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## A racist endeavour

Since its foundation the Israeli state has stolen more and more Palestinian land. Like any colonial-settler project this robbery must involve systematic discrimination against the indigenous population. **Moshé Machover** calls for the de-Zionisation of Israel

That Israel is a racist state is a well-established fact. On July 19 2018, it enacted a quasi-constitutional nationality bill - Basic Law: Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people<sup>1</sup> - which has been widely condemned as institutionalising discrimination against Israel's non-Jewish citizens. As many have observed, this law merely codifies and formalises a reality that long predates it.<sup>2</sup> Within its pre-1967 borders, Israel is an illiberal semi-democracy. It defines itself as "Jewish and democratic", but as its critics point out, it is "democratic for Jews, Jewish for others". In the territories ruled by it since 1967, Israel is a military tyranny, applying one system of laws and regulations to Jewish settlers and an entirely separate one to the indigenous Palestinian Arabs.

The ways in which Israel exercises racist discrimination are too numerous to list here. Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, lists over 65 Israeli laws that discriminate directly or indirectly against Palestinian citizens in Israel and/or Palestinian residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).<sup>3</sup> In addition to these laws there are countless unofficial bureaucratic practices and regulations by which Israeli racist discrimination operates in everyday life.

The conclusion cannot be denied: the state of Israel is *structurally* racist, an apartheid state according to the official UN definition of this term.<sup>4</sup>

### Shocking comparison

In Israeli public discourse, racist speech is extremely common even at the highest level of politics. Some of this high-level racist discourse is almost casual, such as Benjamin Netanyahu's infamous "Arabs voting in droves" video on election day, 17 March 2015,<sup>5</sup> or the "we are not Arab lovers" declaration of Isaac Herzog, leader of Israel's Labor Party.<sup>6</sup> At the most obscene end of the range there are statements by senior politicians containing barely concealed calls for ethnic cleansing.

Some of the harshest condemnation of Israel's racism is voiced by two Israeli academics who, as recognised experts on the history of fascism and Nazism, speak with considerable authority.

Professor Zeev Sternhell is emeritus head of the department of political science



Expansion backed by global hegemon

at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and one of the world's leading experts on fascism.<sup>7</sup> In an article published last year, he referred to statements made by two senior Israeli politicians, members of the ruling coalition, Bezalel Smotrich (deputy speaker of the Knesset, Israel's parliament) and Miki Zohar (chair of one of the Knesset's most important committees). These statements, Sternhell writes, "should be widely disseminated on all media outlets in Israel and throughout the Jewish world. In both of them we see not just a growing Israeli fascism but racism akin to Nazism in its early stages."<sup>8</sup>

This shocking comparison with Nazism is endorsed by Daniel Blatman, professor of history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whose book *The death marches: the final phase of Nazi genocide* won him in 2011 the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research. In a 2017 article he commented that "deputy speaker Bezalel Smotrich's admiration for the biblical genocidaire Joshua bin Nun leads him to adopt values that resemble those of the German SS."<sup>9</sup>

Blatman returned to this topic more recently:

Deputy Knesset speaker MK Bezalel Smotrich ... presented his phased plan, according to which the Palestinians in the occupied territories (and possibly Israeli citizens, too) would become, in the best case, subjects without rights with a status that reminds us of German Jews after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. To the extent that they do not agree to the plan, they will simply be cleansed from here. If they refuse to leave, they will be uprooted violently, which would lead to genocide.

Another elected official from the ruling coalition, Likud's Miki Zohar, did not hesitate to state that the Arabs have a problem that has no solution - they are not Jews and therefore their fate in this land cannot be the same as that of the Jews .... Prof Zeev

Sternhell wrote ... that this racism is "akin to Nazism in its early stages." I think it is Nazism in every way and fashion, even if comes from the school of the victims of historical Nazism. He concludes that "if a racism survey were held in western countries like the one on anti-Semitism, Israel would be near the top of the list."<sup>10</sup>

### Role of racism

Exposing Israel's racism is all too easy. Mere denunciation, without explanation of its underlying context, may actually be misleading if not counter-productive; it may appear as singling Israel out for some peculiar and exceptional moral defect of its leaders or, worse, of its Jewish majority. In fact, racist structures and attitudes, wherever they occur, are part of the legal and ideological superstructure and cannot properly be understood in isolation from their material base.

In the case of Israel, that material base is the Zionist colonisation of Palestine - a process of which Israel is both product and instrument. That the Zionist project is all about the colonisation of Palestine by Jews is, once again, an indisputable fact. It is how political Zionism *described itself* right from the start. Thus, the second Zionist Congress (1898) adopted the following resolution (supplementing the Basel programme adopted at the first Congress a year earlier):

This Congress, in approval of the colonisation already inaugurated in Palestine, and being desirous of fostering further efforts in that direction, hereby declares, that:

For the proper settlement of Palestine, this Congress considers it is necessary to obtain the requisite permission from the Turkish government, and to carry out such settlement according to the plan, and under the direction of a committee, selected by this Congress ....

This committee to be appointed to superintend and direct all matters of colonisation; it shall consist of ten

members, and have its seat in London.<sup>11</sup>

The Congress also resolved to establish a bank to finance the activities of the Zionist movement. The bank was duly incorporated in London in 1899; its name was the Jewish Colonial Trust.<sup>12</sup> Well into the 20th century, Zionists continued to describe their project unabashedly, in a perfectly matter-of-fact way, as one of colonisation. Later in the 20th century this usage became a public relations liability, and the term was replaced by various euphemisms. But the *practice* of colonisation of Palestinian land has continued unabated and is going ahead at full steam to this day.

This context makes Israel's racism quite 'natural', in the sense of conforming to a general law. Every colonisation of an already inhabited territory is accompanied by racism. This is the case whether or not the colonisers arrive with *preconceived* racist ideas. Colonisation invariably meets resistance by the indigenous people. This was clearly understood, for example, by Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880-1940), the founder of the Zionist current that has been politically dominant in Israel for the last 41 years. In his seminal article "The iron wall" (1923) he wrote:

Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of 'Palestine' into the 'Land of Israel' ...

Colonisation can have only one aim, and Palestine Arabs cannot accept this aim. It lies in the very nature of things, and in this particular regard nature cannot be changed.

Zionist colonisation must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power [i.e. Britain - MM] that is independent of the native population - behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach.<sup>13</sup>

In their conflict with the 'natives', the settlers tend to develop racist ideology as self-justification.

We can say more. Racism in general comes in many different variants, and colonisers' racism takes different forms, depending on the type of colonisation. In colonisation based primarily on exploiting the labour power of the indigenous people, the latter are usually depicted by the colonisers as inferior creatures deserving no better fate than working for their conquerors.

But in colonisation based on excluding and displacing the 'natives' rather than incorporating them into the colonial economy as workers, they are usually depicted as dangerous wild and murderous people who ought to be ethnically cleansed. Zionist colonisation belongs to this category. In this respect, it is not unlike the colonisation of what became the United States, except that the Zionist organisation insisted *explicitly and deliberately* on denying employment to non-Jews.<sup>14</sup>

In the US Declaration of Independence, the freedom-loving founding fathers - only some of whom were slave owners - complain that the king of Great Britain "has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."<sup>15</sup> In today's terminology they would no doubt be described as 'terrorists'. The Palestinian Arabs are Israel's "merciless Indian savages".

When viewed against the background of the history of this type of colonisation, Israeli racist ideology and practices are par for the course. The annals of colonisation certainly have grimmer chapters, such as the total extermination of the people of Tasmania, to mention an extreme example. Zionist colonisation is, however, exceptional in being anachronistic: it continues in the 21st century the kind of thing - settler colonialism - that elsewhere ended in the 19th.

To conclude: apart from its anachronism, there is little that is exceptional about Israel's racism. It is rooted in its nature as a settler state. Uprooting colonialist racism requires a change of regime, decolonisation - which in the case of Israel means de-Zionisation!<sup>16</sup> ●

### Notes

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic\_Law:\_Israel\_as\_the\_Nation-State\_of\_the\_Jewish\_People.
- Thus, for example, Bernie Sanders remarked in passing that "the recent 'nation state law' ... essentially codifies the second-class status of Israel's non-Jewish citizens". ("A new authoritarian axis demands an international progressive front" *The Guardian* September 13 2018).
- <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771>.
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime\_of\_apartheid.
- "The right-wing government is in danger. Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves. Left-wing NGOs are bringing them in buses." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/17/binyamin-netanyahu-israel-arab-election>.
- "We are not Arab lovers - Israeli Labor's bankrupt efforts to stave off decline", *Middle East Eye*, 25 April 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/when-israels-main-opposition-party-has-problem-country-palestinian-citizens-1878921672>.
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- "The Israeli Lawmaker Heralding Genocide Against Palestinians" *Ha'aretz* May 23 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-the-israeli-mk-heralding-genocide-against-palestinians-1.5475561>. The biblical reference is to the book of Joshua, which contains a mythical account of the conquest and ethnic cleansing of the land of Canaan (Palestine) by the Israelites. The account is of course purely fictitious, but is taken as inspiration and virtual blueprint by the likes of Smotrich.
- "International Holocaust Remembrance Day: an Israeli hypocrisy" *Ha'aretz* January 28 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-international-holocaust-remembrance-day-an-israeli-hypocrisy-1.5768945>.
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- www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-colonial-trust.
- "The iron wall" (*O Zheleznoi stene*), published November 4 1923 in the Russian-language journal *Rassuyet* (Dawn); English translation <https://tinyurl.com/m8dp3le>.
- See the 1929 constitution of the Jewish Agency, <https://tinyurl.com/yqc3nqpo>.
- <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>.
- See my article "The decolonisation of Palestine" *Weekly Worker* June 23 2016, <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1112/the-decolonisation-of-palestine/>.

SEPT 19

No 25

2019



# Climate change and system change

Neither mainstream politicians, nor jetting royals, nor 'progressive' capitalists have serious answers to the danger of runaway climate change. By contrast **Jack Conrad** shows how the Marxist left can base its programme on deep history, good science and urgent need

**C**limate change is a real and present danger. But there is nothing new about climate change.

Our planet dates back around 4.5 billion years. Earth's first atmosphere mostly consisted of hydrogen and helium - unstable elements which gradually drifted off into outer space. And even after many millions of years of cooling, the Earth's surface temperature is thought to have been a rather balmy 93°C.

Because of the close proximity of the moon, churning volcanic activity and countless asteroid and meteorite strikes, a second atmosphere formed: ammonia, water, methane, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. According to the Oparim-Haldane hypothesis the foaming, mineral rich, storm tossed seas acted as a primeval, or a prebiotic, soup. The first life forms appeared approximately four billion years ago.

Some half a billion years later, great blooms of single-cell, blue-green algae were converting carbon dioxide into oxygen through photosynthesis. The amount of oxygen shot up some 2.4 billion years ago, including free oxygen. Earth's third atmosphere is the product of co-evolution. Indeed, our planet's climate results from the interaction of atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere ... and biosphere.

## Still cooler

Temperatures tended downwards through the successive geological periods. Take 1960-80 as the benchmark. The Cambrian (600-500 million years ago) was 14°C hotter. The Silurian (425-405 million years ago) 4°C hotter. The Devonian (405-345 million years ago) 12°C hotter. The Permian (280-230 million years ago) 2°C colder. The Triassic 10°C hotter. The Jurassic 8°C hotter. The Cretaceous 4°C hotter. The Palaeocene (66-55 million years ago) 10°C hotter.

Doubtless, some of these temperature changes were due to volcanic activity and sun spots. There is also continental drift. Three billion years ago the vast mass of the Earth's surface was covered with water. There were only a few outcrops of dry land. The first supercontinent, the Arctic, arose some 2.5 billion years ago. Eventually it split and drifted apart, but after many more millions of years other supercontinents appeared: Kenorland, Columbia, Rodinia, Pannotia, Gondwana.

Something like our present configuration of continents took shape around 60 million years ago. Doubtless this helped establish our contemporary climate regime. The American and Eurasian land mass more or less encircles the northern pole; that and the continental plate centred on the southern pole provide almost perfect conditions for ensuring an oscillation between cool and cold conditions. The bulk of the Earth's fresh water lies frozen in two gigantic ice sheets.

Over the last million years there has been an interglacial-glacial 100,000-year pattern. Each cycle has had its own particular features and oddities. Understandably, though, as with any study of the past, data becomes ever more uncertain with increasing distances of time. So the best records we possess go from the interglacial, known as the Eemian, down to the present Holocene period - the last 130,000 years have in particular been revealed in some detail with deep ice cores drilled from Greenland and Antarctica.

In terms of climatic transition, the most reliable information is for what is called the Younger Dryas-to-Holocene,



Danger is that the tipping point will be reached in 10 or 20 years

which ended the last ice age. At its maximum, some 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, the Arctic ice sheet extended all the way down to Chicago, New York, Moscow and London and saw much lower sea levels. What is now Britain was joined to France, the Netherlands and Denmark. And, again using the 1960-80 benchmark, we have a -10°C difference.

The qualitative transition to our present-day climatic regime occurred 11,650 years ago and saw the retreat of the great ice sheets. The tipping point seems to have taken only a decade or two. "The speed of this change is probably representative of similar but less well-studied climate transitions during the last few hundred thousand years," conclude the environmental scientists, Jonathan Adams, Mark Maslin and Ellen Thomas.<sup>1</sup> These transitions include sudden cold events (Heinrich events/stadials), warm events (interstadials) and the beginning and ending of long warm phases, such as the Eemian interglacial.

There are less dramatic, but nonetheless significant, patterns of climate change on a smaller scale too. During the present (Holocene) interglacial period, there have been cold and dry phases occurring over a roughly 1,500-year cycle, and climate transitions on a decade-to-century timescale. There have been little ice ages, as well as bursts of relative warmth. Between 1100 and 1300 CE, for example, Europe experienced temperatures which allowed more productive agriculture throughout the continent and saw flourishing English vineyards.

It is also worth recalling that the Thames regularly froze solid during mid-17th century winters and that the years from 1805 to 1820 were comparatively bleak, wet and generally unpleasant. What we are experiencing at present certainly needs to be put into the context of the transition from the little ice age, which finally ended around 1880.

Incidentally, the kaleidoscopic history of the global atmosphere, temperature variations and continental drift explains why those with even a passing knowledge

of the Earth sciences consider the Campaign Against Climate Change such an odd choice of name. It conjures up notions that humanity can, if there is the will, act like some almighty king Canute and command nature to stand still. We can't and it won't.

## Natural and unnatural

'Climate' and 'change' go together like 'weather' and 'change'. The two are inseparable. The weather alters from hour to hour, day to day and month to month. Climate is just big weather. Nasa gives this useful definition of climate: "average weather for a particular region and time period, usually taken over 30 years."<sup>2</sup> So there is nothing unusual about climate change *per se*. In fact climate without change is impossible. Climate change has never ceased, is ongoing and must therefore be considered inevitable. Or, to use a loaded phrase - it is natural. Notions of fixing in place the climate as it now is, or returning it to a pre-industrial ideal, through some kind of technical wizardry or a human exodus, are half-childish, half-sinister and, crucially, are bound to fail.

Consider Britain's climate - a solid record of it lies in the mud and rock beneath our feet. As well as periodic glaciations over the last 20 or 30 million years - in the Quaternary and Tertiary periods - as has already been noted, temperatures have in general been far higher than today. The coal seams of south Yorkshire, south Wales, Lanarkshire and Nottinghamshire were formed in steamy forests and swamps; Dover's white cliffs were laid down under shallow, warm seas; London's clay contains the remains of elephants, hippopotamuses and rhinoceroses.

So claims such as that the hottest 10 years "since records began" have just occurred might apply in terms of reports issued by the London Met Office, but hardly when one considers the geological timescale.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, runaway climate change

is now an almost universally recognised danger. The global climate system probably sits on a razor's edge. Only the self-interested, the downright stupid or the wilfully blind deny it nowadays. If we take temperatures in the northern hemisphere from 1000 CE to the present moment in time, we see alternating ups and downs, but then, around 1880, a sudden and very steep upward curve occurs. The result resembles a hockey stick. Already average global temperatures are 1°C above pre-industrial times<sup>4</sup> - given the time span, very big in climatic terms. Two additional points.

Firstly, while the climate constantly undergoes change, that happens within a relatively stable equilibrium, within a self-adjusting system. Till recently most scientists thought that all large-scale global and regional climate changes took place over a timescale of many centuries or millennia: ie, at rates hardly noticeable during a human lifetime. Gradualism was the ruling orthodoxy. That is no longer the case.

Climate scientists now recognise that quantitative change reaches a trigger point and then flips over into qualitative change. Adams, Maslin and Thomas vouch: "All the evidence indicates that most long-term climate change occurs in sudden jumps rather than incremental changes."<sup>5</sup> Such conclusions were long anticipated by Marxism. Frederick Engels in his *Dialectics of nature* described the jump or leap: "qualitative change ... is determined by a corresponding quantitative change."<sup>6</sup> Given the right conditions, climate change can be triggered by some relatively "small perturbation", one system then tips over into another. New, radically different weather patterns, prevailing winds, oceanic currents, etc, kick in.

Second point. Scientific opinion is overwhelmingly agreed. The temperature rises over the last 100 years or so are primarily due to "human activity."<sup>7</sup> We really are living in the Anthropocene. Industry, agriculture, transport and domestic heating release carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide

(N<sub>2</sub>O) and other such greenhouse gases which have a determining climate impact.

## We'll always have Paris

A recent report by the International Panel on Climate Change projects that global warming will continue at the current rate of ~0.2°C per decade and reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial times around 2040.<sup>8</sup> However, 1.5°C could easily be exceeded in half that time - around 2030 - and 2°C reached by around 2045.

Though theirs is an inexact science, climatologists fear that 1.5°C itself represents a boundary, a tipping point. If correct, after that we could see much reduced cloud cover, an end of the ice caps, soaring temperatures, rising sea levels and the inundation of low-lying cities and fertile plains. Because this might happen within a, relatively speaking, exceedingly short period of time, it could conceivably threaten the "survival of human civilisation."<sup>9</sup> Given the continuation of existing social relations, expect mass migrations, resource wars and pandemics.

True, there is the 2016 Paris climate agreement. Its 195 signatories pledge to limit emissions, so as to ensure that temperatures do not exceed a 1.5°C increase. But the Paris agreement is voluntary, vague and contains all manner of get-out clauses.

And, suffice to say, the leaders of all countries are in thrall to the mantra of economic growth. Typically this is done in the name of ensuring the wellbeing of all. But in reality outcomes are extraordinarily unequal. The mass of the world's population barely ekes out a living. Meanwhile, the few accumulate staggering riches. *Forbes* reports that 1% of the world's population own 45% of the wealth.<sup>10</sup>

Then there is Donald Trump. He threatens a US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement in 2020. The 45th president has already rolled back the Obama administration's environmental measures and is on record as saying that global warming is a hoax concocted by the Chinese government in an attempt to hold back US industry.<sup>11</sup> He is, of course, one of many influential climate-change 'sceptics' operating in high politics.

Jair Bolsonaro, Matteo Salvini, Marine Le Pen, Nigel Farage, Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland come from the same mould. All view action on climate change as an imposition on national sovereignty and a barrier to growth. These counterrevolutionary revolutionaries seek to undo the 'evils' of the October Revolution, roll back democratic rights, stoke up blood-and-soil national chauvinism and extinguish even the possibility of socialism. That is the meaning of the so-called populist right.

So should the left rally to the defence of Paris and seek allies amongst greens, NGOs, liberals and 'progressive' capitalists, such as Bill Gates, George Soros, Richard Branson, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg? Absolutely not.

Two main reasons.

Firstly, we have already demonstrated the criminal inadequacy of the Paris agreement. Its *maximum* goal could actually represent the tipping point that brings civilisational collapse. Why uphold that? We must stand for working class political independence. That requires developing our own programme - not calling for a Jeremy Corbyn government, a general strike or the formation of soviets so as to ensure the implementation of the Paris agreement.

Secondly, it should not be assumed that



protests, declarations and speechifying against the danger of runaway climate change automatically leads to progressive conclusions. Environmentalism usually comes with an ingrained acceptance of capitalism as the natural order and easily leads to demonising the urban and rural poor, especially females, in the so-called third world. This is decidedly the case when it comes to the so-called 'population problem'.

## Population

In class terms greenism amounts to a disenchanting petty bourgeois rebellion against capitalism's accelerating despoliation of nature. Yet, whatever the good intentions, greenism carries a deadly barb. Its denunciations of ecological destruction are joined with talk of "overpopulation" and the limited "carrying capacity" of the planet. "[P]opulation growth ... must be addressed to avoid overpopulation", says the Green Party.<sup>12</sup> Alan Thornett, of Socialist Resistance and Campaign Against Climate Change, goes further: a "major contributory factor" to the ecological crisis is overpopulation.<sup>13</sup> In that spirit, John Andrews, a regular writer for the "radical" webzine *Dissident Voice*, condemns "overpopulation deniers".<sup>14</sup>

Greenism has a very dark side too. The Nazis had their green wing. Hitler's agricultural expert, and later a *Reichsminister*, Walther Darré, idolized nature and its uncompromising laws. Hitler himself expressed his longing for a new faith rooted in nature. He fervently believed that humanity - authentic Aryan humanity, that is - must eventually break with Christianity and fully merge with nature. His alternative religion ended, of course, in the Holocaust and the extermination of millions.

In Britain the Soil Association counted Jorian Jenks amongst its leading members. He edited its journal *Mother Earth* till his death in 1963. He is also considered something of a founding figure of the green movement. However, in the mid-1930s he became a much valued contributor to the *Blackshirt*. He stood as a candidate for the British Union of Fascists and served as a special advisor on agriculture: "fascism alone could make agriculture prosperous again".<sup>15</sup> No surprise - the language Jenks used about Jews is considered "very close to genocidal".<sup>16</sup> The origins of the Green Party in England and Wales lie in the feudal ideal of Oliver Goldsmith and the PEOPLE party. Aristocrat and commoner alike will once again know their place. And let's not forget Jonathon Porret and David Icke. During their time leading the Green Party they advocated halving Britain's population.

There are royal greens too. Speaking barefoot - wow - at a recent Google ecocamp in Sicily's exclusive Verdura resort, Harry Windsor promised to limit his family to no more than two children - his contribution to saving the planet. The irony is unmistakable. The 300 A-list guests flew into Verdura aboard 143 private jets, landed in luxury yachts and stayed in sumptuous apartments - each with its own swimming pool. The total carbon footprint must have been hundreds of tons. More importantly - much more importantly - the royal parasite legitimised the notion that 'people are the problem'.

A toxic idea which sees (Saint) David Attenborough backing Population Matters - a charity which opposed Syrian refugees coming to Britain because of its insistence on zero migration.<sup>18</sup> Another Population Matters sponsor is Paul R Ehrlich, the US biologist and author of the bestseller *The population bomb* (1968). Back then Ehrlich apocalyptically announced: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over." Instead of giving aid to the needy and feeding the hungry, responsible states should henceforth put in place hard measures designed to dispose of surplus people on a global scale.<sup>17</sup>

Indira Gandhi sought to implement that Malthusian programme. During her 1975 emergency six million men were

forcibly sterilised. And, of course, China imposed a one-child policy. Selective abortion has robbed China of 11.9 million females. Even with the abolition of the one-child policy, today there is a 100:117 disparity between the number of girls and boys.<sup>18</sup>

## Laws

In fact, each society possesses its own population laws. Put simply, the reproduction of the human species takes place within different social formations and under different historical circumstances - something the reverend Thomas Malthus palpably 'forgot'. His theory of population floats outside a *theorised* history and therefore took no account of the fundamental distinctions that exist between one society and another. Eg, 11th century feudalism had significantly different population dynamics compared to present-day capitalism.

The peasant family - indeed broadly speaking patriarchal production as a socio-economic system - has an interest in maximising the number of children. Put more accurately, maximising the number of *male* children - a vital distinction. Sons are treasured because they remain *within* the family and through marriage bring in extra wealth in the form of dowries, wives, inheritance and in due course their own children. Girls leave the family and marrying them off costs a small fortune ... their birth is often the cause of mourning in pre-capitalist social formations. Female infanticide was therefore frequent.

The family is a unit of *production*. Boys and girls alike labour in their father's fields from the age of five or six and, of course, not in return for money wages. Food, clothing and shelter are provided - little more. After the age of 10 it is reckoned that children are fully paying for their upkeep. From then on it is gain. Male heirs are also expected to maintain parents into old age. Children are therefore unpaid labourers and a form of social insurance. Given high infant mortality rates, it can easily be appreciated why it is a case of 'the more, the better'.

Apart from capitalism's more primitive, unrestrained and brutal forms, children are an enormous expense for the proletarian family - from the cradle and now well into adulthood. During the industrial revolution, it is true, parents sold their children into work from a tender age. Children of eight or nine did 12 and 14 hour days (until factory acts limited hours). Families could only survive if all available members brought in some kind of wage package (the wife was frequently pregnant - and, lacking reliable birth control and with the peasant mentality still lingering on, she was also typically burdened with a brood of young children hanging on to her breast and skirts).

What of the present-day proletarian family? It is a unit of *consumption*. With universal primary and secondary education, and around half the school population expected to go on to university, the financial outgoings are considerable. Prudential, the insurance company, estimates that on average children cost over £40,000 each.<sup>19</sup> Even after graduation many mums and dads go on to help out their offspring with mortgages, etc.

Certainly nowadays, for *simple reproduction* - not expansion - the proletarian family requires *two* adult incomes. Average *individual* hours might have been forced down - in 1846 parliament passed the first 10-hour act (for what was a five and a half-day week). Full-time male workers in Britain now notch up an average of 39.2 hours.<sup>20</sup> But the workforce has expanded significantly; not least by drawing in more and more women. The total number *employed* is now over 32 million. Roughly a threefold increase over the 1930s. At the beginning of the 20th century females made up 29% of the workforce. Now it is 48%. Women workers today do on average 34.3 hours.<sup>21</sup> Add those figures together and what it tells you is that the family unit is more exploited nowadays and is certainly under more psychological pressures (put

another way, an intensification of labour and relative exploitation). Not least due to these extra drains and life-limiting pressures, on average women have children later and fewer in number compared with the recent past.

In 2018 the average woman in Britain had 1.7 children<sup>22</sup> - down from 2.6 in 1960. What is true of Britain is also true of other so-called developed capitalist countries. Even India is down to 2.3 children per family and is clearly heading to the 2.1 replacement rate.<sup>23</sup>

## Techno solutions

There are many brilliant scientists, engineers and technologists who are furiously working, using their considerable talents, to bring about the so-called 'third disruption' (the first was agriculture and the neolithic counterrevolution, the second was the machine age, in particular the use of fossil fuels). The high tech utopians of Silicon Valley fetishistically worship artificial intelligence, quantum computers, gene editing, nanotechnology, 3-D printing, electronic aeroplanes, driverless cars, solar energy, etc. Amongst their more modest claims is that technology "can save the Earth by 2030".<sup>24</sup>

However, as shown by William Stanley Jevons back in the mid-19th century, such innovations, no matter how revolutionary, lead to a paradox. Increased efficiency results in cheaper commodities, which in turn results in increased demand, and with that comes the increased use of resources. The Jevons paradox is his one and only worthwhile contribution to human knowledge. Amazingly, early Fabians, such as Sidney Webb, George Bernard Shaw and Herbert Somerton Foxwell, considered Jevons and his marginal utility economics far superior to Karl Marx's labour theory of value. Deservedly, however, Jevons is now nothing more than an obscure historic footnote.

Nonetheless, the point has been made. Capitalism treats increased efficiency merely as an opportunity to increase demand. Exchange-value rules. Not use-value. Capitalism moves according to a simple formula: M-C-M'. Money is laid out in order to secure materials and labour-power with a view to one objective and one objective alone: gaining more money. That law of political economy controls the capitalists themselves - even the greenest of greens amongst them - and makes capitalism the most uncontrollable, the most rapacious, the most polluting, the most short-termist system imaginable. Frankly, if one wanted to design a system with the intention of wrecking nature, it would be capitalism. Capitalism is a mode of *destructive* reproduction.

Then there are the advocates of geoengineering. What is being contemplated is proudly upheld by Cambridge University's Centre for Climate Repair.<sup>25</sup> Amongst the suggestions are spraying salt water over clouds, seeding the oceans with iron filings, firing dust into the upper atmosphere, stationing a giant, 2,000-kilometre-diameter eye patch in space to deflect 2% of the sun's rays, growing huge algae beds in the oceans to absorb carbon dioxide, building massive cloud-generating machines, etc.

Given the vast lacunas in our knowledge, such techno-quackery would surely produce completely unintended results. No less to the point, techno-quackery diverts popular attention away from addressing the real problem.

## Programme

Influenced by Justus von Liebig, the founder of modern organic chemistry, Marx developed his theory of a metabolic rift between capitalist production and nature. See 'Large scale industry and agriculture' in *Capital* volume 1 and 'The genesis of capitalist ground rent' in volume 3. Driven by its lust for profit, capitalism pollutes the water and air, fells forests, exhausts the soil and creates deserts. The natural metabolic cycle has to be restored. There has to be sustainable development. Only possible by superseding capitalism, argued Marx.

Frankly, Labour's last general election manifesto, *For the many, not the few* (2017) was far from adequate. What is meant by a "clean economy" is made clear by the

commitment to putting "us back on track to meet the targets of the Climate Change Act and the Paris agreement."<sup>26</sup> There is a climate emergency. Emergency measures are therefore required. With that in mind, we in the Labour Party Marxists recommended these measures - an integral part of a much wider immediate programme.

- Nationalise the land. Nationalise the banks. Nationalise water, electricity, gas, railways and other such natural monopolies.
- Industrial, transport and agricultural polluters must be progressively taxed according to the emissions they produce. That includes shipping and air flight. Carbon, methane and other such greenhouse gases must be minimised. Set a 2025 date for banning hydrofluorocarbon and sulphur hexafluoride gases. End tax breaks for the oil and gas industry. Phase out fossil fuels.
- Boost solar, wind and tidal power.
- Those who produce harmful waste materials should be made to safely dispose of them. Supervision to be carried out by committees of workers, local residents and elected specialists. Recycling must be enforced. Ban the export of waste material for dumping abroad.
- Reduce meat and dairy consumption. Encourage a vegetable-based diet.
- Free urban transport. Cap international business flights. Facilitate conference calls. Shorten the distance between home and work. Promote cycling and walking.
- End the housing shortage. Build good-quality, energy-efficient, well-insulated council houses.
- Encourage urban parks, small farms and roof gardens.
- Rewild selected areas of the countryside. Native species should be reintroduced. Restore flood plains, marshes and wetlands. Turn grouse moors and upland estates back to nature. There must be a concerted programme of reforestation.
- Establish no-fishing zones in coastal sea areas. Create a sustainable fishing industry.

Fighting for such demands helps create the objective and subjective conditions necessary for the working class establish its own rule and break with capitalism's destructive logic. Not that ending capitalism and going over the physical planning is enough. Historically too much of the left has taken for granted a kind of technological Prometheism, whereby once capitalism is overthrown we can do what we like with nature - an arrogance all too often seen in the tragic history of the Soviet Union.

In *Literature and art* (1924) Leon Trotsky breathlessly writes:

The present distribution of mountains and rivers, of fields, of meadows, of steppes, of forests and of seashores, cannot be considered final. Man has already made changes in the map of nature that are not few nor insignificant. But they are mere pupils' practice in comparison with what is coming. Faith merely promises to move mountains; but technology, which takes nothing 'on faith', is actually able to cut down mountains and move them. Up to now this was done for industrial purposes (mines) or for railways (tunnels); in the future this will be done on an immeasurably larger scale, according to a general industrial and artistic plan. Man will occupy himself with re-registering mountains and rivers, and will earnestly and repeatedly make improvements in nature. In the end, he will have rebuilt the earth, if not in his own image, at least according to his own taste. We have not the slightest fear that this taste will be bad.<sup>27</sup>

And the heedless technological Prometheism preached by Trotsky, provided Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev with unattributed inspiration. Leave aside the radioactive waste littered over Kazakhstan, the open-cast mining and the ruinous industrial practices, which caused choking air pollution, poisoned rivers and killed lakes.

In the second half of the 1940s Stalin proposed his 'Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature'. A response to the 1946 drought, which in 1947 left an estimated 500,000-one million dead. Vast tracts of land in the southern steppe were planted with trees to provide an elaborate network of shelterbelts. Rivers feeding into the Aral Sea were diverted - once the world's fourth largest lake, it has now virtually disappeared. Irrigation canals, reservoirs and countless ponds would boost soil fertility. Scientific crop rotation then sees record high yields. Oversight was given over to the now thoroughly discredited agronomist, Trofim Lysenko (he considered the Mendelian theory of gene inheritance an example of "metaphysics and idealism").<sup>28</sup>

Due for completion in 1965, the Grand Plan ended in disaster. The trees died. Crop yields were bitterly disappointing. Topsoil turned to dust, blown, washed away by the wind and the rain.

Khrushchev had his virgin land scheme. In the 1960s the black earth belt in the south was put under the plough. However, crop yields steadily declined. Khrushchev latched upon a Soviet version of geoengineering. Twelve rivers "uselessly" flowing into the Arctic ocean were to be diverted. Reversing the Pechora was not only going to boost agricultural production: the shrinking Aral and Caspian seas were to be replenished. Part of the grand design envisaged creating a vast new river channel using 250 nuclear explosions. Three 15-kiloton devices were actually detonated - inevitably causing significant radioactive fallout. The harebrained scheme was finally abandoned in 1986 - who knows what the results would have been if the whole project had been implemented? A rapidly advancing Arctic ice sheet? Leningrad and Moscow permanently frozen?

Our maximum programme begins after the overthrow of the capitalist state and involves the transition to communism. However - and it needs to be emphasised - even the associated producers can make disastrous mistakes.

Nature must be treated with respect and care. The humans of one generation have to pass on the Earth to succeeding generations in an improved state. They should therefore act as responsible guardians. We are not the Earth's owners ●

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# No pacts, no coalitions

**James Marshall** warns that, while Boris Johnson may well hanker after an illiberal democracy, calls for a caretaker government and a second referendum are worse than useless

Labour has successfully been manoeuvred into supporting a second referendum. Frankly, that neatly dovetails into the Boris Johnson-Dominic Cummings game plan.

Having established a firm grip on the executive arm of government, Johnson and Cummings still envisage token talks with Brussels, riding roughshod through the EU (Withdrawal) (No2) Act - the Benn Act - and then, "do or die", finally delivering Brexit on October 31. A 'people versus the elite' general election would quickly follow.

Meanwhile, unless 11 Supreme Court judges decide otherwise, both Commons and Lords are not only prorogued till October 18. The remain camp is hopelessly divided and seems incapable of doing anything decisive to stop Johnson and his Brexit. Symptoms of what Karl Marx famously called the incurable disease of "parliamentary cretinism."<sup>1</sup>

Jo Swinson has switched the Liberal Democrats from 'second referendum remain' to 'general election revoke'. Jeremy Corbyn has been dragged into adopting a second referendum *after* a general election position. As *de facto* leader of Labour's rightwing backbenchers, Tom Watson insists on a second referendum *before* a general election. As for the Scottish National Party, it supports a second EU referendum call, but with a beady eye to holding a second independence referendum for Scotland.

Amongst the many desperate ideas, one is to install Jeremy Corbyn as "caretaker" prime minister.<sup>2</sup> Of course, that will require gaining support from the SNP, the Lib Dems and the gaggle of former Labour and Tory MPs. It also opens the door to another "caretaker" candidate - if the Lib Dems, SNP and former Labour and Tory MPs find Corbyn unacceptable. Step forward a Ken Clarke, a Harriet Harman or a Keir Starmer. After all if stopping a no deal Brexit is the most important question facing the United Kingdom, surely Corbyn is obliged to do his patriotic duty. Make way for someone else for the sake of queen and country. But, no, Corbyn as "caretaker" prime minister, is "non-negotiable", insists shadow chancellor, John McDonnell.<sup>3</sup>

It is highly unlikely that there will be a second referendum. Boris Johnson will not go for it ... though he is doubtless delighted that Jeremy Corbyn has fallen into the elephant trap.

Yet imagine, for one moment, that the remain camp overcomes its paralysis and succeeds in getting a government committed to holding a second referendum. What would the result be?

While opinion polls show clear majorities wanting a "say" on any final Brexit deal, a remain victory is far from certain. YouGov (September 4) has 46% remain and 43% leave; Panel base (September 6) 52% remain and 45% leave; and Dextral (September 7) 46% remain and 40% leave.<sup>4</sup> The sort of margin we saw at the beginning of the June 23 2016 referendum campaign.

Because things are too close to call, the likes of Tony Blair and Justine Greening have proposed a three-option referendum (obviously in order to guarantee their desired result). Through perpetuating such a blatantly dishonest trick, argues David Jeffrey, a lecturer in politics at Liverpool university, it is theoretically possible for just 34% of voters to decide the "winning option".<sup>5</sup> With the right questions placed on the ballot paper, such a referendum would see two bitterly opposed leave camps and a comparatively aloof remain campaign.

If a preferential vote is added into the formula, then the least popular option would be eliminated and there would be a count-



A low wage low rights regime needs a strong police force to crush opposition

off between the last two questions ... and, so remain would, so goes the calculation, emerge the winner with over 50% of the vote.

Even barring such transparent forms of cheating, say remain narrowly won in a straightforward two-option referendum, what do we expect the 49% (or whatever) - ie, those who vote leave - to do? Sit on their hands? Cosily unite with remainers in the national interest? Hardly.

No less to the point, Labour, presumably, will be squeezed in a general election, held either before or after any such second referendum. If they play their cards right, Johnson and Tories can count on mopping up the Brexit Party vote and maybe, as a result, capturing a few seats in the English midlands and the north: seven in every 10 of Labour's constituencies voted leave on June 23 2016. And having been shunted into the remain camp, Labour has to fight the resurgent SNP in Scotland and the resurgent Lid Dems in London and the south east. Not a good position.

Jeremy Corbyn could conceivably pull off another miracle, as he did in 2017. But, unless the ongoing trigger ballots have seen a thorough going purge of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the majority of sitting Labour MPs will continue to be an enemy within. They will continue to disrupt, sabotage and smear.

## Popular front

Much of what passes for the left is utterly confused, is utterly disorientated: eg, Boris Johnson is a "pound shop Mussolini", who on September 9 carried out a "coup" and an "assault on democracy" (Alliance for Workers' Liberty). No, Johnson acted entirely within the existing semi-democratic constitutional monarchy. That said, the prognosis offered by these social imperialists is not entirely wrong.

Brexit points towards a low-tax, low-regulation, low-rights economy. The working class can only but suffer. But their cure amounts to cyanide: "a strictly single-shot caretaker government which will send the Brexit-extension letter to the EU and call a general election."<sup>6</sup> Okay, the PM might possibly be Jeremy Corbyn ... or a Ken Clarke, or a Harriet Harman, or a Keir Starmer. But who will be the chancellor of the exchequer? Who will be home secretary? Who will be minister of defence? Etc, etc. Unmistakably a recipe for popular front negotiations to be crowned by a government of national unity.

Another, strange, proponent of this line is Paul Mason. Though he's made the long march from Trotskyism to wizard wheeze techno-reformism, he cannot, surely, have forgotten the history of the 1930s, that he once treated as an article of faith when he was a member of Workers Power. Anyway, here is what he wrote in *The Guardian*:

The popular front tactic has deep antecedents in the very political traditions of the modern Labour left emerged from. In 1935 the Bulgarian communist leader, Georgi Dimitrov, single-handedly manoeuvred the Communist International into supporting calls for a 'popular front' against fascism. This was about formal electoral pacts with centrist socialists, left nationalists and liberals - and it paid off within six months. In Spain, to the fury of conservatives, who had formed their own electoral alliance with the fascists, the popular front took power in January 1936.<sup>7</sup>

Mason's argument is, in fact, so absurd, that his good faith must be called into question. Either he has suffered some kind of brain storm, that or he is baiting his old

comrades. Clearly Mason relishes his new found role as a 'blue skies' thinker for the bourgeoisie, but presumably he cannot resist scandalising the old-fashioned Trotskyites who inhabit the deeper reaches of the Labour Party. As for the rest of his audience. He presumably holds it in such contempt that he does not even expect the most cursory Wikipedia fact-checking exercise.

With the least investigation Mason's account of the Spanish popular front and popular fronts in general, proves to be entirely bogus. Behind the figurehead of Georgi Dimitrov there stood Joseph Stalin. It was he, Stalin, not Dimitrov, who 'single-handedly' manoeuvred the Communist International into supporting popular fronts. Paul Mason does not want to tell this inconvenient truth. His *Guardian* readers would be repelled. But then there are the unrepentant Straight Leftists - Seamus Milne, Steve Howell and Andrew Murray - serving as Jeremy Corbyn's principle advisors. Maybe they, as good Stalinites, welcome Paul Mason's conversion to popular frontism. Maybe elevation awaits?

Historically the Communist International (and before it the First and Second Internationals) championed working class independence. In other words the project of socialism as opposed to the project of a reformed capitalism. A united front between working class parties was considered legitimate. This *tactic* involved presenting reformist socialist and social democratic parties with a package of campaigning demands with a view to advancing the interests of the working class.

Primarily though, this approach was designed to win over the mass of the working class to the Communist Party. The calculation being that the leaders of the socialist and social democratic parties would either fight heartedly, that or they

would prefer unity with the bourgeoisie to the unity of the working class. It should be stressed that Comintern's tactic involved *real* parties of the working class. Not minuscule sects such as the SWP, SPEW, the *Morning Star's* CPB, etc, etc.

Taking seats in a bourgeois cabinet, supporting one (lesser evil) bourgeois party against another (greater evil) bourgeois party was explicitly ruled out. Needless to say, Stalin definitively broke with that tradition in 1935. Under irresistible pressure from Moscow, the world's communist parties were instructed to support 'progressive' capitalist governments (potential diplomatic allies of the Soviet Union). Naturally, towards that end, all notions of proletarian social revolution had to be put on the back burner.

The 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain encouraged the Labour Party to join with it an anti-fascist popular front alongside an assorted mish mash of soft conservatives, liberals and well meaning pacifists, actors and vicars. The Independent Labour Party and the Socialist League was drawn to that perilous orbit, not least due to the prestige of the Soviet Union and the palpable threat of Hitler fascism. However the Labour Party itself steadfastly resisted: ironically in the name of working class independence.

Likewise it appears to escape Mason's notice that the Spanish republic was *defeated* in a civil war. Its partisans were butchered on an industrial scale. As many as 200,000 are thought to have been killed *after* the war had finally finished. General Franco wanted revenge.

In fact, the political compromises necessitated by the popular front directly, inescapably, contributed to the horrendous defeat. Eg, the 'official' communists *opposed* colonial independence movements. Stalin did not want to upset 'anti-fascist' imperial powers. In Spain *crucially* that meant



opposing independence for Morocco, the main base of Franco's mercenary army. Rather than appeal to the Moroccan masses and win them to the fight against Francoism, the Spanish republican government loyally upheld the constitutional order.

The logic had to be counterrevolutionary. Those seeking, albeit often hamfistedly, to push things forward to a full blown social revolution, were branded enemies of the people, even a Francoist fifth column. Thousands of anarchists and POUM members were tortured and executed. In short, the 'official' communists in Spain acted not like Bolsheviks in October 1917, but like the rightwing of the Menshevik Party who joined the February 1917 Provisional Government.

## Reaction

A popular front that stops Brexit would undoubtedly unleash a storm of reaction. Chauvinism, xenophobia and imperial nostalgia will not easily surrender. Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees Mogg, Dominic Cummings, Nigel Farage, Tommy Robinson, the DUP, Britain First, the Football Lads Alliance can only but be expected to loudly bang the great betrayal drum. Their message well rehearsed. The leave campaign won the June 2016 referendum fair and square. The votes of 17.4 million people have been ignored, treated with contempt. Britain remains shackled to Europe because of a dastardly conspiracy hatched by Brussels bureaucrats, George Soros, Whitehall mandarins, the self-serving political elite, the City, big business, trade union bosses ... and their leftwing allies.

Amplification will be provided by *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun*, *The Express* and the buzzing swarm of alt right websites and bloggers. One can easily imagine discontent spreading to the army. Note, in 1914 the Tories, Ulster Unionists and the army high command effectively supported the Curragh Mutiny which derailed home rule in Ireland. Army officers staged mass resignations while the Ulster Volunteer Force imported 24,000 rifles.

Barry Gardiner, Labour's shadow foreign trade minister, has warned for some time that a second referendum would boost the far-right and could lead to "civil disobedience".<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Andrew Duff, a former Lib Dem MEP, claims that another referendum might "even pitch the country into a revolutionary situation".<sup>9</sup> Such fears are not entirely groundless.

## Could it happen here?

Back in 1935 Sinclair Lewis chose the ironic title *It can't happen here* for his bestselling novel. His plotline has a charismatic and madly ambitious American politician, Berzelius 'Buzz' Windrip, cynically promoting traditional Christian values, winning the trust of the wealthy, denouncing Jews, fuelling hatred for Mexicans and promising impoverished electors instant prosperity. In short, America will be made great again.

Buzz easily defeats Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the presidential race and goes on to establish a horribly autocratic regime: Congress and the Supreme Court are emasculated. "Irresponsible and seditious elements" are physically crushed by the Minute Men, a ruthless paramilitary force, acting under the direct command of the president. Many thousands are interned and many more flee north to Canada.

Could it happen here? Following a script carefully crafted by the master of the dark political arts, the election 'guru', Sir Lynton Crosby, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson - otherwise known by the mononym 'Boris' - skilfully blew the anti-establishment, anti-EU, anti-Muslim dog whistle: "letter box" and "bank robbers" all in the context of Theresa May's Brexit negotiations.

With his narrative of Muslims as other, Brexit betrayal and the magic of post-Brexit free trade, he was bound to win the Tory contest to succeed the hapless Theresa May. He remains hugely popular and not

only amongst the "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists" who make up the Tory rank and file. According to opinion polls, a Boris Johnson-led Conservative Party that has been thwarted by the Westminster elite over Brexit, would be well placed electorally.

Johnson would promise to restore national honour, freedom and prosperity, a global Britain closely aligned with Donald Trump's USA. But, in the short term, sacrifices will be needed. And that requires discipline. Law and order.

After all, the EU refuses to play fair; its Labour, Lib Dem and SNP collaborators continue to betray the national interest. Strikes, street protests, uprisings staged by the 'usual suspects' - ie, trade unionists, leftwing activists, students, etc - objecting to the roll back of social, workplace and democratic rights. They will be dealt with using the full force of the law. Boris Johnson's 'police speech' on September 5, backdropped as it was by a phalanx of new recruits, comes straight off the pages of Sinclair Lewis. There is more than a whiff of Berzelius 'Buzz' Windrip about Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson.

## Undemocratic

Not that our objection to a second EU referendum is based on short term considerations.

True, the popular support base enjoyed by the Brexiteers has to be won over. It is stupid to dismiss the 51% who voted 'leave' in June 2016 as a single reactionary bloc. Equally, in their own way, the same goes for the 49% who voted remain. They do not constitute a single progressive bloc.

No, we Marxists reject referendums as a matter of principle. By their very nature they are undemocratic. Referendums bypass representative institutions and serve, in general, to fool enough of the people, enough of the time. And yet referendums have the great virtue of appearing to be the epitome of democracy. That explains why Harold Wilson, Tony Blair and David Cameron have all used them.

Complex issues are simplified, drained of nuance, reduced to a crude choice that cuts across class loyalties. Hence, today, one half of the working class are leavers. The other half remainers. Tragic, but not surprising.

Our objections to referendums are long-standing. Marxists opposed the 'Vote for the crook, not for the fascist' presidential election in France in 2002. That amounted to a referendum. Before that, Marxists urged an active boycott of Tony Blair's 1997 referendum in Scotland. Then the 1998 Good Friday referendum in Ireland and the Scottish independence referendum of 2014. Both offered a bogus choice. An unacceptable past versus an unacceptable future.

Hence, in June 2016, Marxists called for an active boycott. Admittedly our results were very modest - 25,000 spoilt ballot papers. Nonetheless, it is crystal clear nowadays. David Cameron's objective was not to give power to the people. On the contrary, he calculated on outflanking Ukip, wrong-footing Labour, satisfying his frothing Europhobes ... and hanging on as prime minister. No reason, whatsoever, to give him support.

John McDonnell claims he is "inspired" by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci.<sup>10</sup> Well then, let us cite him, on referendums. He writes this in June 1921:

The communists are ... on principle opposed to the referendum, since they place the most advanced and active workers, who make the greatest sacrifices, on the same plane as the most lazy, ignorant and idle workers. If one wants direct, individual consultations, then this must take place in assemblies, after an organised debate, and a vote must presuppose knowledge of what is at stake and a sense of responsibility.<sup>11</sup>

It ought to be emphasised, however, this general principle does not translate into automatically refusing to call for a referendum vote under all circumstances. Nor does it translate into a general principle

of always responding to a referendum organised by our enemies with a corresponding call for an active boycott. To vote this way or that way, to set about an active boycott campaign, etc, is always a tactical decision.

Eg, Marxists urged a 'yes' vote in Ireland's May 2015 referendum on gay marriage, the same with Ireland's May 2018 referendum on abortion. And, in the UK, while being critical of the Liberal Democrat proposal for reforming the parliamentary voting system, Marxists called for a 'yes' vote in the May 5 2011 referendum. Despite the glaring inadequacies, our judgment was that, on balance, getting rid of the 'wasted vote' syndrome would be a "small gain" and provide better conditions for the left to develop than the first-past-the-post system. Needless to say, we are programmatically committed to a thoroughgoing proportional representation system, party lists and the right of the party to recall MPs, MEPs, councillors, etc.

The Lib Dems wanted an alternative vote system. Voters would be asked not to opt for a single candidate, but tick candidates off in an order of preference - 1, 2, 3, etc. Faced with an election held under such a system we would advise voting along strict class lines: no vote for petty bourgeois or bourgeois parties. True, calling for a 'yes' vote lined Marxists up with the Lib Dems, the Greens, Ukip, Sinn Féin and Plaid Cymru. Labour adopted no official position, while Respect, the SWP, SPEW and the *Morning Star's* CPB supported the Tory 'no' campaign.

However, our principled opposition to referendums stands. They are not a higher form of democracy than the election of well-tested working class representatives, Marxist politics and extensive public debate. Referendums, on the contrary, tend to divide the working class, weaken its party spirit and produce the strangest of bedfellows.

In terms of our tradition, things unmistakably date back to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The Marx-Engels team knew all about the undemocratic nature of referendums, given the bitter experience of Louis Bonaparte and his 'self-coup d'état' in 1851, and then his self-elevation to emperor in 1852 (each autocratic power-grab being legitimised by a referendum). Bonaparte went on to impose press censorship, restrict demonstrations and public meetings, savagely repress political opponents (mainly red republicans) and force thousands into exile - amongst them the celebrated writer, Victor Hugo. Initially a supporter, Hugo furiously denounced Bonaparte's referendums as a means to "smother men's minds".<sup>12</sup> In the same defiant spirit, George Sand (Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin), damned them as "an infamous snare".<sup>13</sup>

Marx and Engels, along with their co-thinkers, Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, presented their alternative to the post-1871 third republic - in essence a reformed version of Bonapartism - in the minimum section of the *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier*. Here it is explained that the creation of a workers' party "must be pursued by all the means the proletariat has at its disposal, including universal suffrage, which will thus be transformed from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation". The party will fight for the confiscation of church wealth; remove restrictions on the press, meetings, organisations, etc; and abolish the standing army and replace it with the "general arming of the people".<sup>14</sup>

The Marx-Engels position opposing referendums became the common sense of the Second International, including both its far left and its far right. Arturo Labriola, the Italian syndicalist, wrote his *Contro il referendum* in 1897. He castigated referendums as a cruel trick. In 1911 Ramsay MacDonald, Labour leader and future prime minister, came out in similar terms: referendums are "a clumsy and ineffective weapon, which the reaction can always use more effectively than democracy, because it, being the power to say 'no', is far more useful to the few than the many".<sup>15</sup>

The still widely venerated constitutional

theorist, AV Dicey, promoted an all-UK referendum in the 1890s as a means to scupper Irish home rule - Ulster Unionists ran with his referendum proposal and demanded that it be integrated into the constitution; in 1910 Stanley Baldwin included the promise of a referendum over tariff reform in the Tory manifesto, and challenged the Liberals do the same with Irish home rule; in 1911 Lord Balfour tabled his 'people bill' in the House of Lords, allowing 200 MPs to petition the crown for a referendum and thereby potentially block unwelcome government legislation; in 1913 Lord Curzon floated a referendum as a democratic way to prevent the extension of the franchise to women; and, as the reform bill giving women over 30 the vote was passing through parliament in 1918, 53 peers wrote to *The Times* urging a referendum.<sup>16</sup>

However, there were those useful idiots on the left who were attracted by the idea of referendums and the right of the people to initiate referendums. Karl Kautsky, the celebrated pope of Marxism, chose Moritz Rittinghausen, a German social democrat, as his main polemical target over the issue.<sup>17</sup>

Kautsky's *Parliamentarism, direct legislation by the people and social democracy* (1893) was designed to shoot down referenda nostrums and uphold the strategic perspective he outlined in his hugely influential commentary on the Erfurt programme, known in English as *The class struggle*. Even if referendums could replace existing representative institutions, as extreme 'against elections' advocates still want, this would represent, not a step forward for democracy, but a *step backward*.

Kautsky fields three main arguments. Firstly, Kautsky stresses that there are very few situations where there is a simple binary choice in politics. Eg, even assuming that there is a straightforwardly 'right thing to do', it is rarely obvious what the right thing to do is. Very frequently, there is not a choice to be made between option 1 or 2, but options 1 to 7 and within these options, 1 (a) (i), 1 (a) (ii), 1 (b) ... and so on and so forth. To reach a decision, then, it is necessary to reduce the range of options. That is, of course, why Kautsky advocates extending representative democracy and the process of debate, motions, detailed votes and binding legislation.

Secondly - and this is no less important - Kautsky wanted to strengthen the system of party politics. In the transition period between capitalism and communism, it is, he said, vital for the broad mass of the population to think about, to organise around and to vote for competing party outlooks. That has the advantage of bringing to the fore class divisions. Referendums, on the other hand, have the disadvantage of blurring, overriding, deflecting, the fundamental conflict in society between class and class, and the respective conflict between party and party: precisely the *opposite* of what Marxists want to see.

Thirdly, Kautsky stresses the point that Marxists strive - particularly through their emphasis on a working class party - to bring about a situation in which the state is as weak and the people are as strong and organised as possible. He draws a vital distinction between, on the one hand, 'the people' as an unorganised mass who do not think about national or global issues in a coherent fashion, and 'the people' organised into, or by, a workers' party. One is to be the perpetual victim of lies, fraud and humbug. The other readies itself as the future ruling class.

## Memory loss

The reason why the left has largely forgotten the history of opposing referendums in the name of *extending representative democracy* surely stems from a number of factors. Above all, though, it must be the general decline in our political culture. A working knowledge of Marxist theory, socialist literature and the history of the revolutionary movement can no longer be taken for granted. There is certainly no common understanding of the necessity of a minimum programme and emphasising the battle to win democracy.

Once there were mass Marxist parties: now we have bottom dwelling confessional sects. They produce little or nothing worthwhile in terms of ideas. True, Labour has some 500,000 members, but while the Labour Party has always had plenty of socialists in its ranks, the Labour Party itself has never been a real socialist party. Disgracefully, we are still lumbered with the managerial guff Tony Blair substituted for the old clause four in 1995. And though, given the chance, LPM delegates to the Brighton conference will vote to restore the old clause four, there should be no forgetting that it is socialist in name only. Agreed in 1918, Sidney Webb's clause four was socialist in name only. What this gilded Fabian produced was a recipe for a British empire version of state capitalism: colonial peoples would remain nationally oppressed, workers would remain wage slaves.

Sadly, an unacknowledged Fabian socialism survives in the form of Momentum, the Labour Representation Committee, *Labour Briefing* (Original), Campaign for Labour Democracy, etc. Take the all too frequent claim that a Labour government can deliver full employment, an equal society and an economy that works for all. Impossible, of course, without abolishing the capitalist system.

And, as can be seen with The World Transformed event, there are sappy good intentions, the fostering of illusions, activist training ... and turning a blind eye to what is going on. Hence, no place for debating how to combat the on-going witch hunt, the anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism lies, how to reverse the backtracking on Trident, how to guard against the dangers of coalitionism, let alone how to transform the Labour Party.

We in the LPM are absolutely clear. Our goal is a Labour Party that, in the words of Keir Hardie, can "organise the working class into a great, independent political power to fight for the coming of socialism".<sup>18</sup> That quote comes from the time when he was under the influence of Second International Marxists such as August Bebel, Karl Kautsky and Vladimir Lenin.

We certainly need to campaign for the affiliation of *all* trade unions, the automatic reselection of MPs, a radical democratisation at every level and a rule change which would *once again* allow left, communist and revolutionary groups and parties to affiliate - as long as they do not stand against us in elections, this can only but strengthen Labour as a federal party. Nowadays affiliated organisations include the Fabians, Christians on the Left, the Cooperative Party and, problematically, the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Business. We say encourage the SWP, SPEW, the Communist Party of Great Britain, Left Unity, Socialist Appeal, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, etc, to join Labour's ranks as affiliates ●

## Notes

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16. See V Bogdanor *The people and the party system: the referendum and electoral reform in British politics* Cambridge 1981, pp9-94.
17. See B Lewis, 'Referenda and direct democracy' *Weekly Worker* September 18 2014; K Kautsky, 'Direct legislation by the people and the class struggle' *Weekly Worker* March 31 2016.
18. *Independent Labour Party Report of the 18th annual conference* London 1910, p59.



# Out with the new, in with the old

David Sherriff says that, while it is right to vote for the old Fabian clause, the task of Marxists must be to win the Labour Party to Marxist socialism

Clause four - rewritten under Tony Blair in 1995 - carries a totemic status for partisans both of the right and left. But while it is correct to support the rule change proposed by Rochford, Southend East, Doncaster Central and Wallasey (which would reinstate the old Fabian 1918 clause four), we need to be far bolder, far more radical about our vision for the future.

Strangely the moving spirit behind the restoration of the old clause four is Socialist Appeal, the British section of the International Marxist Tendency. Its Labour4Clause4 campaign has garnered support from the likes of Ken Loach, the leftwing film director and MPs Karen Lee, Dennis Skinner, Ian Mearns, Chris Williamson, Dan Carden and Ronnie Campbell. Alongside them there are like-minded trade union leaders such as Steve Gillan of the POA, Ian Hodson and Ronnie Draper of the bakers' union, and Mick Cash and Steve Hedley of RMT.

## A bit of history

Our February 1918 conference agreed a new constitution. Clause four (objects) committed the Labour Party to these aims (subsequently amended in 1959):

1. To organise and maintain in parliament and in the country a political Labour Party.
2. To cooperate with the general council of the Trades Union Congress, or other kindred organisations, in joint political or other action in harmony with the party constitution and standing orders.
3. To give effect as far as possible to the principles from time to time approved by the party conference.
4. To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.
5. Generally to promote the political, social and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life.
6. To cooperate with the labour and socialist organisations in the commonwealth overseas with a view to promoting the purposes of the party, and to take common action for the promotion of a higher standard of social and economic life for the working population of the respective countries.
7. To cooperate with the labour and socialist organisations in other countries and to support the United Nations and its various agencies and other international organisations for the promotion of peace, the adjustment and settlement of international disputes by conciliation or judicial arbitration, the establishment and defence of human rights, and the improvement of the social and economic standards and conditions of work of the people of the world.

These formulations - crucially the fourth - are too often celebrated as being a defining socialist moment. Yet, when first mooted in November 1917 - amidst the slaughter of inter-imperialist war - Sidney Webb, its principle author, Fabian guru and social climber - had no thought, no wish, no intention of promoting genuine socialism. Parliament, the courts, enlightened civil servants and the liberal intelligentsia provided his road to a reformed British empire. Webb wanted a government of magnanimous experts whose decisions would be no more than ratified in elections:



even referendums were ruled out as impeding the will of the educated elite.

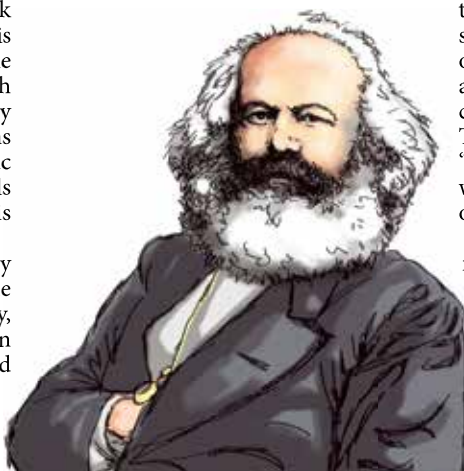
Top leaders of the Fabian Society - eg, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Annie Besant, Sydney Olivier, HG Wells and George Bernard Shaw - considered themselves social engineers of the highest order, intellectual princes, prophets of the future. The role of these ever so clever people was to slowly, patiently, courteously persuade the great and the good of the benefits of 'socialism' ... hence their organisation's chosen name (taken from Quintus Fabius, the Roman general who avoided pitched battles with Hannibal's superior Carthaginian army and instead pursued a strategy of attrition).

No surprise, Marxists have long considered Fabianism to be the crassest expression of opportunism. Fredrick Engels showed particular contempt for this "well-meaning gang of eddicated middle class folk."<sup>1</sup> True, he credited them with enough wit to realise the "inevitability of the social revolution." But the Fabians could not possibly entrust this "gigantic task to the raw proletariat alone." Engels concluded that "[f]ear of revolution is their guiding principle."<sup>2</sup>

The real class war was denounced by the Fabian ladies and gentlemen. The underlying social contradiction in society, according to them, was not between labour and capital, but the idle rich and the industrious masses ... of all classes. Managers and entrepreneurs provide an invaluable service to society. As long as they honestly paid their taxes, fat profits

Fabian window: Sidney Webb, Edward Pease (top right) and other Fabians fancied themselves as the makers of a bourgeois socialism.

Karl Marx's proletarian socialism is an act of self-liberation



and fat salaries are fully justified. In other words original Fabianism amounted to nothing more than a form of bourgeois socialism.

The Fabian Society was not only elitist. Their leaders were thorough-going eugenicists too. Friedrich Nietzsche provided a warped inspiration. HG Wells urged the death penalty for those suffering from "genetically transferable diseases". Defective men, women and children were to be dealt with by the means of a "lethal chamber".<sup>3</sup>

As for the "swarms of black, and brown, and dirty white and yellow people" who did not match his criteria of intelligence and efficiency: "they will have to go". It is their "portion to die out and disappear".<sup>4</sup> With that noble end in mind Shaw demanded that "[e]xtermination must be put on a scientific basis if it is ever to be carried out humanely and apologetically and well as thoroughly".<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the working class was to be lifted out of their ignorance. The more stubborn sections herded into "human sorting houses" to be trained for work. Those who refused would be packed off to semi-penal detention colonies.

The Fabians were committed pro-imperialists too. According to their *Fabianism and empire* (1900) tract, Britain needed to get its fair share of the spoils from the division of the world:

The partition of the greater part of the globe among such [great] powers is, as a matter of fact that must be faced, approvingly or deploringly, now

only a question of time; and whether England [sic] is to be the centre and nucleus of one of those great powers of the future, or to be cast off by its colonies, ousted from its provinces, and reduced to its old island status, will depend on the ability with which the empire is governed as a whole, and the freedom of its governments and its officials from complicity in private financial interests and from the passions of the newspaper correspondents who describe our enemies as 'beasts'.<sup>6</sup>

Fabian socialism valued politeness and good manners on all occasions, even in the midst of a voracious imperialist war of conquest. Over the years 1899-1902, as good patriots, the Fabians backed Britain's war against the Boer republics: the "native races" must be "protected despotically by the empire or abandoned to slavery and extermination."<sup>7</sup>

The British empire was portrayed as a benevolent bringer of democracy to the white dominions and a saviour of the 'lower breeds'. The best interests of 'black, brown and yellow' peoples lay in being ruled over by young men fresh out from Britain's public schools. Under their guiding hand they would eventually be led to "adulthood."<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, as an aside, the Fabians thought that the South African war demonstrated the "superiority of a militia" system over the professional army.<sup>9</sup> An idea that much of the contemporary left refuses even to contemplate.

Naturally, come the 1914-18 great war, the Fabians did their best to serve the imperial cause. Europe had to be saved from the Junkers and Prussian militarism.

However, as the war dragged on and the corpses piled up, any initial popular enthusiasm turned into discontent. The February 1917 revolution in Russia galvanised the hopes of many. Workers, including those in the munitions industry, took strike action. Demands for a negotiated peace grew and amongst sections of the ruling class there were serious worries that Britain stood on the edge of revolution. Reports came of mutinies in army base camps and the killing of military policemen. June 1917 saw a big labour movement conference in Leeds. Famously delegates called for a national network of Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets on the model of Russia. Then came the October Revolution which shook the whole capitalist world to its very foundations. Bourgeois politicians rushed to make concessions. Hence, Sidney Webb and the drafting of clause four.

By cynical calculation he had three goals in mind.

Firstly, his clause four socialism could be used to divert the considerable rank-and-file sympathy that existed for the Russian Revolution into safe, peaceful and exclusively constitutional channels. Not that that stopped prime minister David Lloyd George from declaring, in his closing speech of the 1918 general election campaign, that the "Labour Party is being run by the extreme pacifist Bolshevik group".<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, by adopting clause four socialism, the Labour Party could both distinguish itself from the exhausted, divided and rapidly declining Liberal Party and please the trade union bureaucracy. Since the 1890s the TUC had been drawing up various wish lists of what ought to be nationalised: eg, rails, mines, electricity, liquor and land. Clause four socialism also usefully went along with the grain of Britain's wartime experience. There was steadily expanding state intervention in the economy. Nationalisation was, as a result, widely identified with efficiency,



modernisation and beating the Austro-German foe. It therefore appealed to technocratically minded elements amongst the middle classes.

Thirdly, clause four socialism had to be implicitly anti-Marxist. Webb well knew the history of the Social Democratic Party in Germany. And, of course, Karl Marx savaged various passages in its *Gotha programme* (1875), not least those which declared that every worker should receive a "fair distribution of their proceeds of labour" and that "the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society".<sup>11</sup>

Contradictory and vacuous, seethed Marx. What is fair? What about replacement means of production? What about the expansion of production? What about those unable to work? More than that, Marx explained these and other such woolly formulations as unneeded concessions to the followers of Ferdinand Lassalle. His *Workers' programme* (1862) called for "an equal right to the undiminished proceeds of labour". Obviously Webb wanted to give clause four a distinct Lassallean coloration not out of admiration for Lassalle, but because he wanted to distance the Labour Party from Marxism.

## Red ribbon

Almost needless to say, clause four was mainly for show. A red ribbon tied around what was Labourism's standing programme of social liberalism. In parliament Labour supported Liberal governments and their palliative measures of social reform. Because of its alliance with the Liberal Party, the party even found itself divided over the abolition of the House of Lords and the fight for female suffrage. While a minority - eg, George Lansbury and Keir Hardie - defended the suffragettes and their militant tactics, the majority craved respectability. As Ramsay MacDonald wrote, "The violent methods ... are wrong, and in their nature reactionary and anti-social, quite irrespective of vote or no vote."<sup>12</sup>

Yet, even if it had been put into effect, clause four socialism remains antithetical to working class self-liberation. Capitalism without capitalists does not count amongst our goals. Railways, mines, land, electricity, etc, would pass into the hands of the British empire state.

Capitalist owners might well be bought out - eased into a comfortable retirement. But, as they vacate the field of production, a new class of state-appointed managers and supervisors enters the fray. In terms of the division of labour, they substitute for the capitalists. The mass of the population, meanwhile, remain exploited wage-slaves. They would be subject to same hierarchal chain of command, the same lack of control, the same mind-numbing routine.

Marxism, by contrast, is based on an altogether different perspective. If it is to win its freedom the working class must overthrow the existing state. But - and this is crucial - in so doing the proletariat "abolishes itself as a proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state".<sup>13</sup>

Capitalist relations of production and the whole bureaucratic state apparatus are swept away. Every sphere of social life sees control exercised from below. All positions of command are elected or chosen by lot and are regularly rotated. Hierarchy is flattened. Alienation is overcome. What is produced and how it is produced radically alters too. Need, not exchange, is the ruling principle. And alone such an association of producers creates the benign conditions which allow for the full development of each and every individual.

Doubtless, the old 1918 clause four resulted from progressive political developments. Opposition to the horrors of World War I and the inspiration provided by the October Revolution have already been mentioned. But there is also the formation of the Socialist International, the world-wide celebration of May Day, the considerable influence of the socialist press, the increased size of trade union membership, the formation of the shop

stewards movement and the election of a growing body of Labour MPs. Then there was state intervention and regulation of the economy. Capitalism was widely considered abhorrent, outmoded and doomed. Socialism more and more became the common sense of the organised working class.

By contrast, Fabian socialism meant arguing against unconstitutional methods, slowly expanding the provision of social welfare and persuading *all classes* of the benefits that would come to the nation, if the commanding heights of the economy were put in state hands. In other words, the Fabians *consciously* sought to ameliorate the mounting contradictions between labour and capital ... and thus put off socialism. Rightly, Lenin denounced Fabianism as the "most consummate expression of opportunism."<sup>14</sup> And, needless to say, the years 1918-20 witnessed colonial uprisings abroad and a massive strike wave at home.

Revealingly, before 1918, attempts to commit the Labour Party to socialism met with mixed success. The 1900 founding conference rejected the "class war" ultimatum tabled by the Social Democratic Federation.<sup>15</sup> Despite that, conference voted to support the "socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange". The next year a socialistic motion moved by Bruce Glasier was defeated. In 1903 another socialistic motion fell, this time without debate. Two years later conference passed a motion with the exact same wording. In 1907 the previous endorsement of socialism was overturned at the prompting of ... Bruce Glasier. The same conference agreed to set the goal of "socialising the means of production, distribution and exchange".<sup>16</sup>

The explanation for the seesawing doubtless lies with electoral calculation. While most in the party leadership considered themselves socialists of a kind, they were mortally afraid of losing out in the polls. What appeared acceptable to likely voters - in other words, the popular press - set their limits. So, instead of fearlessly presenting a bold socialist vision and building support on that basis, Sidney Webb, Arthur Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald and co, chased the vagaries of popularity. With the growth of militancy and radicalism, socialist declarations were considered a sure way of adding to Labour's ranks in parliament.<sup>17</sup> Forming a government being both a means and an end.

## Accept

Nevertheless, the Blairising of clause four in 1995 was hugely symbolic - the ground having been laid by the Eurocommunists and their *Marxism Today* journal. Socialism was declared dead and buried, the working class a shrinking minority. Only if Labour accepted capitalism and reached out to the middle classes would it have a future. Neil Kinnock, John Smith and finally Tony Blair dragged the party ever further to the right. Out went the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, out went the commitment to comprehensive education, out went the commitment to full employment, out went the commitment to repeal the Tories' anti-trade union laws, out went the commitment to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

By sacrificing the old clause four in the full glare of publicity, Blair and his New Labour clique sought to appease the establishment, the City, the Murdoch empire, the global plutocracy. Capitalism would be *absolutely* safe in their hands. A New Labour government could be relied upon to not even pay lip service to a British version of state capitalism. Leftwingers such as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Diane Abbott and Ken Livingstone protested, trade union leaders grumbled, but the April 1995 special conference voted by 65% in favour of Blair's clause four.

Needless to say, his version is stuffed full of managerial guff and classless nonsense. Just what one would expect from the architect of New Labour. After all, one of Blair's big ideas was to replace 'socialism' with 'social-ism'. Another was

communitarianism. But, of course, the media glowed with admiration. Crucially, Rupert Murdoch agreed to unleash his attack dogs. Within a few months John Major was almost universally derided as a total incompetent, heading a sleaze-mired government.

Riding high in the opinion polls Blair inaugurated a series of internal 'reforms'. Conference was gutted. No longer could it debate issues, vote on policy or embarrass the leadership in front of the media. Instead the whole thing became a rubber-stamping exercise. Then there were the tightly controlled policy forums, focus groups and the staffing of the party machine with eager young careerists (most on temporary contracts). Blair thereby asserted himself over the national executive committee ... considerably reducing its effectiveness in the process.

Calls for a return of the old clause four are perfectly understandable. But having done that, we need to persuade members to adopt something far more radical. This is the formulation championed by LPM.

1. Labour is the federal party of the working class. We strive to bring all trade unions, cooperatives, socialist societies and leftwing groups and parties under our banner. We believe that unity brings strength.

2. Labour is committed to replacing the rule of capital with the rule of the working class. Socialism introduces a democratically planned economy, ends the ecologically ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production and moves towards a stateless, classless, moneyless society that embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Alone such benign conditions create the possibility of every individual fully realising their innate potentialities.

3. Towards that end Labour commits itself to achieving a democratic republic. The standing army, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the state sponsorship of the Church of England must go. We support a single-chamber parliament, proportional representation and annual elections.

4. Labour seeks to win the active backing of the majority of people and forming a government on this basis.

5. We shall work with others, in particular in the European Union, in pursuit of the aim of replacing capitalism with working class rule and socialism.

## Reclaiming

Real Marxists, not fake Marxists, have never talked of reclaiming Labour. It has never been ours in the sense of being a "political weapon for the workers' movement". No, despite the electoral base and trade union affiliations, the Labour Party has been dominated by career politicians and trade union bureaucrats: a distinct social stratum, which in the last analysis serves not the interests of the working class, but the continuation of capitalist exploitation.

Speaking in the context of the need for the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain to affiliate to the Labour Party, Lenin said this:

... whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers, but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat.

Regarded from this - the only correct - point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns [the German socialist chauvinist murderers of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht - JM].<sup>18</sup>

Despite all the subsequent changes, this assessment remains true. Labour is still a "bourgeois workers' party". Of course, once Corbyn was formally announced leader of the Labour Party, on September 12 2015, things became more complex. Labour became a chimera. Instead of a twofold contradiction, we have a threefold contradiction. The left dominates both the top and bottom of the party.

Corbyn is not the equivalent of George Lansbury or Michael Foot - an elementary mistake. They were promoted by the labour and trade union bureaucracy after a severe crisis: namely Ramsay MacDonald's treachery and James Callaghan's winter of discontent. Corbyn's leadership is, in the first instance, the result of an historic accident. The 'morons' from the Parliamentary Labour Party lent him their nomination. After that, however, Corbyn owes everything to the mass membership. That gives us the possibility of attacking the rightwing domination of the middle - not least the councillors and Parliamentary Labour Party - from below and above. No wonder the more astute minds of the bourgeois commentariat can be found expressing profound concern over the prospects of Labour being dominated by leftwing socialists, militant trade unions and Marxists.

Not that Jeremy Corbyn is a Marxist. Politically, he is a run-of-the-mill left reformist, albeit a left reformist with an enduring commitment to workers involved in economic struggles, campaigners for democratic rights and liberation movements in the so-called third world. Inevitably, not least given his Straight Leftist advisors, he is more than prone to compromise with the PLP right and trade union bureaucracy. Indeed his strategy amounts to seeking out allies on the soft right, while attempting to neutralise the hard right. He fears going to war against the right. He therefore seeks to hold back rank and file self-activity against the right. The 'big idea' is to concentrate on bread and butter issues, ie, ending austerity.

The result can only but be a series of rotten decisions. We have already seen the tacit backing of Jon Lansman's bonapartist coup in Momentum, the retreat over Trident renewal and the disgraceful silence that reigns over the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt.

In other words, it would be fatal for the leftwing majority at a grassroots level to content itself with playing a support role for Corbyn. No, the left needs to fight for its own aims and its own principles ●

## Notes

1. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 48, London 2001, p449.
2. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 50, New York 2004, p83.
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5. GB Shaw quoted in J Carey *The intellectuals and the masses* London 1992, p63.
6. <https://archive.org/stream/fabianismempireooshawuoft/djvu.txt>.
7. [https://archive.org/stream/fabianismempireooshawuoft/fabianismempireooshawuoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/fabianismempireooshawuoft/fabianismempireooshawuoft_djvu.txt).
8. G Foote *The Labour Party's political thought* London 1985, p29-30.
9. AM McBriar *Fabian socialism and English politics: 1884-1918*, Cambridge 1962, p130.
10. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p64n.
11. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 24, London 1989, p83.
12. *Socialist Review* August 1912 - quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p25n.
13. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 25, London 1987, p267.
14. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 21 Moscow 1977, p261.
15. Though it had two guaranteed seats on the LRC's leading body, the Social Democratic Federation disaffiliated in August 1901.
16. See RT McKenzie *British political parties* London 1963, pp465-71.
17. Labour gained 15 seats in the December 1918 general election, making it the fourth largest party in parliament after Bonar Law's Tories, Lloyd George's Coalition Liberals and Sinn Féin. It had a total of 57 MPs.
18. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 31, Moscow 1977, pp257-58.

1. The central aim of Labour Party Marxists is to transform the Labour Party into an instrument for working class advance and international socialism. Towards that end we will join with others and seek the closest unity of the left inside and outside the party.

2. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, waste and production for its own sake. Attempts to rescue the system through Keynesian remedies are diversionary and doomed to fail. The democratic and social gains of the working class must be tenaciously defended, but capitalism must be superseded by socialism.

3. The only viable alternative is organising the working class into powerful and thoroughly democratic trade unions, co-ops, and other schools for socialism, and crucially into a political party which aims to replace the rule of the capitalist class with the rule of the working class.

4. The fight for trade union freedom, anti-fascism, women's rights, sexual freedom, republican democracy and opposition to all imperialist wars are inextricably linked to working class political independence and the fight for socialism.

5. Ideas of reclaiming the Labour Party and the return of the old clause four are totally misplaced. From the beginning the party has been dominated by the labour bureaucracy and the ideas of reformism. The party must be refounded on the basis of a genuinely socialist programme as opposed to social democratic gradualism or bureaucratic statism.

6. The aim of the party should not be a Labour government for its own sake. History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

7. Labour should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme. This cannot be achieved in Britain in isolation from Europe and the rest of the world.

8. Socialism is the rule of the working class over the global economy created by capitalism and as such is antithetical to all forms of British nationalism. Demands for a British road to socialism and a withdrawal from the European Union are therefore to be opposed.

9. Political principles and organisational forms go hand-in-hand. The Labour Party must become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans. Hence all the undemocratic bans and proscriptions must be done away with.

10. The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries but proportionately according to the political balance in each delegation.

11. All trade unions should be encouraged to affiliate, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy and join the Labour Party as individual members.

12. The party must be reorganised from top to bottom. Bring the Parliamentary Labour Party under democratic control. The position of Labour leader should be abolished along with the national policy forum. The NEC should be unambiguously responsible for drafting Labour Party manifestos.

13. The NEC should be elected and accountable to the annual conference, which must be the supreme body in the party. Instead of a tame rally there must be democratic debate and binding votes.

14. Our elected representatives must be recallable by the constituency or other body that selected them. That includes MPs, MEPs, MSPs, AMs, councillors, etc. Without exception elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker, the balance being donated to furthering the interests of the labour movement ●



# Taking the witch-hunt into the workplace

Hammersmith and Fulham council is appealing against the employment tribunal's decision that its dismissal of Stan Keable was 'unfair'. Ed Kirby reports

Stan Keable - LPM secretary - was sacked by Hammersmith and Fulham borough council for making critical remarks about Zionism. This happened in the course of a notably civilized exchange at the 'Enough is Enough' demonstration and Jewish Voice for Labour counterdemonstration in Parliament Square on March 2018.

He was, though, fully exonerated by an employment tribunal. However, now council officers have decided to appeal. If that appeal is allowed to go ahead, not only will more precious public funds be wasted on lawyers' fees, the council's reputation will be further tarnished.

The appeal is, of course, politically motivated. Stephen Cowan, Labour leader of the council, wants to uphold the British establishment's 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' false narrative. In this Stan Keable is not the real target. That is Jeremy Corbyn - and the entire Labour left. In the attempt to see the back of Corbyn, the Labour right is quite prepared to extend the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt from the Labour Party into the workplace.

The council's failure at the five-day tribunal hearing in May - a full year after Stan Keable's dismissal - was humiliating. Judge Jill Brown found that the dismissal, for "serious misconduct", was "both procedurally and substantively unfair" and "well beyond the range of reasonable responses of a reasonable employer".

Stan Keable has asked for reinstatement, and his work colleagues are looking forward to welcoming him back into the housing team. Departmental director Nicholas Austin - the man who formally sacked him - told the tribunal that he had "an entirely clean disciplinary record", was "good at his job" and described him as "good, thorough, dogged in pursuit of landlords in trying to improve housing conditions".

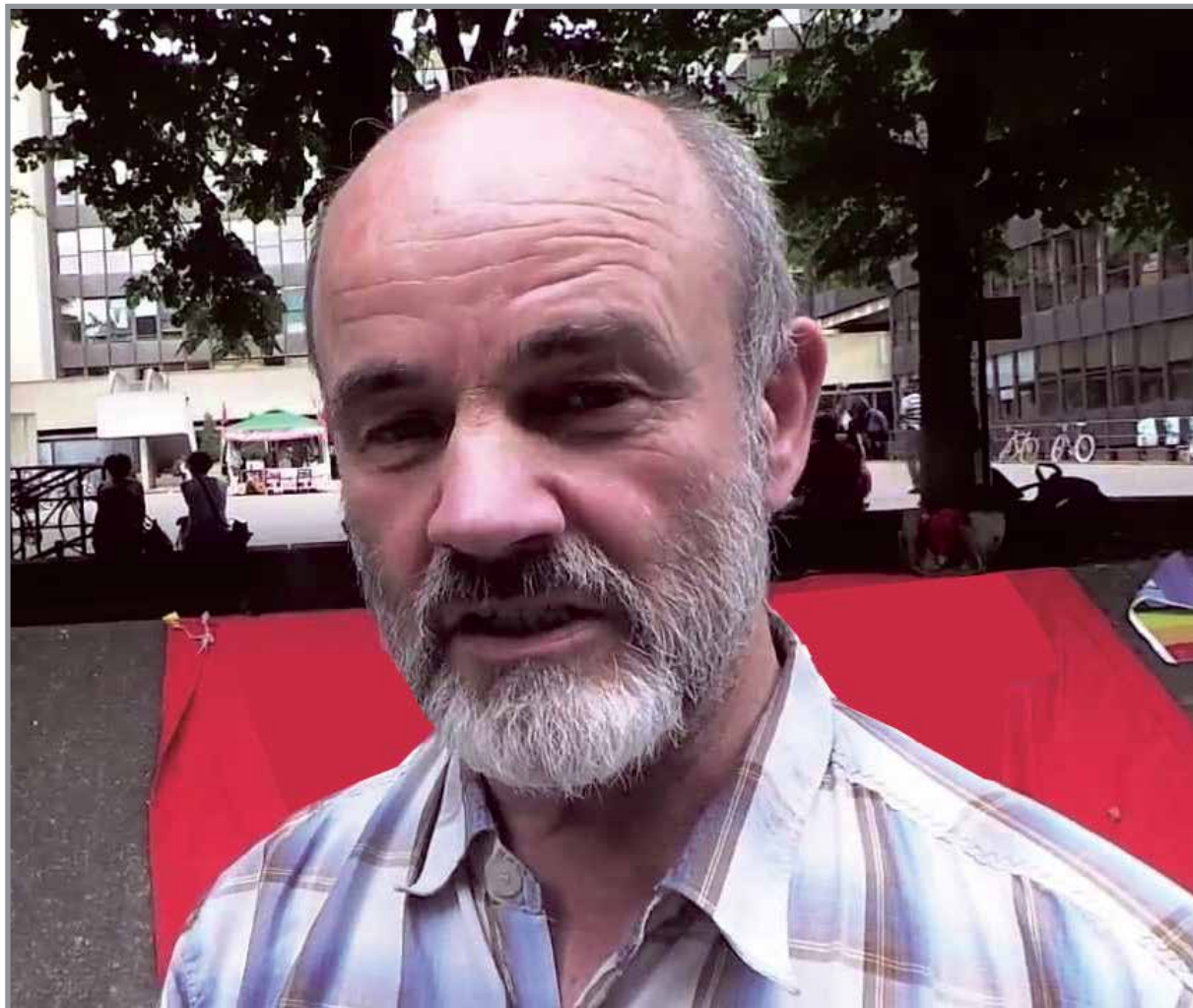
The issue of reinstatement was due to be resolved, along with appropriate compensation, at an October 2 "remedy hearing" - which may now be postponed, extending Stan Keable's time in limbo even further. Hopefully, the tribunal will refuse permission to appeal. Criticism of Zionism and Israel should be calmly debated, not be a sacking offence.

On March 27 2018 - the morning after the 'Enough is Enough' demonstration, ostensibly against Jeremy Corbyn's supposed anti-Jewish racism - Stephen Cowan forwarded a 105-second long video to the council's chief executive officer. This video had already been publicly tweeted by Chelsea and Fulham Tory MP Greg Hands. It showed a brief moment taken from a longish political conversation in Parliament Square between Stan Keable and an unknown man,

Cowan's email stated:

LBHF [London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham] employee Stan Keeble [sic] making anti-Semitic comments. I'll let Mr Keeble's words speak for themselves. I believe he has brought the good name of LBHF into disrepute and committed gross misconduct. Please have this looked at

**Labour Against the Witchhunt**  
Tel: 07817 379 568  
info@labouragainsthewitchhunt.org  
www.labouragainsthewitchhunt.org  
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£10 per annum, £5 (unwaged).  
Affiliates: Local or Regional: £25pa.  
National: £100pa



Stan Keable is innocent

immediately and act accordingly and with expediency... Please advise me at your earliest opportunity what action you have taken.

Hands' tweet, tagged to Cowan and Hammersmith Labour MP Andy Slaughter, was not a complaint to the council, but a public attack on the Labour Party, smearing the party as a home for anti-Semites. Stan Keable's employment at LBHF was unknown to Hands, but well known to Cowan, who seized the opportunity to extend the scope of the anti-Corbyn witch-hunt to the workplace. Cowan was, at this stage, the only complainant - joined later only by Greg Hands himself. His twitter campaign to drum up a storm of protest - and of BBC *Newsnight* journalist David Grossman, who was actually responsible for the video - produced zero results. Tens of thousands viewed the video, Stan Keable's comments were reproduced in the *Evening Standard* and *Mail Online* - surrounded, as usual, by reports of *unsubstantiated allegations* of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. But no-one complained to H&F council. Hands and Cowan were alone.

By labelling Stan Keable's comments "anti-Semitic" and saying "gross misconduct", Cowan effectively instructed council officers to suspend and dismiss him. Judge Brown found that they were "clearly put under very considerable pressure by Mr Hands MP and by councillor Cowan to dismiss the claimant".

Four hours after Cowan's email, Stan Keable was unceremoniously suspended from work - on charges which *did not include anti-Semitism*. One presumes that the council's lawyers had pointed out that telling well documented, historical truths about the Zionist movement did not constitute racism. That would have been a good moment to tell Cowan that he was wrong and advise him to drop the matter. But an instruction is an instruction. Omitting the leader's unsustainable "anti-

Semitism" complaint, the suspension letter described the comments as "inappropriate", "insensitive", "likely to be considered offensive" and having "the potential to bring the council into disrepute".

The tribunal, however, took a different view. Judge Brown "found that the claimant's demeanour throughout the video clip was calm, reasonable, non-threatening and conversational".

Stan Keable was not told that the complainant was the council leader, nor the substance of the complaint - that it was explicitly about "anti-Semitism." Those embarrassing facts were only revealed a year later, shortly before the tribunal hearing. Nor did the suspension letter specify which comments were considered "offensive". The original complainant (Cowan) had not done so.

Two "offensive" comments were eventually selected by the investigating officer, Peter Smith: (1) "The Zionist movement at the time collaborated with them" (ie, the Nazi regime), and (2) "The Zionist movement from the beginning was saying that they accepted that Jews are not acceptable here" (ie, in the countries where they currently live).

Stan Keable's Jewish former wife, Hilary Russell, had already helpfully emailed the council: "I can say absolutely confidently that he is no anti-Semite... it is not anti-Semitic to be opposed to Zionism, as many Jews are, or to criticise the government of Israel."

## Keep digging

Smith should have dropped the case. But he chose to keep digging, adding the Equality Act 2010 to the allegations. If anti-Semitism won't stick, let's try anti-Zionism.

He wrote:

If Zionism constitutes a belief under the terms of the Equality Act, then the statements made by the claimant that the Zionist movement collaborated with the

Nazis and that it accepted that "Jews are not acceptable here" might be deemed to have breached the Equality Act... [and] do not promote inclusion nor treat everyone with dignity and respect and... have breached the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Subsequently, whether a belief in Zionist ideology should be considered a protected characteristic under the Equality Act was neither claimed by the council nor determined by the tribunal. In any case, the act does not forbid *criticism* of a protected "religion or belief": it outlaws harassment, discrimination and victimisation of believers. But the council "did not find that the claimant had made anti-Semitic or racist or discriminatory remarks", so this seed fell on stony ground.

In his zealous search for a case to answer, Smith concluded his investigation report by adding a truly Orwellian allegation to the charge sheet, effectively saying that council employees must not attend demonstrations:

That, in attending a counter-demonstration outside the houses of parliament on March 26 2018, Stan Keable knowingly increased the possibility of being challenged about his views and subsequently proceeded to express views that were in breach of the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the council's Code of Conduct...

Unsurprisingly, the tribunal upheld the right to demonstrate. The judge concluded that Stan Keable's comments were "an expression of his views and beliefs. The claimant, as other employees, had the right to freedom of expression and assembly, which would normally include attending rallies and expressing their views there".

As Justice Michael Briggs commented in the High Court (*Smith v Trafford Housing Trust* [2013] IRLR 86, HC):

The encouragement of diversity in the recruitment of employees inevitably involves employing persons with widely different religious and political beliefs and views, some of which, however moderately expressed, may cause distress among the holders of deeply felt opposite views. The frank but lawful expression of religious or political views may frequently cause a degree of upset, and even offence, to those with deeply held contrary views, even where none is intended by the speaker. This is a necessary price to be paid for freedom of speech.

Quite so.

Unable to dismiss Stan for anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism, the council then attempted to establish "misconduct" for being "offensive" - but this failed at the tribunal too. The judge "took into account the line of case law which says that for a single act of misconduct to justify dismissal it must be serious, wilful and obvious".

The misconduct must be obvious; it must be such that the employee would plainly recognise it as conduct which would merit summary dismissal if discovered by his employers. Such recognition might be either because the employers had expressly made known to their staff that a particular type of misconduct would be treated as a dismissible offence or because the employee, judging the matter for himself according to the ordinarily accepted standard of morality of the time, would recognise dismissal as the predictable consequence of such misconduct (*Bishop v Graham Group plc* EAT 800/98).

The basis of the decision to dismiss Stan Keable was departmental director Nicholas Austin's personal view that "the average person would interpret the claimant's comments as suggesting that Zionists collaborated with the Nazis in the holocaust and that that was highly likely to cause offence". However, the judge disagreed: "Mr Smith had not interpreted the claimant's comments in that way, nor had Mr Hands in his tweet or letter... and nor had the other evidence which Mr Smith had relied on from the *Mail Online* or the *Evening Standard*."

Why is a Labour council pursuing this pathetic case - wasting public money in order to restrict our hard-won rights of freedom of speech and assembly? These rights are the products of, above all, the class struggle of the workers' movement, from the Chartists onwards. This case illustrates the fact that the class struggle is taking place at present in a sharp form within the Labour Party - councillor Cowan has placed himself firmly on the side of the ruling class.

One can only assume the council is counting on the legal strategy of "deep pockets wins". Stan Keable's legal costs, if the appeal is permitted, are likely to rise above £10,000.

Please help out, go to: <http://www.gofundme.com/ReinstateStanKeable>

Your financial support is needed - please pay into the LPM bank account:  
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secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk