



# weekly worker



**Gorton and Denton: YP HQ cannot provide clear voting advice. Zarah Sultana urges a Green vote. We need working class politics**

- Letters and debate
- SWP's fascism panic
- 'Washington Post'
- YP Scotland launch

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Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10

Now Corbyn and his embattled clique resort to red-baiting





# LETTERS



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

## YP petition

No more expulsions of leftwing members from Your Party!

We, the undersigned, vehemently oppose the expulsion from Your Party of Rob Rooney. Rob was standing as a candidate for the Your Party CEC elections in the South West region. He clearly stated in his candidacy statement that he is a member of the Socialist Party. He received 86 endorsements, earning him a place on the ballot.

Less than 24 hours after voting opened, Rob was expelled via email - on the evening of February 10. In fact, he is still on the ballot 15 hours later, which means the votes of all of those who have ranked him have been lost. Without a transparent or independent disciplinary and complaints procedure, Rob has had no opportunity to contest his expulsion.

We believe that Your Party HQ has used a punitive interpretation of our rules on 'dual membership'. Members at the launch conference overwhelmingly voted for the most democratic of the two options they were offered - so that all members of left groups would be able to openly participate in our new party. We don't want a Labour mark two. We want a democratic, pluralist socialist party that unites the left, not divides it.

Grassroots Left members on the CEC commit themselves to:

- Overturn this and all expulsions and suspensions of members of left groups, including those expelled on the eve of the launch conference.
- Install real dual membership for members of all left parties and groups.
- Fight for a democratic socialist party of the whole left - without purges and witch-hunts. We want plurality, democracy, diversity of opinion and principled unity, with members able to set up and join political platforms and tendencies.

We stand in solidarity with Rob and firmly against the ongoing manoeuvring and undemocratic actions seen in this Your Party CEC election. Sign here: [grassrootsleft.org/no-more-expulsions](http://grassrootsleft.org/no-more-expulsions).

**Grassroots Left**  
email

## YPS split

The founding conference of Your Party Scotland in Dundee last weekend proved just how deep-fried nationalism has become amongst the left here. The most significant motions passed were those for a completely separate party in Scotland and a political statement saying: "YPS believes that an independent Scotland is the best route to improve the lives of people in Scotland and achieve socialism."

The former was passed with almost 60% of votes cast and the latter by just over 63%. But what must be noted is the derisory turnout - 13.32% and 13.02% of the registered voters, translating into just 310 and 311 votes respectively. There were claims of 600 registered for the conference and then 400 expected, but from where I was sitting it looked like around half that - and even less in the Sunday sessions.

There were widespread self-congratulatory claims that it was so much better and more successful than the national YP conference in Liverpool, but it bore the same

hallmarks as that farce - and in some respects, such as these nationalist votes, even worse. It also stuck with the same format of maximum two-minute speeches and went further, in that we were instructed we had to register online in advance the desire to speak on any motion. This caused all sorts of difficulties and meant we heard endlessly from self-styled chair, Ellie Gomersall, about digital procedures that had to be followed. There were many glitches, with everything having to be done through the app or website and this was then used as a means to blame HQ for the dodgy software. Why use it then?

And why use the same anti-democratic and crass binary forms of motions? The crucial one on Scottish independence offered the following as option A - the alternative to the nationalist one above - "In its initial years YPS will not take an explicit public position on Scotland's constitutional future." What sort of position is that to offer except one designed to fail?

This, more than anything, shows just how much of a stitch-up and foregone conclusion the unelected and self-appointed organising committee had in mind. It was apparent from the earliest days that there was a level of entryism into YP ranks from the likes of the redundant Radical Independence Campaign that aimed all along for this separatist position. They were more recently joined by careerist, ex-Green nationalists and dominated proceedings - along with the middle class debating-society-styled Scottish Socialist Youth.

Of course, the monstrosity that has developed through the shenanigans of the Corbyn clique made it all the more likely for understandable frustrations to turn to nationalist 'solutions', but the level of naive delusion displayed in Dundee was still surprising. As Ian Drummond pointed out on the UDI motion, did they really think that HQ would now blithely hand over the reported '60,000 expressions of interest' database to an organisation that's just split?

Jim Monaghan also raised the point that it wasn't actually at the behest of whatever organisation unfolds in Scotland to decide on its relationship with the Britain-wide YP and perhaps we would see two organisations formed in Scotland now. Who knows?

But what is vital is that the forces who recognise how disastrous this abortion is must cohere and get organised to face the challenges ahead. There was very little sign of that in Dundee, with Philip Stott of Socialist Party Scotland (which does have a sister party down south in SPEW!) leading the charge in the opposite direction by being first to call for UDI because of the ban on Dave Nellist and April Ashley in the central executive committee elections and other such measures. Instead of seeking to unite the left to fight back, Stott advocated splitting too.

But perhaps the biggest example of the naive, delusionary nature of what's going on with all this was the 70% vote for standing candidates in the forthcoming Holyrood parliamentary elections in May on an independence ticket. I may be wrong, but I cannot see any way that this will prove more successful than that of the pro-independence Rise or Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity back in the post-independence election of 2016, when they got 0.5% and 0.6% of the vote respectively and nowhere near a list seat.

But it has all gone a bit bonkers

up here lately, with Anas Sarwar's 'Starmer out now' call also plunging Scottish Labour into the vat of deep-fried nationalism with his constant refrain of 'My country, Scotland'. I've put a call out to Democratic Socialists YPS and others, like the newly forming YP Marxist Caucus, to cohere and organise in opposition, but I'm not holding my breath with them or any of the left sects up here, who have almost to the last comrade kow-towed to that nationalism as well.

**Tam Dean Burn**  
Glasgow

## YPS nat chums

Your Party Scotland had its inaugural conference in Dundee last weekend. As one of the organisers and members of the Interim Democratic Procedures Committee, I thought it would be interesting for *Weekly Worker* readers to have an informed report.

Firstly, one of the most striking features of the conference was its friendliness - not just compared to Liverpool, but to some other left conferences. The atmosphere was positively inclusive and democratic and was intended to be as such by the organising committee. It is frankly lovely to have held such a successful conference and we have received that feedback in real time from members.

The organising committee is comprised of recent ex-Scottish Greens, ex-Labour, current members of the SWP, RS21 and those with no recent party-political history. We were elected from what proto-branches currently existed in early December. With many of us only meeting for the first time in person at the organising conference, we quickly established a collaborative and collective approach. Our group of no more than a dozen and a half volunteers pulled together a conference of over 400 people, making us bigger than the conferences of the Scottish Greens, Lib Dems and Tories. We did this in just two months. This included drafting initial documents, holding online assemblies, organising an amendments process and then running conference itself.

Mercifully, we don't have quite the same factional dynamic that England is experiencing in full swing. We had both Corbyn and Sultana (at different times) attend the conference and both were received warmly. Neither slate is particularly organised in Scotland. The political situation is objectively different and, I would suggest, more immediately hopeful than YP UK.

The good-natured debate was not for want of discussion or unanimity of thought - indeed, one vote was an exact 50%-50% tie. Unlike Liverpool, the debates were immediately followed by online voting - inevitable tech issues notwithstanding. We also explicitly allowed conference the opportunity to vote down the agenda, to challenge the chair and to raise points of order. By explicitly creating a structure as open and democratic - frankly normal - as possible, we created a culture which members perceived and responded to in kind. There was little to no grandstanding, procedural shenanigans or ill-tempered bluster. Unlike Liverpool, we felt able to rely on democratic intentions rather than a row of private security to prevent stage invasions.

Initially we had difficulties and miscommunications with Your Party HQ and we approached contact with understandable caution, given, well, everything. It is worth putting on record that HQ did not seek to

interfere in the running of conference and provided valuable financial and logistical support in the run-up and on the day. Scholars may attribute this to HQ recognising its support, like the Corbyn wave, was never particularly strong in Scotland, but I will leave that for debate.

The crucial decisions, as the mainstream press have reported, are:

- for YP Scotland to be organisationally independent *à la* the Scottish/English and Welsh Greens;
- for YP Scotland to be in favour of Scottish independence;
- for YP Scotland to strongly support dual membership, with a prohibited list rather than an allowed list;
- for YP to stand in the Holyrood elections;
- for members to elect a Scottish executive committee within eight weeks, before which the conference organising group will act as an interim SEC.

This sets YP Scotland up to immediately engage the working class on a credible position of contesting political power and opposing the British state. In my own view, any other position would have caused terminal wounds on the party, though decent minorities exist on all of those questions. This is not to say the path ahead is easy, but there *is* a path.

We have Holyrood elections in May and council elections in 2027, not to mention the wider political work to get on with. I am looking forward to them - not something I would have said immediately after Liverpool. To comrades down in England, I suggest you have a look at what we do in Scotland over the next year. You might learn something.

**Tánaiste Custance**  
Your Party Scotland

## YP questions

Republic Your Party (RYP) is approaching candidates for the central executive committee with a set of issues and questions.

The first issue concerns democracy and dual membership. RYP sent an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana on this issue. We had no reply, so we have raised a petition and we now have 53 signatures requesting answers. We are seeking support from every candidate associated with The Many, Grassroots Left and all independent candidates, if we can locate them.

The Liverpool founding conference voted to accept dual membership. Every member must have the same rights to vote and stand for office (the new, elected CEC will consider this again). This issue - whether dual members should be elected to office - must rest with the members alone. They have the responsibility of making a judgment about the suitability of every dual membership candidate. We protest and oppose bureaucratic interference in fixing elections by excluding YP members from standing.

There is some reluctance, or refusal, for candidates (and members) to sign our petition. We have, therefore, to work out what interests are at stake. First are sectarian considerations. Some agree with the principle of member sovereignty, but put their group interests above any association with Republic YP. Second, there is opportunism, where democratic principles are not defended for personal or electoral advantage, or simply because they don't have

any principles. Third is simply ignorance of democratic principles and practices, and the need to defend them. Whichever reason, the lack of democratic principle and solidarity with excluded members is sufficient grounds not to trust or vote for any such candidate.

We have categorised these 'refuseniks' as 'red' for danger. Don't vote for them if they have no convincing answer for their lack of principle and solidarity. Those candidates who support our demands for accountability and democratic principles, and show solidarity, are identified as 'green'. They can be trusted to hold office.

At the present time, six CEC candidates have supported our petition. Two of the three candidates for the Scottish YP CEC representative - Ian Drummond and Niall Christie - are 'green' to go. So is Ian Spencer for the North East, Pete McLaren for the South East, Kadira Pethiyagoda in London and Alex Fox for the West Midlands. These comrades may or may not agree with RYP, but we recognise they have principles and stand by them.

Of course, there are other questions and issues to be asked before deciding who to vote for. Republic YP is asking CEC candidates four questions:

1. Do you support a democratic, secular republic?
2. Do you agree with the necessity for YP to have a republican programme?
3. Do you oppose the union of England with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and recognise sovereignty must rest with the free nations of Ireland, Scotland and Wales?
4. Do you support the demand for an English parliament?

We will keep you updated.

**Republic YP**  
email

## Spart Cannonism

Comrade Mila Vilkova's report of the Australian Revolutionary Communist Organisation/Communist Unity conference was generally encouraging ('Factions, nameswitching and unity' February 5). But I got the impression from it that comrades were taking too seriously the Spartacists' Cannonite agitation for a 'turn to industry'.

In a letter last week I wrote about the Cannonite project of Matgamnaism - first 'courting' rival groups, then turning on them, as a 'raiding entry' policy of dishonest manoeuvres to destroy 'centrist obstacles'. 'Turns to industry' are slightly later Cannonism, from the 1939-40 split in the US Socialist Workers Party. They are based on the characterisation of the opposition in the SWP (which rejected Soviet defencism in the partition of Poland and the Winter War with Finland) as 'petty bourgeois', and hence promoted the idea that the problem would be overcome by radical 'proletarianisation'.

In reality, the 'petty bourgeois' character of the opposition - and of the Shachtmanite Workers Party - was sharply overstated in Cannon's reports to Trotsky (and hence Trotsky's approvals of 'proletarianisation'). By 1945 it was clear that there was not a radical class difference between the composition of the SWP and the WP; the SWP was seeking unity (as it did again after 1956) and, in relation to political substance, together with the rest of the Fourth International, was calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from eastern Europe -



which at the time would clearly have meant simply their replacement by US and allied (later Nato) troops. ‘Proletarianising’ thus did not ‘save’ the SWP from third-campism. And Shachtman’s later evolution from third-campism to first-campism reflected the rightwards political evolution of the US trade union movement.

‘Turns to industry’ have a darker later history. The post-Cannonite leadership of the SWP around Jack Barnes promoted such a ‘turn’ in the SWP itself and the ‘Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International’ in 1979-84. Their expectation was factional advantage. The result was merely negative. In the International Marxist Group-Socialist League, of which I was at the time a member, the result was to weaken the organisation’s trade union implantation (as well as cutting membership numbers by around a third): that is, to reduce the link to the workers’ movement.

In the Spartacist Tendency itself, arbitrary ‘proletarianisation’ demands were a significant element in what the International Bolshevik Tendency splinter called - rightly - “the road to Jimstown”: that is, the devolution of the tendency into a personal cult round James Robertson.

That the Australian Spartacists should be reviving this crap is a bad sign and a political health warning: certainly not something Australian comrades should consider adopting.  
**Mike Macnair**  
Oxford

Petty bourgeois?

After perusing last week’s paper, I am afraid I am no more enlightened as to the evidence proving that the Marxist Unity Caucus of RS21 “seems in danger of imploding” - a claim reported to have been made by Carla Roberts in ‘At home and abroad’ (January 22).

Allow me to expand on my last letter (January 29) by saying, if the claim is true, it is a serious development, and the evidence ought to be laid before your readers. I have never known the *Weekly Worker*’s writers to be shy about reporting such things, so I eagerly await the proof.

The rest of this letter concerns the Green Party. Carla Roberts’ last article (‘Our politics needs light’, February 5) exemplified an excessive superficiality, common to Marxist critiques of the Greens, when she wrote: “The Greens remain a thoroughly pro-capitalist party, based politically on the petty bourgeoisie. We should point that out over and over again, especially as the Greens have been sucking in tens of thousands of people who would have joined Your Party, if it were not dysfunctional.”

Of course, I grant that the Greens are a pro-capitalist party, in that they do not propose to overthrow capitalism - I would instead like to question the confident assumption that the Greens are petty bourgeois, which I have also encountered in other Marxist publications.

It is first of all doubtful that many of us have a clear idea of what the petty bourgeoisie is in the 21st century. As I understand, this is a matter of fairly warm debate among social scientists: for Dan Evans - the only writer I am aware of who has written a book on the British petty bourgeoisie in recent years - it consists not only of small business owners (the classic stereotype of the petty bourgeois), but of downwardly mobile graduates in poorly paid white-collar occupations. According to Evans, the working class is *not*

the majority in this country - a heretical claim from a Marxist point of view, and incompatible with the traditional Marxist political strategy. He rather thinks that the workers are a third or at most half of society, the other two thirds being made up of the petty bourgeoisie and the wealthy professionals and capitalists.

To be clear, I am not expressing a view on Evans’s conclusions: I merely wish to show how far the composition of the petty bourgeoisie is a disputed and controversial subject; and I would venture to say that, for most readers, to affirm that someone or something is “petty bourgeois” does not convey a very determinate idea, except that most Marxists will consider it pejorative. To sum up my difficulty on this head, I simply do not know, without further elaboration, what 21st-century Marxists mean when they throw out the words, ‘petty bourgeois’, and I imagine many others are in the same situation.

For the sake of argument, let us return to the familiar 19th century picture of the small business owner: does the contemporary small business owner seem likely to be a supporter of the Green Party? Evans certainly does not think so: his opinion is that the traditional petty bourgeoisie is much more likely to support the populist right; and there appears to be good evidence for this view. The Greens, of course, are bitter opponents of the populist right.

So I feel compelled to return to the question: who are the Marxist critics talking about when they call the Greens a petty bourgeois party? It may surprise these critics to learn that, as of January 2026, the Greens command the support of nearly half of 18- to 24-year-olds - 45%. The Greens are not similarly popular among any other age group. If, to be petty bourgeois, you must have some capital at your disposal - and if, as is obvious, most young people have no capital - it once again becomes difficult to make sense of what is meant when the Greens are denounced as petty bourgeois.

From the Greens’ programme I equally struggle to see decisive proof of their petty bourgeois character. The 2024 manifesto of the party - that is, the manifesto from the time *before* Zack Polanski, an outspoken left populist, became the party’s leader - called for the repeal of “current anti-union legislation introduced since 1979”, to be replaced with “a comprehensive Charter of Workers’ Rights”. It went on: “We will restore the right to strike, remove arbitrary ballot thresholds and outdated requirements for postal ballots for strike action, and overturn bans on secondary picketing and industrial action for political objectives.” Now perhaps I am gravely mistaken, but this does not sound to me like the measures one would expect to find advocated by a party “based politically on the petty bourgeoisie”. The facts are evidently more complicated.

For my part, I think the Greens are in a process of transition: the election of Polanski; the enormous increase of their membership to over 190,000; the work of the left faction, Greens Organise; these are important developments, demanding scientific study and a rigorous Marxist response. Old catchphrases will not suffice.

It would be most disappointing if those who claim to uphold the Marxist philosophy - a philosophy defined, perhaps more than anything else, by a special attention to the interminable processes

of change - were to cling to hackneyed expressions and worn-out prejudices, when the moment clearly requires more.

**Talal Hangari**  
London

Marxist polemic

As a long-term subscriber to the *Weekly Worker*, after many years of reading interesting polemics and Bolshevik history, finally I understand the ‘partyist’ project.

The left has been disoriented, demoralised, blown this way and that, and theoretically confused. Opportunist groups like the Socialist Workers Party use activity and ephemeral movements as a cynical funding project - other groups seem to assault the prevaricating centre. Amongst this maelstrom of energy, where is the time for education and Marxist theory? Your Party is the flavour of the month that the left have focused its weight on and things don’t bode too well, as the leadership’s lack of democracy seems to be its undoing.

My argument here is a dedication I would like to present on how learning theoretical Marxism acts as *ballast* to navigate these difficult times and put into perspective the validity of party over movementism. Of course, to distinguish between a sect and a genuine party is not easy for the young or naive - a programme is the litmus test of seriousness (dialectics in action, so to speak).

So where does a dedication to theory come into my argument? Human beings tend to be perfectionists and that’s not what I’m advocating, when it comes to theoretical matters. For years I’ve heard Marxists describing religion as the opium of the people and never knew Marx was critiquing Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. Popular Marxist journalism prevails over supposed grey theory.

Maybe the left are too patronising about the working class, so that they find it boring and don’t have the time for it. Trade union consciousness is the best we’ll get!

Many times I’ve explained how I have read all of Marx’s political economy rapidly - maybe as a precursor to specialise in without claiming to be an expert in it. It has centralised and reinforced my beliefs in Marxism, where the road is littered with past failed journalist projects.

Action theory in conjunction with the party project should complement each other to get over this terrible hurdle of rightwing populism, which in the long run will make all our lives even worse!

**Frank Kavanagh**  
email

War danger

Though I concur with Mike Macnair that war between the US and China is at some point inevitable (‘More lies, more paranoia’, February 5), I wonder how it will happen.

The success of the People’s Republic of China in competing for raw materials and market share does indeed make it a challenge to US firms and Washington’s hegemon. However, the PRC is unlike British colonialism in having a careful, less paternalistic relationship with African elites. In exchange for mining rights and other profits, it is building infrastructure useful to Africans.

Unlike the US it is a commercial power, not a military one. The PRC has one military base on the African continent - in Djibouti, a small republic between Ethiopia and the Gulf of Aden. (Admittedly, China

is in contact with African military leaders and is selling the continent arms.) Another difference is with pre-1914 Germany. Due to a scandal in 1907 concerning allegations by a magazine of homosexuality and pacifism among Wilhelm II’s court, the kaiser got rid of his political advisors and replaced them with the military elite.

While the prestige of the People’s Liberation Army is immense, Xi Jinping’s main concern is with ‘order’ inside China and his nation’s advance in trade and manufacture - though, of course, the Chinese Communist Party will respond to any ‘humiliating’ encroachment. It may also try to gain leverage over Taiwan, which it sees as its equivalent of Ulster. I have, however, recently come to understand that an invasion of the island would be logistically very difficult, and that’s even before the arrival of western forces.

It’s hard to see what the equivalent of the archduke’s assassination that kicked off World War I would be. Unless it is the stirring up of war fervour in the west for a battle between ‘democracy’ and ‘authoritarian expansion’ (you know, Hitler) - spurred on by conservative hawks, glad of any support for the idea that such a clash is inevitable.

**Mike Belbin**  
email

Cynic Mandelson

Disgraced Peter Mandelson played a leading role in “degrading” the Labour Party from the 1980s onwards, according to a former Labour press officer. This is one of the extraordinary revelations in a forthcoming new documentary film about the rise and fall of the Labour Party called *The left*.

In the film, John Booth, who was hired by Mandelson to work in the party’s press office in 1986, accuses Mandelson of having had a major influence on the way Labour now does politics and of “degrading the whole political process of participatory democracy”. He said: “There’s a younger generation of

people like Wes Streeting and Peter Kyle and other people around the cabinet table who’ve been led to believe by Mandelson that this is the way you do politics. You smear, you’re underhand, you brief against your opponents and wipe your fingerprints off it, so it all becomes an anonymous briefing and that’s the way you do politics.”

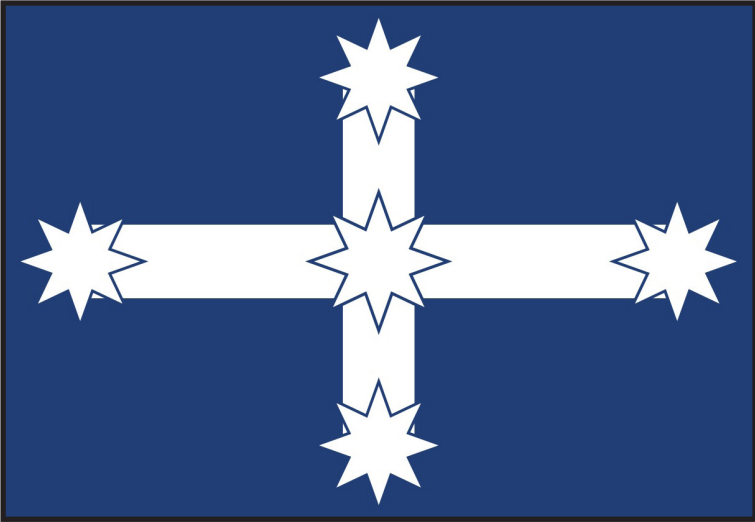
Booth said he saw the beginnings of what’s happening now when he worked closely with Mandelson in the 1980s: “I went into work for the party to use whatever professional skills I had to support the party, the movement and the members of the movement. Mandelson took communication to be different, saying it was a top-down instruction, based on the cynical belief that Labour voters would turn out and vote Labour because the leadership said that’s what they should do and because they didn’t have any alternative.”

The result was, according to Booth, widespread “parachuting” of Labour parliamentary candidates into areas they didn’t know, and party members having less and less control over what was going on in their name and forced to support people in many cases they’d never even known. He said: “And in that sense the whole political process of participation democracy has been degraded - not solely by Mandelson, but he’s been a major influence on that.”

Mandelson was Labour’s director of campaigns and communications when Booth worked for him in the 1980s and Booth speaks scathingly in the film about the way Mandelson operated. He accuses him of secretly briefing *The Times* during the Wapping dispute and says that, when Booth objected, Mandelson threatened him that he might never work in Britain.

*The left* tells the story of the rise and fall of the Labour Party. It is produced by Platform Films, makers of *Oh Jeremy Corbyn - the big lie* and *Censoring Palestine*. It will be released later this year.  
**Norman Thomas**  
Platform Films

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## YOUR PARTY

# Red-baiting by HQ

Despite the expulsions and unhinged attacks, Grassroots Left is on course to win a majority. Fearing defeat, the embattled Corbyn clique has gone into panic mode, says **Carla Roberts**

Jeremy Corbyn's slate, The Many, is clearly in big trouble. In the last few days, the *modus operandi* of the whole campaign has changed dramatically. Instead of pretending to want 'unity' and getting 'the party back on track', the Corbyn clique has now decided on a strategy of 'scorched earth'. They have made it very clear: if they do not win in the current leadership elections, they will not just walk, but probably burn the house down too.

Why? We suspect they have done the maths. Like the Grassroots Left slate, supported by Zarah Sultana, the Jeremy Corbyn clique will have made projections based on the endorsements cast for various candidates. As there were over 11,000 members who endorsed candidates - roughly the same number who voted during the launch conference and in the Christmas online referendum - there is a good chance that the endorsements will indeed translate almost directly into votes. And, according to projections, the Grassroots Left would win a small majority of between one and four seats on the central executive committee. With many independent candidates failing to meet the undemocratic hurdle of 75 endorsements, there is, of course, a certain amount of guesswork involved. But the Corbyn clique are aware of how close things are.

Of course, there is also the added fact that those behind The Many slate are the same people running not just Your Party HQ, but also the current elections. No third party was brought in. HQ can see 'live' how the voting is going, and adjust their campaigning priorities. Karie Murphy is probably going to count the votes herself too. An utter outrage, needless to say - one of so many that it is almost impossible to list them all. What started off as a project of hope, supported by over 800,000 people, is in danger of turning into a tragic lost opportunity.

HQ clearly got spooked when seeing the number of endorsements. First, they extended by 36 hours the deadline by which new members were able to join Your Party and get a vote in the leadership elections. Then Corbyn gave a set of 'exclusive' quotes to that stalwart journal of the left, the *New Statesman*, in which readers were told that "Jeremy knows that the fate of Your Party rests on this election. It will determine whether it grows as a mass, community-based party that can speak to millions of ordinary people, or becomes a battleground for every splinter group under the sun. The Many simply has to win for the party to survive."

Running with that theme, a number of The Many candidates let slip that, in their view, the hundreds of existing (proto) branches are a real problem. Hannah Hawkins (standing in the North East) took it furthest: "Anyone in office in a proto-branch *should not be allowed to stand* when it is constituted as an official branch", she said to a Teesside meeting on February 5. A comment she repeated on Facebook. This would deny local members the right to decide their own officers.

It appears the Corbyn clique then decided that Hawkins was onto a winning formula. On February 8, the day before voting started, The Many published a 'set of proposals',<sup>1</sup> which amounted to a declaration of war against the left... and active members and the branches themselves. The proposals, if implemented, would



**Zarah Sultana and Grassroots Left are winning the argument**

turn Your Party into another version of Momentum - with a powerful leadership, online referendums and entirely powerless members and branches.

## Abolish branches

Point 1 is entitled "Set up *official* branches" (original emphasis) "with inaugural all-member meetings" as "per constitution". Funnily enough, the text does not mention the ridiculous quorum of 20% of all local members who would be required to attend such a meeting in order to be allowed to found a branch. That was, remember, the least bad of the four options the Corbyn clique 'allowed' members to vote on at launch conference (the other options were 25%, 40% and 50%). Anybody who is a member of a trade union will know how difficult it is to meet such levels. This is a rule designed to stop branches from even being formed.

The point then goes into attack mode. It quite rightly points out that this is "very different from what the Grassroots Left slate is promising" - that much is true. The rest is a combination of scare tactics, half-truths and selective memory:

They want to overturn Your Party's constitution, which was overwhelmingly endorsed by members at the founding conference, in order to immediately recognise existing proto-branches on day one. We think this is wrong. While many proto-branches have been doing great work in their communities, not all members have been able to take part in them. Many are run by the Socialist Workers Party and other sectarian groups which comprise the Grassroots Left slate. These groups are more organised than ordinary individual members, who are effectively excluded from equal participation. They are seeking to exert control of the party through control of the branches.

Wow, classic red-baiting stuff. First, we should stress that the Grassroots Left is *not* "committed to overturn Your Party's constitution" - not that we would have a particular problem with that. After all, the launch conference was an absolute joke. Members

were unable to submit motions, amendments or even properly discuss issues - the question of the branch quorum, for example, did not even come up! Members were only allowed to click 'yes' or 'no' to the 'options'.

The GL's promise to "recognise proto branches on day 1" does not mean at all that it would not, *in addition*, constitute proper inaugural meetings to which all local members are invited. After all, this is what the GL candidates - as well as the members and branches - have been demanding for many months! It is the Corbyn clique running The Many that is withholding the data. That is the reason why "not all members have been able to take part" in the branches! There is certainly a question on how you would deal with the 20% quorum - a new CEC might have to organise a special emergency congress to overturn this and some other undemocratic rules.

## More expulsions

The attack on left groups is continued in point 2, 'Defend Omov':

Key groups and candidates within the Grassroots Left are deeply hostile to Omov [one member, one vote]. They don't want members to take decisions for themselves; they want power to be in the hands of delegates from branches, because the sectarian groups who make up the Grassroots Left believe they have more chance of controlling a branch than controlling the whole membership. It's a way for them to have an influence bigger than their numbers warrant.

This point also comes with a neat graphic which explains: "The Many will defend 'one member, one vote', so that the members call the shots, not sects."

So there we have it: members of organised groups ("sects") are not real members. There can be no doubt that the list of "national parties" that would be approved for "dual membership" by a CEC dominated by The Many would be, to put it mildly, very, very short.

As if to stress the point that the Corbyn clique will start with a purge, we have now seen the first expulsion post-conference. Readers

will remember that on the eve of the Liverpool launch conference, HQ very symbolically expelled a number of leading members of the Socialist Workers Party - including, for good measure, some who had never joined Your Party! Rationality is the first victim in a witch-hunt.

In an equally worrying move, HQ has now decided to expel a CEC candidate. While a number were barred (and some then unbarred) from running because of their (alleged) membership of this or that group, Rob Rooney in the South West was not challenged. He made it onto the ballot paper, with 86 endorsements, despite the fact that he is quite open about his Socialist Party in England and Wales (SPEW) membership.

But on the evening of Tuesday February 10, 24 hours after voting had opened, he was informed by email that he is "not eligible to be a member of Your Party and stand as a candidate in the CEC 2026 elections". No other SPEW members have been expelled, to our knowledge. To make matters worse, as we go to press, Rooney is still on the ballot paper! Any votes cast for him are clearly lost. Then there is the fact that, for the first 15 minutes, the election was 'accidentally' run under the wrong system (first-past-the-post instead of single-transferable-vote). What a mess.

As an important aside, HQ is running the election under the STV system 'imperiali', which is the least democratic form possible. Ranking more than two people is almost pointless, as votes are not really transferred to other candidates (unlike in the more democratic 'Scottish' version of STV). It favours big voting blocks and slates - another sign which shows how desperate the Corbyn clique is. This may well bite them in the bum, however, as it does not just favour The Many, but also the Grassroots Left. For example, this system could get candidates like Max Shanly in the South West onto the CEC, despite the fact that he had far fewer endorsements than some of the independent candidates. But members supporting independents are more likely to rank different people first, whereas all supporters of GL are putting Max at No 1 - and only those first preference votes really count.

Anyway, The Many's claims

about Omov are entirely dishonest. Communists, socialists - hell, anybody with a democratic bone in their body - are, of course, in favour of Omov voting in our branches. Needless to say, this should include members who cannot be there in person, perhaps because of health reasons or caring responsibilities - we should always make provisions for meetings to be conducted in a hybrid format and many proto-branches are already doing exactly that.

But members can only make informed decisions when they can hear the arguments, are able to ask questions and propose amendments. Our launch conference should have been run with Omov, too, instead of voting via mobile phone many hours, sometimes even days, after a particular issue had been discussed (if it was discussed).

## Real Omov

The Corbyn clique does not want *real* Omov. They want the sort of atomised voting, at home, that Margaret Thatcher introduced with her anti-union legislation: she took away the right of workers to make important decisions in the workplace, when they could, for example, decide with a show of hands if they wanted to go on strike. Just as Thatcher accused union militants of hijacking the membership, so the Corbyn clique now claims that left groups defend the right of branches to elect delegates, because "they have more chance of controlling a branch than controlling the whole membership". This really is a new, shameful low for Corbyn.

No, socialists and communists defend representative democracy, with members in the branches electing delegates, because this is the only way to *get organised collectively*. After all, we believe that the liberation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself - collectively. We therefore need to empower and strengthen the branches, not sideline or even abolish them, which is what the Corbyn clique clearly wants to do. Under a Corbyn-led CEC, sortition will become the standard way to choose who goes to a powerless conference. Not the most thoughtful or the most active, but randomly chosen members.

Point 3 in The Many's proposals promises that the Corbyn clique will not allow policy-making by the members and branches - but outsource this to 'policy commissions'. This is exactly what Tony Blair introduced into the Labour Party with the National Policy Forum. He thereby successfully gutted conference. We cannot allow this to happen in Your Party. Our conference must be the highest, sovereign body, where elected and accountable delegates collectively debate and decide policy, tactics and strategy - which our elected representatives (Councillors, MPs, etc) must then implement.

Online voting and email referendums, on the other hand, really are nothing more than a facade. Members are essentially passive. The Leader and their clique decide the question, do the messaging and, unless something goes badly wrong, always get the result that they want.

We deserve something better, much better. Vote for the GL slate ●

## Notes

1. [www.themany.uk/getting-your-party-back-on-track](http://www.themany.uk/getting-your-party-back-on-track).



SWP



Benito Mussolini's March on Rome, October 1922: pure theatre

# Spreading panic and confusion

Alex Callinicos is playing a cynical opportunist game when he compares the situation in Minneapolis with fascist terror in Italy. He wants to excuse the Together popular front, writes **Eddie Ford**

A simple Google search will reveal that there are plenty of people with an essentially liberal outlook who think that the US under Donald Trump is becoming fascist, or undergoing “creeping fascism”. *The Atlantic* magazine declares “yes, it’s fascism” as “the resemblances are too many and too strong to deny”<sup>1</sup> and the *Daily Kos* tells us that “fascism is knocking at the door”<sup>2</sup>.

The Thom Hartmann Program develops this theme more colourfully by saying: “... fascism isn’t knocking: it’s here [sic] and those are unidentified ICE agents at your door at the behest of felon Donald Trump”<sup>3</sup>. More dramatically still, Jason Stanley of the *More to the story* podcast boldly states that “I study fascism” and “I’ve already fled America”, as we discover that he “isn’t afraid to use the F-word when talking about” Trump and is also the author of *How fascism works* and *Erasing history*<sup>4</sup>. Whatever the shortcomings of their analyses, which are profound, they are *sincere* expressions of moral outrage at Trump’s authoritarianism and his ICE thugs.

What then are we to make of Alex Callinicos and the Socialist Workers Party jumping on the liberal bandwagon? In his *Socialist Worker* column, the comrade writes about how the twin cities of Minneapolis and St Paul in Minnesota have been experiencing something “approximating” the violent assaults that town after town in Italy suffered from fascist squads in 1920-22. Indeed, he sees “parallels” between Trump’s ICE and “other fascist street thugs”<sup>5</sup>. He immediately adds the caveat, “of course there are differences”, as “the Italian offensive laid the basis for the fascists under Benito Mussolini to take control”, whilst apparently in the US today, “the far right is already in power” and “its fascist wing” is directing the assault on Minneapolis and other Democrat-controlled cities. The main leader, he asserts, is “probably” Donald Trump’s

deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller – a stand-in for Mussolini?

Adding to the mess, Callinicos says that, just as many young ex-soldiers were recruited into the Italian fascist paramilitaries, “Trump’s *squadristi*” come “from a section of the state apparatus” – ie, ICE ( hugely expanded over the past year and likely to grow more). Calling it a “quasi-fascist militia”, he quotes a Minneapolis protestor telling *The Atlantic* that “it became clear very quickly that ICE is the Proud Boys, the Boogaloo boys” – but “they’ve given them uniforms and let them run wild”. Callinicos urges, predictably enough, that “collective organisation” in the workplaces will have to be mobilised, “if anything like the national general strike people are calling for is to happen”.

Actually, for all of Callinicos’s feverish account, you do not need to be an expert to know what happened in Italy. Despite being on the winning side in World War I, the ruling elite felt cheated. Italy did not get the territories it wanted (like Dalmatia). Wartime spending resulted in massive government debts and quickly resulted in hyperinflation. Unemployment grew and grew. Demobilised soldiers went hungry. The weak government was paralysed.

## Socialist failure

Formed in 1892 the Socialist Party of Italy took an anti-war position in World War I. This saw Benito Mussolini – formerly a direct action firebrand – splitting, in the name of Italy entering the war and ‘revolutionary nationalism’. The Fascio Rivoluzionario d’Azione Internazionalista was formed in October 1914. However, immediately after the war the PSI became the country’s biggest party. Membership rose to 250,000. In the 1919 general election it won nearly 33% of the vote and 156 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The ‘two red years’ (biennio rosso) followed.

There were mass strikes and widespread workplace occupations.

Factory councils were formed in Turin and Milan. Militants in the countryside seized farms. However, the centrist leadership of the SPI dithered and failed to consummate the revolutionary situation in a revolutionary insurrection. There were left militias and the Red Army of Turin had been formed. The PSI had also applied to affiliate to the Third (Communist) International but balked at the famous 21 conditions. In 1921 the PSI left formed the Communist Party of Italy.

## Fighting squads

The ruling class was desperate and saw Mussolini’s fascist fighting squads, the blackshirts, as saviours. Counterrevolutionary terror was unleashed. Trade union, socialist and communist papers, print shops, meeting places and militants were attacked. Maybe 2,000 were killed. In October 1922 Mussolini staged his March on Rome. A piece of political theatre – prearranged with the monarchy, the army high command and the key capitalist magnates. By 1926 Mussolini had consolidated his fascist dictatorship (which saw the upper echelons of the fascist party merge with the ruling class, and the lower ranks incorporated into the state machine). Counterrevolution had triumphed.

Alex Callinicos is clearly an intelligent man. So how come he wrote such a terrible article for *Socialist Worker*? Either he is losing his marbles and showing early signs of senility, or he is playing a cynical, opportunist game. Occam’s Razor suggests the latter. Rather than writing a serious analysis of Trump, ICE and what fascism is and is not, he merely looks to provide excuses for the SWP’s popular front, the Together alliance. Sponsored by Amnesty International, Friends of the Earth, Sir Lenny Henry, Beverly Knight MBE, Paloma Faith, Gurinder Chadha OBE, the TUC and a host of trade unions and celebrities, Together is banking everything on getting a huge turnout for March 28

and its ‘unity’ demonstration. Naturally, it has the lowest of lowest common denominator ‘politics’: ‘Love not hate’.

This requires maximising the narrative – and panic – about fascism ‘knocking at the door’, which the above *Socialist Worker* article was presumably designed to feed, and trying to please everybody by fudging every issue: Trump’s America is sort of fascist, ICE is sort of fascist, ... Stephen Miller is “probably” a fascist leader, but, but, but.

In Minneapolis, two people were killed – Renée Good and Alex Pretti. Sorry, Alex Callinicos, but this is obviously not the same as Italy 1920-22. They were killed by agents of the state machine, not fascist gangs. OK, someone from the Proud Boys joined ICE – so what? People who join the army, the police, the prison service tend to come from the right. And such bodies *tend* to reinforce rightwing ideas and prejudices ... Britain being something of an exception, at least when it comes to the prison service.

Going back a bit in time, if you were banged up in jail, chances are that the person who locked your cell door would be ex-army, ex-police and maybe a card carrying member of the National Front. No longer so. The Prison Officers Association having a left leadership that actually endorsed Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign in the 2015 Labour Party leadership election.

But regardless, prison guards are part of the state machine just like ICE. It is absurd to suggest that the Trump administration’s brutal actions in Minnesota are in any way “approximating” fascist terror of early 1920s Italy (or the Nazi terror in the 1920s and early 1930s). Alex Callinicos knows all that, but he feels compelled to prostitute his intellect for the sake of rehabilitating the SWP in the eyes of the liberal establishment and the trade union bureaucracy (Stand Up to Racism is one of the sponsors of Together).

While it is far from universally accepted, Trotsky’s definition of

fascism retains its value. Fascism feeds off plebeian discontent, it organises a disciplined movement based on top-down command-and-obey principles, it forms counterrevolutionary fighting squads, usually out of demobilised soldiers, that are protected by the state but are *separate* from the state. This distinguishes it from other forms of counterrevolution. Another central defining feature is that fascism objectively acts in the interests of the capitalist class, and its strutting leaders and their fanatical followers are often manipulated and financed by influential members of the capitalist class. The aim being to smash the revolutionary working class. Fascism in that sense is a kind of punishment for the working class failing to take power.

## Roll back

What is also vital to understand is that, yes, something is changing in the US. But it is not mutating into fascism. There is no revolutionary working class that threatens the ruling class: rather it is the fact that the Trump administration not only wants to roll back the gains of the Civil Rights movement, the anti-discrimination legislation of the 1970s and so forth, but actually to roll back *all* the concessions which have been made to the working class since 1945.

Trump is not attempting to be a Mussolini or a Hitler. Any coup he carries out will be from within the state (like the botched January 6 2021 attack on the Capitol). There will be nothing like the March on Rome or the Munich Beerhall Putsch. Nonetheless, the velvet gloves are coming off ●

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## Notes

1. archive.is/vFwIz#selection-615.0-615.112.
2. dailykos.com/stories/2023/7/19/2182144/-Fascism-Is-Knocking-At-the-Door.
3. youtube.com/watch?v=oesws9R\_Das.
4. revealnews.org/podcast/jason-stanley-fascism-trump-history.
5. socialistworker.co.uk/alex-callinicos/alex-callinicos-how-can-the-protests-in-minnesota-win.



## BY-ELECTION

# Not red on the inside

Corbyn's faction cannot provide clear voting advice. Nor can SPEW. Zarah Sultana urges a Green vote. So does the social-imperialist ACR. The SWP calls for election deals with 'principled leftwing Greens'. **Jack Conrad** calls for independent, working class politics

**G**orton and Denton exposes the backwardness, the muddle, the flabby softness that characterises Your Party. Across the piste, evasion and confusion reigns. From the Fonthill Road HQ, here is the official line:

The greatest single threat to this country right now is a far-right government ... It is imperative that Reform is defeated in Gorton and Denton and the far-right tide is beaten back. To that end, we will actively mobilise against the far right, even as we continue to build a mass party that can elect socialist and anti-war candidates across the country.<sup>1</sup>

What stands out from the waffle is the studied ambiguity. Voters are left in the dark about how to vote on February 26.

Looking at the Gorton and Denton poll of polls we find Reform out on top with 30.6%, Labour next on 28% and the Green Party on a surprisingly good 21.7%.<sup>2</sup> With the sitting Labour MP, Andrew Gwynne, forced to stand down on 'health grounds' (ie, in disgrace), with Sir Keir Starmer mired in the Mandelson scandal and with Anas Sarwar calling upon him to quit, such polling numbers are hardly surprising. Note, in the July 2024 general election Labour secured 50.8% of the vote.

Given the first-past-the-post system, that gives Reform a good chance of winning. However, if the priority is to see "Reform defeated", then a clear recommendation is imperative. Logically, given the numbers, it ought to be voting Angeliki Stogia and Labour. We should certainly expect tactical voting on a considerable scale. Who anti-Reform voters opt for on the day will depend on who emerges over the next few weeks as the most credible challenger against Matt Goodwin and Reform. It could be the Greens, but at the moment it still looks like Labour. The Tories, the Liberal Democrats and the fringe parties have no chance.

It is not just Your Party HQ, Jeremy Corbyn and his The Many faction. Grassroots Left takes the opportunity of Gorton and Denton to complain, rightly, about the disastrous launch of Your Party. How there "should have been a principled socialist candidate on the ballot". How branches should have been "recognised months ago". How they should be given the "local data" and "resources" they need. Yes, yes, again yes ... but then we are told that Grassroots Left "should not lend unconditional support to the Green Party candidate". A formulation, which I take to mean that Grassroots Left will 'lend conditional support' for Hannah Spencer (though, apparently, many, for their own peculiar reasons, take the statement as 'lending no support').

To leave no shadow of doubt, Zarah Sultana (and husband Craig Lloyd) drafted a *personal* statement announcing that she would give the Greens her "critical support". Nothing wrong as a matter of *principle* with voting Green, or Labour, or Communist League ... as long as the 'Vote X' call is solidly based on clear programmatic perspectives. Voting is a tactical question, and tactics, while being flexible, should be designed to serve the programme. Either way, what are the criticisms? Grassroots Left says the Green Party is "pro-capitalist, pro-Nato and has been



Against cuts ... but not when they have to impose them

enforcing cuts in councils all over the country".<sup>3</sup> So why is comrade Sultana urging a Green vote in Gorton and Denton?

She says Hannah Spencer is the "strongest challenger to Labour and Reform". Undeniably the case (see the above poll of polls). But the strongest challenger to Reform is Labour. So why not vote Labour? After all comrade Sultana was a Labour member since she was 18. As a career politician she got herself elected and re-elected as a Labour MP (Coventry South in 2019 and 2024). Did Labour undergo some transmogrification with her departure in July 2025? Frankly, not a credible argument.

## Labour connections

In fact, the Labour Party continues to be a *bourgeois* workers' party. Bourgeois, not simply because of the bought and bribed servants of capitalism in the Parliamentary Labour Party. There is also the organic connection with the trade union bureaucracy (merchants in the commodity, labour-power). Neither Neil Kinnock, nor Tony Blair, nor Sir Keir Starmer have changed that. Hence the continued relevance of our strategic perspective of engaging with, challenging, the Labourite left and fighting to transform the Labour Party into a united front of a special kind - a permanent united front of all working class organisations.

Perhaps the call to vote for Hannah Spencer comes from privileged inside information about Zack Polanski's plans to give the Green Party an eco-socialist makeover. Artistic license admittedly, but entirely plausible. Polanski is a left populist shape-shifter. One day he is a "strong Zionist", the next "certainly not a Zionist"; one day he is a Liberal Democrat, the next a Green; one day he accuses the Labour left of being rife with anti-Semitism, the next he apologises for the slur. However, what really matters is not headline-grabbing, verbal pronouncements against the evils of capitalism. No, it is a proven commitment to the programme of extreme democracy, working class rule and the transition to communism.

However, some in Your Party appear to view the Green Party as natural allies (maybe future coalition partners in a 'progressive' anti-Reform government). That is certainly the case with Anticapitalist Resistance.

The social-imperialist Mandelites want "working alliances with Green activists", which would "help efforts to make the Green movement more [sic] anti-capitalist".<sup>4</sup>

Not a few in Grassroots Left seem to share a similar perspective. Typical is the article written jointly by Candi Williams and Anahita Zardoshti - both comrades are candidates for the central executive committee. The title says it all: 'The Green Party is great, but it's not enough'.<sup>5</sup> What is "great" about the Greens goes entirely unexplored. Could it be their pro-capitalism, their pro-Nato stance, their willingness to impose cuts? Obviously not.

The comrades write of the Greens "using the word, socialist". News to me. News to Green Party members we have asked. What is actually featured in Green Party manifestoes, election addresses and conference resolutions is the usual 'social justice', 'environmental justice' and creating a 'fairer society' goop. Meaningless platitudes, not socialism.

Nonetheless, supposedly: "Fascism knocks at the door, with far-right marches drawing hundreds of thousands onto the streets". If the claim is that fascism stands on the threshold of power, this is a thoroughly misconceived assessment. However, panicking oneself (and others) does provide a convenient excuse for cross-class politics - ie, popular frontism - on what passes for the left. Hence ACR's Red-Green alliance.

There is, in fact, no immediate prospect of fascism. Reform is a right-populist party, not fascist. Tommy Robinson is a fascist, but leads a rabble, not a party. Crucially, in terms of definition, fascism is counterrevolution which uses *non-state fighting formations* to smash, to pulverise the organised working class. Of course, there is today, no revolutionary situation to negatively resolve. The organised working class is no threat to the capitalist system. The ruling class can continue to rule without losing political control by elevating fascist goons into state power.

Anyway, according to comrades Williams and Zardoshti, the problem with the Greens is that they are "an exclusively electoral party trying to solve ... issues at the ballot box, a strategy which, at best, kicks the fascist can down the road." But "reforms

alone", they say, "cannot change the source of the fascist problem, which requires a rebuilding of class power".

Leave aside today's phantom "fascist problem". Working class power *that does not take state power* invites a real "fascist problem", ie, counterrevolution. Therefore, their formulation about "rebuilding class power" is painfully inadequate. To begin with, what golden age do the comrades have in mind? The 1970s, the 1950s, the 1920s? No, it will not do. Marxists learn from the past, but we are committed to the future. And that through fighting for "reforms" - ie, high politics, which *alone* point towards working class rule. We have in mind demands such as the abolition of the monarchy, House of Lords and MI5, and the replacement of the standing army by a popular militia. Demands such as ending all anti-trade union laws, unrestricted freedom of assembly and speech, the disestablishment of the Church of England, withdrawal from Nato, a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united Ireland and a United States of Europe.

When it comes to programmatic horizons, the sights of comrades Williams and Zardoshti are lowered to the point of banality by the thoroughly internalised assumptions of intersectionalism, spontaneity and streets, strikes and ballots economism. Hence they say:

We need a party which both fights in elections and organises in communities all year round, not just mobilising for elections. We need a bridge between the ballot box and the streets, a party of the whole working class.

We need a party that brings together disparate liberation struggles under a single banner. A party that brings anti-war activists onto the streets with tenant organisers and anti-racism campaigners. Where striking workers are joined on the picket line by queer liberation movements. We need a party that doesn't just talk about causes, but actually fights for them.

High politics are entirely absent. Of course, we should vote for the Grassroots Left slate ... but we are doing that *critically*.

The problem does not stop with Your Party's two big factions. Take the Socialist Party in England and Wales. When it comes to Gorton and Denton, there is no advice about how to vote - we phoned to double check. However, there is again a definite softness towards the Greens.

Blockheaded SPEW loyalists say that here, on this subject, we are talking 'absolute rubbish' (the polite version). SPEW is an uncompromising opponent of the Green Party. Sad to say, a much exaggerated claim. The comrades, along with their Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition outriders, are in the midst of running a petition campaign, designed to get the Greens to commit to their 'no cuts' shibboleth.<sup>6</sup> You would not do that with Reform, the Tories or the Liberal Democrats.

From the scratch to the gangrene. *The Socialist*, in a 'What we think' editorial, wants the Greens to be "invited to affiliate" by Your Party.<sup>7</sup> 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".<sup>8</sup> 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 cross-class, *federal* party and the forlorn hope of SPEW receiving an official YP invitation to affiliate! Such a thoroughly opportunist *strategy* - and that is what it is - inevitably culminates in paying no more than lip service to establishing "an independent working class party".<sup>9</sup> That is, sadly, what the much vaunted 'transitional method' amounts to in practice. Paradoxically, tactics become all.<sup>10</sup>

Editorials in *The Socialist* must be regarded as authoritative statements on behalf of SPEW (which, of course, publishes, finances and tightly controls the paper). Perhaps the final edit was done by the 'newspaper team' (six HQ-based full-timers). But, whoever actually wrote the damned piece advocating affiliation, prime responsibility for what is *class treachery* must be placed on SPEW's leadership as a whole.<sup>11</sup> And class treachery it is. After all, for good reason *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."

## Origins

Historically the Greens are 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, unfairly, been described as 'blackshirts with green welly boots'. Even so, they ominously 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.<sup>12</sup>

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*, contained more than a few worthwhile demands: public ownership of energy, water and railways, build council houses, end 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.<sup>13</sup> Plainly more radical than Sir Keir's offer, that is for sure - and this comedy duly produced a crop of leftwing, 'big name' endorsements: eg, Jennie Formby, Jamie Driscoll, George Monbiot, Owen Jones, Grace Blakeley, Laura Parker<sup>14</sup> ... and, in the 'small name' league, the blogger, Phil Burton-Cartledge, formerly of this parish.<sup>15</sup>

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".<sup>16</sup> Finance capital is, at least in the imagination, reigned in, but continues, albeit in *responsible* form. Essentially the same happens with industrial capital.

Electorally, the Greens are disproportionately young, student, female, well-educated and renting.<sup>17</sup> Reportedly there are now some 190,000 members. Programmatically, however, it is unmistakably a petty bourgeois party which wants to repair current 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 biggish donors.<sup>18</sup> But, the more MPs and the nearer to coalition politics they come, there will come those 'no strings' donations generously provided by billionaires.

Note, in 2021, Germany's Greens "received more large donations than Angela Merkel's party".<sup>19</sup> They duly abandoned their pacifism and adopted militarism, neo-liberalism and established foreign policy. Green ministers in the 2021-24 traffic light coalition proved themselves by *unconditionally* supporting the Israeli war in Gaza. They even opposed calls for humanitarian aid. No surprise then, the Greens spearheaded demands to supply Ukraine with heavy weapons, including long-range Taurus missiles. You can see why ACR wants a Red-Green alliance in today's Britain.

Federalism

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

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*.<sup>20</sup> 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".<sup>21</sup> A categorical error revealing a stunning ignorance of the ABCs of Marxism.<sup>22</sup>

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 as a whole: 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 no chance of overthrowing and superseding capitalism.

Triumvirate

Under its Lewis Nielsen, Tomáš Tengely-Evans, Sophia Beach 'renewal' triumvirate, the SWP proposes that, while socialists and Greens "need to avoid running against each other in some constituencies to boot out Labour ... there should be no blanket policy of standing aside for all Greens - only principled leftwing ones".<sup>23</sup> By the way, this formulation reveals that the SWP argues not just for "standing aside" for so-called "principled leftwing" Greens ... but, one presumes, voting for them.

Does that mean voting for Hannah Spencer in Gorton and Denton? Is she a "principled leftwing" candidate? What about Labour? It does, after all, remain, as argued, no matter how attenuated, a 'bourgeois workers' party. Nothing in *Party Notes*, nothing in *Socialist Worker*. We repeatedly tried to contact the comrades to get a definite answer, but all we got is a "cannot accept new messages" automated response.

Whatever the reason for that logjam, 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 and his rotten 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.<sup>24</sup> 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 perks - that 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 YP as 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 stunning 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 clearly fails to understand that salient fact.

Thirdly, he 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.<sup>25</sup>

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 - *publicly* prided himself in having "one rule", a rule he "always followed": do not read the "sectarian literature" of rival organisations. He apparently took great satisfaction in "never" having read Gerry Healy's paper, nor that of the Mandelite 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".<sup>26</sup> Note, Tony Cliff's biographer, Ian Birchall, usefully tells us that this is, in fact, simply untrue.<sup>27</sup> No surprise - 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. Not to have read its press would have been imbecilic.

It has to be admitted, the SWP's third generation of leaders - comrades Nielsen, Tengely-Evans and Beach - are hardly distinguishable from left Labourism ... certainly when it comes to elections. Look at the platform on which their Maxine Bowler stood 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".<sup>28</sup> Recycled left Labourism, in other words.

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".<sup>29</sup> As if elections cannot be made into a form of the *real* class struggle. Frankly, such a statement either displays a complete lack of self-awareness - that or it reveals out-and-out hypocrisy. The reader can judge.

Second generation

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 high politics - such as a federal republic, self-determination for Scotland and Wales, Irish unity, the abolition of the monarchy, etc, etc - the SWP used its majority to present the Socialist Alliance as 'old Labour' during election campaigns.

Officially it characterised the SA as a "united front between revolutionary socialists and left Labourites".<sup>30</sup> 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 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 immigration 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.

By contrast, for communists, standing in 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".<sup>31</sup>

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 such as Gorton and Denton, where voters are asked to choose between lesser evils, do nothing to challenge the system.

But, if we can get our act together, if we can form a real party of the "whole working class" - in other words, a Communist Party - elections can become one of our most effective weapons, especially

in non-revolutionary times.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> Indeed success in elections could quite conceivably be the antechamber for social revolution ●

Notes

1. x.com/thisisyourparty/status/2018408817923342594.
2. *The Independent* February 5 2026.
3. x.com/Grassroots Left/status/2018653546682650678.
4. Anticapitalist statement: 'Why we back the Greens in Gorton and Denton by-election', February 5 2026 - anticapitalistresistance.org/why-we-back-a-green-in-gorton-and-denton-by-election.
5. novaramedia.com/2026/02/03/the-green-party-is-great-but-its-not-enough.
6. 'Greens must pledge no cuts to services!' *The Socialist* February 5-11 2026.
7. 'What we think' *The Socialist* September 11-17 2025.
8. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd0d0d08jnjnjo.
9. 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).
10. For the last of my many critiques of the so-called 'transitional method' see 'Programmatic starting point' *Weekly Worker* February 27 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1527/programmatic-starting-point).
11. Gensec 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.
12. See E Goldsmith and R Allen *A blueprint for survival* Hamondsworth 1972.
13. greenparty.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Green-Party-2024-General-Election-Manifesto-Long-version-with-cover.pdf.
14. bright-green.org/2024/06/19/who-are-the-high-profile-figures-who-have-endorsed-the-greens.
15. averypublicsociologist.blogspot.com/2024/06/the-green-partys-leftism.html.
16. 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.
17. yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49978-how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-general-election.
18. donation.watch/en/unitedkingdom/party/GPEW/donors.
19. *The Guardian* September 7 2021.
20. See S Freud *Beyond the pleasure principle* London 1961.
21. 'What we think' *The Socialist* September 3-9 2025.
22. 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" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 5 Moscow 1977, p426).
23. *Socialist Worker* September 10-16 2025.
24. T Tengely-Evans 'Why the left must break from Labourism' *Socialist Worker* March 26 2025.
25. T Cliff *A world to win: life of a revolutionary* London 2000, pp59-60.
26. T Cliff *A world to win: life of a revolutionary* London 2000, p62.
27. Letters *Weekly Worker* September 2025.
28. *Socialist Worker* May 31 2024.
29. 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) - presumably Alex Callinicos, Charlie Kimber and Judy Cox.
30. See J Conrad *Towards a Socialist Alliance party* London 2001, p25.
31. J Conrad *In the enemy camp* London 1993, p18.
32. 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).
33. J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991, p97.



## MEDIA

# Et tu, Bezos?

The Amazon oligarch's brazen attack on his own *Washington Post* amounts to a betrayal of the vocation of journalism. More of the same should be expected, reckons **Paul Demarty**

**O**n February 4, employees of the *Washington Post* were assembled for an all-hands Zoom call. There was little doubt among them what was coming - those familiar with the corporate world know that, when such meetings are arranged with no stated purpose, it is unlikely to be good news. The media world had been abuzz with rumours of lay-offs at the *Post* for weeks.

In the end though, both the scale and the shape of the bloodletting took many by surprise. This was not, as sometimes happens, a broad, horizontal slice of the staff being cast off, with the rest expected, in time-honoured fashion, to 'do more with less'. Whole departments were to be wiped out. There would be no more books coverage. The sports pages were cast into the flames. Its local coverage - in the United States, papers like the *Post* and *New York Times* function ambiguously as both local and national outlets - would suffer considerable cuts. Foreign affairs was to be gutted, with the *Post's* Middle East and Ukraine bureaux to be shuttered entirely; the remainder is to focus on "national security".

This was all euphemised by editor-in-chief Matt Murray as a "strategic reset", to deal with a declining readership, but nobody could be so cruel as to blame him for the message he was forced to deliver. This is the work, ultimately, of the *Post's* owner, Jeff Bezos - the Amazon centi-billionaire. His main instrument in all this is the paper's CEO, Will Lewis, who is an old hand at ruthless action on the part of media oligarchs - having handled the clean-up operation for Rupert Murdoch after the phone-hacking scandal blew up. His dirty work now done in DC, he resigned on February 7.

There are a couple of narratives to fit this into and the first is narrowly economic. The basis for the profitability of traditional news organisations (let us restrict ourselves to print for simplicity's sake) had a couple of layers. At bottom, you needed a mass readership; this means something different for a local paper than a national tabloid, but the point is that this is an attractive, well-understood audience for adverts, which pay for the overall operation. Typically, more mass-market content (sports pages, lifestyle features, even horoscopes) subsidises (via the ad revenue) more niche content, which crucially includes the sort of deep, investigative reporting that more or less justifies journalism as an enterprise. (The *Washington Post*, legendarily, broke the Watergate scandal in the 1970s - a tortuous enterprise that took months of journalistic and legal effort.)

Since the advent of mass internet usage, however - and the central ad monopolies of Google, Meta and friends - the price of advertising has plummeted. The central link between the 'popular' stuff and the 'real journalism' - ad revenue - has been broken. The classified adverts in local papers - a surprisingly large portion of revenue in their day - have likewise been destroyed by eBay and friends. The result is an industry-wide death spiral.

This is true enough, and may suffice to explain some morbid symptoms: for instance, the increasingly dystopian death-grip on local media in this



**Opposed to Trump 1.0, but not Trump 2.0**

country held by the company, Reach, with each outlet slowly being reduced to a sluice for AI slop, generated by a few full-timers at central office. For all the focus on the beleaguered 'high street', the evisceration of local media is surely a significant driver of alienation and declining civic pride. My older brother and his fellow delinquents used to be avid readers of the Plymouth *Evening Herald's* court reports to see which of them appeared this week: they nicknamed the column "Stars in their eyes". Without such reporting, however, nobody - including more mature readers than those boys were then - can have much of a handle on local affairs of far greater import.

## Influence

This is not enough to explain the decline of national or global media organisations, however. A purely capitalistic look at the old business model poses an obvious problem: if investigative journalism or literary pages require such a cost centre, *why have them at all?* The answer is that these prestige activities give you things that do not show up on the balance sheet - cultural cachet among the elite, or - crucially - political leverage.

Think of the impact that the Watergate reporting had on US politics. This is real influence in the halls of power, and press barons have traditionally valued this far beyond their bottom line. Rupert Murdoch - probably the last of the true press moguls, who even in his 90s likes the smell of printers' ink on his fingers - exploited this to great effect. Whether it was the *Sunday Times* Spotlight team in high politics, or the antics of Mazher Mahmood, the 'fake sheikh', at the *News of the World*, this was an instrument of coercion, above all against the political class.

As the news of the *Washington Post* massacre filtered through, there was anger and bafflement that Bezos was being so miserly about the whole thing. He is, after all, rich enough to fly

his then-fiancée, Lauren Sanchez, and washed-up pop star Katy Perry into space. The *New York Times's* Peter Baker guessed that he could fund the paper for five years with the money he made in a week. Normally when such calculations are offered, scepticism is in order. Pacifists, for example, often translate the military budget into the number of hospitals, schools and so on that could be built, but in reality the ability to have a welfare state at all is dependent on comparative military advantage in the imperialist order.

In this case, however, we *must* interpret Bezos's decision not to run the paper at a loss as a *deliberate choice*. And it is a choice that must be placed in the history of his ownership overall. He bought the paper in 2013 at a low ebb for a little over \$300 million, and spent the first few years - as many legacy outlets did then - 'modernising' it for the digital age. In 2016, however, a great steroid injection was given to it, the *NYT* and similar liberal-leaning outlets, by a certain Donald J Trump. The *Post* emerged as the house organ of the '#resistance' to the new president. It added a portentous motto to its masthead: "Democracy dies in darkness".

The 'resistance'-aligned media, it must be said, suffered a great deal economically, when their dayglo-tanned money-spinner departed the White House in 2021. Panic about Trump translated readily into subscriptions, but, although the Joe Biden years were hardly serene, the emergency was over. When it loomed once more, in 2024, however, Bezos had something else in mind for the second Trump term, should it take place. He joined the general stampede of the tech billionaire set to the right, though he was more discreet about it than Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg.

The die was cast, finally, when the *Post* - under heavy manners from senior management - spiked its planned endorsement of Kamala Harris in October of that year. This was interpreted, no doubt accurately,

as a favour from Bezos to Trump - a favour he would expect returned. In terms of high politics and, given where Bezos makes much of his *real* money (enormous Amazon Web Services contracts, including to the government), it was a canny move; if Harris had won, she would be less likely to punish him for it than Trump would be to punish him for a Harris endorsement.

For the *paper*, however, it was a total disaster. Hundreds of thousands of subscriptions were cancelled. Bezos and his agents doubled down, announcing that, henceforth, its op-ed pages would be used solely to promote "personal liberty and free markets". The financial crisis at the *Post* is largely a matter of its management dissolving the existing readership, and failing to elect another.

## Few remaining

In this light, the maiming of the *Washington Post* begins to look like a deliberate attack on what was, after all, a storied institution of the American press - one of only a few remaining with serious journalistic muscle, which was *occasionally* to be found holding the powerful to account. It is altogether poetic that it should have taken place during the release week for *Melania*, a by all accounts bizarre, Amazon-funded film about the first lady, whose budget - the highest ever for any documentary (if that is what we should call it) - included a \$28 million bung directly to its subject herself. No doubt her finances are entirely separate from those of her husband, and everything is above board ...

If this is a deliberate act of destruction, it would seem congruent with certain other recent developments in the broader media. The CBS television network has been manoeuvred into the hands of David Ellison, a Trump-aligned businessman, who promptly hired the self-regarding Zionist lunatic, Bari Weiss, to run operations. The new

management has attracted controversy for repeatedly spiking news stories critical of the administration and hiring toadies. Its ratings are, at this point, positively subterranean.

Meanwhile, Ellison's father, Larry - the notoriously-rapacious billionaire owner of the tech behemoth, Oracle, and a Bond villain right down to his preposterous goatee - found himself the beneficiary of the forced sale of the social network, TikTok. The sale, of course, was forced in stages, because it declined to censor coverage of the Gaza genocide. Failed Republican presidential hopeful Nikki Haley exemplified the logic, when she claimed that 30 minutes of TikTok use made the user "17% more anti-Semitic" - the sort of thing Chris Morris used to dupe celebrities into saying on *Brass Eye* ("paedophiles are more crab than human ...").

The takeover finally went through recently, with the immediate result of a comically heavy-handed censorship regime coming in. The short-term result is a stampede off the platform - although platforms of this sort are 'stickier' than individual media outlets, and so this may not turn out to be the kind of self-immolation seen at the *Washington Post* or CBS.

If this is the direction of the media - if it is doomed to be colonised by billionaires primarily motivated by other business interests, who are incentivised to grovel towards the buy-side on large government contracts - then things are bleak indeed. Serious journalism is a public good, and one which was imperfectly provided (but provided nevertheless) by the great bourgeois media firms. One could compare the situation to that of a private hospital: its driving force is profit, but it does really treat patients nevertheless. The betrayal of this vocation by the new oligarchs is encouraged by the economic headwinds mentioned above.

We are approaching the moment where, for journalism to survive at all, it *must* be divorced from the profit motive, which offers it only death. Here, the workers' movement has much to offer - if it can revive. Mass-membership political parties could sustain journalistic operations without the sensibilities of oligarchs and advertisers to take into account. They could train journalists, defend them with lawyers, and supply them with an intelligent and demanding readership. Such was the case in the best times of the movement's history. There is no reason, beyond our movement's current political failings, why it may not be true again.

A real journalistic endeavour of this sort - tied to a coherent social movement - would have many salutary effects. It would provide an alternative to the aimless doomscrolling of social media, never mind the desperate scrabbling of the legacy outlets, slowly turning into vast approximations of the *Daily Mail's* old 'sidebar of shame', full of trivia and smutty paparazzi shots. It might, for that matter, shame the bourgeoisie into meaningfully reviving its own media.

Until then, we can expect only more desecration of the public sphere by the incomprehensibly rich ●

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## ECONOMY

# From stagnation to stagflation

She promises to cut taxes, increase spending on social security and the armed forces. Will the re-election of Sanae Takaichi encourage the corporate sector to invest and thereby boost Japan's economy? **Michael Roberts** thinks not

In Japan, a general election took place on February 8, just months after Sanae Takaichi became the nation's first female prime minister. Takaichi is an arch-conservative, ultra-nationalist and a devotee of Margaret Thatcher. She became prime minister last October by winning an internal party race for the presidency of the beleaguered governing Liberal Democrat Party, battered by two disastrous elections in as many years and subsequently without a majority in either house of the Japanese parliament. However, the LDP and its coalition partner, the Japan Innovation Party, secured a landslide victory.

Takaichi seemed to have broad appeal, polling consistently well with women, young and old. She claims that she will be different from all past LDP leaders. She wants to cut taxes for most people - in particular, the consumption tax, which drives up prices in the shops. And she seeks to increase government spending on social security and 'defence', even if it means higher budget deficits. Takaichi says she is going for growth - not dissimilar to the slogans of the ill-fated, short-lived Tory prime minister, Liz Truss. Truss's plans for a large increase in the UK budget deficit led to a sharp rise in government bond yields and a run on the pound. Something similar is happening in Japan, if at a slow burn. Japanese government bond yields are up significantly and the yen has been at near historic lows.

### Down in flames

Does this mean that Takaichi will go down in flames like Liz Truss? Probably not, but it does mean that all her talk of 'being different' will lead nowhere. As in all G7 economies, over the decades, Japanese governments adopted neoliberal economic policies aimed at reducing pensions and welfare benefits. Richard Katz has pointed out that the LDP coalition lowered social security benefits for seniors from ¥2.9 million (\$20,000 at today's exchange rates) in 1995 to just ¥2.1 million (\$14,500) now - a 30% decrease in price-adjusted terms.<sup>1</sup> In addition, government spending on healthcare for each person over the age of 65 has been reduced by almost a fifth over the past 30 years. At the same time, the corporate profits tax has been slashed from 50% to just 15%. Profits have doubled from 8% of GDP to 16%, while corporate tax revenue for the government has tumbled from 4% to 2.5%.

But those cuts in corporate profits tax have not led to improved business investment growth. Instead, companies have hoarded the cash or invested in government bonds and the stock market, with nearly 1 quadrillion yen in liquid assets, of which ¥270 trillion were in cash and deposits, ¥233 trillion in bills and accounts receivable, and ¥460 trillion in investment securities. Net of debt liabilities, non-financial corporations' overall assets relative to their total sales has shifted by more than 30 percentage points since the mid-1990s (or about ¥460 trillion). Put another way, the cumulative net saving of the Japanese non-financial corporate sector over the past 30 years is now worth about 80% of Japanese GDP.

The key to the failure of



Sanae Takaichi: Japan's Margaret Thatcher

neoliberal measures to boost corporate investment and so end the stagnation of the Japanese economy since the 1990s has been the decline in the profitability of capital investment. Japan's profitability of capital has fallen more than in any other G7 economy.

The big long-term issue is Japan's population. It has been falling and ageing. That allows per capita income growth to grow more than total GDP; per capita, Japan's real GDP is up 10.8% since 2010, while real GDP is up 9.6%. But even per capita real GDP growth has been slowing. Those with jobs are overworked. Japan invented the term *karoshi* - death from overwork - 50 years ago, following a string of employee tragedies. The large corporates are promoting the idea of a four-day week to relieve this pressure and increase productivity. But there is little sign that this or any other measure is working to raise productivity. Productivity growth is now non-existent.

Japan's corporations may have increased profits at the expense of wages, but they are not investing that extra capital in new technology and productivity-enhancing equipment. Real investment is no higher than in 2007. Public investment (about one-quarter of business investment) is static. Japanese capital's image of innovating technology appears to be long gone. The mainstream measure of 'innovation', total factor productivity, has faded from over 1% growth a year in the 1990s to near zero now, while the huge capital investment of the 1980s and 90s is nowhere to be seen. So Japan's 'potential' real GDP growth rate is close to zero.

### Trumpism

Prime ministers come and go, but nothing changes. Japan has run permanent government deficits, spending it on construction and other projects, yet its economy has continued to stagnate. With Japan's corporate sector unwilling or unable to invest, Takaichi is now attempting to end Japan's stagnation by fiscal spending, cutting interest rates and allowing

the yen to depreciate in order to boost exports. It is a Truss/Trump-type policy that has got the Bank of Japan and the financial institutions really worried, as well as foreign investors.

Instead of stagnation, the Japanese economy has now morphed into stagflation, with rising prices, flat GDP and consumer spending, and falling real wages. Consumer prices have risen 12% since 2021. At the same time, GDP is barely higher than it was in 2018. Spending, in turn, is stagnant, because real wages are down 7% from their 2018 level.

Takaichi wants to boost growth with fiscal spending and monetary easing and ignore the resulting rising bond yields and falling yen. In contrast, the BoJ wants to cap bond yield rises and keep fiscal spending down to cap inflation and stop the yen falling. But here is the dilemma: the BoJ's aim to reduce inflation via higher interest rates will worsen the stagnation, but Takaichi's aim to boost fiscal spending and fund it by BoJ purchases will only exacerbate inflation.

Takaichi correctly insists that Japan's inflation is mostly supply-driven, but she thinks that is a transitory problem and so reckons restoring growth is more important than suppressing inflation. A year ago, she called the BOJ "stupid" (similar to Trump's attack on the US Fed for not cutting rates) for raising its interest rate from zero to 0.25% (it is now at 0.75%). Takaichi opposes interest rate hikes, because she wants to help automakers and other exporters "at all costs"<sup>2</sup> - particularly in light of the Trump trade tariffs on Japanese exports.

Will Takaichi's policies end up crashing the Japanese government bond market, as Liz Truss managed in the UK? I think not. Most government debt is held by Japanese themselves (88%), unlike in the UK. The risk of capital flight only lies in that portion held by private investors, the *net* debt. And the latter is smaller than it has been in decades, mainly because

the BOJ has bought so much of the debt since 2013. Early that year, net government debt held by private creditors peaked at 144% of GDP, while today it equals just 96%.

### Bond yields

Yes, bond yields are up, but reduced net debt and previous ultra-low interest rates have lowered *net* interest payments at all levels of government to a trivial 0.03% of GDP in 2024 (down from nearly 1% in 2012). This is easily manageable.

But what rising yields and a falling yen do show is that, as Richard Katz has put it,

... the slow corrosion of the economy. Decades of submarket interest rates have kept zombies

on life support at the expense of healthier companies. A stunning half of Japan's GDP is produced in business sectors where (total factor) productivity is actually falling, not just decelerating. The chronic deficits are more the symptom of economic weakness than its cause.<sup>3</sup>

Letting the yen depreciate will not work. The 43% depreciation of the yen since 2021 has not boosted Japan's exports - in real terms they are up just 5% in the last three years. That suggests Japanese exports are just less competitive in world markets. Indeed, Japan's *real* trade surplus in goods and services is currently falling at a 15% annual rate. So Takaichi's hope that allowing the yen to fall will somehow boost Japanese exports and kick-start economic growth is so much wishful thinking.

Nevertheless, Takaichi appears to be riding high for now on 'making a difference' as a 'Thatcherite' prime minister. And she has not wasted the opportunity to play the immigration card. The number of foreigners working in Japan reached a record 2.57 million last year. Immigrants have really helped to keep the economy going, as Japanese citizens age and the population falls. But not for Takaichi. She has called for immigration controls to stop any change in Japanese 'culture' and 'way of life'.

Once again, here she follows the Trumpist message ●

Michael Roberts blogs at  
[thenextrecession.wordpress.com](https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com)

### Notes

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## Fighting fund

# Up the pace!

Unfortunately, we're quite a bit behind the going rate, when it comes to February's fighting fund. As most readers will know, we need to raise £2,750 every month to help support the *Weekly Worker*, but, as I write, the running total is just £877 after 11 of the 28 days. So now we need to up the pace!

Of course, we're more than grateful to this week's contributors for their generosity - special thanks to comrade TB for his magnificent £96 donated via PayPal. Others using that payment method were SH (£50), ST (£20), AB (£11), MN (£10), JV (£7) and GP (£5).

Then we had a few comrades who paid by bank transfer/standing order - thanks to comrades DV and NH (£30 each), NR (£25), RD (£12) and comrades SM, PM and CC, who all chipped in with a tenner. Finally, there was that well-known donor, who handed his usual £5 note to one of our team, comrade Hassan.

Of course, we're more than

grateful to all those comrades, but the problem is, there weren't enough of them! Their generosity only provided an extra £330, when reaching that target requires a weekly average of more than twice that!

So are we going to see a lot more coming our way over the next two weeks and three days? Let's hope so!

As new subscriber KL wrote, "Yours is the best paper on the left - the only one I know that believes in serious debate." Thanks, comrade - that's all part of the drive that motivates us: building a mass party that can finally end capitalism by organising the working class for state power.

Please support the fighting fund! ●

Robbie Rix

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## YP SCOTLAND



First time farce ... second time it definitely looks like a repeat

# Heading to dreamland

Separatism is taken as common sense by much of what passes for the left in Scotland nowadays. But, argues **Peter Kennedy**, socialism and nationalism contradict each other

**Y**our Party Scotland officially came into existence with the launch of its inaugural conference in Dundee over the weekend of November 7-8. Roughly 350-400 and 250-300 attended day one and day two respectively, in addition to an unknown number attending live online.

The conference was well organised, making practical use of digital technology, to roll out motions, amendments and standing orders, duly explained, discussed and debated. One negative issue was the short time members had to listen to debates before voting - limiting any possibility for small-group or self-reflection.

Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana provided set speeches designed to rally the troops, sandwiched between key conference decision-making that will define the democratic structure and political direction of Your Party Scotland in its initial years.

It was heartening to see YPS endorse being an out-and-out socialist party - committed to working towards socialism, based on collective leadership and accepting members with dual-party affiliation, although it is worth stressing that the validations will be decided by the Scottish executive committee. The downside was that some major decisions were made at this inaugural YPS conference concerning our electoral stance, political orientation and direction on the basis of a low vote threshold of around 4%-5% of those eligible to vote.

The main decisions were as follows:

With respect to governance of the party, it was decided that 16 offices would be elected to the SEC (one

per Scottish parliamentary region), plus eight on an all-Scotland ballot; and that national officers would be elected by all members, with all posts term-limited. Moreover, rather than a delegate system, voting on matters at party conferences would be open to all members through online voting systems, accessible throughout conference time.

### Holyrood elections

With respect to the electoral issue, the immediate strategy is to stand candidates in the May 2026 Holyrood elections, with branches or regional groups deciding whether to stand on the basis of a 50%-plus-one majority or a quorum of at least 10% of members. Branches would also be responsible for organising public conferences, reaching out to and including trade union members, community organisations and socialist parties, around the principle of a no-cuts 'people's budget', based on local needs.

YPS pledged that elected councillors and MSPs would never vote for cuts, and it would seek cooperation with independent socialists, socialist parties and others such as the Greens to avoid the splitting of the left vote, with the aim of facilitating the building of a progressive bloc against Reform UK.

Without doubt the defining decisions taken in Dundee were those related to political strategy. It was clear from the conference that national issues, and how they cross-referenced with class, were to the fore. In this respect, there was a strong sentiment in the conference hall towards specifically Scottish solutions over matters of party

and class. Rejecting autonomy, YPS favoured independence from Your Party UK to establish its own Scotland agenda.

The debate seemed to be almost a foregone conclusion within the gathered assembly and it did not take too long to reach a verdict. The issue of the right to self-determination is not in question for democrats, but the discussion in favour of independence hinged on the belief that YPS would facilitate a break with the top down bureaucratic and centralised leanings of YP UK. This will allow YPS to develop without YP UK scrutiny and somehow open the door to alliances with members across nations within the UK. Exactly how was not explained or even ruminated on. In this respect the discussion of such a party-defining political strategy was vague and nebulous.

More crucial still was the vote in favour of an independent Scotland as the best route to improve the lives of people in Scotland and achieve socialism. I have to say I have heard and read much more convincing arguments than those offered in conference. For example, the argument that Scottish workers were innately more socialist and radical than the rest of the UK-wide working class is not impressive or factual. The argument that YPS members working in the community would find it easier to build, because they would be working with the grain of sentiment at community level that socialism is intimately linked to an independent Scotland, is instrumental rather than one of socialist principle.

Meanwhile, the actual political

aims and objectives remained vague, while no evidence was offered for arguments about economic dividends flowing from independence. It was all taken on trust - a given. Arguments that an independent Scotland was the best route because of the practical advantages of acting locally to bring change to the working class, when faced by what appear as the insurmountable powers of global capitalism, are understandable, but seemed more of a lament than a concrete analysis of class divisions, leaving aside the trenchant claims that an independent Scotland would thrive economically and politically, once it breaks with the UK.

### Breaking up

The debate as a whole lacked a revolutionary perspective with respect to independence. It was more about the separation of national decision-making and less about how breaking up Britain might evolve into the formation of workers' power along organisational forms that would also erase nationalist sentiments.

Those against basically argued the opposite: that there is nothing innate about the Scottish working class re socialism; there ought to be evidence presented for claims Scotland would thrive; and that independence would come at the expense of building class unity across the nations of the UK. The best of the arguments were that independence would divide the working class in Scotland and, if implemented, divide the working class of each nation. What we did not hear were positive arguments about how to progress beyond the British state and beyond nationalist sentiments.

From the side of independence,

I was, at the least, expecting to hear the republican argument, which claims independence as a political strategy for the working class across the UK to settle accounts with British imperialism and its monarchical trappings as a basis for broader class unity across nations.

Yet the reality is that a more developed argument was not required to convince the delegates: both the votes for an independent YPS and an independent Scotland as the best route for the working class were almost a given, in a conference hall that emitted a strong, almost tangible sentiment for Scotland independence.

The same sentiment was also revealed in the *rejection* of this motion:

We oppose the global system of imperial domination and colonisation and stand in solidarity with real and effective resistance to these, centred around the working class. Your Party will always support the interests of the working class in any nation or territory, and understands that this is not the same as supporting any would-be ruling class group or faction that claims to represent either the working class or 'national liberation'.

Meanwhile, conference voted *in favour* of retaining the motion, "We oppose the global system of imperial domination and colonisation, and support movements for national liberation and self-determination."

Whether YPS can marry the two is another matter. And whether a vote cast by a fraction of the membership will hold water is debatable - especially given the party's commitment to all-membership participation •



# Not nationalism but regionalism

Having rightly opposed the illusions in nationalism in Your Party Scotland, Peter Kennedy proposes his own recipe for the future

**A**gainst the backdrop of Your Party in the UK, Scotland and Wales there arises the issue of how to locate all three within the UK political landscape.

The context gives succour to socialists committed to national independence as a shortcut to socialism, but it also opens up other solutions. One of them is for socialists to promote a regional-based political movement that erases national divisions and enhances democratic accountability. This short intervention critiques national independence projects and considers the socialist possibilities of regional assemblies.

The incongruous pairing of nationalism with socialism over the course of the past hundred years has left the working class movement in a politically pitiful state. During the cold war era, working class capacity to act for itself was decapitated by international capitalists in the west placating and dividing the working class with 'national roads to socialism' in the form of social democracy. Meanwhile the Stalinist USSR used tanks to bring 'socialism in one country' to eastern Europe workers, while also reinforcing the idea that social democracy in the west was on the road to socialism in one country, as a matter of appeasement with western capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

## Horizons

Post-Stalinism and post-social democracy, the conflation of nationalism and socialism continues to bring benefits to international capitalism, circumventing the movement to actual socialism and containing the working class within nationalist horizons - pinned in by international capital through sanctions, blockades or more direct interventions. In such cases, the ideology of 'socialism in one country' helps to placate a population whose living standards have been worsened.

As we know, there are no post-independence nation-states in existence that promote workers' power in transition to socialism. What we see are various authoritarian bureaucracies, from China to Cuba, lording it over the working class, or creating ethnic and national divisions as a basis of social control in support of 'managing capitalism' or versions of Stalinism. And, as we ought to know, the pull of national independence adventures today fills the chaos left in the wake of a declining capitalism, headed by US imperialism. The decline itself has come about because of the failure of the socialist left and the working class to abolish capitalism. Capitalism and the capitalist class now operate across and beyond nation-states through transnational entities under the control of finance-capital elites, committed to war and barbarism to defend the



Nationalism cannot be combatted by administrative solutions

dying embers of the capitalist mode of production. The idea of a world where national self-determination is possible is an idea without reality.

Instead, we exist in a capitalist world in which US imperialism overrides 'the right of self-determination' of other imperial powers, including the UK and EU nation-states, with respect to what it will do with Greenland, or where European powers can invest capital in US armaments, hi-tech ... (and, where they cannot, in Chinese hi-tech)<sup>2</sup> and how much they can spend on welfare over warfare, and so on. If this is so with developed capitalist states, then smaller states can only leave the working class even more exposed.

In this context, nations and national projects, republics included, are containers of capitalist exploitation. The working class as a class in itself can only develop fully for itself in a social form within which its economics, politics and ideas find expression. The nation-state, even one labelled 'socialist republic', is not this form.

So much we know, but have arguably not learned from. Socialists today are still hooked on the notion that national independence offers a short cut to socialism. The development of Your Party, YP Scotland and YP Wales presents yet another opportunity for socialists fixated on illusory short cuts to press their case for national independence.<sup>3</sup> They are drawn to the argument that the three Your Parties that have emerged so far in Scotland, Wales and England ought to be framed as separate independent national parties.

Their case for independence is dressed up in terms of a 'socialist republic' or 'democratic republic', with a focus on constitutional change.<sup>4</sup> It amounts to the same thing; sowing illusions in short cuts to socialism and conflating national

solutions for capitalist problems for which the working class usually has to pick up the bill. They claim that the working class of Scotland is more leftwing and that is why they call for independence.

Yet surveys show similar beliefs between people in Scotland and those in the wider UK, when asked what needs to change for the better.<sup>5</sup> Most people give more or less the same answers across the UK: better access to healthcare, employment and wages, housing, transport, all of which amount to minimal reforms within capitalism.

The one difference is that sections of the Scottish and Welsh working class have been sold the illusion that independence might improve things. Socialists advocating Scottish independence, no matter how well-meaning, have promoted this illusion - to the benefit of the Scottish National Party, not the working class of Scotland. There is also no basis for the view that Scotland is more radical or more oriented towards socialism than the rest of the UK and can therefore be the vanguard of radical change.

In summary, there is no basis for socialism in nationalism. National independence, no matter how it is dressed up, only serves to fragment working class unity, such as it is, and sustain conditions of capitalist exploitation and alienation.

## Assemblies

While socialism can only come into being internationally, the working class must act locally if it is to become a reality. The working class must certainly break with the British capitalist state and monarchic trappings and establish socialist governance across the UK, of course, but not create more problems with smaller independent nation-states.

In this respect, if YP as a mass workers' party were ever to take power, democratic socialism would be best served by prioritising regions over nations. The political gelling agent (to take power and to unify regions) would be a clear socialist programme, with minimum demands and maximum aims to abolish capitalism and embark on the transition to socialism.

On this basis we might envisage each region being based around numerous branches. And each region would have their own regional assembly, which would link to three principal assemblies - autonomously related with equal powers, in Cardiff, Edinburgh and London, say. The three principal assemblies would be linked in turn to a central assembly.

Democratic accountability

would flow from local branches to regional assemblies, to principal assemblies, to the central assembly, cutting across existing national boundaries and unifying the working class. Issues arising from specific forms of oppression and inequality, due to historic national differences engineered by capitalism, would more likely be resolved within the regional assemblies and principal assembly.

Moreover, grassroots-led, democratically accountable, regional power would ensure nationalist ties are erased, rather than allowed to prosper, and allow socialist ties to be strengthened. It would clearly empower the working class to begin to erase severe regional economic inequalities caused by capitalism, and create new arenas for democratic socialist politics.

In sum, working class unity and democracy would be enhanced if we break up the unitary state and simultaneously regenerate it along regionally-based, democratic socialist lines, in ways that erase national divisions.

Whatever spatial organisational forms we adopt, what is certain is that any mass working class party (which we hope the fledgling YP might aspire to be) must challenge national divisions by developing organisational forms along spatial lines that erase the significance of nations and the incumbent threat of nationalism.

Members of Your Party in Scotland, England and Wales should not rush headlong into carving the political space into separate nations. More time should be given for democratic debate and discussion as to which organisational forms and spatial politics best unify the working class in the struggles ahead.

One suggestion presented here is to consider the democratic possibilities for advancing socialism, premised on regional rather than national lines, and guided by one vital aim above all else: building working class unity across the UK space and internationally, to develop in lockstep towards the socialist transformation of society.

Obviously, this would be a complex undertaking that would require the power of a united working class in a determined struggle with the ruling capitalist class - not to mention time, careful thought, good faith and creative thinking. But it is absolutely vital if Your Party is ever to amount to a mass workers' party with powers to shift society beyond the wreckage of a late and moribund capitalism towards socialism ●

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## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# weekly Worker

Promises of  
golden hellos  
and a better  
life

## What's up, doc?

Doctors are leaving in droves. It is not just that Australia, New Zealand and Canada look more attractive. There is, says **James Linney**, the push factor too. Labour is proving to be little different from the Tories

The words 'NHS' and 'crisis' are these days the best of friends: inseparable, and almost never appearing in media news stories without each other. It is now taken for granted that the national health service is in perpetual crisis, in a way that would have seemed shocking a decade or two ago.

How did we get here? The way was paved by 14 years of Tory misgoverning and stealth privatisation and - sadly, but predictably - the current Labour government shows no intention of putting on the brakes or steering the NHS out of danger.

Here we will consider one major crisis, among several, currently facing the NHS - one that at first glance appears paradoxical: namely, a dire shortage of doctors, while simultaneously thousands of doctors are unable to secure training posts or jobs, many of them having to look outside the UK for work.

The NHS workforce crisis is not new - it has been glaringly obvious for a long time now. However, over the past two years the situation has sharply worsened. Despite clear warning signs, Labour appears uninterested in making any meaningful attempt to avert catastrophe.

When it comes to the number of doctors per 1,000 of the population, the UK has always ranked amongst the lowest in Europe and well below the global average, compared to other higher-income nations (3.2 doctors per 1,000<sup>1</sup>).

### Latest data

There has been an increase in the number of medics completing their university training in the UK each year, with around 9,500 places available annually as of 2023 - an increase of approximately 2,000 since 2013. And, according to the latest data (August 2025), the number of licensed doctors has been increasing steadily for over a decade. NHS secondary care now has over 47,000 more full-time employed doctors than in September 2015 - a 45% increase.<sup>2</sup> Yet the increase has failed to keep up with demand. Meanwhile, hospital trusts have been subjected to years of so-called 'efficiency savings', meaning they are now unable to afford to create the training posts needed to employ doctors who have completed their two foundation years.

By August 2025, more than 30,000 doctors were competing for just 10,000 speciality training places. Doctors finishing foundation years are increasingly struggling to progress onto training schemes. A recent British Medical Association survey found that 52% of the foundation year two (F2) doctors surveyed said they did not have employment secured.<sup>3</sup>

The situation in primary care is arguably even more serious. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) fully qualified GPs (including locums) has fallen overall by 2.3% since 2015,<sup>4</sup>



Many are packing their bags

while during the same period the average number of patients cared for by each general practitioner has risen by 15% and GP surgeries are now providing 22.8% more appointments each year compared to 2019.<sup>4</sup>

Older GP partners have been retiring without being replaced, while younger ones cannot afford the risk of buying into a practice, given the uncertainty around the future of primary care, as well as rising property costs. Many instead are choosing to work as salaried GPs or locums, competing for a diminishing number of available jobs, due to the fact that GP surgeries are under extreme financial pressure. The defunding of primary care that took place throughout the Tories' 14 years in government has continued under Labour, despite their promise to 'bring back the family doctor' by 'shifting resources to primary care'.

So it is unsurprising that a large *BMJ* survey<sup>5</sup> found that around one in three UK medical students plan to leave the NHS within two years of graduating, with the vast majority intending to take up medical posts abroad. Most plan to emigrate to Australia, New Zealand or Canada. The General Medical Council reported that 11,384 doctors intended to emigrate in 2025 - an increase of 44%, compared to 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Hardly a day goes by when I don't receive an unsolicited email from a recruitment agency advertising jobs in Canada or Australia, promising golden hellos, better pay, a lower cost of living, improved work-life balance and more affordable housing. As I sit writing this (occasionally glancing out of my window at a typical UK winter's day, oscillating between blustery wind, sleet and drizzle), it is

hard not to be attracted by the prospect of warmer climates. Who would not want to pop down to a sun-drenched beach for a swim before work?

Of course, the reality is that the trend towards underfunding public hospitals and squeezing pay for medical workers is not unique to the UK: it is global - a reflection of the ongoing crisis of capitalism since the 2008 crash. Doctors leaving the UK for greener pastures may just find themselves on picket lines elsewhere: there have been recent strikes by doctors over pay and working conditions in both New Zealand in 2024<sup>7</sup> and New South Wales in April 2025.

### Motivation

But, besides pull, the current exodus of UK medics is being driven by *push*. Historically, NHS staff were motivated by the sense that their work was socially useful and genuinely beneficial. That satisfaction has been steadily eroded. Chronic understaffing, relentless workloads and falling real-terms pay have pushed nurses and doctors into industrial action - something medical professionals were traditionally extremely reluctant to take.

After two years of Starmer's government, all that have been delivered are gimmicks and broken promises. Plans to 'modernise' the NHS, as laid out in its 10-year plan<sup>8</sup>, largely amount to putting all the eggs in the AI basket - a technology that is currently ill-suited for patient diagnosis and which will instead serve as cover for further privatisation, as well as granting big tech access to NHS data and patients for profit.

The so-called transformation of

primary care boils down to forcing surgeries to allow patients to send an uncapped number of appointment requests to surgeries online, from 8am to 6:30pm. Health secretary Wes Streeting might claim they are improving access, but he is fully aware that it does nothing of the sort. The BMA, which is now in dispute with the government over the policy, has repeatedly pointed out that all it does is simply overwhelm GPs: doctors are now forced to spend their time triaging hundreds of requests daily - thus increasing clinical risk, while reducing the time available for face-to-face care. When leading GPs raised safety concerns, Streeting's pathetic response was to accuse the BMA of "juvenile delinquency" and behaving like "moaning Minnies".<sup>9</sup>

Similar attacks on resident doctors (formerly known as junior doctors) have been just as aggressive - arguably more so than anything seen under the Tories. Streeting described the planned five-day strike by resident doctors in December 2025 as "morally reprehensible" and warned it would cause "untold misery and disruption to patients" during a high-pressure winter period. Yet we know that medical professionals are historically reluctant to strike and have been driven to do so only because misery and disruption have become the norm for the NHS: it is no longer unusual for waits of over 12 hours for emergency care, with patients being held on trolleys for days.

The NHS has always been heavily reliant on non-UK-trained and non-UK-born workers - historically they have been actively recruited from less economically well off countries. Doctors who qualified outside the

UK currently make up around 42% of the workforce.<sup>10</sup> However, GMC data shows that increasing numbers of non-UK doctors are also choosing to leave: "Greater numbers of non-UK-qualified doctors left practice last year. 4,880 doctors who obtained their primary medical qualification outside the UK and had been working in the UK left in 2024 - a 26% increase on the previous year's 3,869."

This is a deeply worrying trend. As Dr Jeanette Dickson, chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, warned, without the contribution of overseas doctors and nurses the NHS "could quite easily fall over" and find itself without "a critical mass of people there to run the service safely".<sup>11</sup>

Brexit effectively turned off the tap of EU workers coming to work in the NHS. Meanwhile, Labour's pandering to the right, along with its fear of Reform UK, is leading to an increasingly hostile environment for those not born in the UK, discouraging other non-EU medical professionals from moving here. One such example is the introduction of the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill in early 2026 in order to 'prioritise' graduates from UK medical schools for foundation and speciality training posts - echoing Gordon Brown's desperate "British jobs for British workers" slogan back in 2007, when Labour were also pandering to the right to avoid general election defeat.

A Reform victory at the next general election, which is looking increasingly possible, would obviously multiply the problems for the NHS exponentially. Nigel Farage has declared that he intends to introduce an insurance-based healthcare system, as in the USA, so a Reform win could potentially mean the end of the NHS as we know it!<sup>12</sup> ●

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