

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 339 - June 2023

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

Party Politics and the Labour Party

The Labour Party is the official opposition to the government. What exactly does this mean? How should socialists regard the Labour Party? Finding a satisfactory answer to these questions is not easy. To answer them we need to look at the kind of system (representative party political democracy) that the party system is embedded in. The British political parties evolved out of the civil war of the Seventeenth Century as two fluid but competing factions of the governing elites of the country. One of these was protective of the monarchy as the primary source of political power. The other supported the aristocratic oligarchy as the governing elite with a monarchy as a figurehead with limited powers. These parties were the Tories and the Whigs respectively. Although political alignments were never clear cut, and although there were Tory aristocrats and middle class Whigs, the basis of the political power of each was located in different positions within the ruling elites. Tories relied in particular on the lower aristocracy (gentry) and on those who felt oppressed by the aristocracy as the main basis for their support. During the early years of party politics, changes of government were not smooth and the outgoing administration was regarded as treasonous by the incoming one. The system took a long time to bed down as a form of peaceful transfer of power between competing factions.

These early parties were basically associations of clans (groupings of extended families) whose members populated both houses of parliament and exercised patronage over jobs and privileges nationally and locally. Until 1832 the proportion of the population with the vote was around 10% of adult males, nearly doubling after the Reform Act of that year. The Labour Party came to prominence when the electorate was enlarged in 1918 and included the working class male population. Liberals (formerly Whigs) who had represented working class constituencies gradually made way for Labour, especially in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Critically, they helped to 'domesticate' the Labour members into the ways of parliament and taught them what was acceptable behaviour and what the limits of political action could be. 'Clubbability' was enlisted as a way of making the new representatives feel part of the elite and thus distancing them from those whom they represented. Essentially the role of a parliamentary opposition is to slide into government without disruption and without disturbing the overall power structure of the society and the Labour Party was educated by the Liberal (formerly Whig) faction of the ruling elite to do just that. Labour learned this lesson well. At that time, both Liberals and Tories represented capitalist interests but had different views on social, national

and imperial questions and on how a capitalist economy should work. Working class power though continued to develop through the trade union movement from the 1930s to the 1970s. Instead of parliament, civil society in the form of the working class organised in trade unions, co-op societies and other institutions and their industrial and voting strength became the motor of working class politics for a couple of decades. This movement was transformed into an effective working class legislative and executive power for the brief period 1945 – 51, building on working class hegemony in the economy during the Second World War. The TGWU under Ernest Bevin was the main motor of this advance. For a brief period it looked as if there was an alternative elite in the making, developed from the working class rather than capitalists and aristocratic remnants. Those days have long gone. Apart from a few trade unionists like Ernest Bevin, Walter Citrine, and later in the 1970s, Jack Jones and Clive Jenkins, British trade unions never really saw themselves as a potential governing class and were much happier sticking to the subordinate role of restricting the power of management, rather than taking over the enterprises in which they worked or even running insurance or vocational education structures on

behalf of the working class.

There are four main elements to the Labour Party. The trade unions and co-op societies that are affiliated and financially support it. There is the mass individual membership. There is the central party administration and there is the Parliamentary Labour Party. Since the 1990s the Labour Party has gradually distanced itself from the trade unions and indeed from the traditional industrial working class, which itself shrank in number. It is no longer accurate to describe it as parliamentary representation of the trade union movement. The mass individual membership is no longer so clearly rooted in the traditional working class as it used to be. Many members belong to what Sahra Wagenknecht has called the ‘self-righteous’,¹ that is mainly middle class people with relatively secure and well paid jobs who are more interested in identity and lifestyle politics than they are with furthering the material and political interests of the working class. There is a divide, often unspoken but real enough, between those interested in class and those interested in identity politics. This is reflected in Starmer’s contortions, for example stating that 99.9% of women do not have a penis.² Such absurdities further alienate

1 <https://labouraffairs.com/2021/12/05/sahra-wagenknecht-the-self-righteous/>

2 <https://www.spiked-online.com/2023/04/04/no-keir-starmer-women-still-dont-have-penises/>

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ISSN 0953-3494

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Labour Affairs

Published by the Ernest Bevin Society
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Websites: <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>
and <https://labouraffairs.com/>

Subscription: £20 for one year (10 issues)

Distribution: Dave Fennell
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Green Lanes, London N16 9BT
33 Athol St., Belfast, BT12 4GX

working class voters while they smooth the ruffled feathers of the highly influential university educated party activists.

Turning to the party administration and the parliamentary party, we enter a world increasingly dominated by career politicians from a relatively narrow class background, increasingly detached from the people whom the party was founded to represent. A typical career trajectory for an aspiring Labour politician would closely resemble that of an aspiring Liberal or Tory. It would include higher education at an elite university, working in a think tank, then working as a political advisor to a senior politician before eventually landing a position as a parliamentary candidate or senior party apparatchik. As full-time politicians relatively detached from the trade unions and individual members Labour full-time politicians wield the real power within the party. Having a political elite need not be disastrous. Serious parties need talented and dedicated people able to devote a large part of their lives to politics. Effective working class politics would also need an effective elite of trade unionists, party officials and parliamentarians. But problems arise when the parliamentary party is seen as the only element of the party worthy of consideration and all its other elements are thought to be at its service, fit only for fundraising or envelope stuffing and canvassing at election times. Ruthless use of the rule book (or even ignoring it) can ensure that dissent is rooted out. The elite running the party

identify more with the broader elite running the Tories and the major institutions of capitalist society than they do with the people they nominally work for and represent.

We are now approaching a situation where the two parties converge on social composition, attitude and policies. This is similar to the Tory - Whig divide of the Nineteenth Century. There is no real division on important political issues and complete unanimity on following an imperialist foreign policy. This brings us to a fundamental question that will require further debate – is parliamentary democracy capable of containing substantial political differences between parties or is it a theatre set up to provide an appearance of real alternatives without actually doing so? The destruction of the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn suggests the latter. A mild social democrat, he was portrayed as a threat to the well-being of the British Constitution and dark hints were dropped by obscure military figures that extra-constitutional means might be necessary to ensure that he did not bring the then

Labour Party programme to fruition.³ If this is the case, then prospects for the advance of working class politics through the Labour Party are virtually non-existent. The Labour Party is an alternative ruling class party whose role is to provide a semblance of political dissent to the British public without the substance.

This analysis poses the uncomfortable question as to how substantial political change can take place within representative parliamentary democracy. This would be a problem for any party that sought to take the place of Labour, unless serious consideration is given as to how the constraints of the political system can be worked around.

³ There is also some evidence of two coup plots against Harold Wilson's governments, one in 1968 and another in 1974. Wilson was a serious political reforming social democrat, enough to worry some elements of the military and security services and those in the political elite who feared that he might do something radical.

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Analysis: local elections 2023

By the Workers Party of Britain, with permission

by Phil Bevin

Celebrating failure

Despite whatever Keir Starmer says, the local election results were a crushing disappointment for Labour, grinding any hopes of their forming a majority after the next election into dust. As I have argued previously, Labour's own working-out suggests that they need a swing of around 10 points to give them a rough 12–14-point lead for a majority of 1 at the next general election. Historically, opposition parties tend to do better in mid-term local election results, which are often used as an opportunity to protest against the Government, than they do in general elections. In general elections, people are more likely to revert to their traditional party of choice as fear of change and its consequences plays on their minds. As I have also pointed out in a previous piece, this is also evident in the period that Labour is taking as their model for success – the 1990s. In the 1995 local elections, Labour led the Tories by 22 points, in the 1996 14 points and they won with a 13-point lead in GE 1997 <https://www.patreon.com/AdifferentNarrative>

By contrast, Labour's lead was 5% in 2022 and 7% in 2023. The small decline in Tory support can probably be ascribed to Tory leadership turmoil, which saw the Prime Minister change three times in a matter of weeks, rather than a Labour surge. Why do I think this? Despite improving its lead over the Tories in the 2023 local elections, Labour's vote share did not improve from 2022, remaining at 35%. The fundamentals actually look pretty bleak for Labour; there's good reason to believe that 35% may be close to the upper limit of what

they are capable of achieving. Why? The Tories are likely to be in a stronger position than initially appears from last week's election results.

The tentative Tory revival

While I believe that real election results are a far better indicator of actual popular support for political parties than hypothetical polling, the truth is, comparing the Tories' levels of support from last year to their position this year is not comparing like for like. At last year's local elections, the Tories were led by Boris Johnson, who, we shouldn't forget, secured the Tories an 80-seat majority at general election 2019.

Although polling behind Labour, the results were actually fairly respectable for an incumbent government mid-term. From a purely electoral point of view, deposing Boris Johnson was a mistake for the Tories and the second coup against the legitimately elected Liz Truss also damaged the Tory brand. This, more than anything else, I believe negatively impacted upon Tory support, resulting in the fairly consistent 20-point notional polling leads Labour was enjoying over the Conservatives following Rishi Sunak's "election" as Prime Minister.

Rather than comparing Rishi Sunak's performance to that of Boris Johnson, to understand the full capability of the Tories under their current leader, we are better served by comparing Rishi Sunak's position now, compared to what it was previously.

When analysing political polls, the general trend tells us more than headline voting intention figures,

and, from this perspective, Sunak is heading in the right direction, despite significant economic turmoil that would be benefitting the opposition were it more popular and indeed competent.

For example, according to Yougov, since he assumed office perceptions of Rishi Sunak's competence ratings have increased to their highest level since he became PM (41%).

Although he is regarded as untrustworthy (he is a politician, after all), Sunak's "trustworthiness" rating is at 24% (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-rishi-sunak-trustworthy>), its highest yet. Similar trends are visible in other metrics, such as strength (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-rishi-sunak-strong-or-weak>), decisiveness (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-rishi-sunak-decisive>) and likeability (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-rishi-sunak-likeable>).

This contrasts with Starmer's ratings, which are on a downward trend. At the height of his popularity, Starmer's competence rating was 45% (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-keir-starmer-incompetent>). It is now 33%. At its height, Starmer's trustworthiness was 35% but is now 33% (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-keir-starmer-trustworthy>). In terms of likeability, Starmer is also at 33%, down from a previous height of 36% (<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-keir-starmer-likeable>).

The trend is bad news for Starmer, as it suggests that he peaked in popularity some time ago. By contrast, Rishi Sunak's

ratings are on the up, despite his presiding over a serious economic crisis. Although repeating Thursday's result would see Labour emerge as the largest party in a hung parliament (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-65475817>), present trends in leadership ratings – and indeed general election voting intention polls – suggest that the Tories are narrowing the gap. This means that Labour is on course to do worse next year, losing the general election unless it undergoes a major course correction, which is not going to happen, or Tory support collapses completely, which, though more likely, is still improbable.

Starmer's Stalling Strategy

Many people on the “left”, see Starmer's war against Labour socialists as vindictive and mean spirited. However, it is also strategic. As *Labour Affairs* incisively pointed out recently:

“Starmer is targeting seats that have rarely voted Labour. Starmer is attempting to make Labour attractive to voters who would never have considered voting Labour.

To be successful in doing this, Starmer will jettison almost all the radical policies on which he fought the Labour leadership election. To win these seats, Starmer is prepared to commit Labour to a pro-market, pro-business and anti-trade union agenda on the domestic side.”

Starmer's war against the left is therefore a means of demonstrating to Conservative voters the seriousness and finality of the party's change in direction. He hopes that Tory voters unhappy with their Party's record in Government will shift to Labour. Partially, this is borne out of necessity. Thanks to the Brexit-driven collapse of 2019 – for which Starmer is himself chiefly

responsible – to achieve electoral success and the 10 percent swing it needs, Labour must win both the “red wall” seats in 2019 and seats that traditionally voted Tory.

Nevertheless, it is a poor strategy rooted in the narrow mindedness of the political establishment, which is overly focused on so called swing voters. That Labour and the Tories are competing for the same votes and therefore now sound so similar, means that there is now more space for other parties to break through on both their left and right flanks.

This has been demonstrated to an extent in the May 2023 local elections, with purged former Labour councillors romping home to victory in the ward of Garston in Liverpool (<https://skwawkbox.org/2023/05/05/breaking-gorst-williams-see-off-labour-in-garston/>). Similarly, Thursday saw strong support for the Greens in some areas, with former Labour Councillor Jo Bird succeeding in retaining her seat after being hounded out of the Party over false allegations of antisemitism (<https://www.liverpoolworld.uk/news/wirral-local-election-results-2023-labour-conservative-4131451>).

In certain areas of usually robust Labour allegiance, where independents have a strong record and have fought good campaigns, we could be seeing a sclerosis of Labour Party support. It would be wrong to overplay these results but their advance is likely being blunted by their own strategy, to the point that they are limiting their potential supporter base to a coalition that is too small to win them a general election.

Labour's narrow focus on Tory voters and their consequent refusal to reach out to non-voters, whose apathy is driven by a lack of interest in a system that has failed them, also carries risk, as the Worker's Party demonstrated in the 2022 local elections.

In 2022, the Workers' Party targeted Birmingham's Bordesley and Highgate Ward, and achieved close to 15% of the vote after motivating previous non-voters and disenchanted Labour supporters (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/370716/bordesley_and_highgate_ward_results). Labour's candidate, lost votes on the previous 2018 local election, with their count reduced to 925 from 1176 (https://www.wikiwand.com/en/2018_Birmingham_City_Council_election#Bordesley_&_Highgate).

Starmer's stalling advance demonstrates the problem at the core of his own strategy. To construct his bridge between Labour and Tory voters, Starmer has removed the core structures of support that underpin his party's base, weakening it. In certain areas, with strong targeted campaigns from genuinely socialist parties appealing to disaffected Labour supporters and historic non-voters, that base will collapse.

Anger on the left

Moreover, Starmer's purges and war against the left has not simply left formerly core Labour supporters apathetic: many are hostile and willing to campaign to bring the party down in order to make room for a genuine movement of working-class support. The decision by left Labour MPs to back Starmer when he might still have been removed – most notably in 2021's Batley & Spen parliamentary By-election, when George Galloway's campaign almost brought Starmer down – means that former supporters of the Labour left feel betrayed. The trust is gone, and ever fewer socialists feel sympathetic to a party that so viciously turned on them.

My view is that Starmer's strategy has left Labour's flanks vulnerable to a pincer movement,

if, on the right, the modest Tory resurgence continues and, on the left, due to socialists' increasing recognition that Labour isn't and never really was a genuine vehicle for meaningful progressive change.

This is bad news for Labour but good news for real socialists who realises that the Labour Party is the main enemy right now and must die for the working class to thrive. However, to make use of our opportunities, we must target our relatively small resources strategically and strike at key points where we are strong and Labour is weak. In so doing we will progress and grow in strength over time. A coordinated alliance of small socialist parties and independents could punch above its weight if its candidates stand only in areas that play to their strengths. Conversely, there is little point of standing everywhere and achieving nothing meaningful anywhere.

Germans to further liberalize immigration

By Eamon Dyas

GAZA STILLS

They line up for the camera,
the remainder of families,
still in life as in death,
they don't complain,
make no requests,
they will get nothing
and have nothing
but checkpoints,
high walls,
razor wire,
Israeli fighter jets
who strike at their children,
their mothers,
their fathers,
their grandparents,
their phones are listened to,
their faces are in a data bank,
and now the camera
of a foreign magazine.
pries into their soul,
the adults are still,
the children are still.
the camera sees nothing
but a quiet resistance,
there is no crying
of the young,
no wailing
of adults
no facial expressions,
no grief
no smiles,
it's a calm pool
where the water doesn't ripple.
A voice enquires of their losses,
but there are no losses,
their dead are still with them,
in their hearts and in their minds,
in Palestine.
Wilson John Haire. 21st May 2023.

The New Imperialism that is adding the exploitation of Third World Human Resources to the traditional exploitation of Material Resources.

The Labour Minister says that Germany is looking to African countries to fill its skills shortage. Just like the 19th century rush to Africa Germany has been late to this particular imperialism. Modern imperial exploitation of Human Resources began some time ago in the medical profession when doctors and nurses were enticed from their homes in Africa and Asia to fill the shortages in our hospitals. This happened in the U.K. after the war when Irish and West Indian doctors and nurses failed to keep up with demand.

Then in Europe in the last couple of decades liberal ideology conveniently facilitated immigration from countries destabilised by US-instigated wars in order to fill more general labour shortages.

If this more recent effort by the German Labour Minister is an indication of anything, we now see western leaders proactively touring the young labour markets of African countries to take away the labour power of their youth through the inducement of the previous equivalent to the 19th century baubles - the western life style.

In Germany it seems that the

country - once renowned for its vocational training - has decided that it's now cheaper to look to Africa for its skilled workforce rather than continue to train their own workers in Germany. What can possibly go wrong?

It should also be said that this coincides with the more fundamental failure of western liberalism - the failure to sustain a birth rate capable of replenishing the death rate despite the longer life expectancy that it claims as one of its great victories.

"Germany's economic daily Handelsblatt reported in April, however, that the number of youths in the country who lack relevant professional skills, including a lack in vocational training, has surpassed 2.5 million. As many as 17% of those aged between 20 and 34 are unskilled, the paper said, citing a government report.

"Heil also admitted that around 1.6 million people aged between 20 and 30 have no vocational qualification and *"too often"* end up *"in long-term unemployment."*" –

From \RT (Accessible here: <https://thepressunited.com/updates/germany-to-further-liberalize-immigration/>)

From FT: <https://www.ft.com/content/e859c90c-1ac4-4bf4-9660-b3a0882c2305>

Minimum Service Bill debate in the House of Commons

22nd May 2023

[The Government moved against the amendments voted by the Lords. See reproduced below a selection of extracts of contributions by Labour, LD and SNP members; note how some are sceptical of Angela Rayner's promise that Labour will repeal this Bill when in power.]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Kevin Hollinrake)

I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker

With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Lords amendment 2, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 4, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 5, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 6, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 7, and Government motion to disagree.

[John McDonnell referred to the case of air traffic controllers:]

The Lords passed an extremely sensible amendment asking the Government simply to consult before they go further with this legislation. To give an example of why consultation is needed in my constituency, there is no such thing as a *minimum service* for air traffic controllers. In effect, that means that the Government are barring air traffic controllers from ever taking industrial action. Those sorts of consultations need to take place before the Government, as others have said, inflame the industrial relations climate in this country.

[Angela Rayner promised that a Labour Government would repeal the Bill if passed:]

Let me be clear: Labour Members oppose this Bill in its entirety, and we stand ready to repeal it when in government.

Angela Rayner

Let me start by drawing the attention of the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Interests,

which reflects the fact that I am a proud trade unionist, and have been for a very long time. As the Minister outlined, today we return to the Conservatives' sacking nurses Bill because the other place has reached the same conclusion as us: this Bill is as unworkable as it is unnecessary. It is not just an almighty, anti-democratic attack on working people, but a threadbare Bill that does not stand up to a shred of scrutiny. Today we consider a number of Lords amendments.

Let me be clear: Labour Members oppose this Bill in its entirety, and we stand ready to repeal it when in government. That said, we thank Members of all parties in the other place who made the thoughtful and sensible amendments that we are considering tonight. They do not solve all of the very long list of issues with this legislation, but they take the sting out of its worst elements to a significant extent. For that reason, Labour Members will reject all attempts by the Government to remove the amendments.

This evening, we will hear a raft of excuses for the Bill, and for why we cannot uphold the Lords amendments. We will hear that the Bill is about protecting public safety—well, I don't know; there are not many Government Members here and willing to defend it. We will hear that Government Members all want minimum service levels all the time, but it is Tory Ministers who are failing to provide the minimum service levels that we need in our public services.

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that nurses are taking action in order to protect patients? We hear continually about cases in which there are only two nurses on a night shift, trying to manage a ward of 30 patients. Is that not evidence that nurses are taking action because they have been pushed to the brink? Are they not doing the right thing by holding the Government to account through their actions?

Angela Rayner

I absolutely agree. I worked alongside my hon. Friend on workers' rights for many years. I was a care worker for many years, and had to take industrial action once. People, especially in public service, do not do that lightly. The nurses' union took its first ever industrial action recently. We have seen an unprecedented amount of strike action, and there is an absolute crisis in vacancy numbers in our public services because of this Government. The real risk and danger to public services at the moment is from this Conservative Government. After 13 years in office, they have really run down our public services, and they are not listening to the people who are trying to deliver those services.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Does the right hon. Member agree that one of the most frustrating things about the Bill, which appears to be totally ineffective, is that the minimum service levels that it sets out are very often not met in normal working times?

Angela Rayner

The hon. Member makes a crucial point, which I was trying to make to the Minister: on non-strike days, minimum service levels do not apply at the moment. Many of the people providing our public services are absolutely screaming at the Government, "We need more people working in those services. We are having record vacancies. We are having people leave the profession because of the mismanagement by this Conservative Government." Take our fire and rescue services: how does the closure of 80 fire stations across the UK keep the public and our brave firefighters safe? Take our precious NHS: how does having 7.3 million patients left on waiting lists keep people safe? And take our overstretched schools: how do record teacher vacancies keep our children safe?

Janet Daby Labour Lewisham East

Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Regulatory Policy Committee's opinion, published on 21 February, red-rated the Government's impact

assessment for the Bill as “not fit for purpose”? Does she agree that, in fact, it is the Government who are not fit to govern?

Angela Rayner

I absolutely agree. How will threatening key workers with the sack in the middle of an unprecedented recruitment and retention crisis do anything to provide the level of services that the public deserve?

We will also hear tonight that the Bill brings us into line with international standards, but what does the Minister have to say to the ILO’s director general who slammed down the Bill in January? The Minister did not effectively answer the questions that were put to him during his opening statement. What does he say to President Biden’s labour Secretary, who also raised concerns?

We are going to hear that the Bill is the only way to bring strikes to a close. We are now in May and there is no end in sight to the current wave of industrial action, harming the public, small businesses and, not to mention, the workers who lose a day’s pay. Might I give the Minister some friendly advice? Strikes are ended by getting round the table, not by insulting the very workers who kept the country going during the depths of the pandemic.

The Bill is one of the most sinister attacks on working people I have seen, and I speak as a trade unionist, an employer and a Member of this House. It gives Ministers the power to threaten every nurse, firefighter, health worker, rail worker or paramedic with the sack. Other Government Members wanted even more people to be in scope. I do not think they want anybody anywhere to have trade union rights in this country. This is being done at their whim. They have literally gone from clapping nurses to sacking nurses.

In the words of my noble Friend Baroness O’Grady, Lords amendment 4 is about

“the individual freedoms, dignity and livelihoods of workers.”— [Official Report, House of Lords, 26 April 2023; Vol. 829, c. 1242.]

Labour is proud to support that amendment. We ask any Government

Member—there are not many of them here—who believes in the right to protection from unfair dismissal to vote with us tonight.

We also stand by the provision in Lords amendment 4 to require employers to serve work notices and to prove that individuals have received them. The Government’s proposal not only threatens workers, but burdens employers, including our overstretched public services and small businesses. That only goes to show the Bill’s complete unworkability and proves the point of all employers who have condemned it.

The Bill also represents an almighty attack on trade unions—unions made up of ordinary working men and women. We are all grown up enough to acknowledge the integral role they play in our economy and our democracy. I think we can all agree that attempts to attack their ability to represent their members is morally, economically and democratically wrong. In its original form, the Bill would require them to take “reasonable steps” to ensure compliance work with notices, without any

Toggle showing location of Column 83

clarity on what that means. The Government have effectively conceded the flaws in their drafting of the Bill in their concession on Lords amendment 3. That is welcome, but not enough. The Minister asks us to vote tonight for vague and unclear wording that gives us no idea of what they actually require trade unions to do. So we will vote to keep Lords amendment 5 and by extension, Lords amendments 6 and 7.

[...]

Angela Rayner...

This is one of the worst pieces of legislation in modern times, and looking over the last 13 years, that says a lot. But it is not just Labour Members who think that. The Bill has been widely and routinely condemned by: the Regulatory Policy Committee; the Equality and Human Rights Commission; the Joint Committee on Human Rights; NHS providers; the rail industry; the Chartered Institute

of Personnel and Development; the CEO of the confederation of recruitment companies; the CEO of the NHS Confederation; President Biden’s labour Secretary; the ILO; all UK trade unions; the TUC; the Welsh and Scottish Governments; the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg); the right hon. Member for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland); the Transport Secretary; the Education Secretary—what a shambles! If it was not so serious, it would be a joke. This is from a Government who are desperately trying to distract from the 13 years of their own failings and who are playing politics with key workers’ lives.

...

Alan Brown (SNP) replied to Angela Rayner’s promise to repeal the legislation:

I also welcome the commitment from Labour to repeal this legislation if it is in Government, but I would point out that there have already been a number of Labour U-turns recently, and now we have heard the mantra that Labour is not going to be in power to do the job of repealing nasty Tory legislation, so there is a concern that Labour will not do what its representatives have promised at the Dispatch Box.

David Linden SNP

[Referred to concerns that Labour will not repeal the Bill when in office]:

I am just struck, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), by the quote from the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), who said:

“We can’t come into office, picking through all the conservative legislation and repealing it... It would take up so much parliamentary time. We need a positive agenda.”

...

Perhaps when the Labour Front Bencher sums up at the conclusion of the debate, they will outline exactly how quickly this Bill will be repealed from the statute book, as well as anti-trade union legislation more generally.

Sam Tarry Labour Ilford South

[The MP who was dismissed from the front bench for standing on a picket line, makes a clear case]:

In its original form, this Bill represented what many call a sackers charter, because it was a mishmash of unworkable draconian assault on workers' rights. I would say it is one of the biggest setbacks for workers' rights in generations. If it passes, it will shackle trade unions, ordinary workers and a whole list of people struggling for fair wages in so many sectors of our economy. It will place unacceptable restrictions on the fundamental right for workers to withdraw their labour, and to defend their and their colleagues' pay, which at the moment mostly seems to mean defending themselves from the Government's inability to offer fair pay rises in so much of our public sector.

Worst of all, particularly in a sector such as the railways, the Bill will worsen industrial relations, create more delays on rail and create a worse situation for passengers. It will worsen industrial relations overall. I note that one union did successfully get a decent pay rise, because the Government clearly could not stomach the fight with it. It was our beloved firefighters who did actually get a decent raise out of this Government.

This Bill is anti-democratic because it gives the Secretary of State enormous power to define and introduce minimum service requirements. It is draconian because, in its original form, workers could be sacked for participating in industrial action supported through their own democratic processes. By the way, with trade unions facing enormous damages, we should bear in mind that they are the biggest voluntary organisation movement in this country, with more than 6 million people, and the majority of the reps do not get a single penny for the trade union work they do.

The Bill is also counterproductive, because the Government's own analysis says that minimum service levels could lead to more strikes and more non-strike industrial action—in other words, action short of strike—so what on earth is the point of going ahead with it? It is unnecessary to

its very core, because it is already custom and practice, especially in the NHS and the blue light services, for cover to be agreed by unions during industrial disputes.

Richard Burgon Labour Leeds East...

I end by refuting the Government's empty claim that this legislation is really about bringing the UK into line with International Labour Organisation norms. That is absolutely not the case. I previously tabled an amendment, backed by 30 Members on a cross-party basis, to prevent this legislation from being enacted until a judge had certified that the UK was meeting its International Labour Organisation obligations. The Government refused to accept that amendment; I wonder why. Perhaps it is because they know that their claim that the Bill brings us into line with other countries and International Labour Organisation standards is hollow rhetoric. The truth, as the European Trade Union Confederation has said, is that

“The UK already has among the most draconian restrictions on the right to strike in Europe, and the UK government's plans would push it even further away from normal, democratic practice across Europe.”

Members do not need to be trade unionists to understand the common sense and democratic decency of these Lords amendments, and they certainly do not need to be socialists. Any Member of this House who values the hard-won freedoms of individual workers and trade unions in our society should back these Lords amendments. Not to do so would be completely shameful and go against the hard-won democratic freedoms that we have secured in this country through struggle. Indeed, it is shameful that we have had to protest outside Parliament today and to argue for those freedoms in this Chamber tonight.

The Government having a majority won the votes the figures being in the order of 287 to 232.1

Minimum Service Bill update

The House of Lords defeated the

1 [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-05-22/debates/DE7D768F-2624-49B7-A053-2A644CD0B2CE/Strikes\(MinimumServiceLevels\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-05-22/debates/DE7D768F-2624-49B7-A053-2A644CD0B2CE/Strikes(MinimumServiceLevels)Bill)

government on several crucial parts of the Minimum Service Bill (see part of the debate in May Labour Affairs).

The bill went back to the Commons on Monday 22 May. The Government defeated the House of Lords amendments; the bill will now go back to the Lords.

Statement by the TUC:

Protect the right to strike

Our right to strike is under attack.

Rishi Sunak is trying to force his anti-union “sack key workers bill” through parliament as quickly as he can. It means that when workers democratically vote to strike, they could be forced to work and sacked if they don't. That's wrong, unworkable, and almost certainly illegal. We need to stop this bill.

These new laws are a direct attack on working people's fundamental right to strike to defend their pay, terms and conditions.

The attack on our right to strike has reached a critical point. On Monday 22 May, the Strikes Bill returned to the House of Commons where MPs cast their final vote.

Unfortunately, given the parliamentary majority, the government won all the votes in the Commons which means that the four amendments that we supported in the Lords are now removed from the Bill. Lords will have an opportunity to vote to reinstate them when it returns to them, probably w/c 5 June or shortly thereafter.

The Tories have supported this bill at every stage, and proved they will stop at nothing to hurt working people. They have seen the impact our strikes have had, and know the public are on the side of striking workers. Their last resort is an outrageous attack on our right to strike.

Why we must protect our right to strike?

This government has gone from clapping key workers to threatening them with the sack if they take lawful action for a pay rise.

Instead of listening to the concerns of working people and negotiating fair deals, Rishi Sunak has decided to undermine the right to strike.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues to hurt workers everywhere, we need to be able to stand together and choose to strike when we must. These laws will do nothing to fix this crisis - they will make it even harder for working people to get pay rises.

The UK already has some of the most restrictive trade union laws in the world – but workers have been pushed into action by a government and employers that won't listen. You can't legislate away the depth of anger workers feel about how they've been treated.

Four reasons to oppose the Strikes Bill

Workers could now be sacked for taking strike action that has been agreed in a democratic ballot.

Unions might have to pay large damages. The Bill says a union must take "reasonable steps" to ensure that all its members identified in the work notice do not take part in the strike action. If it doesn't, unions could face an injunction to stop the strike or have to pay huge damages. These costs come out of members' subs.

Probably against international law. The European Trades Union Congress says: "The UK already has among the most draconian restrictions on the right to strike in Europe, and the UK government's plans would push it even further away from normal, democratic practice across Europe."

You can't legislate away dissatisfaction. This Bill will do nothing to resolve current industrial disputes or to help workers in the public sector who have seen their wages fall.

Every working person is under attack from these new laws. Join the campaign. We must defend the right to strike. [Find out more about the anti-strike law.](#)²

23rd May 2023

2 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/fighting-anti-strike-law>

Hiroshima Shame

G7 Summit 2023 Hiroshima
welcomes its devastator its occupier,
radiating the charm of the hyena
in not mentioning the supplier
who now pays a peace tribute at the Genbacku
Dome,
with the world already full of these land-marks.
A remembrance of a blistering peeling skin
syndrome.
Wreathed in cynical silence they don't hark
back to their store of nuclear weapons back home.
With the world in danger because of the ambitious
they introduce a salesman of death and of the dumb,
in his army fatigues, and laden him without
contrition.
Wilson John Haire. 21st May 2023.

Climate Change and Private Planes

**Marie Dupin-a Fresh Look at the News
France Info 4th May 2023**

*The News Personified—a fresh look at the news
A short daily humorous piece on French state radio
'France Info'*

Every morning, the journalist Marie Dupin takes on the role of a personality, an event, a place or a fact at the heart of the news. In this instalment we learn that 'In France, the government has even allowed the private jet to escape the ban on short flights introduced by the Climate and Resilience Act.' What better illustration of the humbug that is official climate talk.

Intro: You are a private jet that reaches new heights

Marie Dupin. Yes, since last summer with its mega fires and terrible heat waves, I have become a symbol of ecological aberration, ultra-polluting and a privilege of the very rich.

I pollute in one hour as much as a French person does in a year.

Faced with the polemics and the political declarations calling for the regulation of the sector, one could have expected a decrease in sales and flights, in short a slight beginning of awareness.

Not at all, the more I have a bad reputation, the more I fly and the more people buy me. In the 2000s we private jets were barely 10,000 in the sky, today we are more than 23,000, and last year we flew more than 5 million times, according to a report published this week by a group of American millionaires who are calling for more taxes to fight global warming.

One of these millionaires decided to abandon me, the private jet, believing, and I quote, 'that it is impossible to reconcile the slightest concern for the environment and humanity with the supreme selfishness that is jumping into a big jet alone.

Q. Since you are talking about the Americans, are they the leaders in these jet trips?

Marie Dupin. Yes, the most active American high-flyer is Elon Musk, the owner of Twitter, who was outraged at the beginning of the year that a website was publishing the details of his travels; last year Elon Musk made 171 flights, which is not bad going, one of which lasted only 6 minutes and he alone contributed to the burning of 800,000 litres of aviation fuel. The millionaire authors of the report are asking the US administration to simply introduce new taxes on fuel and on the purchase of private aircraft. If these measures were implemented, Elon Musk would have paid 4 million dollars last year.

In Europe, too, traffic has increased to the point where, according to the industry, private jet flights now account for 17% of European flights, with France, Germany and the UK leading the way. No regulation is on the agenda. In France, the government has even allowed me, the private jet, to escape the ban on short flights introduced by the Climate and Resilience Act.

Nkrumah, Lumumba, Gaddafi: the US and Democracy in Africa

Article by Socialist Party Zambia

What democracy can the United States government really promote for an African country?

On March 29-30, 2023, the United States will co-host the second Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, and Republic of Zambia.

Article by Socialist Party Zambia

On March 29-30, 2023, the United States will co-host the second Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, and Republic of Zambia.

But what democracy can the United States government really promote or advance for an African country?

How many of our elected leaders and governments has the United States toppled and killed?

On February 24, 1966, the fate of Africa was irrevocably altered when the United States CIA sponsored a coup d'état against Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the elected Prime Minister of Ghana and Pan-Africanist visionary, who was voted "Africa's Man of the Millennium". At least 1,600 Ghanaians died in the coup.

In 1999, these claims were confirmed when the US government declassified the Western-orchestrated plot to get rid of the man who was, "doing more to undermine our interests than any other black African".

The US government was determined to depose Dr Nkrumah before he managed to unite Africa under one government, working with allies such as Great Britain and Canada to finance, mastermind, and guide the coup.

According to the US State Department at the time, Nkrumah's "overpowering desire

to export his brand of nationalism unquestionably made Ghana one of the foremost practitioners of subversion in Africa".

They were behind the toppling and assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the elected Prime Minister of Congo.

Files of importance to the CIA mission to assassinate Lumumba include the 1975-76 US Senate Church Committee's investigation of CIA assassination plots against Lumumba, the report of a Belgian parliamentary inquiry in 2001, Congo Station Chief Larry Devlin's 2007 memoir, and the long-awaited appearance in 2013 of a "retrospective" Congo volume in the State Department's Foreign Relations of the United States series, which contains extensive CIA operational documents from the 1960s.

They played a key role in the toppling and assassination of Muammar Gaddafi.

The list is long, and their endless efforts at regime change in Zimbabwe are well known. To this very day they are still seeking regime change there.

Since the 19th century, the United States government has participated and interfered in – both overtly and covertly – the replacement of several foreign governments. In the latter half of the 19th century, the US government initiated actions for regime change mainly in Latin America and the southwest Pacific, including the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars.

At the onset of the 20th century, the United States shaped or installed governments in many countries around the world, including neighbours Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

The United States expanded the geographic scope of its actions beyond traditional area of operations, Central America and the

Caribbean. Significant operations included the United States and United Kingdom-orchestrated 1953 Iranian coup d'état, the 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion targeting Cuba, and support for the overthrow of Sukarno by General Suharto in Indonesia. In addition, the US has interfered in the national elections of countries, including Italy in 1948, the Philippines in 1953, Japan in the 1950s and 1960s and Lebanon in 1957. According to one study, the US performed at least 81 overt and covert known interventions in foreign elections during the period 1946–2000. According to another study, the US engaged in 64 covert and six overt attempts at regime change.

The United States has led or supported wars to determine the governance of a number of countries – Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria.

Again, what democracy can the United States really teach us or advance in our poor countries?

This is the country the Zambian government of Mr Hakainde Hichilema has hired itself to as a puppet. What shame! What an embarrassment!

What democracy are they advancing or promoting with the United States? The AFRICOM type of democracy!

We urge them to retreat from this embarrassing neocolonial mentality and imperialist puppet, lackey behaviour.

They are stripping our country and our people of the anti-imperialist badge of honour they have worn since independence. For what? We have become the continent's laughing stock.

Fred M'membe

President of the Socialist Party 1

¹ <https://socialistpartyzambia.com/2022/12/01/the-united-states-will-co-host-the-second-summit-for-democracy-with-the-governments-of-costa-rica/>

A sensible left-wing election programme: the CP in the East of England

In the east of England on May 4 voters in Felixstowe East and Felixstowe West, Felixstowe Coastal, Kempston in Bedford, Sopwell in St Albans and Abbeygate and district in Bury St Edmunds will have the chance to vote communist.

The campaigners have given priority to opposing the outsourcing and privatisation of council services and the need to take the transport system into public ownership — some major towns no longer have transport connections to cities and there are villages which have been completely cut loose and left to fend for themselves.

We are arguing for innovation in transport, including the use of guided bus systems.

We are making the case for support for the Charter for Women programme of the National Assembly of Women — women are often left to face the burden of reduced services and a squeeze on income. In some rural areas, support has all but collapsed.

The communists are the only party campaigning for the abolition of council tax and its replacement with a local progressive tax on the ownership of land, wealth, property and income based clearly on an ability to pay.

This is allied to the party policy for a central wealth tax. The combination of both would lead to a revolution in local government financing as the latter includes a major redistributive element and would end the many scam

schemes that allow local Conservative-run councils to access grants.

Equally, we have been the only party to make the case for a programme of council housebuilding, and the restoration of public construction works through direct labour organisations, with councils sharing equipment and skilled personnel.

Our party is arguing for the council takeover of unused high street properties owned by speculators and their use for local co-operatives, farmers' markets and community services.

We have been on NEU picket lines in solidarity and are making the case in our manifesto for restoring the relationship between schools and education services with local authorities.

Restoring this vital link allows communities and teachers to work together to plan and provide high-quality schools and educational opportunities for local pupils.

We call for a free, publicly owned NHS and the reincorporation of dental, eye and hearing services.

We are proud to include among our candidates, two leading figures from the Toothless in England campaign, which has become the main community campaign across England fighting for the restoration of dental services in the NHS.

When services collapsed in Suffolk, it was the Toothless campaigners who raised

funds and worked across the community to provide mobile dental services through Dentaaid, which saw many hundreds of people treated who had been in desperate need.

Uppermost in our campaign is the case for a radical shake-up in local government.

In England, the Communist Party is proposing a major review of the structures of local government, which seem to grow in number and complexity by the week as they diminish in effectiveness.

We propose the establishment of dynamic, directly elected and accountable regional assemblies with tax-raising powers.

They will have a remit of investing in quality jobs for young people and be charged with breaking the monopoly on local transport services by profit-greedy bus companies.

A regional assembly will develop long-term plans to deal with coastal and soil erosion, the promotion of co-operative farming and food processing, the establishment of manufacturing centres focused on the machinery and systems that can deliver renewable energy and the regeneration of our towns and villages.

Phil Katz is East of England district secretary of the Communist Party of Britain (www.comunist-party.org.uk).¹

¹ https://morningstaronline.co.uk/system/files/pdf-editions/M_Star_010523.pdf

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

- Britain Blighted by Upper London
- Upper London Fears the Chinese Example
- The Mistrustful USA
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 - Why Russia Rallies Round Putin
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Britain Blighted by Upper London

Well-meaning liberals like William Keegan are baffled that British politicians stay locked into policies that have caused vast suffering.

Right-wing ideas that never did improve Wealth Creation:

“Brexit caps years of Tory failure Starmer fears to oppose...

“Brexit is the last straw after a succession of damaging, mainly Tory, policies: ironically, these were justified as being in the interests of business, investment and productivity. But the Thatcher governments from 1979 onwards inflicted serious damage on the economy... Blessed by the windfall of North Sea oil, the Thatcherites refused to use this bonus to invest for the future. As one minister cynically commented: ‘*We used North Sea oil to finance unemployment.*’...

“The Blair/Brown governments of 1997-2010 had some success in reviving investment. In opposition, David Cameron and George Osborne approved of their plans. Then, when they took over as prime minister and chancellor in 2010, they presided over a period of austerity which, once again, inhibited the investment that is a fundamental requirement for higher living standards.”¹

I take a different view, and am not baffled.

Liberals delude themselves; **Britain is not a whole.** And liberals ignore how privileges were made, or how they are maintained. Or even expanded.

I see us as being dominated by Upper London. An elite that has kept control.

‘Upper London’ is a convenient name for an elite who are not always physically located in London. Who are much more coherent than the US elites, who have several regional centers of power. And who are very different from a majority of actual Londoners.

People speak of ‘London’ doing various things, when it is actually Upper London, the consensus of the elite. Or speak darkly about a Deep State, as if there were senior state officials independent of the will of the rich.

Starmer is part of Upper London: he wants the privileged to go on gaining. And may well believe the Thatcherite nonsense.

The world’s elites knew they were at risk after World War Two. The Soviet Union was a massive challenge, and there were strong fears of a fascist revival. So they made sure that ordinary people were looked after. Most people got secure jobs, cheap housing, free education, and free health care.

The suggestion that these things were impossibly expensive began at a time when the Soviet Union looked less attractive. Particularly when Khrushchev first said that Stalin had been a criminal lunatic, and then tried to carry on with the system Stalin had built. And went further with the invasion of Hungary, whereas Stalin had wisely decided against invading Yugoslavia when it defied Moscow.

But there was anyway a recovery of confidence by an Upper London that now included more people who had risen from ordinary beginnings. Who felt very superior, and often denied that they had duties to those who had stayed ordinary.

The elite rule through Parliament, which keeps archaic forms. And rejects the Proportional Representation that has become normal for multi-party systems.

Upper London includes most MPs. Most of the newspapers and television news.

One early move was to convince everyone that there was a drastic economic crisis in the 1960s. The economy was healthier than it has ever been in later decades, but this blighted the Wilson governments.

Labour’s elite control the electable left. Tories controlled the right, and let the interests of Upper London override what traditionalist voters actually wanted:

“Radical-right parties’ positions may seem incoherent and inconsistent when viewed

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/apr/16/brexit-caps-40-years-of-conservative-failure-that-starmer-fears-to-oppose>

through the lens of the traditional left-right division on welfare issues. But in a recent study, I write that this is only because it represents a new form of redistributive logic. Populist radical-right parties are developing a dualistic welfare state. This addresses 'deserving' and 'undeserving' welfare recipients in very different ways, which go far beyond the notion of welfare chauvinism.

"For the 'deserving' (such as nationals with long employment histories, and pensioners), the populist radical right are defending a protectionist welfare-state logic. For these people, they propose a welfare state based on generous and compensatory policies (pension, child benefits and unemployment benefits).

"But the radical right proposes that the 'undeserving' (for example, foreigners and nationals seen as not contributing enough to the nation, such as the long-term unemployed) should not have full access to collective resources. Instead, they believe this group should remain subject to state discipline and surveillance. Such people's access to social benefits should be conditioned by 'workfare' policies and the strong policing of welfare abuse. Although not introduced by the populist radical right, this coercive approach to the moral obligation to work fits aptly with its authoritarian rhetoric."²

If we had had Proportional Representation, both Labour and Tories would have split many times. Probably a Corbynite

Labour Party would dominate the left. There would be a Populist Right, but Moderate Tories would not be obliged to pander to them.

But the broad picture is that Upper London flourishes and the rest of us are squeezed. And the media tries to make us see it as unavoidable.

"People need to accept they are poorer, says Bank of England's Huw Pill."³

But only some people are poorer. 90% of the population have gained less since the 1980s than would have been expected without Thatcher. The rich somehow managed to grab an increasingly large share after the 2008 crisis.

They are buffered by the 'Next Nine' – people not rich enough to be part of Upper London, but often imagining they are, or soon will be.⁴ People in the richest 10% but not the richest 1%; they have kept much the same level of prosperity.

They as individuals are not cheated, so many of them suppose that all is well.

Yet not even Upper London is succeeding in the long run. Brexit is a disaster. We may carry on as a centre for global finance and dirty money: a grander version of Luxembourg and some West Indian islands.

Brexit split the elite. It was an incoherent reaction by ordinary people, but it helped the sectors of Upper London least connected with what remains of British industry.

Notions of commercial honesty declined under Reagan and Thatcher. Both of whom had people among their associates who were caught being dishonest.

³ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/04/25/people-accept-poorer-bank-of-england-huw-pill/> - pay site.

⁴ <https://www.quora.com/q/pwqwxusqvnzrlzm/>

[The-Next-Nine-and-the-Damaged-Majority](#)

Upper London Fears the Chinese Example

Deng Xiaoping dropped Mao's commitment to strong equality. He allowed an 'Upper Beijing' to emerge. But he also never shared the Thatcher / Reagan reverence for capitalism as an 'unknown ideal'. He looked at what had actually worked – the success of Japan, West Germany, Italy, France under De Gaulle, and the Asian Tigers. Applied the successful model that gets loosely called Keynesianism. And which used to be called the Mixed Economy, but somehow this term has been dropped from most public thinking.⁵

Deng said '*some must grow rich first*'. He had noticed that Japan and the Asian Tigers had pulled far ahead of China. That China could become a global centre for cheap manufacturing, but might also hope to ascend the 'value chain' if given free access to world markets.

Mao's hard work had broken down the small-property mentality that actual capitalist societies had spent decades rooting out of their own economies.

Deng would have remembered how ineffective China's home-grown capitalists had been, when it was theoretically open to them to reform the country after the ruling dynasty was overthrown.⁶

An Upper Beijing emerged. Some were children of the Communist Party leaders: they knew which types of limited commerce would be allowed. But many more came from nowhere. And unlike post-Soviet Russia, almost all were actual wealth-creators rather than tricksters or gangsters.

Being new, Upper Beijing also looked after the entire nation.

When corruption was running out

⁵ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

⁶ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/why-chinas-blue-republic-achived-nothing/>

of control, they knew that a strong leader was needed. Xi Jinping happened to be the most suitable candidate, with relatives among the new elite. But without him, someone else would probably have done much the same.⁷

China's success looks likely to push the rest of the world back towards the Mixed Economy and Generous Welfare. The *successful* policies we had before Thatcher and Reagan. And the Western elite see this as unacceptable:

"America's new cold war against Beijing may enjoy bipartisan support in Washington, but it doesn't enjoy bipartisan support in the United States. According to an April Pew Research Center poll, only 27 percent of Democrats see China as an enemy — roughly half the figure among Republicans. In a December 2021 Chicago Council survey, two-thirds of Republicans — but less than four in 10 Democrats — described limiting China's global influence as a very important foreign policy goal.

"Grass-roots Democratic voters dislike the government in Beijing. But they oppose a new cold war for two key reasons. First, their top foreign policy priorities — according to an April Morning Consult poll — are combating climate change and preventing another pandemic. Treating China as an enemy undermines both. Second, they oppose higher military spending, which a new cold war makes all but inevitable."⁸

⁷ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/post-liberalism/chinese-politics-working-well/>

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/08/opinion/joe-biden-primary-challenger-foreign-policy.html> - pay site.

There are also business interest seeking compromise:

"It has become a cliché that the one thing that America's divided democracy can agree on is policy against China. But if the dogs of war are in full cry, what is worth noting is the dog that no longer barks. The 'peace interest' anchored in the investment and trading connections of US big business with China has been expelled from centre stage. On the central axis of US strategy, big business has less influence today that at any time since the end of the cold war.

"The idea of a 'peace interest' — a transnational social and economic constituency opposed to war — was coined by the economist and social theorist Karl Polanyi, who used it to explain the long era of great power peace in Europe between 1815 and 1914. The make-up of the peace interest can change. After the shock of the French Revolution and Napoleon, it was Europe's conservative dynasts who opposed war. From the mid-19th century, it was bourgeois advocates of free trade.

"Of course, not all big business is interested in peace. Military spending is an easy source of profit. Through history, business interests have propelled imperial conquest and cemented international alliances. The business interest in peaceful globalisation, if it is to be influential, needs to be organised."⁹

It would also need a candidate who might get elected. That must have helped the come-back of

⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/5e38eec5-8caa-41d1-b4fd-b0ac5e8ca58a> - pay site.

Donald Trump.

China meantime has been expecting a confrontation, and is ready:

"For more than a decade, Beijing has been trying to reduce its reliance on the dollar, motivated by risks emerging from the US economy — such as the financial crash of 2008 — and the desire to boost its own sphere of influence...

"But for China's leaders, a more prominent international role for the yuan needs to be balanced against the party's grip on domestic financial markets.

"Truly internationalising the yuan would mean loosening the government's control over capital flows and allowing the market to play a bigger role in the currency's valuation. That is not a risk that the party is willing to take, either politically or philosophically. A central tenet of its economic philosophy is that the state should have a prominent role in the economy."¹⁰

They must have noticed that the West suffers from weak controls over globalised money. Riches for those who work the flows successfully, but worse for most of us.

Talk of a BRICS currency is hopeful. But making it real may be tough.

The Mistrustful USA

"Collapsing social trust is driving American gun violence...

"Mass shootings and high-powered rifles draw most attention, but the reality of

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/08/chinas-war-chest-how-beijing-is-using-its-currency-to-insulate-against-future-sanctions>

most US firearm deaths lies elsewhere...

“Active shooter incidents were responsible for 103 US firearm deaths in 2021. This is a sickeningly high number, but it looks tiny when you consider the total number of US gun deaths in the same year was 48,830. An astonishing 44 per cent of Americans say they know someone who has been shot, and one in four says someone has used a gun to threaten or intimidate them or their family...

“Canada and Finland, the second and third most armed societies in the developed world, have about three times fewer firearms per head than the US overall, but 10 times fewer handguns. The distinction is key, since most gun deaths are suicides by handgun, and most murders are spontaneous rather than planned.

“It also reflects very different gun cultures. In Finland and Canada — like most developed countries — gun ownership has traditionally centred on hunting, whereas 76 per cent of US handgun owners say their weapon is for personal protection...

“There is a strong positive relationship between a nation’s gross domestic product per head and levels of interpersonal trust, but levels of trust in the US have been eroding for decades and the share of Americans who say they do not trust other people in their neighbourhood is now roughly double what you would expect based on US socio-economic development...

“This toxic combination of

handguns and hostility is all too clear in the spate of recent US shootings involving young people shot while playing hide and seek, pulling into the wrong driveway and going to retrieve a basketball from a neighbour’s yard.

“The vast majority of Americans who die by firearm don’t make national and global headlines. They’re not killed by extremists with semi-automatics and slogans, but by suicides that most likely wouldn’t have happened without a gun to hand, arguments that escalated, intimate partner violence and by people who have come to see their neighbours as a threat.¹¹

The New Right encouraged mistrust, as a way of weakening state power and reducing taxes for the rich. A way to undermine Trade Unionism. But they did this with a shallow understanding. They pushed the society in directions that make it unworkable.

US politics since Reagan has had an informal partnership to boost the rich. Republicans cut taxes, mostly for the rich. This leads to a gigantic deficit, leading to calls to cut spending. Then Democrats cut back the dangerously high deficit, but let the rich keep most of their gains.

Here and in the UK, a challenge is made very hard by hanging onto first-past-the-post voting. This also secures the jobs of existing representatives. Aided in the USA by blatant gerrymandering by both sides to give incumbents great security.

Snippets

Russia and China

I’ve mentioned before that *The*

¹¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/3d5a52a8-9180-4e56-92f9-16dfe6d1f397> - pay site.

Economist is there to describe economic and political realities to working business people. So they admit things that you’d never find in *The Guardian*.

“According to the latest instalment of our crony-capitalism index, which first estimated how much plutocrats profit from rent-seeking industries almost a decade ago, crony capitalists’ wealth has risen from \$315bn, or 1% of global gdp, 25 years ago to \$3trn or nearly 3% of global gdp now..

“Russia is, once again, the most crony-capitalist country in our index...

“Meanwhile Chinese billionaires continue to struggle with the vagaries of their government. Since Xi Jinping launched a crackdown on private capital, crony wealth has fallen sharply, from a peak of 4.4% of gdp in 2018 to 2.5% now. Tycoons of all stripes operate only with the consent of the state. In 1998 there were just eight billionaires in the country (including Hong Kong and Macau) with a total worth of \$50bn. Now its 562 billionaires command \$2trn. By our measure crony capitalists account for about one-quarter of that total. A recent working paper published by the Stone Centre on Socio-Economic Inequality, part of the City University of New York, finds that between 83% and 91% of corrupt senior officials were in the top 1% of the urban income distribution because of their illegal incomes. Without that money just 6% would be in that bracket.

“Since Mr Xi came to power in 2012 over 1.5m people have

been punished in an ongoing anti-corruption drive. High-profile tycoons also face more scrutiny...

"India's leader, Narendra Modi, has favourites among the country's corporate captains. Over the past decade, wealth from crony-capitalist sectors has risen from 5% to nearly 8% of its gdp."¹²

They confirm what I'd already concluded. President Xi has successfully controlled the rich elite. This has failed to happen elsewhere, with flourishing global plunderers whose abuses go well beyond what *The Economist* would denounce.

I also notice that Ukraine is omitted from their list of offenders. Notoriously corrupt.

China is doing unusually well, for a fast-growing economy that does not have centuries of Western culture defining what is and is not legitimate. And I see that as a continuing benefits of Leninism, which has remained a successful creed for the real problems of modern society.¹³

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Why Russia Rallies Round Putin

Not one of Russia's elected representatives at a national level has gone against Putin's policy on Ukraine. They feel that the West has become their enemy. That any concessions will be followed by new demands.

NATO could have given Security Guarantees to Middle Europe. Suggested they demilitarised. Instead NATO marched eastward, and demonstrated in Iraq that it felt free to be a global aggressor.

Russia, which thought it had negotiated terms to end the Cold War, was treated as if it had surrendered unconditionally.

This was a contrast with how West Germany and Japan were treated after World War Two, even though they had surrendered unconditionally. They soon became trusted partners, and got a lot of economic aid.

Though Putin gets denounced, the Western media cover up the awkward fact that the important Russian opposition parties are almost all more anti-Western than he is.

And International Law is no refuge. It was designed within Western Europe, to regulate the existing behaviour of predatory states. It did not doubt the legality of overseas empires. Nor the hegemony of what was called the White Race.

The Global South felt obliged to condemn Russia's

¹² <https://www.economist.com/international/2023/05/02/the-2023-crony-capitalism-index> - pay site.

¹³ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Post-Leninism-Why-Socialists-Have-Nothing-to-Apologise-For>

military support for Democratic Secession in Ukraine. But they do not see Russia as a threat.

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Worse Weather

As I said last month, we go from bad to worse:

"Climate Change Made East Africa's Drought 100 Times as Likely, Study Says."¹⁴

More rain overall, as the atmosphere warms. But far too often, in all the wrong places. As I write, there is disastrous flooding in North Italy.¹⁵

And yet another clutch of heat-waves:

"High temperature records have been set from Portugal to Thailand as heat waves fueled by climate change have arrived early this spring..."

"A record-breaking heat wave in the western Mediterranean last month would have been nearly impossible without the influence of climate change, new research finds..."

"Yet early heat is striking all over the globe this year, not just in the Mediterranean.

"Much of Asia also suffered extreme heat last month, including Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Bangladesh and parts of China. The city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, recorded its highest temperature in nearly six decades on April 16 at a blistering 105.1 F. And Thailand saw its hottest temperature ever recorded on April 14 when the city of Tak reached an eye-popping 114 F.

"In certain parts of South Asia, April and May are often the hottest times of the year. Even so, this year's heat wave was one of the most severe in recent history, toppling records across the region."¹⁶

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Old newsnotes at the magazine websites. I also

¹⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/27/climate/horn-of-africa-somalia-drought.html> - pay site.

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-65632655>

¹⁶ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/heat-waves-fueled-by-climate-change-topple-records-around-the-globe/> (free article from pay site.)

She [Madame Chiang Kai-shek] can talk beautifully about democracy but doesn't know how to live democracy.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Shamefully we now learn that Saddam's torture chambers reopened under new management, U.S. management.

Edward Kennedy

Saddam Hussein's trial would not be public since he could name countries and persons whom he gave money.

Iyad Allawi

Industrial Democracy

A new book has just been published: Our trade unions, what comes next after the summer of 2022? By Nigel Flanagan, Manifesto Press

The book is vigorously written and addresses the question of the immense weakness of the trade union movement today without flinching. It rightly addresses the question of how it came about as a decline from the high point of power in the 1970s. The common reaction today, whenever the unions show any strength, is 'Beware! The unions will take us back to the anarchy of the 1970s'. What was this 'anarchy' of union power? Flanagan gives us a short history and his book is dedicated to Jack Jones, who was there at the time, at the heart of developments of this 'anarchy'.

Which is why we are disappointed that Flanagan ignores totally what is to us at Labour Affairs the missed opportunity of real labour power, the Bullock report. The rejection of the Bullock report by the labour movement entrenched a preference for a subservient role, of getting the most under the present system, instead of being part of decision making. Flanagan does not mention the Bullock report, which was an achievement of the labour movement.

We will write a longer review next month, but we reproduce below an article by Conor Lynch on the subject, and separately an interview with the very Jack Jones to whom Nigel Flanagan dedicated his book.

Trade Union Diary by Conor Lynch¹

Industrial Democracy

A recent letter in this magazine complained about harking back to the past. Why do we go on so much about the lost opportunities for industrial democracy in the 1970s?

Firstly, what was proposed at that time has been all but written out of history. Accurate history is vital for understanding the present. History is what makes us what we are. And if we don't understand what we are, we have little chance of developing a coherent plan of action for the future.

Can anyone doubt that our movement hasn't a clue these days about what it was, what it is, and where it is going? For the most part it does little more than react to the latest Tory jibe or the latest

Sun editorial.

Secondly, we believe that the core of the policy we supported in the 1970s is even more applicable in the 1990s. This core is that the working class has developed well beyond the point of being merely an exploited mass in need of protection against wicked employers. After 200 years of trade union organisation, 70 years of political democracy, and over 40 years of general education, the welfare state and the NHS, the working class is a very heterogeneous and complex body indeed.

It is only at work that the working class allows itself to be subservient. In practice, of course, employees daily take vital decisions – often of necessity behind the backs or against the wishes of employers. But the work culture is still subservient. 'Management's right to manage' was promoted by Hugh Scanlon, Arthur Scargill, Frank Chapple and others in the 1970s. That is not 'merely' history. Scargill and Co. won that battle. Their position is the general trade union position today. Trade unionism still props up the subservient work culture.

There is still the belief that if a 19th century confrontational trade union policy is abandoned, working class organisation will collapse and we will all be ground down. Well, the victory of the free collective bargainers didn't help a lot these last 12 years. We suggest it caused what has happened these last 12 years.

The trade union position has in practice (and often in theory) been that the employer is there to screw you and the union is there to screw him. This is the essence of the Thatcherite ethos. It is the very antithesis of a socialist ethos. And I suggest that the time may be more than a little overdue for our movement to be promoting a socialist ethos as against a capitalist ethos.

The socialist ethos is that of public service. Goods and services are produced primarily for public consumption and enjoyment – not primarily to provide the capitalist with profit or the worker with wages. Such a public service spirit breaks out all the time in the working class. I have had the pleasure of mentioning it in this column in relation to railway workers. Most of us get pleasure when a consumer is happy with

¹ Using the pen-name Dave Chappel

the product or the service we provide.

But there is a limit to the development of the public service ethos. And that limit is precisely in the capitalist relations of production. Trade union attitudes only perpetuate capitalist relations of production. These relations can be replaced by the working class assuming that it can have real power at work: through industrial democracy.

We are not, as has been suggested, wedded to a particular form of industrial democracy. We will support all kinds of proposals and occasionally make a few of our own. The important thing now is to win the battle for industrial democracy in the unions against the class struggle fetishists – then, whenever an opportunity arises to develop a specific agitation, we will be in a position to take it.

The point about the Bullock Report is not that we are re-proposing it. It was not proposed. It was offered on a plate. The unions had no nerve for this sort of thing. And a golden opportunity was lost. We are trying to develop a type of trade unionism which will grasp such opportunities whenever they arise. Hence the history lessons.

This article appeared in September 1991, in Issue 25 of *Labour and Trade Union Review*, now *Labour Affairs*.

You can find more from the era at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/>.

The Press and the Labour Party

By Eamon Dyas

I remember when I worked at the British Library at Colindale discovering how most English towns, and even quite small towns, usually had two newspapers covering national and local events from either the Tory or Liberal perspective. The heyday of this was in the 1880s. It went into decline when Gladstone's Irish policy created a fracture in the Liberal camp. However the rudiments of this continued into the decade before the First World War, having been further damaged by the Chamberlain tariff reform issue. Its decline also coincided with the growing commercialisation of the local newspaper industry as newspaper groups were increasingly being formed in ways that prioritised profits rather than service with the result that family run newspapers with a political loyalty to either of the two parties began to disappear.

The emergence of the Labour Party came about in the aftermath of the heyday of this phenomenon and although there were local newspapers with a Labour perspective around from the late nineteenth century the extent to which they existed never emulated the earlier saturation of the small towns of Britain by Liberal and Tory papers. The absence of a Labour network of local newspapers has always struck me as a factor in its subsequent evolution.

But then again the emerging Labour perspective was framed along the guidelines of progressive liberals and it never fully escaped that legacy so there was no strong local basis other than the trade union one that such a perspective could be constructed. Robert Blatchford, the founder of what could be seen as a local network around a labour perspective could not escape the Tory/Liberal legacy of British politics. He admitted himself to be a Tory democrat who was an Englishman first and a socialist second. His criticism of the Labour Party on its formation in 1900 was that it remained too subservient to

its liberal inheritance.

Nonetheless, it remained possible for the Labour Party to develop an independent perspective based on its connection to the trade Union movement and it continued to serve the working class as long as the trade unions provided it with a bedrock of power within the wider community. But the weakness of that position was that should that bedrock begin to weaken there was no other independence perspective that it could call upon to give it direction. It might have been able to evolve a wider working-class perspective that embraced but was not limited to, its trade union bedrock. But that was only possible if it had fully replaced the Liberal Party in the British two-party system. It was the continued existence of the Liberal Party that prevented this happening. After the First World War the Liberal Party continued to possess its national local network out of all proportion to its presence at Westminster but it was its presence in Westminster that remained as a piece of political grit in the machinery of British politics.

This had the effect of spoiling the ability of the two main parties - Tory and Labour - from being true to themselves. What should have seen the evolution of a hard crust between Tory and Labour perspectives was softened by the perpetual possibilities of coalition government involving the rump of the old Liberal Party. Such an outcome became the means by which what should have provided a hard alternative between Tory or Labour policies at elections being viewed instead as aspirational in terms of the programmes of both parties. Politics became the domain of the deal makers in a political arena where there remained the ongoing prospect that government might require a willingness to use policies as bargaining counters, with the result that there could be no hard and fast attachment to even basic principles.

Industrial Democracy in 1991: Jack Jones speaks

Jack Jones explains his role in the Labour movement in the 1970s, and how the battle to bring in Industrial Democracy was fought and lost, making something like Thatcherism almost inevitable

An interview with Jack Jones, conducted by Labour and Trade Union Review magazine

L&TUR We'd like to begin with the experience of the seventies. As you were a central figure in that period, your reflections would be of great interest and, I think, of great use to the present Labour movement.. So could be ask you, what lessons were learned from the experience of the seventies, of Labour in government and the protracted problems that developed in the 1970s.

J.J. I'm not sure about 'what lessons were learned', rather, what lessons should be learned, because in retrospect the Labour Party, the Labour Government and the Trade Union movement unfortunately allowed things to develop at the very end of that Labour Government which not only led to defeat in the election, but considerable defeat for the whole of the Labour Movement – not least the Trade Union Movement.

We had made considerable progress based on discussions within the Liaison Committee, which brought in the TUC, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the NEC of the Labour Party. We worked at that from 1971 and 1972 onwards. I thought

it was necessary to bring back unity after the defeat of Labour in 1970, and above all, we had to get the Industrial Relations Act removed from the statute book, because that was the biggest blow the Trade Union Movement had suffered for a long time.

We produced a lot of policy statements which dealt with the economy, housing and pensions – in other words, social justice. The social wage was very much in our minds; also the principle of bringing in legislation which would ensure the operation of the Trade Union Movement: the right to representation, to Trade Union recognition, the right to join a Trade Union and elements of Industrial Democracy. All these were involved in our discussions.

And in 1974, we set to work to produce the Employment Protection Act. I described this at the time as a 'shop stewards' charter'. And it was. It was designed to . ensure that organized workers would have the right to information from their employer and the right to time off in the discharging of their Trade Union duties. The principle of extending Health and Safety legislation was proposed and operated. In particular, that Health and Safety representatives would have to be members of independent Trade Unions. That is very important because victimisation could only be avoided by people who were members of some organisation

that could protect them.

So although we made a great deal of progress, towards the end the Government, faced with considerable economic difficulties, pressed for a 5% limit on pay. This was unrealistic. I was then retired, by the way, so I watched from the sidelines. The 5% limit was too low, given that the previous one was 10%; and it was the result of acquiescence by the Trade Union Movement, not negotiation with it. On the other hand, those unions who were concerned with national negotiations were beginning to demand far more than was reasonable in the circumstances. Examples of this were the public service and local government unions. And I'm afraid some of my colleagues in parts of the transport industry were doing the same thing. The result was that we had disputes that, in my view, should have been avoided. I pointed out the dangers of this in 1977, when I was defeated at our own union conference on the issue of pay policy. I said that if the Trade Union Movement and the Labour Government split away from each other, it would put the party of privilege back into power and would result in the poor being kicked in the teeth.

So the lesson we should learn is that the Trade Unions and the Labour Party should work closely together and find ways of maintaining unity in spite of all the difficulties. If ever Labour gets back into power, it

is essential that we do not have a repeat of the kind of situation that divided us in 1978 and lost us the election in 1979.

L&TUR Do you think there is any connection between the failure of the Trade Union Movement to support the Bullock Report proposals for Workers' Control, and the headlong rush into wage demands you have just talked about?

J.J. The Trade Union Movement was a bit divided anyway on the approach to Industrial Democracy. My old friend Hughie Scanlon and one or two others, always took the view that the only thing they should do is extend collective bargaining. I appreciate the idea of extending collective bargaining. And if you read the Bullock Report, you will see that the inference there is that you would have Trade Union channels, the shop stewards, taking collective bargaining into the boardroom. Which I think is still right.

The proposal was a two-way connection between the worker representatives, who were serving their colleagues in the Trade Union Movement, reporting back to the workshop floor and taking the workshop floor's point of view into the boardroom. If you are going to ensure that workers succeed and gain improvements in general, then they must have a place in the determination of overall policy of an industrial undertaking, whether it is publicly or privately owned.

L&TUR Were you surprised by the reaction of people like Hughie Scanlon to the Bullock Report?

J.J. Oh no. Let's face it, there was a lukewarm attitude on the part of members of the government: people like Edmund Dell, Shirley Williams, in fact a whole crowd of them. I'd better not mention too many bloody names. They wanted to settle for much less than the Bullock Committee recommended.

L&TUR But was there anybody rooting for it, apart from yourself, in the Trade Union Movement?

J.J. I think we could say that at the time the TUC leadership, that is to say people like Len Murray and David Lea, were in agreement with me. Clive Jenkins, for what it was worth, supported the approach. It was a bit of a battle on my own. But I thought it was highly justified; and still do, even if we are now in a situation where we can only get half the loaf. The fact is that we were in a position to make a lot of progress. If we could have gone on and won an election with an increased majority – I am very mindful of the fact that in 1979 the Labour Government did not have a majority, and that is what brought them down – but a government with a good majority could have really done something in the direction of Bullock, modified in the light of circumstances.

The original report dealt with large-scale industry in the main, and with a situation in which the Trade Union Movement was at its height. We had 12 million members of the TUC, and in the T&GWU 2.1 million. We were moving forward quite rapidly in the sense that, because of the progressive legislation we'd got during that period,

we could begin to grapple with the small firm.. You can take it that the employers and management of firms of say, 500 or less, operate with a degree of personal dictatorship towards anyone trying to set up a trade union branch, so much so that today many of these small firms could be likened to the days of Charles Dickens.

However, the fact is that now all the safeguards have been virtually taken away. One of the safeguards applying to small firms was the system of wages councils. We had broadened the terms so that they could deal with a wide range of conditions, where it was essential to have some sort of legal framework. That has been taken away. The restriction on hours of work for women and young people has been taken away. But, above all, we had the right to go first to conciliation and then to arbitration on the issue of the 'going rate'. If you had a small firm operating in an industry where there were established wages and conditions in that locality, although you could not strike in such a firm, you could take a dispute to arbitration and get a decision which was legally binding. And with other firms we had the machinery for getting Trade Union recognition where it had been refused for years before.

But we lost all that. So, if we want to draw lessons from the past, we must bear all this in mind and restore the opportunities for working people to be protected, both by law and through their Trade Unions, at the first opportunity.

L&TUR Do you see the rejection of the Bullock Report as a turning point? We are

inclined to look at it as the turning point; that after that Trade Unionism was left to its own devices, which led to Arthur Scargill's approach. At the time you yourself said that it 'had come to the top of a hill'. It had almost gone beyond Trade Unionism in any recognisable sense.

J.J. We almost reached the top of the hill, then the road suddenly gave way and we went right back to the bottom. But it is too simplistic to say that Bullock, of itself, was the turning point. It was one factor, yes. It showed that the government was not prepared to go all the way in backing the Trade Union movement. I am bound to say that Callaghan expressed support for the approach, but I don't think he ever fought for it. That was partly because the politicians never truly understood manufacturing industry, and did not appreciate the significance of Bullock as much as I hoped they would. That is not to criticise, because in general Callaghan was sympathetic

L&TUR If the unions had been united with you on the subject of Bullock, do you think the government would have been forced to fight for it?

J.J. Yes. Had there been greater unity in the Trade Union movement on that, I think it would. There would have been a sense of purpose. I think there was a short-sighted attitude on the part of some Trade Union leaders – and this is still the case – that if you encourage worker involvement, worker participation, worker representation on boards, it could be at the expense of the individual Trade Union. But I

don't see that. I think it would strengthen the Trade Union Movement.

Looking at the wider European scene, if we now get European legislation for works councils, I would regard that as a step forward and we should try to ensure that the representatives on those legal works councils are representatives from independent, bona fide Trade Unions. Without that there could be the danger of victimisation. Works councils would be a step in the direction that ultimately we would want: adequate representation on the board. It is the families of the employees, not just the employees themselves, who are involved in the jobs the people do.

And acceptance of Bullock at the time, even if it would have had to be taken step by step, would have meant a good message to everyone: that the workers counted in society, counted in industry.

L&TUR And don't you think it would have brought home to the electorate that the Trade Unions were acting quite responsibly in accordance with their power, and that they weren't just throwing their weight about?

J.J. That's right. Those would be precisely my words on that.

L&TUR Do you think that, to put it crudely, because of the failure of the movement to adopt Bullock, and other mistakes that were made towards the end, that it has to accept some of the responsibility for Thatcherism?

J.J. No question about that.

L&TUR Were you surprised by the success of Thatcherism?

J.J. No. I thought that with

the degree of disunity that was demonstrated towards the end, it was 'quite clear that the Tories were going to get back. I didn't think they would get the majority they did, but I was afraid that if they got back they would hold on to power, and, holding on to power, they would drive the anti-Trade Union attitude into legislation. As well as removing a lot of the improvements we had secured for children and pensioners, for example.

L&TUR What did you think of Labour's reaction to Thatcherism in power during the eighties?

J.J. I think that the party has been bemused by the tremendous majorities that Thatcher & Co. have managed to secure in the various elections. They have been asking themselves what they could do to win back public opinion to their side, and they have sought, if you like, the lowest common denominator to gain support. I can understand the politicians looking in that direction. They have to try and find ways and means of reviving possible support. But it is unfortunate that there have not been the close links that Labour had with the Trade Union Movement that we had in the run-up to the 1974 election. I know that a number of the political leaders of the Labour Party feel that it is disadvantageous to have too close a link with the Trade Union Movement. But it was never a question of the Trade Unions laying down what should be done. It was a question of discussing what the problems of working people are, and how we resolve them together. There is no doubt that

the Trade Union Movement can be very influential – as can the Pensioners’ Movement, for example. So it was right that we should talk closely together, and right that we should have a liaison. But that has been abandoned and does not exist any more.

L&TUR That does not bode well for the future, does it?

J.J. No, it doesn’t. I think the Labour Party leadership should seek again to get closer discussions. But the Trade Union leaders must not approach those discussions – if ever they take place again – with the idea that they can lay down the law, and that everything they say is absolutely right. It is no use ‘doing a Scargill’ talking to Labour leaders. That attitude of rhetoric, irrespective of whether you get anywhere at all, is unhelpful. There is a need for both sides to exercise good will towards each other.

L&TUR I suppose we have to accept that there will be no increase in intimacy this side of an election.

J.J. I’m not sure. I would hope there would be.

L&TUR What would you like to see as Labour’s priorities on the broad front of Trade Unions and industrial relations when Labour gets into power?

J.J. I think that Neil and the people around him have got a number of priorities absolutely right. They have said that in terms of immediate or very early legislation they would have two priorities, children and pensioners. They have given a commitment to increasing child benefit and increasing pensions, and I hope they will keep it.

There has been a lot of argument about labour

legislation. In a recent speech Neil Kinnock made clear that the approach to labour legislation would be to restore the legal right to be a member of a Trade Union, and the legal right to representation. This is very important. If we had the legal right to representation we could make a great deal of progress, for example, in North Sea oil rigs, and the small firms I mentioned earlier, where the great problem is fear of victimisation.

If you want to strike under the Tory law which changed the 1974 Labour Government’s legislation, the employer can retain in employment those who go back at a very early stage and when the rest go back he can sack all of them together, or he can pick out whoever he thinks ought to be sacked. That fear of victimisation must be removed. Workpeople must have at least the right to talk to their employer without fearing the sack. This has gone, and has got to be restored.

The National Health Service is also a vital priority, as are children, pensioners and housing. The Trade Union Movement should want to talk about that, because working people must have the right, not only to jobs but to decent homes. That means getting back to the stage where the nation is involved, and the municipal authorities are involved, whether it is building houses to rent or even to buy.

This article appeared in March 1991, in Issue 22 of *Labour and Trade Union Review*, now *Labour Affairs*. You can find more from the era at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/>.

Continued From Page 24

to Russia, with respect to Crimea) but different rules seem to apply to Israel.

As for the “75 years of vibrant democracy”, von der Leyen doesn’t seem to realise that by no stretch of the imagination can Israel be described a democracy. The most basic principle of such a system of government is that everybody subject to the rule of the government emerging from the electoral process should have a vote. But millions of Palestinians in the occupied territories haven’t got a vote and are excluded from the election of the government which rules over them.

As for the “75 years of friendship between Israel and Europe”, a few days after she spoke there was a hiccup in the friendship when the EU delegation in Israel refused to meet a senior member of the Israeli government. The minister in question was the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir. Apparently, although according to *von der Leyen* the EU shares “values” with Israel, it doesn’t share “values” with this Israeli minister: his “views contradict the values the EU stands for”, the EU says [2]. As a result of this conflict of “values”, the EU delegation had to cancel its Europe Day (9 May) diplomatic reception, because Itamar Ben-Gvir was scheduled to represent Israel at it.

(Clare Daly MEP has produced four short video responses to *von der Leyen* [3]. *They are excellent, as usual.*)

David Morrison

23 May 2023

References:

[1] twitter.com/EUinIsrael/status/1651088583644594177

[2] www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/8/eu-in-israel-cancels-europe-day-event-over-ben-gvirs-involvement

[3] twitter.com/ClareDalyMEP/status/1658131096440127490

Anniversary of state of Israel, von der Leyen's declaration

The establishment of the state of Israel involved the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their land

75 years ago, on 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel. 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their land in the course of its establishment.

In 1947, Britain handed over responsibility for the future of mandate Palestine to the UN and a UN commission recommended a partition plan involving the creation of separate Jewish and Arab states. This was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in resolution 181, which was passed on 29 November 1947 by 33 votes to 10, despite the opposition of the Palestinians and all Arab states.

At that time, about 2 million people, 1.4 million Arabs and 600,000 Jews, lived in mandate Palestine. The partition plan was extraordinarily generous to Jews, who made up less than a third of the population and owned less than 6% of the land. Despite this, the partition plan allocated almost 56% of the land to a Jewish state, containing the vast majority of the 600,000 Jews in Palestine but also with a large Arab minority.

The Zionist leadership accepted the partition plan publicly, but with the clear intention of expanding the territory allocated to Jews by the UN and of expelling the bulk of the Arabs living there. The Israeli state was established in this expanded territory, which amounted to around 78% of mandate Palestine.

Around 750,000 of the 900,000 Arabs living in that territory were either expelled or fled beyond the borders of mandate Palestine – to Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, or Transjordan – or to the West Bank and Gaza. Much of this ethnic cleansing - of around 300,000 people - had already taken place by the time

of Ben-Gurion's declaration on 14 May 1948.

At the end of the war, an Arab minority of only 156,000 people remained within the state of Israel. Of this number, 46,000 were internal refugees who were either expelled or fled from their homes and land and had to continue living in other places inside Israel.

(*)

With limited exceptions, Palestinian refugees were never allowed to return to their homes and land. To this end, during the war and in the years immediately following it, Israel destroyed approximately 400 abandoned Palestinian villages and Palestinian neighbourhoods in cities, or settled Jewish immigrants there. Over time, the villages' names were erased from the map, marked as "ruins," or renamed in Hebrew.

Most of the land in those villages was appropriated immediately after the 1948 War and became state land through the Absentees Property Law, which defined Palestinian internal refugees as "present absentees". Further land expropriations followed in the coming decades. Palestinian internal refugees were also barred from returning to their villages, due to restrictions on movement imposed by the military administration that ruled over Palestinians in Israel until the end of 1966.

In all, 85% of the land holdings that were owned by Palestinians within the area that became the state of Israel prior to 1948 were expropriated and became state-owned land. As a result, agricultural lands which constituted the main sources of income for the Palestinian minority that remained within Israel were also seized by the state.

(*)

On 27 April 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, sent a video message [\[1\]](#) to the Israeli President on the

occasion of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of his state. The text of it is as follows:

Dear President Hertzog, dear friends.

Seventy-five years ago, a dream was realised, with Israel's Independence Day. After the greatest tragedy in human history, the Jewish People could finally build a home in the Promised Land.

Today, we celebrate 75 years of vibrant democracy in the heart of the Middle East. Seventy-five years of dynamism, ingenuity and ground-breaking innovations. You have literally made the desert bloom, as I could see from my visit to the Negev last year.

Today we also celebrate 75 years of friendship between Israel and Europe. We have more in common than geography would suggest: our shared culture, our values, and hundreds of thousands of dual European-Israeli citizens have created a deep connection between us."

Europe and Israel are bound to be friends and allies. Your freedom is our freedom. Happy birthday to all the people of Israel.

No mention there that "realising the dream" of a Jewish state involved the ethnic cleansing of over 80% of the indigenous Arab population from the 78% of Palestine that became Israeli territory. In fact, no mention of Palestinians at all. It's as if they don't exist, and never existed.

No mention either of the fact that for the past 56 years the Israeli state has occupied the other 22% of Palestine and established Jewish settlements there, which continue to grow in size and number. The EU has been known to apply economic sanctions to states that engage in this sort of behaviour (for example,

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