had moved that we go straight to the vote on the candidate membership issue in order to secure adequate time for the

current discussion, which involves important political differences. He added that there are inconsistencies in comrade Roberts's proposals and comments. The question of 'fluidity' in particular is misconceived. Conditions were not more 'fluid' a month ago than they are now. The underlying 'fluidity' is towards the right; and this exerts a pull on our own organisation. He added that the PCC will be happy to support useful initiatives taken by comrades in YP/JCP.

Stan Keable said that comrades' impatience is understandable, given the dire world political situation. But there are no short cuts: we can only do what we can with what we have got. While comrades intervened to discuss local YP/JCP developments in their localities, comrade McShane, in a second intervention, said that what she had been taught when she was first in the CPGB was precisely the need to seize the initiative. It is not that individuals cannot take local initiatives, but the PCC itself must do so.

Comrade Roberts came back to state that most politics is about grasping opportunities when they arise. She was not proposing breaking with our commitment to free speech, or dumbing down our programme, but about taking the initiative, and about how to reach comrades who are close to us by avoiding insulting them.

Comrade Macnair, summing up in defence of the motion, commented that there was a level of self-deception in the conflicting comments, proposals and emails from Carla Roberts. It was a fantasy to suppose that there was a big opportunity in August, which we had missed by not accepting comrade Roberts' proposals. "Avoiding insulting people" by statements of the sort in comrades Conrad's and Macnair's articles, would in fact be self-censorship on political grounds: the issues were *political differences* about openness of political debate, and about the trans question. Comrade Roberts' proposals had to be assessed as a package, and as a package they did amount to the usual far-left practice.

The motion passed with just one abstention ●

Agreed resolution

Four steps that apply to our immediate approach in the JCP/YP



Our main weapon

These steps are framed by the political line of the resolution, 'Make the party now!' adopted by the August 24 CPGB aggregate.

1. We should both at national level and locally seek to actively engage with others who fight for political democracy and communist politics in YP/JCP. This includes willingness to create caucuses and/or blocs round specific issues. The most immediate issue in this respect is around democratic functioning of the proposed party, as opposed to Bonapartist operations resting on elected representative and apparatus control and plebiscitary schemes.
2. We must aim for the *Weekly Worker* to play a leading role in promoting democratic functioning and communist politics in YP/JCP by providing a strong and consistent pole of principled Marxist politics, which seeks to counter the inevitable pull to the right. It should attempt to feature and engage actively with YP/JCP groups and activists who partially share our aims: for example, by inviting guest contributions, featuring debates, etc.

Irrespective of our success or otherwise in getting people to contribute, the *Weekly Worker* remains our main political instrument. Comrades should be ordering extra papers and attempting to distribute them at local YP/JCP meetings.

3. We urge the Why Marx? grouping to develop a study/education and discussion programme, ideally also reaching out to others who support political democracy and communist politics in YP/JCP. This could concentrate on questions posed by the new party in the process of its formation:

- Seeking government participation vs building an opposition (Millerandism; the more recent examples of Podemos/Syriza/Die Linke, etc, drawing in international allies).

- The question of clear opposition to our own imperialist state, its military alliances and its rearmament project.

- Broad fronts vs Marxist partyism.

- Economism vs a radical democratic programme.

- Plebiscitarianism and 'e-democracy' vs real democracy.

- 'No platforming' versus free speech, etc.

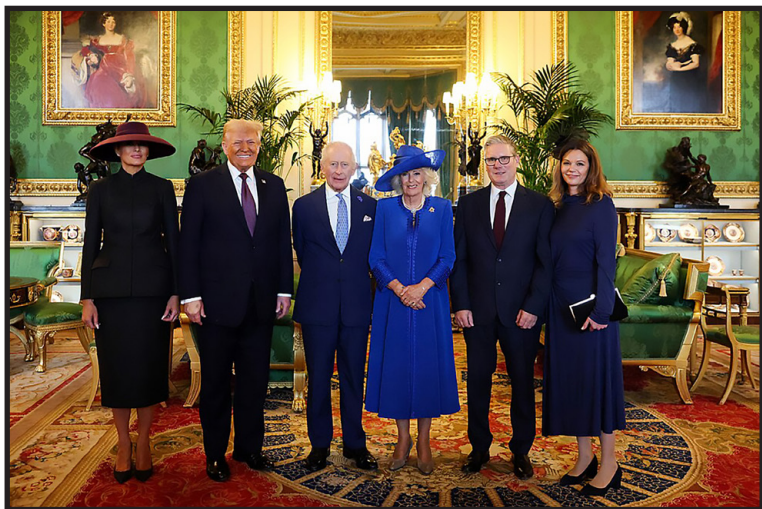
4. Our Draft programme provides our political orientation in the policy debates which will inevitably arise both in the process of formation of the new party and once it is formed, to the extent that there is any opening for discussion of policy not controlled by the secretive central leadership group.

We can select issues for attempts to make an agitational intervention, depending on what is posed by the immediate conjuncture. At present, our primary agitational focuses are the questions of the democratic functioning of YP/JCP, and questions of opposition to imperialism: in particular round the Ukraine war, Nato and rearmament, and round going beyond opposition to the Gaza war to opposition to Zionism as an 'exclusion colony' project ●

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Sunday September 21 5pm

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What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ISSN 1351-0150

weekly worker

No-one on
the sane left
celebrated

Death of a sycophant

Charlie Kirk's assassination is another glimpse into a particularly American pathology. Paul Demarty expects nothing good to come of it

There was very little remarkable about Charlie Kirk - until, that is, his spectacular death, on a glorious late-summer's day in Orem, Utah.

Kirk was getting started on his 'American Comeback' tour, which was to sell weapons-grade Trumpism to students across the United States. Nowhere better to kick it off than deep-red Utah, at Utah Valley University (the somewhat less prestigious neighbour to Brigham Young). Kirk, still baby-faced at 31, was just getting warmed up. He was, ironically, ranting about the supposed prominence of transgender people among mass shooters, when a shot rang out. He was hit plumb in the carotid artery, and died shortly afterwards.

The killer was on the roof of a nearby campus building, an impressive 200 metres away. He was clearly a better shot than Thomas Crooks, who took a pot-shot at Donald Trump himself in Pennsylvania last year, but in many other respects, the two cases are eerily similar, as we shall see.

Though it was a spectacular murder, this might seem an odd candidate for a shot heard around the world. Yet fulsome tributes to this young man came from far afield. Sir Keir Starmer felt the need to blub a little. So did Benjamin Netanyahu, who more or less enjoyed Kirk's support. The Golden Arches flags at the Guantanamo Bay McDonald's flew at half-mast: an image that surely encapsulates the strange degeneracy of America since 9/11.

This sort of weeping and wailing has, of course, become *de rigueur* among the bourgeois elite. Yet it is one thing to denounce political violence of this sort - which can be done intelligently from any number of political positions - and quite another to cry over the corpse. We were told that Kirk was a great champion of free speech (which he was not - except when it suited him). We were told he did politics the 'right way', because he engaged in fatuous, gladiatorial pseudo-debates with liberals (he was, admittedly, less crude in his debating style than, say, Ben Shapiro). Eventually some bewildered liberals and leftists protested, pointing out that this man was a racist, an all-around bigot, a 'fascist' even - though few serious people were stupid enough to actually *celebrate* his being murdered.

The counterblast, however, carries the risk of giving Kirk too much credit. This man was a hack, who rode the dark-money gravy train wherever it took him. He was racist - exactly as racist as required to make a name for himself as a young media figure on the Republican hard right. His politics, since the rise of Trump, have consisted of total obedience to the big man. Whatever Trump says is the official line of Kirk's outfit, Turning Point USA. He flip-flopped on every classic culture-war issue in lockstep with his hero. He was a Jeffrey



Charlie Kirk with the boss

Epstein conspiracy enthusiast - until Trump decided to put the kibosh on that, at which point Kirk snapped into line so quickly, he was in danger of doing himself (if you'll forgive me) a neck injury.

The man who died on September 10, in other words, was a coward, a sycophant and a philistine. He was one among a great multitude of such people, swarming to Trump like flies to shit, building their petty media empires with the fun-money of black-hearted billionaires. He was a talented organiser among young men, but undistinguished in every other way. The essential skills in this crowd are a loud voice and a wandering memory. Who knows what the demands of the next day will be? - except that, whatever they are, they will require coarse and manipulative interventions from the legions of 'conservative influencers'.

No motive

None of those things, of course, are - or ought to be - capital crimes. Kirk deserved nothing worse than obscurity. Someone, obviously, disagreed, which brings us to the alleged killer: Tyler Robinson, a 22-year-old from the small Utah town of Saint George. Speculation as to his motive began immediately, but it became clear rapidly that there was little for journalists and others to go on. He had produced almost no record of himself on social media. High school contemporaries remembered a quiet but friendly teenager. He comes from a conservative family, but his own political views are radically uncertain.

All the speculation, in the end, comes down to the text etched into bullets found in the murder weapon. Some messages seem at least superficially leftwing: "Bella ciao"; "Hey fascist, catch this". Others appear to be nonsensical references to internet memes and jokes ("If you're reading this you're gay, LMAO"). Even the superficially political ones may be explained differently: "Bella ciao" may be an anti-fascist anthem, but it has seen wide use in other media recently. "Hey fascist, catch this" was followed by a series of arrows which indicate a reference to the video game *Helldivers 2* (Robinson is very keen on video games).

Robinson thus presents an enigma, but not an altogether novel one. A strange feature of many recent lone-wolf attacks and mass shootings in the US has been the bizarre indeterminacy of motive: where political motives are identified, they are frequently extremely esoteric. Crooks had no clear political views. Luigi Mangione - the presumed killer of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson - seems to have been associated with the Silicon Valley rationalists, who have also spawned a violent cult by the name of 'the Zizians'.

Robin Westman, who carried out a mass shooting at a Catholic school in Minnesota a few weeks ago, left behind only fragments indicating a hatred of Catholics and perhaps also Jews. The daddy of them all is Stephen Paddock, a late-middle-aged, middle class man, who opened fire at a concert in Las Vegas in 2017 from a nearby hotel, killing 60 and injuring hundreds, before taking his own life. To this day, exactly nothing is known about his motive.

There are both prosaic and more profound explanations for this phenomenon. It is a simple fact that spectacular acts of violence of this sort are given to contagion; the notoriety granted, inescapably, to the killers holds a grim attraction. From Crooks, Robinson borrowed his general MO - sniping at a public figure from a nearby roof (though he was a better shot than Crooks, probably familiar with the kind of hunting rifle he used from his family background). The etched bullets are, of course, pure Mangione.

The authorities have continued to insist that Robinson was motivated by "radical left" politics, despite no evidence having come forth of any *public* political activity. But suppose, as is perfectly possible, he had picked up some esoteric left ideology in his tour of obscure Discord servers - Maoist third-worldism, say, which conceives of revolution as the conquest by main force of the imperialist countries by the countries of the periphery. These ideologies float weightlessly around the internet, but have essentially no connection to meaningful social forces anywhere (not even in countries where there are large Maoist movements). Interpreting such commitments as political is unavoidable, but it is a

kind of fantasy version of politics, centred on an eschatological image of revenge. It is psychology, not politics, primarily at work here; and the relevant political explanation has to do with the disaggregating effect of decades of triumphant capitalism.

Not that such subtleties weigh heavily on the rightwing conscience. It is difficult to describe the right's response to this killing as anything other than deranged; indeed, the sheer extremity of its mawkishness would be funny if the consequences were not, potentially, so grave.

Revenge

Internet mob campaigns against people who openly glorified in Kirk's death quickly metastasised into a wild, generalised witch-hunt against anyone who dared to issue any reservations about all this caterwauling. Many random individuals have already been sacked from their jobs. JD Vance, who hosted Kirk's regular show on Monday (another indication of the symbiotic relationship between Trumpism and its alt-media praetorians), urged listeners to "put on the full armour of god" and ... continue doxxing and snitching (I am not sure that is what St Paul had in mind ...).

More troublingly, Trump himself promises a clampdown on the "radical left", which would use anti-terrorist and immigration laws, and perhaps the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act ('Rico', passed in the 1970s to crack down on the Mafia), to crush socialist organisations, and even milquetoast liberal ones. Indeed, we have already seen such tactics used by Trump against the Palestine movement.

We are accustomed to thinking of the US having, whatever the innumerable faults of its constitution, at least stronger protection for free speech and association than we enjoy in Britain, never mind in places like Germany. Yet the American central state has, over the decades, arrogated to itself such arbitrary power that these protections are effectively conditional. (How can you bring a first amendment defence to the courts if your client has been disappeared into a Salvadoran gulag?) The American left may soon face uncomfortable questions: how can it keep going under conditions of heavy repression? How is it to conduct legal defence, to defy bans, even to defend itself physically?

The saga, no doubt, will drag on. It is fortunate, at least, that there were few leftists foolish enough to blithely celebrate the assassination this time (unlike in the case of Mangione, who coincidentally had two terrorism charges against him dropped this week). Many celebrated Kirk's death, but they would have celebrated his death from Ebola as well. Perhaps the fact that influential leftwing media figures understood immediately that they were in the frame for reprisals and

furiously attempted to calm down their followers had some effect. Or perhaps the obvious failure of the Brian Thompson killing to spark off any serious elevation of political consciousness - as the old theory of 'propaganda of the deed' supposed - has made such people warier in the face of this latest crime.

So far as these tactics go, the arguments of Leon Trotsky in 1911 are still worth attention:

A strike, even of modest size, has social consequences: strengthening of the workers' self-confidence, growth of the trade union, and not infrequently even an improvement in productive technology. The murder of a factory owner produces effects of a police nature only, or a change of proprietors devoid of any social significance ... But the disarray introduced into the ranks of the working masses themselves by a terrorist attempt is much deeper [than that of the bourgeoisie]. If it is enough to arm oneself with a pistol in order to achieve one's goal, why the efforts of the class struggle? If a thimbleful of gunpowder and a little chunk of lead is enough to shoot the enemy through the neck, what need is there for a class organisation? ...

In our eyes, individual terror is inadmissible, precisely because it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness, reconciles them to their powerlessness, and turns their eyes and hopes towards a great avenger and liberator, who some day will come and accomplish his mission. The anarchist prophets of the 'propaganda of the deed' can argue all they want about the elevating and stimulating influence of terrorist acts on the masses - theoretical considerations and political experience prove otherwise. The more 'effective' the terrorist acts, the greater their impact, the more they reduce the interest of the masses in self-organisation and self-education.¹

It is not *primarily* the morality of terrorism which is at issue for Marxists. It is instead the question of revolution itself - of what means can *actually* yield the victory of the proletariat. The leftwing appetite for such spectacle presents as extreme radicalism, but is in fact, for exactly the reasons enumerated by Trotsky, a compact with despair.

It is the construction of strong, mass organisations that alone offers a solution to all of this: from the spread of odious ideas to the nihilism of the lone wolf, and to the furious drive for reprisal and repression ●

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Note

1. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1911/11/tia09.htm.