

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly



worker



**Four rightwingers
and not a left
candidate in sight**

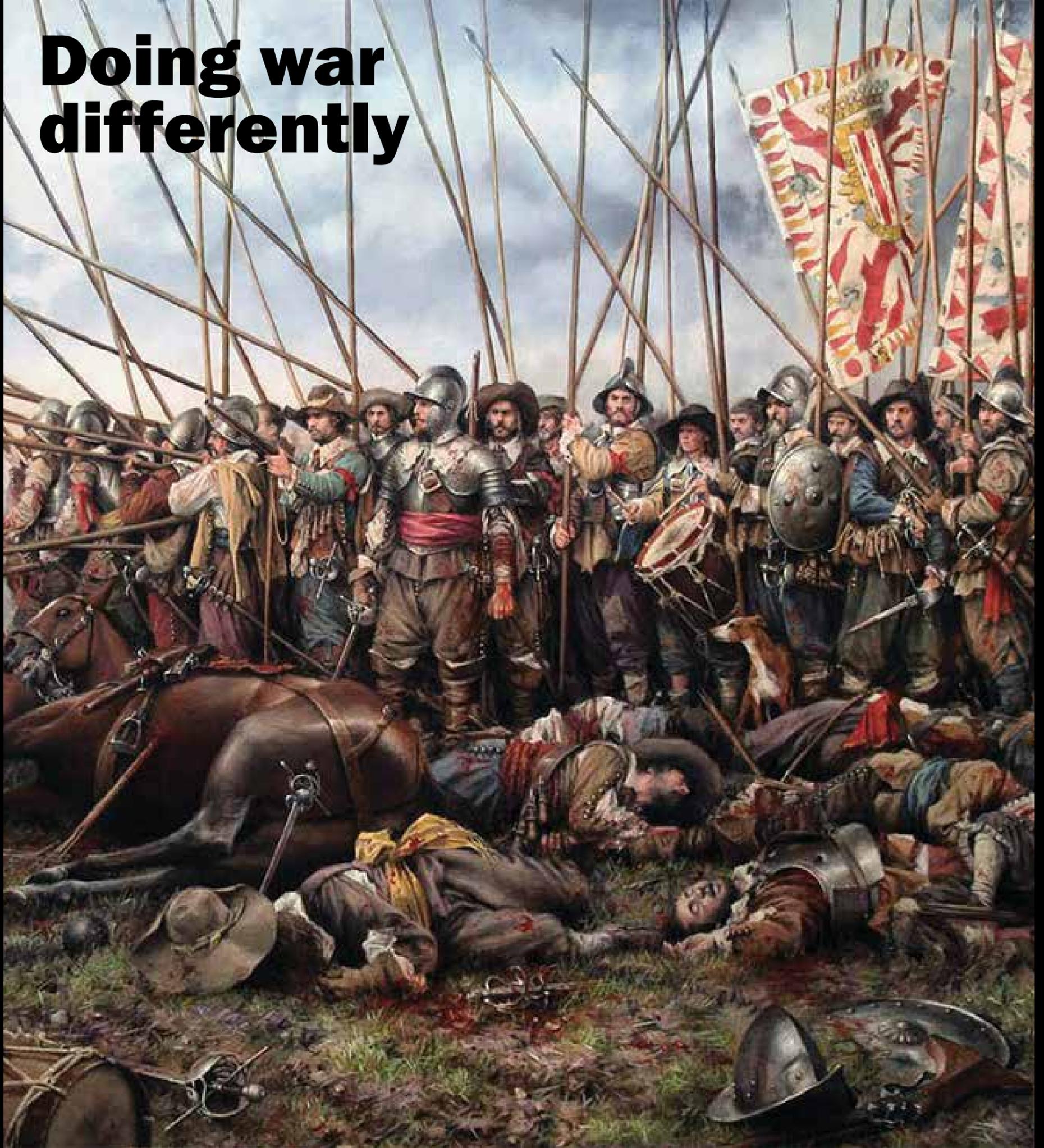
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No 1060 Thursday May 28 2015

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Doing war differently



LETTERS



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

New questions

Some of the earliest materialist philosophers, based in the Greek port of Miletus, proposed several different explanations about the origin of our world. Thales claimed that everything came from and was ultimately made of water, while for Anaximenes the underlying substance was air.

A dead end was reached. Indeed, the problem of the ultimate constitution and origin of matter would wait at least another 2,000 years to be once again seriously tackled. What happened instead? The question (and answers) of what things are made of was abandoned, and replaced by new questions. The concern with form and arrangement, rather than material constitution, led to new lines of philosophical enquiry, starting with Pythagoras, and moving on to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

What is the moral of this excursion into ancient Greek philosophy? That sometimes the best strategy is to think of new questions. At the point in which a majority Tory government has been elected, and the left continues to make no progress by any measure, I believe this is one such time that new questions are needed. At the moment, the indications are that the left is not going to do this. 'Don't mourn - organise!' seems to be the general attitude, and it seems to be that the mourning is because of the Tory victory, not because of the left's failings.

On the latter, there seem to be two reactions - denial or despair. Neither is very helpful, and the latter simply reinforces the former. What is needed is not unthinking organisation - such as the organisation of yet more demonstrations and conferences - but an honest and realistic assessment of the situation and the formulation of questions. There is no need to analyse the ultimate answers - of where we want to be, and what society we want. The socialist or communist ideal in abstract form is not a new one, and in a sense dates back thousands of years. The concrete reality of such a society cannot be prescribed or even imagined from our current viewpoint. The task is to work out how to get there. The failing of the utopian socialists was that they knew where they wanted to go, but they didn't have sufficient understanding of where they were starting from, let alone how to set off on the successful journey to their destination.

I think that, although the modern left has the benefit of the corpus of Marxist works, which lay bare the operations of capitalism and the state, and the historical process, it is in a comparable situation to that of the utopians. There is a lack of awareness and understanding concerning the balance and nature of class forces, and the attitudes of strata within classes, to be able to ground a strategy on a concrete assessment of the society we live in. I think there are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, the leadership and full-time cadre of left organisations are completely cut off from the reality of most working class people - not in the sense of material deprivation (I accept that many full-timers are very poorly paid), but in knowing first-hand the conditions of modern-day work, and knowing (outside of family perhaps) people who either have different political views, or are completely disengaged from anything remotely political.

The second point, related to the first, is that most of the membership of left organisations is cut off in the same way. Many, if not most, work in the public sector, which even today is a qualitatively different kind of place to work than the private sector; not

least through being salaried and having unions present, which have mostly managed to hold the line regarding the terms and conditions of employment for many staff.

Third, the type of political activity the left seems to prefer is not activity which brings us into meaningful contact with the full breadth of the working class. A high-street stall largely attracts those already engaged with political concerns in some way - people who have political ideas, people with faith that some form of political activity might achieve some change, however small. Demonstrations, intervening in strikes, and organising public meetings and attending conferences has the same effect. This leads to overconfidence and bullishness about the prospects of the left growing and gaining influence, which subsequent failure fails to dent.

How do I know that this is the case, and what do I propose to do about it? Good question. I know it because, with several other comrades in north Devon, I have just spent the last six weeks campaigning for four Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates in the local council elections. The results we gained in terms of votes were a mixed bag - some OK, some disappointing. Of course, votes are not everything to a Marxist, but (contrary to the views of some in Tusc) they are still important, as they tell you things about how well your political message is going across, and they also help to build - or damage - credibility.

But we gained much else besides just over a thousand votes and an updated list of Tusc supporters, who we'll be able to keep in regular contact with in the future. We gained a new appreciation of the way in which different layers of the working class respond to our politics, and how their attitudes have been shaped by neoliberalism. We gained this appreciation not by expecting them to come to us - via stalls or public meetings - but by going to them. We knocked on well over a thousand doors in the course of the campaign, gaining thousands of impressions of the reactions of the people we spoke to, and recording data on canvassing sheets to aid in our post-election analysis and activity.

What did we learn? That beyond pockets of support in rows of terraced houses, there are deep levels of cynicism amongst large swathes of the working class. Many of these people seem unwilling to countenance any possibility that politics might bring about any positive change in their condition. They are inward-looking, seeking to shut themselves off from the world. They are uninterested in voting, which doesn't appear to offer solutions to their daily concerns of paying bills and putting food on the table. The fact that our literature explicitly rejects the world of the bedroom tax, benefit cuts, food banks, zero-hour contracts and tax avoidance by the rich had little impact - even if was not thrown straight in the bin without being read. The left is not exempted from the generalised anger and cynicism towards politics. This tells us something very important about the state of the working class today - something which has not been adequately appreciated by the left as a whole, whose social contacts, workplace colleagues and political activity leads them to mingle with trade unionists, campaigners, people who do actually vote.

How does this relate to the theme I introduced at the beginning, of finding new questions? The answers - demonstrations and conferences - are the same answers that have been tried, and failed, before. They are, in a sense, answers without questions. They are the automatic, unthinking responses of a left in autopilot. To get better answers, we need to work out the questions we intend to derive the answers from. Or, if not getting definitive answers, we may

at least get indications and ideas about the way forward from trying to answer and think about the questions.

How do we formulate these new questions? We work out ways to encounter as much of the concrete reality of our current world as possible. Not by reading, not by going to events, but by meeting people in person. Election canvassing is an excellent way to do this, but also knocking on doors as part of a campaign could serve well. Collect data if possible. Then have a free and frank discussion of experiences, impressions, patterns and observations. No answers at this point. But questions should emerge. And formulating a good question, and working to make that question better, is half the battle.

So what questions have we formulated so far? We haven't had our post-election review meeting yet in north Devon, but will soon. Here are some questions we have come up with so far. We have no answers, but will learn a lot, and improve the way we operate, just by going about trying to answer them:

- How do we turn our voters into activists?
- How do we break through the wall of cynicism which leads many working class people to completely reject any politics?
- Why are young people disproportionately among the cynical and those most disengaged from politics in general?

The passivity of much of the working class was evident when we supported and also attempted to galvanise anti-cuts activity after 2010. I suspect that in many areas this still holds true. What do we do outside of elections to engage in activity and attempt to draw others into collective action if there are no campaigns in our area to support or instigate, to enable this to happen? The answer is not the kneejerk left response of mindless activism conducted by a small number of superactivists, which also leads people with lives and commitments outside politics to drift out of activity.

The answer is not those superactivists preaching to the converted and attending talking shops with other leftists. New answers are needed, and that will require us to formulate new questions.

Jim Lowe
email

Poking fun

I recently came across your article which mentions the Paul Dennis result of zero votes in Rainham North ('A wasteful dead-end', May 21). In neighbouring Rainham South and Rainham Central Tusc scored 165 and 177 votes. Paul Dennis's family have lived in Rainham for over 100 years and he is well known in the community. We were expecting this to be the highest of the Rainham votes.

Zero votes is clearly a false result. It is not a reflection of Tusc's support, but of an austerity council which tried to run an election count on the cheap - overworking its counting staff in the process, during the marathon 26-hour event. Since the story broke, Paul has had people knock on his door saying they voted for him, and Tusc supporters have had to correct co-workers that their votes for Paul have not been counted.

Working class people in Rainham have been quick to jump to Tusc's and Paul Dennis's support (as have other parties in Medway) and we'd be happy to see others on left doing similar, rather than using the situation to poke fun at Tusc as a whole.

A petition is available to sign here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/justice-for-paul-dennis-rainham-north-medway>. And an interview with ITV is here: [www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2015-05-19/video-would-be-](http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2015-05-19/video-would-be-councillor-got-zero-votes-despite-voting-for-himself)

councillor-got-zero-votes-despite-voting-for-himself.

Tusc agent
Medway

Hard

Some hard thoughts. Jack Conrad bewails the state of the left - the bureaucratic habits, the lack of debate, the splits ('Some hard thinking is needed', May 21). Perhaps we should ask the question, why is the left like this?

His description of Die Linke, Syriza and Refoundation, which could also apply to a degree to parts of Left Unity, mentions origins in 'official communism', Conrad's euphemism for Stalinism. Products of the decomposition of Stalinism and reformism are part of the picture to this day: the bureaucratic methods, the addiction to popular-front politics, the basing of perspectives on defence of the nation-state and the national economy. We cannot skip over the lessons of the betrayals of the Second and Third Internationals.

He tells us that reformism is illusory. In the long run, true, but the post-war boom meant that gains could be made and left the reformist outlook still strong in the workers' movement, and not least among many on the left, who claimed to speak for the workers. To reformism, we should add the influence of postmodernism and 'end of history' triumphalism on intellectual life.

Thus when we look at the left we find the illusion that the decaying remnants of the old organisations of the labour movement can be pressed to yield something that is contrary to their nature. Alongside this are identity politics, alternative lifestyles, one-off protest campaigns and the ever-present tendency to adapt to whatever non-working class trend is flavour of the month. The latter often involves cheering on some armed struggle, preferably a long way away. When CPGB comrades turned out to leaflet for Tusc, did they pause to reflect on the role of the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party in promoting nationalism in Scotland?

Naturally, Conrad can point to Socialist Resistance as diluting the (already feeble) politics of LU in order to appear superior. As an anti-Trotskyist bigot, he likes to use them as an example of Trotskyism to match his own caricature. For the record, the 'transitional method' he attributes to Socialist Resistance has nothing to do with the *Transitional programme*, the founding document of the Fourth International. SR has long since abandoned politics that could reasonably be defined as Trotskyist. They at least have found their natural habitat in LU.

The left that the CPGB is trying to build is actually an obstacle to winning workers to an international revolutionary perspective. You may think you are creating a platform for yourselves, but it is also one for those who create something very different. To answer the question of why the left is so bad, I would say that its social base is not mainly the working class, but remnants of the labour bureaucracy.

Mike Martin
Sheffield

Reclaim

I was interested in Tom Munday's response (Letters, May 7) to my letter (April 30). I assume Tom is a member of the *Weekly Worker* group and of Left Unity? Tom states I make "some truly bizarre assumptions regarding the relationship between the CPGB and the wider membership of Left Unity", and then goes on to say I am "not alone in these sentiments", and indeed he encounters these in his own LU branch!

I am glad those LU members are not openly aggressive or hostile to Tom,

but perhaps their 'uncertainty' in their attitude to supporters of the *Weekly Worker* is precisely because of the tension, even contradiction, I suggested between LU's stated aim to be a broad, new model party of the left, embracing reformists and revolutionaries, and the *Weekly Worker's* explicit opposition and criticism of this.

I am not a member or a supporter of Left Unity so I don't think it "represents the finished article" (where did that come from?), and I don't think its formation will in any way address or resolve the increasing desperate crisis in working class political representation, following Labour losing so badly to the Conservative Party in the general election - despite the latter's record in office since 2010, its dark and brutal threats to inflict further massive pain on the weak and vulnerable in our society, and its unashamed standing for the interests of the obscenely rich and powerful.

Weekly Worker editor Peter Manson's discussion of the attitude we should take to the Labour Party ('Gambling on a government - or bidding for an opposition?', April 23) pointed out, correctly in my view: "It is sponsored and financed by the trade unions, and its members and supporters are overwhelmingly working class. While this situation remains, it is criminal to simply turn our backs on Labour, as Socialist Party of England and Wales has done, claiming that it can never become a party that actually does represent our class in any shape or form. You might just as well say that the unions can never be won to really represent our interests either."

He adds that there remains the basis and opportunity to "transform the Labour Party into a party that groups together all the main organisations and trends within the working class, including, of course, the Marxists." This is not at all dissimilar to the 'reclaim' half of the political strategy articulated by the Communist Party of Britain over the past 15 to 20 years.

So, how is this generally pro-Labour Party (or, more accurately, pro the mass political party of the working class) orientation congruent or compatible with the *Weekly Worker's* parallel intervention in Left Unity? Are the two in contradiction, or is the *Weekly Worker* progressing a 'twin-track' strategy?

The *Weekly Worker* in its occasional commentary on the CPB likes to assert that the 'reclaim' pole of its political strategy is opposite or at least in conflict with the 're-establish' pole. I think this is wrong and leads the *Weekly Worker* to see divisions and differences in the CPB which, beyond shades of nuance and emphasis, simply do not exist.

'Re-establish' is complementary and interrelated to 'reclaim'. If the Labour Party's link with the trade unions is reduced even further, or if union members can't be persuaded to pressure their leaderships, or if trade union leaderships can't be persuaded to pressure Labour, or if Labour refuses to take heed of trade union pressure, then we are collectively 'buggered', as they say in Devon.

'Reclaim' may well work, but, if not, we would be trapped into electorally supporting a Labour Party which, beyond mentioning 'working people and families' in words, still basically accepts the need to balance the nation's books on the back of and at the expense of working people, and offers hardly any pro-working class policies whatsoever.

That would be a recipe for despair and disillusion and may result in us being completely marginalised and swept aside, as working class people start to increasingly vote for other parties or simply stay at home. While the rich and powerful get richer, more powerful and more aggressively confident in demonising us all.

The 're-establish' pole provides

us with a means to move forward, should the 'reclaim' pole continue to fail to deliver or to address the crisis in working class political representation. 'Re-establish' initiatives may actually stimulate and strengthen existing efforts to 'reclaim' the Labour Party, especially if it looks like the Labour Party will lose trade union members, votes and money.

A full-blown 're-establish' initiative and process has just got to include large sections of the existing Labour Party, including trade unions, trade union members, Labour Party individual members, socialist societies and groups, given these are core working class organisations and constituencies, as well as reaching out and including wider forces and potential reservoirs of support.

The shocking electoral defeat of the Labour Party and the resignation of Miliband at least gives us the opportunity to test out whether the 'reclaim' or the 're-establish' pole of the strategy will prevail, without being constrained by calls not to 'rock the boat' or to jeopardise a newly elected Labour government.

I agree groups like Left Unity can and should play a part in generating greater unity between socialists, communists and progressives, should be based on general opposition to capitalism and its replacement by socialism, and should not divide or exclude on the basis of differences of view in strategies, tactics, history or political tradition.

Left Unity can and should contribute to the formation of a genuinely mass political party of the working class, but this itself can only emerge from, develop and be based on the labour movement and its structures and organisations. This might be a 'transformed' Labour Party or a replacement, but one absorbing and going well beyond many existing Labour Party structures, organisations and members.

We need a mass, democratic, socialist and labour party, which expresses the immediate and longer-term aims and interests of the working class. It should be possible to include the majority of existing socialists, communists and political progressives, and it must be grounded in the organisations and structures of the working class. We need, in short, to create a mass political party that unites Marxism, socialism and the labour movement - which, as Lars T Lih has argued, was the central aim of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

We need such a clear and agreed strategic aim and objective, if in the meantime we are to obtain the maximum unity in action and to make tangible progress in the short to medium term.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Left candidate

Charles Gradnitzer's report on the response of the Blairites to Labour's dire election results and the respectable performance of Left Platform candidates ended on the question of concrete proposals and a concrete strategy ('Out come the Blairites', May 14).

Since publication, 10 newly elected Labour MPs have made an intervention into the leadership debate by rejecting a return to 'New Labour' and calling for opposition to austerity cuts. I have written to most of them requesting they back a candidate who can articulate this position in the leadership debates. And within a few days, a Facebook page calling for John McDonnell to be on the ballot, and thus on the platform of the leadership debates, has attracted over 300 fans.

McDonnell has ruled out standing and has launched a website called *Radical Labour* to discuss the future of socialism and the Labour Party. The social media pressure group, Red Labour, has urged its followers on Twitter and Facebook to contact socialist Labour MPs to call for a left candidate in the leadership contest.

An analysis of the election results by Jack Kiffin, published in the *Morning Star* on May 20, argues that parties using rhetoric of complete opposition to austerity had votes greater than or equal to the majorities won by 23 Tory MPs, and suggests that if Labour had been able to win over 'anti-austerity' voters, both Labour and the Tories would have had 308 seats.

Kiffin predicts that, if the 'anti-austerity' parties grow their vote share in 2020 by the same amount as in 2015, and if other factors remain constant, Labour could lose another 26 seats. The result could be the worst the party has suffered since the 1930s. And all this is to say nothing of the impact of boundary changes.

With unseemly haste, the Blairites have framed the debate on the Labour leadership contest, joining with capitalists and sympathetic media commentators in dubbing Miliband's pro-cuts, migrant-bashing platform as 'too leftwing', and providing the mood music for leadership candidates to declare Labour must be even more 'pro-business'.

So we now have a group of former government ministers and shadow cabinet members posing as the willing executioners of Pasokification. Of them, Andy Burnham has the best chance of getting the backing of union tops.

The new 'one member, one vote' system and the overwhelming anti-union media effort may convince those voting to opt for Yvette Cooper. An early social media campaign calling on Ian Lavery to stand as a candidate resulted in his declaration for Burnham - and it may be the case that many of the Labour MPs who are pro-union will nominate Burnham despite his mixed track-record and recent 'pro-business' and anti-migrant sentiments. It has been reported he has up to 70 backers.

Given Burnham will be reluctant to be painted as the union-backed 'left' candidate, it is in his interest that a more radical candidate stands. The numbers certainly exist on the back benches for an anti-austerity candidate to gain sufficient nominations.

James Doran
Darlington

Say sorry

For over a year there has been an ongoing dispute between the Manchester branch of Left Unity and Laurie McCauley and his organisation, the Communist Party of Great Britain - an organisation I was once a member of ('A year in limbo', May 21).

The dispute is over the suspension of Laurie from the Manchester branch due to persistently bad behaviour, where members, particularly women, were treated to sneers, jibes and personal insults. This not only took place in branch meetings and when socialising, but in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. After becoming tired of such behaviour and seeing it drive away members, we took the collective decision to protect the branch and suspend him. We asked the disputes committee to look into how to rebuild the relationship between the branch and Laurie.

This process has been held up for over a year and both the branch and Laurie are quite rightly anxious to have the issue resolved. The delay has been because Laurie and his organisation refused to cooperate with the disputes committee, though I do understand that he has now decided to do so. This is good news and I hope we can see the issue resolved in a way where both Laurie and his organisation recognise that such behaviour will not be tolerated in a socialist party and he can again participate in the work of our branch.

Apart from a few responses on social media, I have not risen to the personal attacks, the outright lies and smears against myself and the Manchester branch by Laurie's organisation. The behaviour of the group's leaders towards those it sees as threats, whether internal or external, has always been vicious, often

apolitical and personal and ultimately concerned with preserving the leadership body, not progressing a political strategy. The hallmarks of a sect.

For further background it is worth noting a couple of things. Firstly, this is not the first time I have been involved in an action to censure Laurie because of his behaviour in a political organisation. Laurie was removed from an organising role in the London branch of Communist Students, with the blessing of the current leadership of the CPGB, because of his destructive behaviour within it. Despite being aware of his record and knowing that other sections of the Manchester left have also complained about his behaviour, the CPGB opportunistically used the suspension to attack members of Left Unity whom it perceived as political enemies and, in doing so, showed a callous disregard for how that would only further isolate Laurie and entrench the divide between him and his branch.

Secondly, at no time has political debate or differences been brushed aside or hidden in our branch. In fact, we were one of the few Left Unity branches that took part in the controversial speaking tour where the question of Scottish independence was debated in public between two Scottish LU members. Further, before Laurie's suspension, he was invited to lead public discussions twice for the branch, so that he could put his views and we could have a full debate. Since then we have held successful meetings on Syriza and Greece, on the new left parties in Europe, Labourism and the left, and half a dozen other topics that are key debates across the left. In no way have we shirked the necessity to have rigorous and open political discussions.

At no time have we opposed open reporting of our political work whether online or in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. What we have no time for, and neither should Left Unity, is destructive personal attacks by individual members that disrupt and damage our collective work. It would not be acceptable in any credible political organisation and, as a socialist party, Left Unity can ill afford to indulge such behaviour.

This issue needs to come to a fair and open resolution and, as I advised Laurie prior to his suspension, an apology is the first step in rebuilding his relationship with the branch.

Chris Stafford
Manchester Left Unity

Not so dead

Excellent article on the great Adam Smith ('Devotees of a dead Scotsman', May 21), there are other comments that he made relevant to events closer to our own day, such as Margaret Thatcher's poll tax:

"Capitation taxes are levied at little expense; and, where they are vigorously exacted, afford a very sure revenue to the state. It is upon this account that in countries where the ease, comfort and security of the inferior ranks of people are but little attended to, capitation taxes are very common ... In England, the different poll taxes never produced the sum which had been expected of them, or of which it was supposed they might have produced, had they been exactly levied" (my emphasis).

Or the present HS2 railway:
"The proud minister of an ostentatious court may frequently take pleasure in executing a work of splendour and magnificence, such as a great highway ... But to execute a great number of little works [that] ... have little to recommend them but their extreme utility is a business which appears too mean and paltry to merit the attention of so great a magistrate. Such works are almost always entirely neglected."

I wish the present economists dealing with neoliberalism could write like that.

Ted Crawford
email

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

London Communist Forum

Sunday May 31, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 2, chapter 2: 'The circuit of productive capital' (continued). Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology
Tuesday June 2, 6.30pm: 'The coming of the dread: the Rastafari-Maori of New Zealand's east coast'. Speaker: Dave Robinson. Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Talks are free, but small donations welcome. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

Hands off the People of Iran

Saturday May 30, 11am to 5pm: Day school with Moshé Machover, Mike Macnair and Yasmine Mather, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Organised by Hands off the People of Iran: www.hopoi.org.

Forgotten women of the war on terror

Sunday May 31, 2pm: Talk, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1. Organised by Southbank Centre: <http://webwewant.southbankcentre.co.uk>.

Democracy needs truth

Monday June 1, 6.30pm: International speakers tour in London, Birkbeck College (main building), room B35 (entrance on Torrington Square), London WC1. Speakers include: Daniel Ellsberg, Thomas Drake, Coleen Rowley, Norman Solomon, Justin Schlosberg. Organised by Media Reform Coalition: www.mediareform.org.uk.

Israel's Bedouin citizens

Tuesday June 2, 7.30 pm: Discussion, Centrecom, 602 North Row, Milton Keynes. Free admission and refreshments. Email miltonkeynespsc@gmail.com for more information. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

What is political party of the left?

Thursday June 4, 7pm: Moderated panel event, Ian Gulland Lecture Theatre, Goldsmiths University, Richard Hoggart Building, Lewisham Way, London SE14. Speakers: Jack Conrad (CPGB), Simon Griffiths (lecturer), Luke Gregory-Jones (student occupier). Organised by Platypus Affiliated Society: <http://platypus1917.org>.

Picket G4S

Thursday June 4, all day: AGM protest, ExCel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16. G4S is profiting from some of the world's most serious human rights abuses. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org.

Confronting a world at war

Saturday June 6, 10am to 5pm: Stop the War Coalition AGM, TUC, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Where now for the left?

Saturday June 6, 1pm: Open left discussion meeting, Gallery Room 4, University of Sheffield students union, Western Bank, Sheffield S10. Speakers: Pete Green, Left Unity principal speaker; Alistair Tice, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Organised by Sheffield University Left Unity student society: www.facebook.com/events/850793981673274.

Swansea defiant

Saturday June 13, 12.20pm: March against government cuts and bedroom tax. Assemble Swansea Guild Hall, The Guildhall, Swansea, SA1, for march to rally at Castle Gardens. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Politics in the park

Sunday June 14, 3.30pm: AGM, Somerset and South Wilts Left Unity, Royal Victoria Park (south lawn), Marlborough Lane, Bath BA1. Followed at 4pm by picnic and political discussion. Organised by Left Unity: www.leftunity.org

Celebrating our culture

Sunday June 14, 1pm: Community Gala, Concert room, Wardley Club, Palmers Hall, Palmers Bank, Wardley NE10. Followed by social, 5pm. Organised by Miners Advice: www.minersadvice.co.uk/events.htm.

End austerity

Saturday June 20, 12 noon: National rally, Bank of England, Queen Victoria Street, London EC4 (nearest tube: Bank). No more budget cuts. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

The war you don't see

Wednesday June 24, 6.30pm: John Pilger film showing and discussion, Unity Hall (small hall), 277a Upper Street, London N1. Organised by: North London Stop the War: www.facebook.com/events/355506474655423.

CPGB wills

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

LABOUR

Banging the Blairite drum

Eddie Ford is less than thrilled by the leadership candidates on offer

Following Ed Miliband's near instant resignation after the election, the Blairites have not been shy in offering their diagnosis for Labour's defeat. It was far too leftwing under Ed, apparently, with even a whiff of class war. Instead, they tell us, Labour should appeal to the 'aspirational' and cater for 'all sections of society' - Blairite code words meaning that the party should *openly* serve the interests of capital. Tony Blair understood this and won elections, we hear, but Miliband did not - and look what happened to him.

Of course, this Blairite narrative does not fully compute. The prime reason for Labour's defeat was Scotland, where Labour was regarded as not leftwing enough - ie, 'red Tories'. There is also the fact that Miliband's more 'leftwing' policies seemed to have a measure of popularity: mansion tax, restoration of the 50p tax rate, pledge to freeze energy prices, tax non-doms, etc. Only a fantasist could believe that pure Blairism would have won back voters from the Scottish National Party, or think that a 'centre ground' could be found between the SNP, Greens, UkIP and middle-class English voters. But this appears to be of little interest for the Blairites and other Labour rightwingers determined to totally distance the party from anything resembling progressive politics - not to mention the unions. An agenda enthusiastically endorsed by the pro-Tory press.

Alas, it also appears to be the view - to one degree or another - of the current candidates for the Labour leadership. As time goes by, it looks increasingly unlikely that any more contestants will emerge, even if there are intermittent rumours about Jamie Reed, the shadow health minister and MP for Copeland in Cumbria, who has described himself as a "Jedi" and "good Methodist". Certainly no beauty line-up, the four declared candidates are Liz Kendall, the shadow social care minister, Yvette Cooper, shadow home secretary (wife of the ex-shadow chancellor and ex-politician, Ed Balls), Andy Burnham, shadow health secretary, and Mary Creagh, shadow international development secretary. Those so far competing for deputy leader are Rushanara Ali, Ben Bradshaw, Angela Eagle, Stella Creasy, Caroline Flint, Tom Watson and, recently, John Healey - the MP for Wentworth and Dearne who felt compelled to stand, as he had become "dismayed at how narrow and shallow the debate has been so far" (meaning that mathematically at least one or two of those already declared will lack enough MPs' support to make the ballot paper).

As our readers will know, there were two other candidates for leader, but they dropped out of the race. Blairite poster-boy Chuka Umunna, shadow secretary of state for business, innovation and skills, said he found the pressure of candidacy "uncomfortable" and was concerned about the "impact" on family and friends - with one source close to Umunna claiming that his mother had been "followed home" by a reporter. Interestingly, in 2007 he supported Jon Cruddas's unsuccessful bid to become Labour deputy leader, but is now backing the 'moderniser', Liz Kendall (ie, Blairite), as she has been "courageous in challenging conventional wisdom".

As for Tristram Hunt - the shadow secretary of state for education and also the author of the rather good *The frock-coated communist: the revolutionary life of Friedrich Engels* - he gave up the fight for the simple reason that he could not get anywhere



Andy Burnham, Liz Kendall, Mary Creagh, Yvette Cooper: not a leftwinger to be seen

near enough nominations. He was blocked by the number of MPs that had quickly committed themselves to either Burnham or Cooper, the two clear favourites. Hunt admitted that he had not been prepared for the "speed" of the leadership campaign, commenting: "It is surprising that the nomination process to select a leader for at least the next five years appears to have been largely decided within, at most, five days of a devastating general election defeat".

In 2014 he was widely denounced by the press for waging "class war" when he proposed that private schools should be required to form "partnerships" with local state schools if they wanted to keep their charitable status. Clearly a dangerous revolutionary. He too backs Kendall - obviously a fellow revolutionary - and has sharply criticised the "timid, institutionalised caution" of the '35% strategy' of the Miliband team, when what is needed is a "100% strategy" - one that is "broad-based, forward-looking".¹

The result of the ballot for Labour's next leader and deputy leader will be announced on September 12 at a special conference, before the full party conference on September 27. The timing means Labour will also delay the election for its London mayoral candidate until September. The leadership elections will happen under the reformed rules outlined in the February 2014 Collins report (led by the esteemed Baron Collins of Highbury). The three-way electoral college has gone and in its place is a 'one person, one vote' system - open to both fully-fledged, card-carrying Labour Party members and registered supporters (for a £3 one-off fee). This means, for example, that members of Labour-affiliated trade unions will need to register as Labour supporters in order to vote. And, of course, candidates need to be nominated by at least 15% of the Parliamentary Labour Party - ie, 35 MPs - with nominations officially opening on June 9 and the ballot papers sent out on August 14. The vote, as in previous elections, will be held by the alternative vote (instant run-off) system.

For what it is worth, at the time of writing William Hill gave the following odds for leader: Andy Burnham 11/10, Liz Kendall 5/4, Yvette Cooper 5/1, and Mary Creagh 33/1 - though if you are feeling really lucky, John Cruddas is 100/1.²

Squeezing

Rather frighteningly, or perhaps comically, the Blairites are loudly complaining that Burnham and Cooper are "squeezing out" the 'modernisers' - ie, Kendall and Creagh, or any

other rightwinger who might still be contemplating having a go. In other words, for the likes of Lord Mandelson and Alan Milburn, the two front runners are still too leftwing: not truly in touch with 'aspirational' Britain.

Having said that, there is a kernel of truth to what the Blairites say. Burnham and Cooper are understood to have secured more than 100 nominations between them, which by definition means most other candidates - declared or undeclared - will not get a look in. At this stage, it is not even certain that Kendall has the required numbers. Creagh is in trouble. Yes, the 15% rule, or barrier, is very high compared to the Tory Party, where a candidate requires just a proposer and a seconder. Standing is made more difficult by the candidates' obvious self-interest in amassing as many nominations as possible, which inevitably drains the pool still further - exactly what happened in 2007 and 2010. Hence the entire nominations procedure tends to encourage cronyism and favouritism: 'You scratch my back and I might give you a juicy position in the shadow cabinet'.

One senior backbencher and rightwinger, Barry Sheerman, has darkly claimed that Unite supporters were "pressurising" new MPs to back the frontrunners - principally Burnham. For him it was a "fix" by Unite's "merry men" in 2010 that stopped the saviour from across the waters, David Miliband, from becoming party leader, and "we cannot have that again" - had David been chosen, he believes, "the reality" is that Labour would have won this year's general election. Forget Scotland. More generally, he continued, "we have to be realistic about the role of unions in society", as they are "smaller than they ever were" and are "increasingly rare" in the private sector: they no longer provide "troops on the ground or at general committees".

Lord Hutton, the Blairite traitor who took up a job under the last coalition government, also thinks Labour can no longer appeal or depend on a "diminishing trade union vote". He thinks the party needs to "skip a generation" and wants to see a "big debate", requiring more than two candidates. As one senior Kendall supporter put it, "We want as many modernising forces on the ballot paper as possible" - after all, "we are not just trying to challenge the politics of Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband: we are also challenging their way of doing politics". Similarly, Lady Morgan, a Labour peer and advisor to Tony Blair for 10 years, pointed out that in 2010 David Miliband ensured some of his supporters nominated the

leftwing Diane Abbott to make sure she appeared on the ballot paper. Morgan would like to see this happen again - except in reverse, with the current front runners getting a certain percentage of their supporters to nominate Kendall or another rightwinger.

Naturally, papers like the *Daily Mail* are trying to scare us with the idea of the unions flooding the Labour Party with 'registered supporters', and in that way getting the decisive say as to who becomes leader - even if Harriet Harman told *The Times* that "there's absolutely not going to be a stitch-up by the unions in this election". In reality though, it is far more likely that these 'registered supporters' will be mobilised by the unions to support Burnham, who will then become 'Red' Andy in the (largely anti-Labour) media.

Reset

But only a paranoid Blairite or the *Mail* could think that Burnham and Cooper represent the forces of 'old Labour'. Using typical neo-Blairite language, Cooper has warned against Labour lurching to the left or right and in a blog post for the *Huffington Post* hit out at those who think the party will be out of office for a decade - having a "vague plan" to maybe win in 2025.³ But in her opinion Labour needs to "reach out" and have a plan to win *next year* - London mayor, Welsh assembly and the Scottish parliament. She might be disappointed.

Slightly Orwellian, she has condemned the party's "anti-business, anti-growth and ultimately anti-worker" stance, declaring that Ed Miliband's rhetoric about "predators and producers" was a "mistake". Company directors and hedge fund managers are wealth generators, not "predators". As leader, Cooper would back a cut in corporation tax and "reset" Labour's "relationship with business" - creating a business advisory group that would invite bosses who did not support Labour to join it. Wildly leftwing stuff.

When it comes to Andy Burnham, to call him 'leftwing' is to stretch the term to breaking point - especially when you recall that he was responsible for the reckless PFI deals under the last Labour government. True, since then he has repositioned himself, saying that he would revert to Labour's *previous* policy of giving the NHS "preferred bidder" status when considering contracts - effectively reversing the steady encroachment of private providers under the coalition. This wriggle to the left has been enough to make Burnham the preferred candidate of the unions (for the very same reason he is regarded as

a turncoat by senior Blairites).

On the other hand, he has also said that the party's mansion tax proposal spoke to the "politics of envy" and - having privately disagreed with Miliband's line for some time - wants to bring forward the in/out EU referendum to 2016 for the sake of British businesses, which have been complaining of continued uncertainty. He will be joining Tory Eurosceptics in demanding a "tough but fair" settlement on immigration, telling *The Observer* that migrants should not be entitled to benefits for at least two years.⁴ Burnham is engaged in a complex manoeuvre of simultaneously trying to please the unions and outflank both David Cameron and Nigel Farage over the question of Europe and immigration.

Liz Kendall, the favourite candidate of the Tory press, has warned the party not to cling to the "fantasy" that Britain has swung to the left. She has told journalists Labour must "back business" and "embrace public-sector reform", and she "won't be pushed around by the trade unions". Like the Tories, she is opposed to a permanent top tax rate of 50% and is in favour of an annual benefits cap, doubtlessly because it is a "basic issue of fairness" that a family should not be "able to get more in benefits than someone going out to work" (to use the words of Cameron). Impressed, *The Sun* commented that Kendall is the "only Labour leadership candidate who can win back *Sun* readers and working class voters" (May 24). Although Mary Creagh has come out with very similar sentiments.

Given the current balance of forces within the Labour Party, the best that communists can hope for at the moment is that Burnham gets elected - prompting a whole swathe of Blairites to storm out of the party in protest: good riddance to bad rubbish. However, that is quite unlikely. The bastards will stay. John Cruddas, now in charge of writing the report explaining the reasons for Labour's defeat, has stated that the party is facing the "greatest crisis" since it was created - "epic in its scale".⁵ This is a slight exaggeration - how about, say, Ramsay MacDonald's decision in 1931 to dismiss the Labour cabinet and form a national coalition government? Yet there can be no doubt that Labour is in a pretty dire state and it is certainly true that Ed Miliband's manifesto was an eclectic and incoherent admixture of bits and pieces, amounting to nothing in particular.

But, then again, if you chuck out the goal of 'socialism' - even in the thoroughly reformist and bureaucratic form of clause four - then what 'grand narrative' have you got left for essentially bourgeois politicians like Tony Blair and Ed Miliband? They have nothing to really distinguish themselves from the Tories, so ultimately everything becomes reduced to wretched managerial politics. By contrast, we communists want to get as many unions as possible to affiliate to the Labour Party, but not to *accept* Andy Burnham or any other Labourite misleader. Quite the opposite, we want to challenge such people and transform the Labour Party into a *permanent united front* along the lines advocated by Leon Trotsky ●

Notes

1. *The Guardian* May 19.
2. <http://sports.williamhill.com/bet/en-gb/betting/g/5527117/Leader-Betting.html>.
3. www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/05/19/yvette-cooper-labour_n_7311022.html.
4. www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/16/andy-burnham-labour-leadership-campaign-not-factional-politics.
5. *The Observer* May 16.

IRELAND

A gay day for equality

Anne McShane celebrates the defeat of the Catholic church and calls for the battle for democracy to include the aim of socialism

Who would have thought that holy Roman Ireland would become the first country in the world to vote for gay marriage?

On Friday May 22, 1.2 million people (62%) voted to accept an amendment to article 41 of the Irish constitution allowing marriage “by two persons without distinction as to their sex”. Two out of three voters approved what is a very significant breach in the Catholic constitution. The result reflects the mass secularisation of Irish society, along with the discrediting of the church in the eyes of much of the population.

A relatively high turnout of over 60% was bolstered by a surge of late voting registrations, mostly from young people. Facebook and Twitter were used to gather momentum behind a ‘yes’ vote and to promote the concept of equality. Hundreds of young Irish migrants returned just to vote. For them it was vital that Ireland shift its attitude towards sexuality. All democrats, along with gay men and women, rejoice in this victory, but what has caused this sea change in Irish society?

Eamon De Valera, architect of the current theocratic constitution, must be spinning in his grave. A 1916 republican leader, civil war oppositionist and founder of Fianna Fáil, De Valera was without doubt a religious zealot. He was determined to create a bastion of Catholicism. Given the opportunity to draw up a constitution to replace the 1922 Free State document, he immediately enlisted the aid of prominent clergymen - in particular his close ally, the notorious John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin and all-Ireland catholic primate. McQuaid ensured that the constitution was written to conform to strict Catholic doctrine, reflecting canon law on the family, education and social welfare issues.

De Valera, keen to win the authority of the pope, presented the draft to the Vatican for approval. It was only after he got the nod from Rome that he put it before the Irish electorate for rubber-stamping in a plebiscite on July 1 1937. The people were asked a single question: “Do you approve of the draft constitution which is the subject of this plebiscite?” 56.5% voted ‘yes’ and holy Roman Ireland was born.

Fundamental to De Valera’s constitution was the safeguarding of the Catholic family. Article 41 asserts that the traditional family is the “natural, primary and fundamental unit group of society” and “a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law”. The primary place of women within the home is specifically enshrined and the constitution commits the state “to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home”. It will “guard with special care the institution of marriage, on which the family is founded, and to protect it against attack”.

Long years of dark repression followed. McQuaid remained a shadowy figure in Irish politics right up to 1972. His long career mirrored that of De Valera, who served 19 years as taoiseach and a further 14 as president, finally retiring in 1973 at the age of 90. The church ran the state and the shame of being anything but a compliant, mass-going Catholic was enormous. Women who had children outside of marriage were ostracised, locked up in mother and baby homes and their children taken from them. It was impossible to be openly gay. Not only was it deemed unnatural and sinful, but it was a criminal offence until 1993.

Up to now most referendums on the role of the family have been aimed at strengthening

the church’s influence. Thus the 8th amendment passed in 1983 institutionalised the “right to life of the unborn”, giving a foetus the same rights as a pregnant woman. Tens of thousands of Irish women travel abroad every year for an abortion or order illegal drugs over the internet to terminate their pregnancy. Those who cannot go abroad are forced to suffer an unwanted pregnancy. The constitution makes clear that this is the ‘natural’ order of things - women have to accept their lot and just get on with it.

Major shift

The campaign and the result of the referendum on May 22 reveals a major shift in attitudes on sexuality and morality. The revelation of the systematic abuse inflicted on men, women and children during the De Valera days and afterwards has caused the church’s standing to plummet. The Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, conceded that its teaching is not getting through. And the Vatican is appalled at the turn of events. The referendum result is apparently a “defeat for humanity”.

A comparison with the 1995 divorce referendum shows how much has changed in 20 years. Then article 21 was amended to allow divorce when a couple are separated for four out of five years. And, even though this was an extremely limited entitlement, it was won by a bare 9,000 votes. It was Dublin’s urban population that secured the result, pulling the rest of the country reluctantly behind it.

In 2015 it is a different story.

Only one out of the 26 counties voted ‘no’ to same-sex marriage. Working class areas had the highest ‘yes’ votes, with Dublin South East registering 75% in favour and Cork North Central 64%. The ‘yes’ was also higher in areas where anti-water charges campaigns had been most active, showing that the result was not a vote of confidence in the government.

But that, of course, is exactly how the Fine Gael-Labour coalition is presenting it. Taoiseach Enda Kenny hopes to reverse his deep unpopularity over water charges and present himself as a modern, egalitarian leader, fit for the new millennium. Nothing could be further from the truth. His party agreed to accept the manifesto commitment of the Labour Party to this referendum in a deal which ensured his government an unassailable majority in the Dáil. It then tried to avoid discussing it until Enda Kenny’s clumsy attempts to dodge the issue threatened to cause even more embarrassment to the ailing administration. Then it was arranged that the youthful health minister, Leo Varadkar, would come out on national radio. Overnight the Fine Gael leaders reinvented themselves as staunch supporters of gay marriage. This caused a great deal of bitterness amongst the party’s lower ranking TDs. But the leadership ignored the gripes - it was determined to use the referendum to its advantage.

Even Fianna Fáil announced support for the ‘yes’ side. It seemed the whole establishment wanted change - at least officially. Fearing

isolation, the church decided to allow the deeply reactionary Iona Institute to head up the well-funded ‘no’ campaign, while preaching fear and prejudice every Sunday from the pulpit. But there was even rebellion within the ranks of the clergy, with a number of parish priests announcing that they would be voting ‘yes’.

Abortion

In the aftermath of the referendum the question of abortion rights is again on the agenda. Clare Daly TD has demanded a referendum on the 8th amendment on a number of occasions during the current Dáil. But every time she and other leftwing TDs have been voted down through the combined forces of all the mainstream parties, including Sinn Féin.

Having previously rejected the demand for a referendum on abortion, the Labour Party is now attempting to win back ground and has announced that it will include it in its manifesto for government. But such cynicism should not surprise us - Labour promised reform on abortion last time round and then came up with the totally inadequate and insulting Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act. Under this legislation women have to be assessed by a panel of psychiatrists to determine if they are truly suicidal and therefore entitled to an abortion. There is the risk of being confined to a psychiatric ward to be forced to go through with a pregnancy.

The only way to win real, thoroughgoing equality is to make the campaign for a new constitution a working class struggle. The connection between our political, social and economic rights must be brought together in a comprehensive programme. There have been various calls for a new republic, from the Right to Water campaign and others.

The working class in Ireland must lead the fight for its own republic. We must champion equal rights for all sections of society, and spell out what we need to become the ruling class. The Irish working class must promote democracy to take on capitalism ●

anne.mcshane@weeklyworker.co.uk



Demanding the same constitutional rights as any other couple

HISTORY

Doing war differently

Does today's workers' movement need its own 'self-denying ordinance'? Mike Macnair looks to the lessons of the New Model Army

April 3 2015 was an anniversary which will pretty certainly be forgotten by the media - but which should be remembered by the workers' movement and the left. It was 370 years since the final passage, on April 3 1645, of the 'self-denying ordinance', first proposed in December 1644, which removed members of parliament from their existing military commands or civil offices (with certain exceptions).¹ The limited purpose was as a means of shaking up the army command. It was connected to the creation of the 'New Model' army, which was agreed on February 17.²

On its face, the self-denying ordinance was a mere technical step in the conduct of the war between king and parliament. It might also be seen as merely a manoeuvre in the faction fighting between 'Presbyterians' (advocates of established Scottish-style church government for England, but also commonly supporters of a negotiated peace with the king) and 'independents' (advocates of religious toleration for Protestant churches independent of the state, but also commonly advocates of a decisive military defeat of the king).³

In reality it was a lot more. The New Model ordinance and self-denying ordinance marked a fundamental transition of the English civil war. Before this transition, it was a politico-religious rebellion against the king, led by aristocrats and in process of failing: like the Bohemian (Czech) rebellion at the beginning of the Thirty Years War in 1618-21, or in France the 1620s Huguenot (Protestant) rebellions or the 1648-53 'Fronde' (rebellions led by lawyers and by aristocrats).⁴ With the creation of the New Model Army, the English war became unequivocally a *social revolution* based on the 'middling sort', like the Dutch revolt from the early 1570s onwards. The English revolution would be temporarily victorious and go all the way to the execution of the king and abolition of the monarchy in 1649. Though it ended in political defeat with the 1660 restoration of the monarchy, important aspects of its changes in military affairs, land tenure, taxation and government finance, persisted in the restoration, and others foreshadowed changes introduced after the revolution of 1688, which shaped the modern British state.

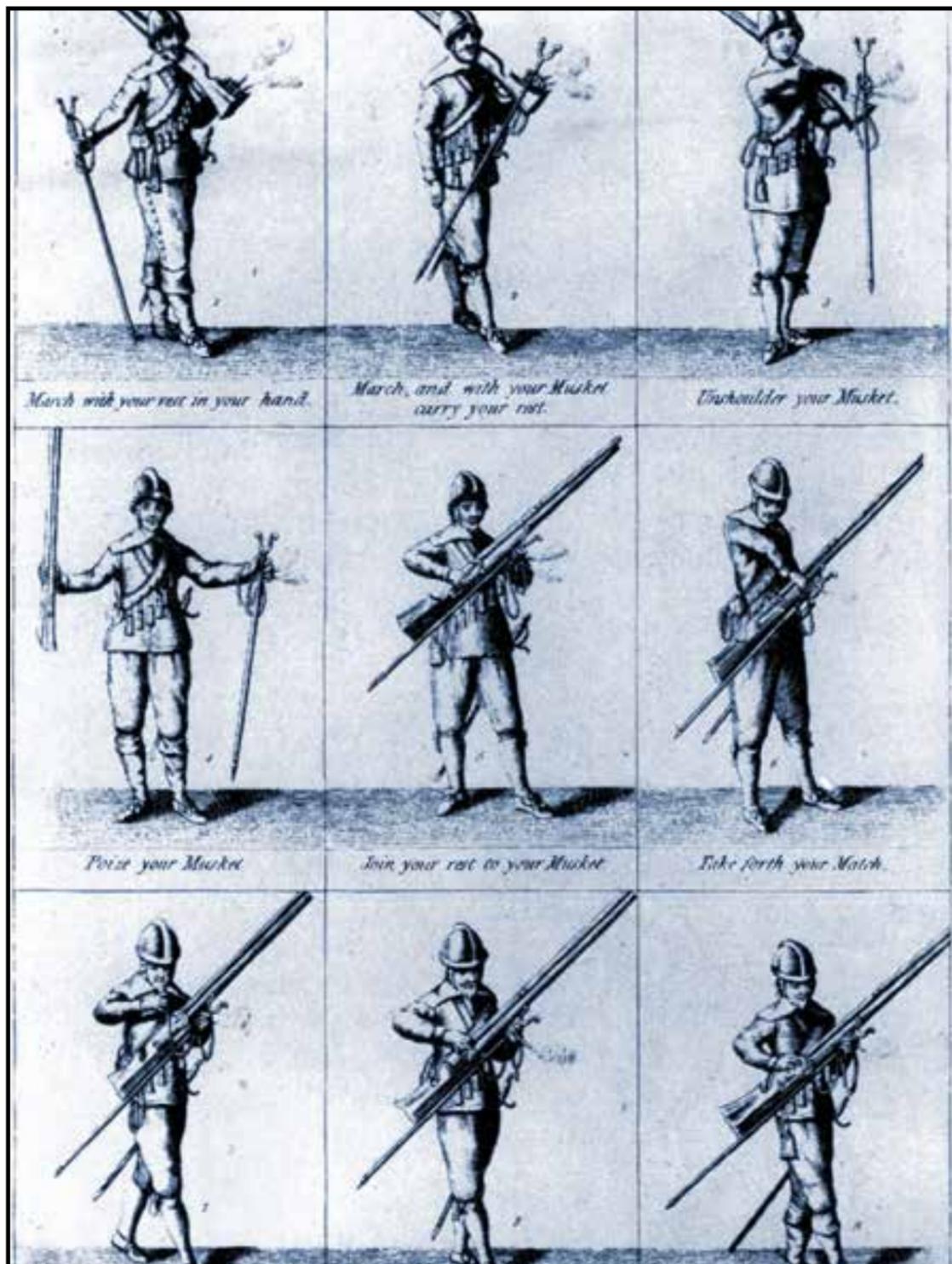
To say that the English civil war became a social revolution requires an outline of the social order which it overthrew.

Feudalism

Medieval society was, in its own self-image, divided into 'those who fight' (aristocrats, including the later medieval and early modern 'gentry'), 'those who pray' (clerics), and 'those who work' (peasants and urban artisans).

'Those who fight' and 'those who pray' were both clear groups of exploiters: the gentry living off rents and other feudal dues, the clergy living off tithes and other 'customary rights', as well as off rents of land given to churches and monasteries as endowment.

'Those who work' were more ambiguous. Both peasant and artisan communities tended to polarise between, on the one hand, rich business - or farmer - employers, who were proto-capitalist exploiters, and, on the other hand, poor small operators; with, below even these, two groups - the first, youth in apprenticeships and domestic service, and the second, an underclass which could only survive by casual work for wages, theft or begging. In practice, the peasants and artisans were usually



Fighting to win a social revolution

'represented' by the wealthier among their number.

Peasants were sub-divided into two status groups. Villeins or serfs were technically owned by their lords, though, unlike classical (or early modern colonial) slaves, the lords could not kill or maim them and could only sell them together with the land to which they were attached.⁵ Peasant revolts in the 1300s-1400s destroying records, landlord difficulties in holding onto tenants after the 1348-49 plague and subsequent recurrences that killed off a lot of the population, and so on, had by the 1630s resulted in villeins becoming rare and confined to remote areas like Devon and Cornwall.⁶ Free peasants were, obviously, those who were not villeins. The difference was not a wealth difference: in the 1200s-1300s, when villeinage was commonplace, villeins were often financially better off than free tenants.⁷

In theory, though practice was a lot messier, land was held by 'tenures' which carried obligations and rules specific to these groups: 'chivalry', 'serjeanty' and related tenures were 'military tenures', which carried an obligation, if called up,

to do military service for the king or lord; 'frankalmoin' or 'free alms', and 'tenure by divine service' were tenures specific to the church; 'socage' was a free peasant tenure, with a liability to pay a (low) fixed rent and related duties; 'villeinage', later called 'copyhold', was originally a villein tenure, and had higher and more variable rents and duties; 'burgage' was an urban borough tenure, like socage, but subject to variable local rules of the individual borough.

Again in theory (and once more practice was a lot messier) the lay statuses were *inherited* from the father: if your father was gentry, you were gentry; if he was a burgher, you were a burgher; if he was a peasant, you were a villein. Clergy status was not in theory inheritable, even after the reformation allowed the clergy to marry.

The distinctions were only actually policed at certain limited points (less in England than elsewhere). Lords of manors tried to keep control of their villeins (or, in the later period, at least to extort money for charters enfranchising them). Boroughs were concerned to police the boundaries of borough

citizenship, which gave the right to trade within the borough and to vote. And a limited class of the top landlords, the peers, were entitled to titles (duke, earl, etc) and to individual summonses to parliament, where they would sit in the House of Lords. So here too *who exactly* was a peer had to be policed.

But the younger sons of gentry, or even of lords, might be apprenticed to burghers and become citizens; the same was true of the children of peasants. Government officials, soldiers in wartime and lawyers might rise through success and royal favour into the peerage. Indeed, very successful armed robbers might pass into the gentry (and *vice versa* gentry under pressure evolve into mere armed robbers). And so on.

All three groups had a degree of local self-management of their own affairs: the peasants in the village (and in the manor court, over which the lord or his steward *presided*, but in which the 'suits of the court', the wealthier peasants, gave the judgments); the urban artisans in borough institutions; the clergy in monastic and cathedral chapters and in periodic diocesan or province-wide meetings; the gentry in county and

'honour' courts.

But this self-government was *subject* to the obligations, both material and jurisdictional, owed to feudal superiors, to kings and to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, going up to the pope. It was also dominated by local customary rules, which might control, in the countryside, what exactly was planted and when; in towns, the precise quality and means of production of goods.⁸ Such obligations and customs bore heavily on both lower landlords and better-off peasants who wished to 'improve' (often at the expense of their neighbours), and similarly on putting-out merchants and successful artisans who wished to expand their business operations at the expense of their competitors.

Customary property

The jurisdictional and material claims, and the local customary rules, were all alike 'consuetudines' - 'customs' in the same sense that modern 'customs duties' are money payments. They were all alike *property rights* of their holders, whether the holder was the king, a bishop, a private lord or a borough or trading corporation. Equally, many property rights in *land* were, in substance, rights not to the immediate physical control of the land, but to rents and related rights derived from the land in the hands of peasant (or, in the towns, artisan) tenants. *Today* rights to rents are understood as the consequence of ownership of the physical land, the landlord being paid under a *contract* for letting the tenant use the land; *then* such rights were seen in terms much more similar to rights to ecclesiastical tithes (which had often been sold off or leased to laymen anyhow⁹) or to such duties as 'cheese weighage' (paid on cheese imported into London) and so on, which persisted into the early modern period.¹⁰

The king's feudal rights over his tenants 'in chief' - those who held land or related rights directly from him by military tenures - were also property rights. The most important in the military tenures was *wardship*: the right if the tenant died leaving an heir who was under-age (below 21) to take the profits of the land until the heir reached 21, and to sell (or give away) the marriage of the heir. Tenants in chief of the king, whether military or other, were also liable to pay 33% of the land value for licence to sell or otherwise transfer it. These rights, the feudal 'casualties' or 'incidents', in the 1630s brought in between £66,000 and £83,000 a year - around 10% of total royal revenue.¹¹ Lesser lords had similar property rights over *their* tenants - if they had kept records to prove the relationship. But if the sub-tenant held *anything* in chief of the crown by military tenure, the king took the wardship of the body of the heir (and the right to sell their marriage) by prerogative right.¹²

In the result, by the early 1600s, *private* feudal tenurial claims were rare; but the crown (or, in the terminology invented in late medieval Italy and beginning to be used in early 17th century England, 'the state')¹³ had a fundamental interest in the continuance of the feudal order, on which it depended for a large chunk of its revenue. The crown similarly, but for different reasons (to preserve the peasantry as a source of healthy recruits for armies), had interests in limiting 'depopulating enclosures' and in preserving the manorial courts, an

activity to which it applied the resources of the Court of Star Chamber (abolished in 1641).¹⁴

Moreover, the form of the reformation in England was not to abolish the ecclesiastical customs, jurisdictions and so on, but to centralise them in the hands of the crown, which took over the old papal jurisdictions.

'No bishop, no king, no nobility' was a slogan attributed to James I; it was around this idea that Charles I and his supporters were able to mobilise opposition to the parliamentary reformers in 1641-42, to the point of civil war.¹⁵ Thus, for example, 'moderate,' later royalist, gentleman-poet MP Edmund Waller commented in the debate on episcopacy:

I look upon Episcopacy, as a Counter-scar[p], or outwork, which if it be taken by this assault of the people, and withall this Myserie once revealed, that we must deny them nothing when they aske it thus in troops, we may in the next place, have as hard a taske to defend our propriety, as we have lately had to recover it from the prerogative.¹⁶

The point is simple. The 'presbyterian' alternative to episcopacy threatened the landlord class with that terrible danger, 'democracy' - and with it the chance that, if the 'customary' property, including jurisdictions, of crown and the bishops were overthrown, the very similar 'customary' property of the smaller squire and the parson would soon also be threatened.

The implication is that, so long as aristocrats retained the leadership of movements of revolt, they would tend to seek not a decisive outcome, but a compromise of some sort with the old regime; whether this was a peace deal with the existing king (as in England and France) or an alternative king (as in Bohemia).

It would be a mistake to imagine that the official (burgher, 'bourgeois' or 'cit') leaderships of the corporate towns, or of the great merchant companies like the East India or Merchant Adventurer Companies, were any more apt to seek a decisive outcome. In the 1000s-1100s urban communes were certainly regarded by kings, lords and clerics as a subversive phenomenon.¹⁷ But by the 1200s they were already being integrated as a subordinate part of the general social order: they received legal privileges, in exchange for accepting constitutions which made them take (as far as possible) an oligarchic form, and allowed intervention by royal lawyers in case they got out of hand.¹⁸

The legal privileges, therefore, were *consuetudines* like those of the lords and the clerics: I have already referred to a (minor) example: London 'weighage'. If 'No bishop, no king - no king, no property' threatened squire and parson, they also threatened mayor, alderman and corporate monopolist with what came to be called 'levelling'. In the process of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary mobilisation in 1640-42 the 'parliamentarians' did win control of most boroughs and especially (and decisively) of London; but the process often involved the overthrow of existing borough leaders by 'outsiders' basing themselves on the middle and lower orders of the borough population.¹⁹

Social relations

Before the self-denying ordinance it was a commonplace that armies should be led by aristocrats. This is, of course, an aspect of the idea of the society as constituted of 'those who fight, those who pray and those who work': while peasants may be grunt soldiers, the officers have to be aristos and the generals should surely be royals or peers ... We are concerned here with an aspect of the practices which constituted feudal social relations.

The material basis of these

practices was, on the one hand, that 'classical' domestic chattel slavery disappeared, and with it disappeared its conceptual converse: the Roman idea that the true elite was a real leisure class and work of any sort degrading *neg-otium* (un-leisure).²⁰ And, on the other hand, that in medieval society occupational specialisation commonly, though not absolutely, required beginning specialist training well before puberty; besides, the later Roman empire had imposed inherited status on a number of trades.²¹ This combination of practical necessity and inherited law was then ideologised as the idea of inherited natural aptitudes to specific productive and elite activities. The literature, for example, contained numerous 'lost heir' stories, in which an aristo child dispossessed by scheming step-parents, wicked uncles, etc, ended up displaying their true nobility.²²

Alongside the idea of hereditary right stood, in medieval society, the idea of personal sanctity, which formed the legitimisation of the claims of 'those who pray' to their *consuetudines*. But, as the Waller speech quoted above indicates, the reformation had already to a considerable extent desecralised the clerisy as an estate: James I's, Waller's and similar defences of episcopacy are not like Thomas More's sacral defence of the papacy and the autonomous clerisy in the 1530s, but rather a pragmatic defence of aristocratic property. Indeed, the attempts of the government of Charles I to restore the power, privileges and coherence of the clerisy as an estate, by sparking revolution in Scotland, triggered the fall of the regime.

The choice that faced the 'parliamentary side' in 1644-45 was, then, either to seek a compromise with the king²³ by preserving the idea that military leadership belonged to the aristocracy, who would inevitably hold back from outright victory for fear of 'no king, no property'. Or to adopt some principle other than *hereditary* aptitude as the basis of the right to command, in the hope of getting a military leadership willing to go for broke, to fight through till final victory.

The break was not just in immediate officer personnel. In the first phase of the civil war, on both the king's side and the parliamentary side, regiments and armies had been raised in the *localities* and to a considerable extent on the basis of landlords 'calling upon' their tenants and other dependants.²⁴ This was not 'classical feudalism', where land-holding in military tenure entailed an obligation to do military service. But it did have about it elements of the 'bastard feudalism' of the later middle ages, in which the crown contracted with aristos to provide soldiers, who were to some extent drawn from local areas of the influence of the particular contractor.²⁵

The New Model meant, in contrast, a *centralised* army with centrally appointed officers and common uniforms (the English soldier's red coat, in use until khaki took over in the 1880s, originated with the New Model). It was a *Rechtsmacht*, a law-army, constituted by the legislative power and tending towards the construction of a *Rechtsstaat*, a law-state - reflected even when the army made coups against the parliament, in overt discussion of written constitutions.

The army's financing changed, too. To force through General Fairfax's and the House of Commons' choice of officers against the opposition of the House of Lords, the Common Council of the City of London, which was to lend £80,000 for the new army, made the loan conditional on Fairfax's proposals going through: a creditors' army.²⁶ In April 1646, the parliament adopted for the first time the method of issuing *assignable* government debt securities, which had been pioneered by the later medieval Italian city-states, and previously adopted by the Dutch,

thereby creating a government securities market - one of the fundamental institutions of the modern bourgeois state.²⁷ Loans to government thus become a species of 'property right' - and, once the system developed more fully after 1688, begin to constitute abstract capital more generally.

Meritocracy

What was the new principle of officer selection expressed by the self-denying ordinance and New Model ordinance? The answer was competence without regard to heredity: that is, it was the social principle described by Napoleon Bonaparte as *la carrière ouverte aux talents* - 'career open to talent': in modern society 'equality of opportunity' or 'meritocracy'.²⁸

'Equality of opportunity' or meritocracy, as a general principle of social ordering, *grows out* of the competitive relations which existed in medieval society *within* the communities of 'those who work' and especially within the boroughs, more specifically *within* the specific trade guilds. The artisan who is good at his trade attracts more business and succeeds, and so on ... Out of this urban view of the world comes the 18th century celebration of "civil society", called by Hegel more transparently *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*: bourgeois, or urban, society. The urban principle of partial competition and market selection by competence, by becoming a principle of army officer selection, escapes its regulated confines in the urban interstices of feudalism and mutates into a general principle of social ordering.

It was precisely this new principle that was and remained afterwards *inspiring* as an alternative to feudalism's ideas of natural hierarchy. It was expressed, for example, in old junior New Model officer, and later republican activist, Richard Rumbold's statement in his scaffold speech at his 1685 execution for treason: "I am sure that there was no man born marked by God above another; for none came into the world with a saddle on his back, neither any booted or spurred to ride him."²⁹ The tag had antecedents in the work of Venetian republican ideologist Paolo Sarpi; Rumbold's speech was to be quoted by American revolutionaries ...³⁰

The self-denying ordinance and New Model Army's shift onto a new social paradigm was decisive for the English civil war, and opened the way temporarily to the Commonwealth - which in turn in some ways provided a model for the eventual revolution in the 1690s. But the new principle of 'equality of opportunity' (or whatever formulation) ebbed and flowed over the next 250 years, even in the army. The peacetime army officer corps remained a place providing jobs to those among the younger sons of the gentry, who seemed less likely to do well in business, the church or the law, while serious wars forced the principle of competence back to work. In a sense, then, the new principle of the self-denying ordinance looked far into the future.

New Model left?

I said at the beginning that the anniversary of the self-denying ordinance was one which should be remembered by the workers' movement and the left. At one level the point is merely one of understanding British history; of understanding the bourgeois revolution; and of understanding social revolutions in general.

There is, however, perhaps a more immediate relevance to the modern workers' movement and left. The problem which faced those who set out to resist royal absolutism and its efforts to restore the clerical power in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Bohemia and England in the 16th-17th century was that their traditional leaders and institutions were tied to the monarchies and the old order by way of *their own* customary property

rights; and were therefore prone to compromise with the old order in ways which led in practice to defeat.

The way out of this problem turned out to be to break decisively with the 'estates' conception and its associated idea of *hereditary* military, political or leadership competence, and embark instead on a new approach to military leadership, and thence to political leadership - what has come in modern times to be called equality of opportunity. The resistance could not do without officers and institutions of command: without these institutions, no coordinated resistance was possible, but only localised disorders. But it could change the principle of selection - and by doing so create an inspiring image of the alternative.

Having described the problem in this way, it should be apparent that the workers' movement and the left is faced with a closely analogous problem - albeit at an earlier stage of its struggles against the endeavours of the neoliberals to use strong-state methods to restore the old capitalist order. Our traditional leaders and traditional methods of leadership, this time because they are committed to *career* leaderships based on competence, on the 'career open to talent', 'equality of opportunity' or meritocracy *within the workers' or left organisations and parties*, are tied to the old capitalist order by the similarity of their claims to *careers* and to private rights to control information to those of the capitalist managerial class.

The result is to disable mobilisation for resistance to the neoliberal 'counter-reformation'. Resistance is disabled at an earlier stage than the misgivings which crippled the Bohemian or Huguenot revolts or the Frondes or that threatened to cripple the parliamentary side in the English civil war. It is disabled because the endeavours of the officials to retain *control* against the lay members operate to split any movement that might develop (as not only the Labour Party and the trade unions, but also each little group like the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Counterfire, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, and so on, seeks to have a front 'campaign', which *its officials* can control by apparatus means). And it is disabled equally because the endeavour of the officials to maintain their positions by control of information, and so on, sterilises discussion and decision-making for the ranks and leads the ranks to demobilise.

Contrary to the anarchists, libertarians, movementists, 'network' advocates and so on, the modern workers' movement and left can no more do without leaders and institutions of leadership than the New Model Army could do without officers. Leaders and institutions of leadership are *necessary elements* in the process of decision-making for collective action, a means by which we can 'boil down' the multiple possible decisions into real choices. But what we can do is *change the principle of selection*: to abandon the idea that leaders are leaders *because of their competence* and that, therefore, they are entitled to a *career* as leaders and to control of information.

And maybe this means that to create a real radical alternative to the liberal reaction the workers' movement will need its own self-denying ordinance: for the existing leaders to step down or be sacked to make way for those prepared to break with managerialism and meritocracy ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

- www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/pp664-665.
- www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/pp614-626.
- Eg, ANB Cotton, 'Cromwell and the self-denying ordinance' *History* No62, pp211-31 (1977); I Gentles *The New Model Army* Blackwell 1992, chapter 1.
- Bohemian revolt: J.V. Polišký *The thirty years*

war (translator R Evans) London 1971, chapters 1 and 4. Huguenot revolts and Frondes: D Parker *The making of French absolutism* London 1983, pp50-59 and chapter 3.

5. PR Hyams *King, lords and peasants in medieval England* (Oxford 1980) discusses the legal doctrine. The underlying agrarian evolution is discussed by R Faith in *The English peasantry and the growth of lordship* (London 1997).

6. R Hilton *Bond men made free* Abingdon 2003; EB Fryde *Peasants and landlords in later medieval England* Stroud 1996; JH Baker *The common law tradition* London 2000, pp325-34.

7. M Prestwich *Plantagenet England 1225-1360* Oxford 2005, pp446-51. The issue is, however, debated: see EB Fryde *op cit* pp12-17.

8. Agriculture: J Goodacre *The transformation of a peasant economy* Aldershot 1994, chapter 3, and cf D Parker *Class and state in ancien régime France* London 1996, pp48-74 (in France such controls continued down to the revolution of 1789); towns: J Davis *Medieval market morality* Cambridge 2012, and cf S Oglivie *State corporatism and proto-industry* Cambridge 1997 (dynamics of the regulated regime, as it persisted in 17th-18th century Württemberg).

9. RC Palmer *Selling the church* Chapel Hill 2002, introduction and chapters 2, 4 and 8.

10. 'Cheese weighage' *Mayor of London v Hunt* (1681-82) 3 *Levinz* 37, 83 *English Reports* 565; cf more generally F Gunning *A practical treatise on the law of tolls* London 1833.

11. M Braddick *The nerves of state* Manchester 1996, pp10-12, 72-76 gives outline figures. The major source of royal income was the customs in the modern sense, duties paid on imports and exports; but the loss of the feudal revenue without replacement would still have produced a major gap.

12. Discussion for the 13th century in SL Waugh *The lordship of England* Princeton 1988; discussion of 16th century legal doctrine in M McGlynn *The royal prerogative and the learning of the Inns of Court* Cambridge 2003; 16th-17th century royal administration: HE Bell *An introduction to the history of the court of wards and liveries* Cambridge 1953.

13. Invented in late medieval Italy: A Harding, 'Origins of the concept of the state' *History of political thought* Vol 15 (1994), pp57-72; J Kishner (ed) *The origins of the state in Italy, 1300-1600* Chicago 2009. Use of the concept in England, primarily by way of 'reason of state' - eg, C Condren, 'Reason of state and sovereignty in early modern England: a question of ideology?' *Parergon* Vol 28 (2011), pp13-18.

14. JE Martin *Feudalism to capitalism* Basingstoke 1986, chapter 8.

15. A clear recent discussion in C Holmes *Why was Charles I executed?* London 2006, chapters 3 and 4.

16. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 'Waller, Edmund, poet and politician'. A variety of similar formulations are cited at various points in the additional chapters in C Hill *Intellectual origins of the English revolution revisited* Oxford 1997, and in C Holmes *op cit*.

17. ME Tigar and MR Levy *Law and the rise of capitalism* (New York 2000), part 1, though one-sided, can serve as a counter to the more predominant view of (conservative, etc) historians that early urban institutions were *not* subversive.

18. Pre-revolutionary 17th century political ideas and related legal doctrine are discussed in PD Halliday *Dismembering the body politic* Cambridge 1998, chapter 2.

19. B Manning *The English people and the English revolution* London 1991; and cf R Brenner *Merchants and revolution* Cambridge 1993, parts 2-3; PD Halliday *op cit* chapter 3.

20. Cf P Brown *Through the eye of a needle* Princeton 2012, chapter 1.

21. Training before puberty: both cavalymen and archers began training at age seven. Discussion of the Roman legal sources in A Świętoń, 'Some elements of centrally planned economy in the late antiquity?' *Revue Internationale des droits de l'Antiquité* No54 (2007), pp503-17. It is highly likely that the late antique state was not capable of enforcing these laws; the point is that the medievals will have inherited them as a component of the constitution of their own self-conceptions.

22. Eg, the stories discussed in NJ Menuge *Medieval English wardship in romance and law* Cambridge 2001.

23. In fact, Charles turned out to be wholly unwilling to compromise with anyone.

24. CH Firth *Cromwell's army* York 1962, pp15-28. On the military effects cf C Holmes *op cit* pp82-86.

25. See, for example, MA Hicks *Bastard feudalism* Abingdon 1995.

26. I Gentles *op cit* p19.

27. www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum, pp846-47. Cf D M Coffman, 'Credibility, transparency, accountability and the public credit under the Long Parliament and Commonwealth, 1643-1653' in A Leonard and L Neal (eds) *Questioning credible commitment* Cambridge 2013, chapter 4; Netherlands: MC 't Hart *The making of a bourgeois state* Manchester 1993, chapter 6; Italian city states: L Pezzolo, 'Bonds and government debt in Italian city states, 1250-1650' in WN Goetzmann and KG Rouwenhost (eds) *The origins of value* Oxford 2005, chapter 8.

28. 'Meritocracy' was coined by M Young in *The rise of the meritocracy* (London 1958); cf Young's acerbic 2001 comment on Blairite meritocracy: www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/jun/29/comment; and A Allan, 'Michael Young's *The rise of the meritocracy: a philosophical critique*', *British Journal of Educational Studies* No59 (2011), pp367-82 (drawing attention to the changed meaning of meritocracy in post-Thatcherite Britain).

29. *State trials* Vol 9, column 882.

30. D Adair, 'Rumbold's dying speech, 1685, and Jefferson's last words on democracy, 1826' *The William and Mary Quarterly 3rd series* Vol 9 (1952), pp25-26. On Sarpi, cf also WJ Bouwsma *Venice and the defence of republican liberty* Berkeley 1968.

SOUTH AFRICA

Loyalists ready to walk

With Marikana about to dominate the headlines once more, Peter Manson reports on the ongoing Cosatu crisis

As the Congress of South African Trade Unions edges towards a formal split, one of the central underlying questions that has helped to fuel the Cosatu crisis is currently the cause of renewed tensions in South Africa.

I am referring to the commission of inquiry into the police massacre of 34 platinum miners at Marikana in August 2012, whose report was handed to president Jacob Zuma on March 31. His failure to release it has added to the political tension and exacerbated divisions not only within the union federation, but within the African National Congress-led alliance, of which Cosatu is a part, together with the South African Communist Party. The SACP, along with other ANC apologists, refused to condemn the slaughter of strikers at Marikana (some individual SACP members even attempted to justify it), saying that the inquiry should be allowed to run its course.

Finally, after almost three years, the commission has completed its work, but the president is refusing to release its report. In response to growing demands for its publication, Zuma stated on May 10:



Irvin Jim: breaking from the ANC

of the view that, since there has been no final and binding decision made by the national congress on Numsa's expulsion, in terms of clause 14.3.2 of the Cosatu constitution, we may still exercise our rights as a member of the federation.

In light of the above, the pending court proceedings to review our expulsion and the pending internal appeal, which we hereby request to be heard at the special national congress, we may further be entitled to partake in the activities of the [SNC] as an active member of the federation.⁴

I feel this argument is far less compelling than the demand for an SNC itself - in that case there was a clear breach of the constitution, whereas with Numsa's expulsion, through a vote taken on Cosatu's leading committee, things are less certain.

But Munusamy points to another factor:

This first problem is Cosatu does not have the money to hold a special congress. The expulsion of Numsa, its biggest affiliate, saw a major source of its funding chopped off. And in order to get back into the black Cosatu has to readmit Numsa as an affiliate. The dominant faction would rather have Cosatu bankrupt than have Irvin Jim and his crew back in the federation.

By "dominant faction" he is referring to the SACP loyalists, of course - it is important to stress that the ANC leadership majority has been trying its utmost to prevent Cosatu cleaving in two. It is convinced that a Numsa-led rival federation would be far more difficult to contain than the same unions would be in Cosatu, where the loyalists would continue to act as a counterbalance.

Split

However, even in the loyalist-led unions the leadership is being challenged by sympathisers of Vavi and Numsa. For example, the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) appears to be in turmoil. Two years ago oppositionists seemed to have won control, for Samwu was one of the nine signatories to the demand for an SNC. But then the loyalists came to the fore again and its leadership welcomed the dismissal of Vavi. As recently as April of this year the leadership took court action of its own to prevent rebel members, who were campaigning under the banner of Save Our Samwu (SOS) with the support of Vavi and Numsa, from using the union's name and logo. Yet just a few weeks later Samwu was one of the seven applicants for an SNC!

The truth is, every one of Cosatu's affiliates are wracked by this basic division between loyalists and rebels. Take the loyalist-led South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu). It too obtained a court order in April to prevent the organisers of a rebel-called provincial shop stewards council from using Sadtu's logo and name. Unfortunately some former Sadtu members have now set up a rival breakaway: the South African Public Service Union (Sapsu).

But loyalist breakaways from rebel unions are actually being sponsored by the Cosatu leadership. That is the case with the newly formed Liberated Metalworkers of South Africa (Limusa). Following the May 11 court order upholding the demand for an SNC, the federation declared:

Numsa can only become a Cosatu affiliate if it reverses the resolutions it took in opposition to Cosatu existing policy [in support of the ANC]. Until then, we are calling on metalworkers to join Limusa, a newly admitted Cosatu metalworkers union. When the Numsa leadership decide to do the right thing, only at that time will we consider internal discussions about what is to be done. For now we are heightening the recruitment campaign for Limusa and servicing our members.⁵

To think that one of the most prominent claims in the loyalist campaign to expel Numsa had been that it was guilty of membership poaching and was therefore breaching the principle of 'One industry, one union'!

A statement on Limusa's own website reads:

The decision to establish the Liberated Metalworkers Union of South Africa (Limusa) came after a long period of internal resistance and struggle against the reactionary direction taken by the Numsa leadership, which opportunistically imposed its will over that union through various forms of despotic manipulation. While calling for dialogue and democracy elsewhere, that leadership ruthlessly stamped on dissent within its ranks.⁶

It has to be said that such claims against Numsa are exaggerated at the very least. It is well known that Numsa's December 2013 special congress, which was attended by over 1,000 delegates, voted *unanimously* to break from the ANC/SACP and set up the United Front. There were no allegations made at the time along the lines of Limusa's website claims.

As I write, a special two-day meeting of Cosatu's central executive committee is being held in Braamfontein to discuss arrangements for the July special national congress. No doubt its SACP-loyal leaders will reiterate the positions already stated and do everything possible to shore up the party's control at virtually any price. Assuming the SNC does take place, whether or not Numsa is allowed to attend, what if the loyalists lose the vote? Do you think they will accept the verdict? No, they will walk. The SACP is prepared to split the workers' movement rather than abide by the will of the majority.

As for the rebels, they, of course, have at long last realised that the alliance with the ANC is a dead end. But to really go forward they need to ditch their illusions in the ANC and SACP of old, and opt for a policy of genuine working class independence rather than a revamped Freedom Charter. As I have said, the rebellion has been partly driven by rank-and-file discontent, but the union membership as a whole needs to establish its own control, rather than rely on the bourgeois courts, in order to reforge a union movement worthy of the name ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. Statement from the presidency, May 10.
2. www.numsa.org.za/article/united-front-supports-calls-for-immediate-release-of-the-marikana-report.
3. Cosatu statement, May 11.
4. www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-05-25-numsa-raises-the-stakes-on-cosatu-special-congress.
5. Cosatu statement, May 11.
6. <http://limusa.org/about-limusa/1-history>.

The commission has made some serious recommendations that require careful consideration. Therefore, it is important to apply my mind carefully, so that our response ensures that the events that took place in Marikana are not allowed to happen again in our country. Everything is being done to ensure that the matters are concluded as soon as possible.¹

That, of course, completely avoids the question of why the report cannot be released immediately - obviously that ought not to depend on the formulation of a carefully worded response to its recommendations (how about 'Don't send out lethally armed police to shoot down militant strikers?'). The delay is adding to the speculation that Zuma is negotiating behind the scenes to have the most embarrassing and shocking details 'amended' or removed altogether. And now, more than two weeks after the last official statement, the presidency is merely repeating Zuma's pledge to release the report "in due course".

As a result, more support has been forthcoming for the legal challenge that was lodged on May 19 under the 2000 Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). A lawyer acting for mineworkers who were injured and arrested during the Marikana shooting put in a PAIA request a week ago and stated that if the president failed to come up with a satisfactory response by May 23 he would have no option but to approach the courts. PAIA requests must be answered within 30 days.

The Marikana Support Campaign, Right2Know and the South African History Archive had grouped together to support the request. And now the anti-ANC United Front - set up by the main oppositional and largest trade union, the 350,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) - has joined in: "President Zuma has avoided all questions around when he will be releasing the report to the public," read its statement. "The delay in the release of the Marikana report is unacceptable. This delay is likely to affect accountability from those responsible for the Marikana

massacre."²

Legal challenge

But, of course, Numsa is no longer a Cosatu affiliate, having been expelled from the federation in November 2014 by a vote of the central executive committee. Its crime? Withdrawing support from the ANC and Communist Party!

Traditionally Cosatu and its affiliates have been dominated by the SACP, which claims 170,000 members. The SACP's role in Cosatu has been to keep union militancy within safe bounds, so as not to risk undermining the ANC-led "national democratic revolution", which it claims is the "most direct route to socialism" in South Africa. The fact that the ANC, ably assisted by SACP government ministers, is imposing a programme of cuts and privatisation, and has presided over a regime of stable capitalist accumulation and an *increase* in relative impoverishment, is irrelevant apparently.

Numsa too had been run by SACP members, but it, along with eight other affiliates, had requested a special national congress of the 19-union federation shortly after the suspension from office of Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi in August 2013. Vavi had been disciplined ostensibly for having an affair with an office worker he had recruited, but in reality the SACP loyalists were looking for an excuse to get rid of a man who had become increasingly critical of the ANC. He was eventually dismissed from his post on March 30 2015.

The fact that nine out of the 19 affiliates were now demanding a special congress (regular congresses are held only once every three years) is an indication of the growing concern - driven in part by rank-and-file discontent - over the direction of Cosatu under SACP control. However, SACP hack and Cosatu president Sidumo Dlamini refused to comply with the federation's constitution, whereby a special national congress (SNC) must be called on the request of one-third of affiliates. At first he agreed to call an SNC, but cited "practicalities" and "expense" as reasons for not doing so straightaway. But within weeks the loyalists were bluntly stating that an SNC was unnecessary and would not

be convened.

This led to a legal challenge by Numsa and six other rebel unions, and on May 11 2015 the Gauteng high court instructed the seven applicants and the two respondents (Dlamini and Cosatu itself) to come to an out-of-court settlement. Once the largest union had been expelled, the loyalists had felt they were better placed to win a congress vote and said that they would indeed convene one after all. But no details were forthcoming, so the rebel seven went ahead with their legal challenge, forcing the loyalists to strike a deal.

The resulting high court statement stipulates that notice of the SNC must be given by June 28 at the latest, but Cosatu was scathing about the rebels' claim that they had won a victory. It declared: "The announcement which was made today is ... not a court ruling, as purported by the Numsa leadership, but a product of the agreement between two parties."³ However, the court statement reads:

By agreement between the parties, the following *order* is made: ... the first respondent [Dlamini] hereby undertakes to issue a notice under clause 3.3.2.3 of Cosatu's constitution notifying the second respondent's [Cosatu's] affiliate unions of the special national congress to be held from July 13-14 2015 (my emphasis).

But, as if to stress that they intend to stay in control, come what may, the loyalists added: "Numsa will not be part of the special national congress, since they are no longer a Cosatu affiliate." This controversy is now the subject of a second legal case - Numsa general secretary Irvin Jim wrote to Cosatu on May 22, demanding that the metalworkers be allowed to attend. Jim said that the basis of the demand for an SNC was two agenda items: "unity and cohesion" in the federation; and the election of office-bearers. Under the first item the appeals of both Numsa and Vavi against their expulsions should be heard, he stated.

According to Ranjeni Munusamy, writing in the online *Daily Maverick*, Jim added:

In addition to the aforesaid, we are

MIDDLE EAST

Least of Khamenei's problems

The US bears the main responsibility for the current situation in Iraq and Syria, writes **Yassamine Mather**

As discussions regarding the final draft of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 powers continue, opponents of the deal in Iran and elsewhere are doing their utmost to make sure the Geneva agreement (summarised as the intention to reach a deal) collapses before the June 30 deadline.

The French ambassador to the United States claims the negotiations are so complicated that a deal is unlikely in the current time scale. Over the last few months France has echoed the views of the Israeli government and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, often appearing more hard-line than the US. The Hollande government's priorities are clear - finalising arms sales to the Persian Gulf countries ahead of any deal with Iran. Earlier this month Qatar signed contracts worth €6.3 billion for the purchase of Rafale fighter jets and missiles from France.

Two weeks ago, Israeli defence minister Moshe Ya'alon implied that Israel might have to nuke Iran in order to prevent a long war:

At the end, we might take certain steps ... I do remember the story of president Truman, who was asked, 'How do you feel after deciding to launch the nuclear bombs, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, causing at the end the fatalities of 200,000 casualties?' And he said, 'When I heard from my officers the alternative is a long war with Japan, with potential fatalities of a couple of millions, I thought it is a moral decision.'¹

One cannot begin to imagine the media uproar if an Arab or an Iranian minister had made such a comment. It is also interesting to note that in this statement Ya'alon is all but admitting to Israel's possession of a nuclear arsenal.

In the US Republican senators also continue to threaten war and more sanctions if negotiations fail, while adding conditions to the existing demands made by the US and the other five powers. Republican senator Lindsay Graham declared: "Iran must not be allowed an enrichment capability greater than the practical needs to supply one commercial reactor."

Then there is opposition from the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council - Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait. They are concerned that they would lose their economic and political weight in the region if after more than three decades of isolation Iran's relations with the west improved. Barack Obama tried to address these concerns by inviting GCC leaders to Camp David, but Saudi Arabia and Oman declined the invitation - a move that was seen as a snub to the US president. Saudi opposition to the Geneva deal is well known and there can be no doubt that the proxy wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia (in Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and according to some Iraq) have accelerated since the April declaration of a nuclear agreement between the P5+1 and Iran's Islamic Republic.

Obama's comments during the summit were primarily addressed at reassuring the GCC countries that the US will continue to support them militarily. He referred to "Iran's destabilising activities in the region", adding: "I am reaffirming our iron-clad commitment to the security of our Gulf partners." According to the White House, there was agreement to develop a "region-wide ballistic missile

defence system", including an early warning system, and hold exercises "emphasising interoperability against asymmetric threats, such as terrorist or cyber-attacks", as well as increasing training in special operations and maritime security.²

It is difficult to take such statements seriously when we know for a fact that Saudi Arabia and Turkey are so committed to the overthrow of the Syrian regime that they finance, back and arm Al Nusra and at least until last year they were the main forces sending funds and supplies to Islamic State.

US legacy

On May 18, a US conservative group, Judicial Watch, published a selection of formerly classified documents obtained through a federal lawsuit. The document from 2012, issued by the Defence Intelligence Agency, talks of support from the west, Gulf countries and Turkey for the Syrian opposition: "there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria ... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime."³

Blogger Levant Report comments:

Overall, what we can see in the document clearly states that a Salafist principality is not desired by the west in terms of the Iraqi situation, but may or may not suggest that this principality is desired in terms of isolating Assad, which is a stated goal of the west and its allies (not just isolating, but removing).⁴

Looking at recent news from the region, one could say the US agency's predictions have come true - except that now we now have a Salafist/Wahhabi region in Iraq as well as in Syria.

The fall of Ramadi, capital of Anbar province, was the worst military setback suffered by the Iraqi government since almost a year ago, when IS took control of the north. According to US defence secretary Ashton Carter, the Iraqi army "vastly outnumbered" the IS forces but chose to withdraw: "What apparently happened is the Iraqi forces just showed no will to fight."⁵ Describing the situation as "very concerning", he added: "We can give them training, we can give them equipment - we obviously can't give them the will to fight."

According to US military sources, the Iraqi army left behind artillery, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, etc. No doubt there is little willingness in the Iraqi army to fight IS, but Carter omits to mention the following reasons for its collapse:

- US regional policy until 2014, which helped the rise of IS in the region.
- Continued US support for Al Nusra and other Islamist groups in Syria, which also strengthened IS.
- The fact that the US turned a blind eye to IS transactions in the Persian Gulf states, including funds obtained from the sale of oil, as well as continued financial support from Arab princes and emirs.
- The 'deBa'athification' and complete destruction of the Iraqi army after the war in 2003, which played a crucial role in strengthening the grip of a corrupt military command associated with a failing government in Baghdad.
- Alienation of the Sunni population after the Iraq war through carpet-bombing of cities such as Fallujah,

so creating a breeding ground for new jihadists within and beyond the borders of Iraq.

Now IS's overall territorial control is far bigger than the US predictions in 2012: the jihadist group rules a third of Iraq and around 50% of Syria. In fact the continuation of Bashar al-Assad's rule is in doubt and, although many in the Middle East and elsewhere would celebrate the fall of the Assad dynasty, Syria's future remains bleak. This week there are reports indicating that IS is marching on Damascus. Last week in addition to Palmira, IS captured part of the industrial city of Sheikh Najjar in the northern Aleppo province, as well as al-Waleed on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

So IS controls the east of the country, while in the north a new coalition of rebel forces is led by an affiliate of al Qaeda! As the Syrian military loses territory, the two jihadist armies are approaching each other's territories and both war and peace between the two groups present horrific scenarios. The civil war between IS and Al Nusra, predicted as the most likely scenario, will be a disaster for Syria and the region, yet if the two sides come to some agreement, it could provide the foundations of a Salafist caliphate encompassing large parts of Syria and Iraq.

Given what is happening in Syria and Iraq, not to mention the resumption of air raids by Saudi Arabia against Houthis in Yemen, it is not surprising that Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has entered the debate about the threats posed by IS. He has accused the US and "some idiotic leaders" in the Persian Gulf of trying to start proxy wars on Iran's borders - a clear reference to IS and Al Nusra military advances in Syria and Iraq.

According to Iranian general Qasem Suleimani, the US has no will to fight IS:

The US didn't do a damn thing to stop the extremists' advance on Ramadi, while their air base is only a few kilometres away ... Does it mean anything else than being an accomplice in the plot? Today, there is nobody in confrontation with IS except the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as nations who are next to Iran or supported by Iran.⁶

Nuclear deal?

In his speech Khamenei also addressed the issue of nuclear negotiations and commented: "We have said that we will not let foreigners inspect any military centre." He also ruled out allowing international inspectors to interview Iranian nuclear scientists, adding: "This means interrogation. I will not let foreigners come and talk to scientists and dear children of the nation, who have developed this science up to this level." This is in complete contrast to John Kerry's comments soon after the Geneva agreement, that Iran cannot avoid answering the questions about its past actions: "They have to do it. It will be done".

The two issues referred to by Khamenei have dominated Iranian news in recent days. Of course, as far as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is concerned, there is no stipulation for inspecting a country's military installations. Such a move, in a world where the use of satellites allows the US and its allies to spy on military bases worldwide, would be regarded as a humiliation. However, in 2003 Iran signed the International Atomic Energy Agency's 'additional protocols', which allow for "provision

of information about, and IAEA inspector access to, all parts of a state's nuclear fuel cycle - including uranium mines, fuel fabrication and enrichment plants, and nuclear waste sites - as well as to any other location where nuclear material is or may be present."⁷ In other words, if the IAEA suspects that nuclear fuel or centrifuges are being held in military installations, they can insist on inspections.

Regarding the second issue - interviews with (or "interrogation" of) nuclear scientists, again there is no explicit mention in the NPT (or the additional protocol). Over the last few days this has become a very controversial issue in Iran - a number of Iranian nuclear scientists have been assassinated with the help of the Israeli Mossad. According to Patrick Cockburn, writing in *The Independent*,

A well-sourced and convincing investigation last year by NBC News in the US concluded that "deadly attacks on Iranian nuclear scientists are being carried out by an Iranian dissident group that is financed, trained and armed by Israel's secret service". It cites two senior Obama administration officials as confirming that the MEK is responsible for the killings, but denying any US involvement.⁸

However, inside Iran, the assumption is that Mossad could not have participated in the assassinations without US involvement. Under such circumstances the idea that Iranian nuclear scientists can be identified and interviewed/interrogated by agency inspectors will be unacceptable to most Iranians, irrespective of their position on the Iranian clerical regime.

Khamenei's comments have also sparked bitter arguments between the supporters and opponents of a nuclear deal in the Iranian majles (Islamic parliament), with some MPs calling Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Zarif, a traitor. In defending the deal Zarif claimed that the issue of interviews was unrelated to nuclear talks between Iran and the 5+1 group. He added that the previous government under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad created a

apparent hard line on inspections/interrogations - "we will not surrender national sovereignty" - are desperate comments of a deluded leader, using the rhetoric of the 1970s. At the end of the day Iran has accepted most of the conditions imposed by the P5+1 because of the disastrous economic consequences of crippling sanctions imposed by the US and the United Nations.

For all the claims of a multi-polar world, the US remains the hegemon power and it can enforce policies, including punitive penalties against banks, companies and institutions which try to bypass sanctions against Iran. Of course, some countries in less strategic areas of the world have managed to resist US dictat for a short time, but in those cases the respective governments enjoyed a level of popular support. What Khamenei fails to realise is that he presides over one of the most hated, corrupt regimes of this planet - a country where an overwhelming majority of the population abhors his rule, where the gap between rich and poor is worse than most developing countries, where the regime's survival depends to a large extent on the illusions created by the 'reformist' (pro-western) factions of the regime. Such a regime has no alternative but to "surrender national sovereignty" as soon as it faces threats from the United States.

If the Syrian dictator is overthrown and Islamic State succeeds in maintaining control of a large part of Iraq, inspections and the interrogation of Iranian scientists by IAEA officials will be the least of Khamenei's problems ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.lobelog.com/israeli-defense-minister-invokes-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-in-response-to-iran-question.
2. www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/14/annex-us-gulf-cooperation-council-camp-david-joint-statement.
3. www.empirelayer.org/2015/05/point-by-point-analysis-of-declassified.html.
4. http://levantreport.com/2015/05/26/guest-analysis-by-robert-barsocchini-a-critical-examination-of-the-dia-document-on-dynamics-of-syrian-conflict.
5. mwww.dw.de/us-defense-secretary-says-iraqi-forces-lacked-will-to-fight-is-in-ramadi/a-18473778.
6. www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4661052,00.html.
7. www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/magazines/bulletin/bull48-2/48203494955.pdf.
8. www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/just-who-has-been-killing-irans-nuclear-scientists-8861232.html.
9. www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=246951.



precedent by allowing such interviews to take place.⁹

Khamenei's comments last week and his

Willing to fight

ECONOMICS

Misreaders and misleaders

With ideas of paying everyone an unconditional basic income gaining some credence on the left, Chris Gray looks at the inter-war social credit movement

As Dr Samuel Johnson observed, the prospect of imminent death concentrates the mind wonderfully, so it is hardly surprising that a renewed plunge into crisis on the part of capitalism stimulates all sorts of speculation about how to get ourselves out of the mess. So it was last time round in the period between the first and second world wars (1919-39). Then one of the fashionable economic saviours whose ideas made the rounds was a certain Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952), generally known from his military rank as Major Douglas. Douglas was the principal instigator of a movement that became known as social credit.

Born in Stockport, Douglas studied at Cambridge, becoming chief engineer for the Westinghouse Electric Company and subsequently assistant superintendent at the Royal Aircraft Works at Farnborough. He served as a major in the Royal Flying Corps in World War I and began writing in 1917. His first book, *Economic democracy*, was published in 1920. He went on to found a weekly journal entitled *The Social Creditor*, and his social credit movement started to gain adherents in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In particular his ideas were taken up in Alberta, with whose political leader, William Aberhart, he had a somewhat stormy relationship. Aberhart showed an annoying tendency to go his own way - a trend also exhibited by his administrative successors, who, though formally aligned with social credit, do not seem to have implemented Douglas's basic ideas. On top of all that, Douglas, who died in 1952, evinced a strong anti-Jewish bias. Janine Stingel writes:

Douglas devoted his career to speaking and writing about social credit's economic and political theories, which were predicated on the paranoid assumption that an international financial Jewish conspiracy controlled the world's economic and political systems. He disseminated these ideas in a number of books and pamphlets, which the Canadian social credit movement imported and sold.¹

There does not seem a logical theoretical connection between the social credit viewpoint of Douglas and this anti-Jewish stance, but there was definitely a connection between them in practice.

We shall return to the topic of Douglas's conception of an international conspiracy below. It is worth asking at this point, though, whether an examination of his views is worthwhile, given such a stance. What invites consideration of Douglas as a political economist, however, is the estimate of him that John Maynard Keynes gives in *The general theory of employment, interest and money*. Here is what Keynes had to say:

Since the [1914-18] war there has been a spate of heretical theories of underconsumption, of which those of Major Douglas are the most famous. The strength of Major Douglas's advocacy has, of course, largely depended on orthodoxy having no valid reply to much of his destructive criticism. On the other hand, the detail of his diagnosis - in particular the so-called A+B theorem - includes much mere mystification ...

Major Douglas is entitled to claim, as against some of his orthodox adversaries, that he at

least has not been wholly oblivious of the outstanding problem of our economic system. Yet he has scarcely established an equal claim to rank - a private, perhaps, but not a major in the brave army of heretics - with Mandeville, Malthus, Gesell and Hobson, who, following their intuitions, have preferred to see the truth obscurely and imperfectly rather than to maintain error, reached indeed with clearness and consistency and by easy logic, but on hypotheses inappropriate to the facts.²

A+B theorem

Douglas distinguishes between payments made by firms to individual beneficiaries thereof and payments made to institutions in order for production to take place. In *Credit-power and democracy* he writes:

A factory or other productive organisation ... may be regarded, on the one hand, as a device for the distribution of purchasing-power to individuals through the media of wages, salaries and dividends; and, on the other hand, as a manufactory of prices - financial values. From this standpoint its payments may be divided into two groups:

Group A - all payments made to individuals (wages, salaries and dividends).

Group B - all payments made to other organisations (raw materials, bank charges and other external costs) ... additional purchasing power [since A will not purchase A+B] is provided by loan credit (bank overdrafts) or export credit.³

In the words of Janine Stingel,

The essence of the A+B theorem was that, since all payments made to individuals (wages, salaries, and dividends - A) and all payments made to other organisations (raw materials, bank charges and other external costs - B) go into prices, the rate of flow of prices cannot be less than A plus B. But the rate of flow of purchasing power to individuals is represented by A only, and obviously A will not purchase A plus B. Hence [!] the necessity to create money to distribute as social credit dividends to consumers to cover B, or as subsidies to producers to permit them to fix prices at A.⁴

Interestingly, the Dean of Canterbury, the very reverend Hewlett Johnson, who went on to become an apologist for Stalin, was a supporter of social credit in the 1930s and wrote a little pamphlet outlining it entitled *Social credit and the war on poverty* (London 1935). He gives a very succinct summary, pointing out that the ostensible deficiency of purchasing power is taken care of by bank loans and foreign trade.

However, the whole A+B theorem is thoroughly questionable, depending in part as it does on the definition of "dividends". "Dividends" may mean distributed or potentially distributable profits, but in any case not all profit need be distributed: some monies may be retained - indeed must be retained in order to restart the production process. There is in fact no essential difference between the two groups of payments, as critics were not slow to point out.

The theorem has the merit of calling attention to the various payments made by the enterprise, but any one of the relevant beneficiaries or organisations may decide not to purchase - in which



Major Clifford Hugh Douglas

case we have a break in the cycle, liable to cause the emergence of a sub-optimal equilibrium. Hence the major misunderstands and obfuscates.

It is important to note, however, that for Douglas the problem is not lack of overall purchasing power, but its (mal) distribution. As Frances Hutchinson explains,

Sufficient purchasing power exists in the system. The problem lies with the impact of seemingly neutral accounting mechanisms upon policy formation. By issuing financial credit, banks create a claim upon future production ... The net result is that the cost of living is constantly rising ...⁵

However, the theorem does have one positive feature:

The A+B theorem breaks with neoclassical convention in observing that markets do not clear during each act of circulation, and that money does not act purely as a numeraire. In describing a dynamic economy in which real - ie, disequilibrium - prices operate, Douglas equates more closely to reality than does neoclassical theory.⁶

It has to be said, though, that Keynes does the job far better in *The general theory of employment, interest and money*.

National dividend

Perhaps the most attractive feature of Douglas's theory is his notion of a "national dividend". As Hutchinson explains,⁷ this was envisaged as a payment to every adult man or woman as an individual - ie, the payment would not be made to households, but to their members. Douglas gives a brief indication of how this might work in the 1933 third edition of *Social credit*, which contains a 'Draft social credit scheme for Scotland'. Sequestration of one percent of all capital assets would produce a dividend for everyone "of Scottish birth and approved length of

conspiracy. In his 1933 edition of *Social credit* Douglas refers to the infamous *Protocols of the elders of Zion* (pp146-47) without stating that they were a forgery emanating from the Russian tsarist secret police. The 1933 book also contains the following passage:

... countries such as pre-war Germany and post-war Russia, which exhibit the logical consequences of unchecked collectivism, have done so under the direct influence of Jewish leaders. Of the Jews themselves, it may be said that they exhibit the race-consciousness idea to an extent unapproached elsewhere, and it is fair to say that their success in many walks of life is primarily due to their adaptation to an environment which has been moulded in conformity with their own ideal. This is as far as it seems useful to go, and there may be a great deal to be said on the other side.

It has not yet, I think, been said in such a way as to dispose of the suggestion, which need not necessarily be an offensive suggestion, that the Jews are the protagonists of collectivism in all its forms, whether it is camouflaged under the name of socialism, Fabianism or 'big business', and that the opponents of collectivism must look to the Jews for an answer to the indictment of the theory itself. It should in any case be emphasised that it is the Jews as a group, and not as individuals, who are on trial, and that the remedy, if one is required, is to break up the group activity.¹⁰

Given the international context of the time, these words have a somewhat ominous ring. However, some qualifying remarks concerning such a stance and the social credit movement's attitude need making. As Janine Stingel notes:

Social credit's anti-Semitism was strictly rhetorical and ideological. At no time was the movement anti-Semitic in the Third Reichian sense of officially adopting and transforming that ideology into a policy of discrimination, then executing the policy by a system of aggression.¹¹

Aberhart appeared at least partly willing to subscribe to the idea of a possible Jewish financial conspiracy, while at the same time denouncing the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a forgery. His successor, Ernest Manning, went on to repudiate the social credit movement's anti-Jewish wing. Meanwhile a Canadian Jew called Louis Rosenberg did his best to counter the stream of propaganda in favour of the idea that international finance was a plot by German Jewish bankers:

He cited statistics showing that German Jews had never formed more than three percent of the world Jewish population; that in 1925 only 3.3% of all persons in Germany who engaged in banking and stockbroking were Jewish; that there was not a single Jew on the board of directors of the Bank of England; that there were only three Jews among the 150 directors of the 'big five' banks in Great Britain ...; that of the 420 directors of the 19 member-banks of the New York Clearing House, only 30 were Jews ...; that there were no Jewish directors on the boards of any of the larger banks ...; and finally that there was not a single Jew on the board of directors of any chartered bank, trust company or mortgage company, or

residence", payable monthly, except where an individual's net income is greater than four times the dividend. Payment would be free of tax. The largesse is not free of all obligation, however:

For a period of five years after the institution of this scheme, failure on the part of any individual to accept employment in whatever trade, business or vocation he was classified in the last census, under conditions recognised as suitable to that employment (unless exempted on a medical certificate), will render such individual liable to suspension of benefit in respect of the national dividend.⁸

This is all very laudable, even if it may seem unreasonable to ostensibly confine individuals to re-employment in their previous "trade, business or vocation" - maybe this is just a drafting oversight. We should perhaps also note the criticism voiced by Earle Davis on Ezra Pound, to the effect that calculation of the national dividend would require an extended army of bureaucrats.

As mentioned above, Douglas's ideas were taken up in the mid-1930s by William Aberhart and his followers in Alberta, Canada. Aberhart promised \$25 a month to every adult Albertan⁹ and called in Douglas as economic advisor. Unfortunately the pair were up against a stacked deck: the province was deeply in debt, but was restricted in its ability to create funds by the British North America Act of 1867 (constitution of Canada), and Aberhart's attempt to get round this in his Credit of Alberta Regulation Act was declared unconstitutional. The Albertan social credit administration lingered on until 1971, but the provincials never got their promised \$25 a month.

Anti-Semitism

The major also managed to combine his advocacy of economic reform with denunciation of an ostensible international Jewish financial

railway company in Canada.¹²

Unfortunately the *Western Producer* newspaper in Alberta, to which Rosenberg communicated these facts, refused to publish his letter. This paper supported the social credit cause.

All in all, it is clear that social credit did not logically need to be anti-Jewish; but it seems we have a common factor in both cases: ie, an inability to think straight.

Ezra Pound

Ezra Pound (1885-1972) was also a supporter of Douglas and of social credit, although he also had some good words for Silvio Gesell.¹³ A link between Douglas and Pound is provided by the guild socialist, AR Orage (1873-1934). As Davis observes,

About 1918 Douglas converted Orage and many of his fellow national guildsmen to his new principles of economic reform. This is when Pound joined too. In England Orage attempted to make social credit the motivating force in the British Labour Party, but was defeated by the Fabians and the organisers, who were mainly interested in higher wages and a greater share of the profits of production.¹⁴

Pound's economic theories are set out in several places, not least in his extraordinary poetical oeuvre known as the *Cantos*. Way back in 1961 a certain Malcolm Cowley summarised the message of these in prose form as follows:

Western civilisation is at the mercy of an international conspiracy of bankers, or, as he calls them, usurers. Wars are caused by this 'autocracy' in order to run nations into debt and create opportunities for manipulating the currency.

The worst of the usurers are Jews, especially a few big Jews conducting a 'vendetta on the *goyim*'. Usury cheapens art, falsifies history and reduces literature to lying journalism.

The autocracy could be abolished by a simple reform of the currency: namely, the issuance of stamped and dated script based on the goods available for consumption. Such a reform would have to be initiated by a benevolent despot on [of?] the order of Mussolini or the best Chinese emperors. Confucius laid down the lines of a good society.

American culture, great in the days of John Adams and Jefferson, declined after 1830 and perished in the civil war, also caused by bankers. The United States were sold to the Rothschilds in 1863.¹⁵

This somewhat lurid summary seems more or less accurate, although it is interesting to compare it with Davis's account, which runs:

His reform programme is based on his belief that it is the business of the state to insure and protect business prosperity, to supply intelligent leadership in economic matters, to regulate just prices and sufficient profits, to stimulate freedom in production and fair dealing in the market, and to check usury and other forms of special privilege which interferes with the circulation of the money needed for buying and selling.

The government of any nation has the power to stop depressions and to promote prosperity; it must be willing to use that power. If business is unable to take labour into partnership or is unable to employ everyone, the government must stimulate business or even fill the gap. Enough money and credit must be made available and not borrowed at interest from private banking institutions. He wanted an ideal New Deal.¹⁶

Other sources for Pound's version

of political economy are *ABC of economics*, his various money pamphlets such as *Social credit: an impact* (London 1935) plus his wartime radio broadcasts in Italy (on which see Davis *op cit*). There is also 'Jefferson and/or Mussolini'. It must be said that the *ABC of economics* contains very little of weight: almost the only passage worth noting is:

An economic system in which it is more profitable to make guns to blow men to pieces than to grow grain or make useful machinery is an outrage, and its supporters are enemies of the race.

2. The immediate problem is distribution.

3. National dividends are possible.¹⁷

Social credit: an impact is an altogether more substantial piece of writing.

Pound and Mussolini

From at least the early 30s, it appears, Pound was a supporter of Mussolini. As Davis puts it, "Mussolini drained the marshes - public works for public benefit - and, best of all, says Pound, he began effectively to control the banks."¹⁸ However (sticking with Davis), "Whatever Mussolini was doing about distribution, no-one has presented *concrete* evidence that he did anything about the monetary system which is different from what is done in other countries."¹⁹

Mussolini's regime was not initially notable for laws discriminating against Jews - these were introduced later, as he gravitated closer to Hitler. Nevertheless Ezra Pound does identify Jews as prominent in the 'autocracy':

He never says that only the Jews are usurious. Other creeds, races, or nations supply the Hamiltons, the Biddles, the Morgans, the Patersons, the Churchills, the evil kings and rulers of China, Italy, Europe - anyone can collect an imposing list, whether or not one agrees with Pound's estimates. But of them all Pound is most infuriated by the Rothschilds. The Rothschilds are obviously Jews.²⁰

As Malcolm Cowley underlined, for Pound there is a connection between international finance and the US civil war, and here the Rothschilds feature. In Canto 48, Pound writes:

... Bismarck
Blamed American civil war on the Jews
Particularly on the Rothschild
One of whom remarked to Disraeli
That nations were fools to pay rent for their credit

Pound does not explicitly endorse Bismarck here, but why bring his remark up if you just want to mention it without condemning it? Davis comments:

Any of us can say that the causes of the civil war were various, slavery remaining paramount. The economic difficulties which had root in the debts of the south, owed to northern financial firms, may have contributed to the tensions leading to strife. How much money was supplied by Rothschild agents ... can hardly be told for certain now. Many private firms made money out of the civil war; the Rothschilds presumably got a large share. We can easily see that Pound's position is extreme ...²¹

A bit further on in the poems we have Canto 52, which attributes a (spurious) remark to Benjamin Franklin:

Remarked Ben: better keep out the Jews

Or yr/ grandchildren will curse you Jews, real Jews, *chazims*, and *neschek*

Also super-*neschek* or the international racket

There next follow five lines which the publishers refused to print: Pound apparently insisted they be shown blacked out - and it appears these lines dealt with the Rothschilds.²²

Pound and Roosevelt

Davis writes:

It is important to note that Pound examined the American scene in a continuous series of articles printed in *The New English Weekly*, beginning September 1932, and continuing to June 6 1940. Between 1933 and 1937 he wrote a great deal about how the New Deal was coming along ... During this period he said many things about Roosevelt, not all of them derogatory. There are moments when he makes critical remarks about Hitler, where he denies anti-Semitism, where he praises America for positive acts like the bill restricting holding companies, even to the point of saying that the choice of Roosevelt over Landon was a great victory for the forces of good in our country.²³

Pound's views on Roosevelt are puzzling. It may be that he was critical of Roosevelt (as of Keynes) for not going far enough in the social credit direction.²⁴ However, as the 30s wore on, Pound moved further into the Axis camp:

As World War II loomed on the horizon, Pound's articles became more and more partisan and shrill. From saying that Hitler was owned by the great usurer, Thyssen, that he was a pathetic hysteric, he began to change his perspective, finding great forward steps in Germany, as well as Italy. He praises the Munich pact and Chamberlain, and he never falters in his support of Mussolini and Italian fascism. Roosevelt's economic measures after 1936 do not receive any support from Pound's articles, and he gives every indication of having lost all hope for the New Deal by 1939. His extremes eventually embarrassed his old British friends and the magazine which had sponsored him for years.²⁵

Pound and Marxism

Certain passages in *Social credit: an impact* have a bearing on Pound's view of Marx. He notes with approval

that "Gesell observed that Marx found no fault with money" (p8). This is a somewhat surprising statement, given that Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha programme* envisages economic arrangements that dispense with money as we use it, but there is a pronounced tendency among bourgeois commentators to ignore or play down this particular work. It should be remembered, of course, that Marx's early writings were not fully available to Gesell, but, even so ...

Despite this, Pound feels moved to state that: "Property has never done any harm, it is the devil capital, sheltering himself behind property, the lien on other men's services, that has played hell with the world."²⁶ In that case, why not call for the abolition of capital? Pound seems to have shrunk from this.

Pound is, on the whole, confused ... and confusing (and it is not just the Chinese characters splattered about the *Cantos* that work to this effect). Still, we can safely ignore the denunciations of "usura": Ezra Pound remains a great poet, nowhere more so than in the magnificent Canto 81, with its environmentalist slant ●

The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.

Pull down thy vanity, it is not man
Made courage, or made order, or made grace.

Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.

Learn of the green world what can be thy place

In scaled invention or true artistry.

Pull down thy vanity.
Paquin pull down!

The green casque has outdone your elegance.

Notes

1. J Stingel *Social discredit: anti-Semitism, social credit and the Jewish response* Montreal 2000, p196.
2. JM Keynes *The general theory of employment, interest and money* New York 1961, pp370-71.
3. C Douglas *Credit-power and democracy* London 1934, pp19-20.
4. J Stingel *op cit* p12.
5. F Hutchinson *The political economy of social credit and guild socialism* London 1997, p48.
6. *Ibid* p50.
7. *Ibid* p69.
8. C Douglas *Social credit* Montreal 1933, p211.
9. See J Stingel *op cit* p14.
10. C Douglas *Social credit* Montreal 1933, pp29-30.
11. J Stingel *op cit* p4.
12. *Ibid* p37.
13. See Earle Davis's invaluable *Vision fugitive: Ezra Pound and economics* Kansas 1968.
14. J Stingel *op cit* p106.
15. M Cowley, 'Pound reweighed' *The Reporter* March 2 1961 (quoted by E Davis *op cit* p13).
16. E Davis *op cit* p97.
17. E Pound *ABC of economics* New York 1935, p125.
18. E Davis *op cit* p131.
19. *Ibid* p131.
20. *Ibid* p173.
21. *Ibid* p179.
22. *Ibid* p126.
23. *Ibid* p188.
24. See *ibid* pp181-82 and p191.
25. pp188-89.
26. E Pound *Social credit: an impact* London 1935, p19.

Fighting fund

Finish the job

"I'm only too glad to get this cheque to you a bit early," writes DB, "to help give a small boost to May's fighting fund." A handy £60, thank you very much.

And it was very timely too, as it helped lift our income this week to £577 and takes our running total to £1,692. In other words, we need another £83 by May 31 - three days left to make our £1,750 target for the second consecutive month. Please make sure we get there.

More than helpful also were the standing orders from DT (£25), GT (£15), DS (£35), SS (£10), RC (£12) and JT (£75), plus the PayPal donations from AN (£20) and PM (£5). But pride of place this week

goes to TM, who last week walked into the *Weekly Worker* office to hand over a princely £320 in £20 notes! That will do nicely.

So now we need you to finish the job and add to those showing their appreciation for our paper's role in promoting Marxist, partyist unity. Please make sure your contribution gets to us in time by using PayPal or making a bank transfer. There again, if you happen to be coming our way with a wodge of £20 notes ... ●

Robbie Rix

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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

**Intersectionality
produces splits,
divisions and
irrationality**

The Goldsmiths ideology

The rightwing press campaign against Bahar Mustafa puts the parlous state of student politics under the spotlight, writes Paul Demarty

Let us begin with the formalities: Bahar Mustafa - whose energetic tenure as student diversity officer at Goldsmiths College is currently gathering so much national press attention after she tweeted 'Kill all white men' - should not lose her job; still less should she be prosecuted for inciting racial hatred, as sillier commentators demand.

Those laws, in fact, are profoundly anti-democratic and ought to be struck off the statute books. To put things clearly, if Mustafa was an open neo-Nazi, we would say the same thing. (Electing a neo-Nazi as your diversity officer would be bizarre, but perhaps an interesting conceptual art stunt of the sort for which Goldsmiths has become rightly famous.)

This is the minimum case possible in the defence of freedom of speech, of course, and little more can be offered in this instance. For, while Mustafa's ironic demand for the death of all white males has become a free speech issue, Mustafa herself is no stranger to political censorship, having motivated her student union to ban Socialist Workers Party members from campus - a cheerful general meeting ended with the local intersectionalist clique ritually burning leftwing literature outside. Some of that literature belonged to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, and it was AWL supporter Tom Harris who was called "white trash" in another eloquent missive from the official Goldsmiths diversity Twitter feed.

Marxists are often in the business of trying to work out when 'quantity has turned into quality' - when a series of small shifts tips over into a decisive transformation. In this instance, we are concerned as to whether we can now clearly say that the intersectionalists have lost the right to be described as left wing. After all, so much more intersectional energy is expended on *excluding* the traditional (they would say 'white, male') left and radical (they would say 'white', again) feminism, wherever they have any measure of petty bureaucratic authority, than attacking the traditionally identified opponents of the oppressed.

Mustafa's SWP ban is emblematic. If you are *actually* concerned about the safety of female students at Goldsmiths, the Socialist Worker Student Society is hardly going to be first on the 'to ban' list (the rugby club is typically a good place to start). This is because all the chatter about safety and inclusiveness is either delusional or deliberately mendacious - a way to gaslight discussions to the detriment of political opponents. Either you want to boot potential rivals of Bahar Mustafa off campus *or you are a rape apologist* - or a white supremacist, or whatever it is this week.

The closest analogue here is the behaviour of the *Antideutsche* and their inheritors in Germany - at this point more or less placemen for the Springer press and the labour bureaucracy, providing Marxisant cover for outrageous smears and



Bahar Mustafa: once on the left

cynical manoeuvres.

The emergence of such political trends - leftwing in origin, anti-left in current practice - is common enough: we could add, from the 1970s, the American Larouchites and the French *nouveaux philosophes*. Each of these trends is generated by unique circumstances, however - objective and subjective. On the objective side, we must note first of all that there are relatively few amenable breeding grounds for the intersectional bacillus: principally, social media and student unions.

We have dealt at length before with the relationship between social media and weapons-grade identity politics ('The internet in the epoch of decline', March 27 2014), and will not reprise beyond the bare minimum here - in essence, despite the apparent vastness and diversity of material available on the web, there is a strong tendency towards cliquery and groupthink. The internet, now that it is a mass phenomenon on a scale unimaginable anywhere 20 years ago, is a buyer's market for fellow feeling. Thus it is fertile territory for brittle ideologies like intersectionality, which resent all external challenges.

Education market

As things stand, Bahar is in trouble primarily over a Twitter post, but her antics are more generally situated within contemporary student politics, and thus are incomprehensible without

reference to the shifts happening within higher education as a whole. Those shifts, of course, are taking place under the rubric of what is called neoliberalism: universities are reinvented as pseudo-businesses, vice-chancellors as wannabe CEOs (with wannabe-CEO salaries) and courses of study as not-quite-commodities.

In this country, the decisive economic transformation is the introduction and ratcheting-up of tuition fees. Today, students are expected to take out loans of £9,000 per year for their courses, with living expenses on top of that. While it would be a vulgar economist indeed who believed that this change has succeeded in introducing anything like a *market* into British higher education, it nonetheless degrades campus politics for two main reasons.

First of all, the huge fees amplify an element of the relationship between student and university which had previously been subordinated, and even thought a little dirty in polite circles: students are *consumers* of educational *services* offered by the university 'firm'. Many commentators, especially those of a donnish and leftist persuasion, have bemoaned this consumerist attitude as an affront to the noble pursuit of knowledge, but it is difficult to blame freshers staring down the barrel of a £50,000 debt for wondering what's in it for them.

The central consequence is that students are less likely on *average* to

engage seriously in politics. Campus activism - of left and right - was always more common among arts and humanities cohorts, who have more spare time to read 'off piste', as well as to do political activity. A renewed focus on the 'bottom line' makes these financially unrewarding courses less attractive in the first place; and also renders those on other degrees less likely to risk costly failures by prioritising any extra-curricular activities unlikely to look good on a CV. Sharpening labour discipline among academics, meanwhile, threatens those very 'red professors' who would formerly slip students a volume of Marx or Bakunin.

Secondly, the pseudo-capitalist ethos of the modern university has a tendency to spread into every capillary of the campus. Many academics have lamented the transformation of the very buildings they work in - security gates popping up everywhere, every spare inch of space put out for hire for private conferences and so forth. The old leftwing tactic of taking a punt on a trestle table outside a freshers' fair becomes less rewarding, the more jealously guarded is the area around the entrance.

This tendency, of course, also affects the student unions themselves, whose activities are more and more hemmed in by boards of trustees and charity law. They, too, become reduced to service providers. Here, we rejoin the Goldsmiths intersectionalists.

Much ill-tempered rightwing newsprint has been dedicated to the apparent hypocrisy of Mustafa's banning of white people from anti-racist events, but we would perhaps do better to look at its even more apparent pointlessness. After all, black people are unlikely to be racist against themselves: are they really high-priority targets for anti-racist propaganda? One of these events, ironically, was a screening of a film called *Listen, white people* (from the next room maybe).

Intersectionality, not uniquely among the different strands of identity politics, thus elevates the self-organisation of the oppressed to the cardinal principle of political strategy; but in doing so it renders *concrete expressions* of such organisation profoundly useless. The manufactured outrage over 'BME only' signs at Goldsmiths meetings makes these gatherings sound rather more grand

than they are: if fact, they are social occasions for a brittle and incestuous clique, barely more political in the last analysis than the rugby team's hazing rituals.

The triumph of intersectionality in these circumstances cannot be explained, however, without reference to the traditional left's failures. Bahar Mustafa and her cronies were able to ban the SWP from Goldsmiths only because the SWP had already destroyed its own student organisation; no more than a handful of campus SWPers can have been effective. My spies tell me they did not even turn up to the crunch meeting - it fell to the AWL, Platypus and others to defend them.

The direct result of the SWP's implosion is a sharp reduction in absolute numbers of campus lefts, and the scattering of hundreds of comrades lacking any serious political education, many of whom have become foot soldiers for intersectionality. (Mustafa herself is not from an SWP background, but was a member of the defunct libertarian-communist Commune group - a detail that has somehow escaped the notice of her many rightwing critics, and which she is none too keen to advertise, now that she has changed her tune somewhat.)

We are dealing, then, not with the downfall of civilisation as we know it, as rightwingers would have it; nor with an unstoppable insurgency of the marginalised, as intersectionalists and their outliers would say. Rather, the Goldsmiths leaflet-burners and white-men-baiters are an illustration of defeat: the failure of the student movement of 2011 to create a new generation of left activists, a failure that can be blamed squarely on those on the left who seemed almost determined to piss their gains away.

Student politics is by no means over for good; any change in the political situation, however unfortunate, creates opportunities. The new regime in higher education has still to stabilise - we may expect further differentiation between top and not so good schools, greater inequality of status among their students and other grim phenomena, and equally expect them to mingle in unpredictable ways with students' political instincts. If anything effective is to come of a revival, however, the intersectionalists will have to be left behind ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

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