



LABOUR PARTY MARXISTS

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A Labour military programme



The armed forces belong to the monarch, not the government

Emily Thornbury has been asked by Jeremy Corbyn to lead Labour's defence review. Its remit is to "examine how the safety of the British people can best be secured in the global conditions of the 21st century". The shadow defence secretary has asked Labour Party members, affiliates and the wider public to contribute to its work. This is the submission of *Labour Party Marxists*

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Despite a fraying US global hegemony, China's rise, the decline of Russia and a stalling European Union, there is no immediate prospect of an all-out World War III. With the likelihood of mutually assured destruction (MAD), who would fight and why? Nevertheless, there is the increasing danger of a regional hot spot accidentally boiling over: Korea, Ukraine, Kashmir, Syria, Palestine and the South China Sea immediately spring to mind. Militarily, a direct clash between the US and Russia or China could quite conceivably rapidly escalate. Even a limited nuclear exchange would exact an

almost unimaginable human toll.

However, what distinguishes Marxists from others on the left who oppose the war danger is that we see the need to retaliate not with the Labour Representation Committee's touchingly pacifistic call to appoint a "UK minister for peace" and "progressively withdraw the UK from the international arms trade".¹ Nor Left Unity's ambiguous demand for a "drastic reduction" in military expenditure.² Nor with the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's no less vague "Cut arms spending".³ The same goes for the number-crunching plea of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain to "cut military spending

to average European levels".⁴ Ditto the Scottish Socialist Party's recipe of reducing "defence spending" to no more than the *per capita* level of the Republic of Ireland.⁵ Banal, timid and self-defeating.

Our military policy should not legitimise a *reduced* version of the existing armed forces. Despite the verbal, statistical and factional variations, what that theme amounts to is the attempt to win the working class - as individuals and as an organised force - to the hopeless illusion of securing peace, while the capitalist system remains intact.

Inevitably there is a corresponding

refusal to take up the elementary demand of arming the working class. That is certainly the case with the Socialist Party in England and Wales and the CPB.⁶ But, if untreated, what begins as a scratch ends with gangrene. Confronted by the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 and the formation of hit squads, the *Marxism Today* Eurocommunists condemned "macho" violence. They offered instead the mystical, women-only pacifism of Greenham Common. Come the 'war on terrorism', not a few of these former peaceniks were to be found amongst the ranks of the Bush-Blair interventionists: eg, the newspaper

Labour defence

columnist, David Aaronovitch.

Marxists are convinced that the bourgeois state machine must be broken apart, demolished, smashed up, if we are to realise socialism and put an end to war. So, concretely, in today's conditions, that not only means scrapping Trident and *all* nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction - they are indiscriminate and therefore inherently inhuman. We should be arguing for the scrapping of standing armies.

Peace will not be realised through the United Nations, Nato or by appealing to good business sense. Paradoxical though it may seem, peace has to be fought for. That is why the working class has to develop its own militia. Such a body actually grows out of day-to-day struggles: enforcing picket lines, defending Muslims from fascist thugs, guarding our local offices, meeting places and demonstrations, etc. And, of course, with a strong, determined and well trained workers' militia, it becomes a realistic possibility to split the state's armed forces. Fear of officers, sergeants and court martials can thereby be replaced by the rank and file's readiness to disobey orders. Certainly, army regiments, airforce squadrons and naval crews declaring for our side provides us with the military wherewithal needed to safeguard either an expected or a recently established socialist majority in the House of Commons.

Programmatically the labour movement should therefore demand:

- Rank-and-file personnel in the state's armed bodies must be protected from bullying, humiliating treatment and being used against the working class.
- There must be full trade union and democratic rights, including the right to form bodies such as soldiers' councils.
- The privileges of the officer caste must be abolished. Officers must be elected. Workers in uniform must become the allies of the masses in struggle.
- The people must have the right to bear arms and defend themselves.
- The dissolution of the standing army and the formation of a popular militia under democratic control.

Background

Strange though it may appear to the historically ill-informed, here contemporary Marxists draw direct inspiration from the second amendment to the US constitution. Ratified to popular acclaim in 1791, it states: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."⁷

Those who made the American revolution - above all the urban and rural masses - saw a standing army as an existential threat to democracy. Eg, in her *Observations on the new constitution* (1788) Mercy Otis Warren - the mother of the American revolution - branded the standing army as "the nursery of vice and the bane of liberty".⁸ At great sacrifice the common people had overthrown the tyranny of George III, and were determined to do the same again, if faced with another unacceptable government.

Naturally Marx and Engels considered the second amendment part of their heritage. Clause four of the *Marx-Engels Demands of the Communist Party in Germany* (1848) is emphatic:

Universal arming of the people. In future, armies shall at the same time be workers' armies, so that the armed forces will not only consume, as in the past, but produce even more than it costs to maintain them.⁹

The Marx-Engels team never wavered. Read *Can Europe disarm?* (1893). Here, in this pamphlet written by Frederick Engels, 10 years after the death of his friend and collaborator, we find a concrete application of Marxism to the dawning

epoch of universal suffrage and universal conscription. Engels concluded that the key to revolution was mutiny in the armed forces. His pamphlet outlined a model bill for military reform in Germany. Engels was determined to show that the proposal to gradually transform standing armies into a "militia based on the universal principle of arming the people" could exploit the mounting fears of a pending European war and widespread resentment at the ruinous military budget.¹⁰ For propaganda effect, Engels proposed an international agreement to limit military service to a short period and a state system in which no country would fear aggression because no country would be capable of aggression. Surely World War I would have been impossible if the European great powers had nothing more than lightly armed civilian militias available to them.

Not that Engels was some lily-livered pacifist. He supported universal male (!) conscription and if necessary was, of course, quite prepared to advocate revolutionary war. Needless to say, his *Can Europe disarm?* was not intended to prove the military superiority of a militia over a standing army. No, Engels wanted a citizen army, within which discipline would be self-imposed. An army where rank-and-file troops would turn their guns against any officer tempted to issue orders that were against the vital interests of the people.

In that spirit the Marxist parties of the late 19th and early 20th century unproblematically championed the demand for disbanding the standing army and establishing a popular militia. Eg, the 1880 programme of the French Workers' Party, the 1891 *Erfurt programme*, the 1889 *Hainfeld programme* of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, the 1903 programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, etc.

In the 'political section' of the programme of the French Workers' Party (Parti Ouvrier), authored jointly by Karl Marx and Jules Guesde, we find the demand for the "abolition of standing armies and the general arming of the people" (clause 4).¹¹ A proposition faithfully translated by the Germans: "Education of all to bear arms. Militia in the place of the standing army" (clause 3).¹² The Austrians too are adamant: "The cause of the constant danger of war is the standing army, whose growing burden alienates the people from its cultural tasks. It is therefore necessary to fight for the replacement of the standing army by arming the people" (clause 6).¹³ Then we have the Russians: "general arming of the people instead of maintaining a standing army" (clause c9).¹⁴

And after theory there must come practice.

Amongst the first decrees of the 1871 Paris Commune was the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by the national guard - "the bulk of which consisted of working men" (Marx). By *actually* constituting a new state, based on a repressive force that did not sit outside the general population, the Commune opened a new chapter in global politics. And Russia, of course, took what happened in Paris to new heights. Formed in April-March 1917, the Red Guards proved crucial. Red Guards, and increasing numbers of army units, put themselves at the disposal of the Military Revolutionary Committee - a subdivision of the Bolshevik-led Petrograd soviet, formally established at Leon Trotsky's initiative. On October 25 (November 7) 1917 the MRC issued its momentous declaration: the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky "no longer existed". State power has passed into the hands of the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers.

There are many other splendid examples.

Beginning in the early 1920s the two

main workers' parties in Germany built their own militias. The SDP dominated the soft-left Reichsbanner, while the Communist Party formed the much more militant Rotfrontkämpferbund (at its height it boasted 130,000 members). Despite its 1923 founding statutes emphasising ceremonial paraphernalia, marches and band music, the Schutzbund in Austria served as a kind of "proletarian police force".¹⁵ When it came to strikes, demonstrations and meetings, this workers' militia maintained discipline and fended off Nazi gangs. Though hampered by a dithering social democratic leadership, the Schutzbund heroically resisted the February 12 1934 fascist coup. Workers formed defence corps during the 1926 General Strike in Britain. American workers did the same in 1934. There were massive stoppages in San Francisco, Toledo and Minneapolis. In Spain anarchists, official 'communists', Proudhon, etc likewise formed their own militias in response to Franco's counterrevolutionary uprising.

Then, more recently, in 1966, there was the Black Panther Party. It organised "armed citizen's patrols" to monitor and counter the brutal US police force.¹⁶ Even the "non-violent" civil rights movement, led by Martin Luther King, included within its ranks those committed to "armed self-defence" against Ku Klux Klan and other such terrorism.¹⁷

Corbyn

Speaking to a Hiroshima remembrance event in August 2012, Jeremy Corbyn spoke of his wish to emulate "the people of Costa Rica", who "abolished the army". Leave aside the concrete situation in Costa Rica and the synthetic outrage generated by *The Sun*¹⁸ and the *Daily Mail*.¹⁹ Demanding the disbanding of the standing army has assumed a burning importance since Corbyn was elected Labour leader.

Imagine for one moment that Corbyn wins a general election majority in 2020. Supposedly because it is constitutionally inappropriate for serving officers to "intervene directly in matters that are of political dispute", are we really expected to believe that the armed forces will idly sit by and behave in a thoroughly trustworthy manner?²⁰ That would be parliamentary cretinism - a disease that infects reformists of every stripe and variety with the debilitating conviction that the main thing in politics is parliamentary votes.

A Corbyn government would - hopefully - be committed to sweeping away the anti-trade union laws, reversing austerity, renationalising the rails, ending British involvement in Syria, decommissioning Trident and maybe announcing a withdrawal from Nato. However, say in the name of keeping the Labour right, the *Mirror* and the liberal intelligentsia aside, the Corbyn government decides to maintain MI5, the police and the standing army. Frankly, that would be an open invitation for a British version of general Augusto Pinochet to launch a bloody counterrevolution. In Chile thousands of leftwingers were butchered after the September 11 1973 army coup, which overthrew the Socialist Party-Communist Party Popular Unity reformist government under president Salvador Allende.

Already, Sir Nicholas Houghton, the outgoing chief of the defence staff, has publicly "worried" on BBC 1's *Andrew Marr show* about a Corbyn government.²¹ There are accompanying press rumours swirling around of unnamed members of the army high command "not standing for" a Corbyn government and being prepared to take "direct action".²² Prior to that, the normally sober *Financial Times* ominously warned that Corbyn's leadership damages Britain's "public life".²³

In fact the army is an instrument of counterrevolution. Institutionally

it is run by an officer caste, which is trained to command from public school to Sandhurst as if it is their birthright. When it comes to the grunts it relies on inculcating "unthinking obedience".²⁴ And, of course, the British army no longer has unruly conscripts to worry about. Instead recruits voluntarily join, seeking "travel and adventure" - followed by "pay and benefit, with job security".²⁵ Because they often live on base, frequently move and stick closely together socially, members of the armed forces are largely cut off from the wider civilian population and from any growth of democratic, progressive and socialistic ideas. Indeed far-right views appear to be the norm - see Army Rumour Service comments about that "anti-British, not very educated, ageing communist agitating class war zealot", Jeremy Corbyn.²⁶

Still the best known exponent of deploying the army against internal "subversives" is brigadier Frank Kitson in his *Low intensity operations* (1971). The left, trade unionists and strikers - they are "the enemy", even if their actions are intended to back up an elected government.²⁷ Legally, the "perfect vehicle for such an intervention" would be an order in council.²⁸ After consulting the unelected and undemocratic privy council, the monarch would call a state of emergency and instruct the army to swiftly and decisively restore order. Remember, army personnel swear an oath that they "will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors", and that they will "defend Her Majesty ... against all enemies".

As made crystal-clear by Michael Clarke, director of the United Services Institute, this is no mere feudal relic. "The armed forces don't belong to the government: they belong to the monarch," insists Clarke. "And they take this very seriously. When [the Tory] Liam Fox was defence secretary a few years ago, for his first couple of weeks he referred to 'my forces' rather than Her Majesty's forces - as a joke, I think. It really ruffled the military behind the scenes. I heard it from senior people in the army. They told me, 'We don't work for him. We work for the Queen.'"²⁹

In the late 1960s and early 70s there were widespread media reports of senior officers and ex-officers conspiring against the rightwing Labour government of Harold Wilson. Many were unhappy about Rhodesia, many

branded him a Soviet mole. However, their pathological hatred was directed squarely against leftwing Labour MPs such as Tony Benn, Irish republicans, communist trade union leaders, striking workers and protesting students - the background to Chris Mullin's novel, *A very British coup* (1982).

If Corbyn even looks like making it into office, there is every reason to believe that threats of "direct action" coming from the high command will take actual form. That is why we say: have no trust in the thoroughly authoritarian standing army. No, instead, let us put our trust in a "well regulated militia" and the "right of the people to keep and bear arms" ●

Notes

1. LRC *Programme for a real Labour government*, no date, no place of publication.
2. <http://leftunity.org/manifesto-2015-international>.
3. 'AWL election campaign: why we are standing and our policies': www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/get10/man/parties/Workers_Liberty.pdf.
4. www.comunist-party.org.uk/about-us.html.
5. www.scottishsocialistparty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SSP_Manifesto_2007.pdf.
6. See *Weekly Worker* May 21 2009.
7. www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am2.
8. http://constitution.org/cmt/mowarren/observations_new_constitution_1788.html.
9. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p3.
10. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p371.
11. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm.
12. www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm.
13. I am grateful to Ben Lewis for his translation of the *Hainfeld programme*.
14. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/draft/02feb07.htm.
15. M Kitchen *The coming of Austrian fascism* London 1980, p116.
16. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party.
17. See CE Cobb *This non-violent stuff'll get you killed* New York 2014.
18. www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/6637495/Corbyn-Britain-should-abolish-its-Army.html.
19. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3233244/How-wonderful-d-scrapped-Army-ranted-Jeremy-Corbyn-s-call-dismissed-madness-Tory-MP.html.
20. Jeremy Corbyn quoted in *The Mirror* November 8 2015.
21. *The Mirror* November 8 2015.
22. *The Sunday Times* September 20 2015.
23. *Financial Times* August 14 2015.
24. NF Dixon *On the psychology of military incompetence* London 1976, p244.
25. Lord Ashcroft *The armed forces and society* May 2012.
26. *The Guardian* January 25 2016.
27. F Kitson *Low intensity operations* London 1991, p29.
28. P O'Conner *The constitutional role of the privy council and the prerogative* London 2009, p20.
29. Quoted in *The Guardian* January 25 2016.

LPM AMENDMENT FOR MARCH 19 AGM OF CLPD

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy commits itself to returning the Labour Party to its organisational principles of federalism and inclusiveness. We must again become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans.

It is quite correct to maintain rules barring from membership those promoting parliamentary or local candidates standing against the Labour Party. However, this should not be applied to the distant past or indiscriminately. For example, sitting councillors and other activists standing against

Labour candidates committed to supporting imperialist adventures or imposing government cuts, etc ought to be treated sympathetically.

Moreover, there should be no place in the Labour Party for rules prohibiting organisations - and members of organisations - which have their own "programme, principles and policy, or distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies".

Such rules must be done away with or radically reformulated.

The CDLP will campaign for these ends and promote suitable resolutions to party conference ●

Thin end of the wedge

We must oppose the expulsion of Gerry Downing, but fight to expose his political errors, argues **Jim Grant**

On February 20, I attended the special general meeting of the Labour Representation Committee.

It was far from my first LRC general meeting, and the form was getting familiar. I was struck when we were treated to our annual John McDonnell boilerplate speech from the top table by the fact that things, in the standard dialectical fashion, can be terribly familiar and also completely different at the same time. We had heard that speech before as the defiant cry of a lone voice in the enemy camp; but now, it was the voice of the shadow chancellor, a fixture of television and radio, albeit still surrounded by foes.

Something similar can now be said about Gerry Downing, also among those present on February 20 and at LRC gatherings *passim ad infinitum*. A perennial orthodox Trotskyist gadfly, Gerry's political journey has taken him from the cultish Workers Revolutionary Party, through several of its posthumous fragments, into the Mandelbrot International Socialist Group (today's Socialist Resistance) and out again, and around the houses a little more before washing up with his own micro-group, Socialist Fight, whose operative strategy has been obedience to the letter and spirit of Trotsky's 'French turn' - enter the social democratic parties in order to take the best fighters into the revolutionary party when they inevitably split under inclement historical conditions.

Gerry's brand of Trotskyism has now become national news. During the Labour leadership campaign he was expelled, as central office desperately tried to reduce Jeremy Corbyn's vote by purging every last individual who, by an elastic interpretation of Labour's onerous rules, could be excluded. He was readmitted to the party shortly afterwards, in what is becoming a recurring pattern. Last week, however, Gerry found himself the subject of a feverish exchange on the Commons floor, when David Cameron himself cited his opinions on September 11 and Islamic State in order to smear Corbyn. By the time Gerry reported for a grilling on Andrew Neil's *Politics show* the next day, he was outside the fold again.

He found old Brillo Pad in unusually accommodating form. We sometimes wonder if Neil's middle name is 'If you'll just let me finish ...', such is the vigour of his sub-Paxmanite shtick. Yet he treated comrade Downing firmly but fairly, putting a whole series of his outrageous views to him and allowing him good time, by televisual standards, to respond. The argument that the 9/11 bombers "can never be condemned"? We must understand, before we condemn - 9/11 was a response to American incursion on their lands. "Critical support and tactical military assistance" to (among others) Islamic State? The point, Andrew, is that US imperialism must be sent packing from the Middle East.

It was Neil and his researchers who managed to dig up the most damning evidence, however, which was and remains fellow SF member Ian Donovan's writing on 'the Jewish question'. Comrade Ian has unfortunately collapsed into anti-Semitism in the last couple of years; he has developed a theory that US support for Israel can be explained by the fact that the Jews form a transnational "semination", and that a preponderance of them among the wealthiest Americans has led them to become the "vanguard" of the imperialist bourgeoisie. (It was *after* this collapse that Ian found a welcoming home in SF.)

And so Gerry was left defending this rubbish on the BBC. Neil was able to drop comparisons to Hitler and the *Protocols of the elders of Zion*; and despite Gerry's protestations of 'materialism', the charge sticks better than it really should to a leftwinger.

Gerry's anti-imperialism is, needless to



Gerry Downing: playing a fool's game

say, confused in the extreme. The confusion stems from exactly where Gerry says it does: Leon Trotsky's policy of critical support to anti-imperialist nationalist forces - most notably Haile Selassie in Ethiopia during the Italian invasion - and his argument that, instead of joining the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang in the 1920s, the communists ought to have fought separately but alongside them against the Japanese. This policy ultimately stems from the anti-imperialist united front advocated by the early Comintern.

The trouble is that Trotsky's judgments were straightforwardly incorrect, and Gerry's later ones also wrong for much the same reasons. Selassie was a British client; Trotsky's support effectively meant supporting British imperialism against Italian imperialism. (His vigorous pursuit of this policy *inside the British labour movement* was thus particularly misguided.) As for China, it is difficult to see how the communists could have suffered less except by fighting the KMT and the Japanese, as they ended up doing anyway.

Likewise with, say, Islamic State - after all, who *are* they, really? A bunch of disaffected ex-Ba'athists, funded lavishly by factions of the Gulf monarchies. They are 'anti-imperialist' only in the most limited sense that they are clients of regimes that are in turn clients of the US, albeit of elements within those regimes least susceptible to the direct discipline of the US. In general, we find in the chaos of the Middle East numerous examples of allegiances spinning on a sixpence; never before has arbitrary 'critical support' of 'anti-imperialist' forces been such a hostage to fortune.

Defeat the right

It is nevertheless not so much in spite of his worsening political errors as *because* of them that we oppose Gerry Downing's expulsion from the Labour Party. Every wedge needs a thin end, and by remaining wedged to the moralistic anti-imperialism of his Trotskyist extraction, with the additional seasoning of Ian Donovan's 'theories' about Jews, Gerry has made just such a thin end of himself.

We do not get to pick and choose the terrain of every battle, however. Gerry's expulsion is part of a wider project on the part of the Labour right and their cronies in the yellow press to delegitimise the left, not least by equating our opposition to Zionism and the ongoing Israeli colonial-settler project with anti-Semitism. Let us get things in perspective: despite the ravings of Simon Schama, Dan Hodges and the like, the Labour Party's biggest problem is not that it is riddled

with anti-Semites. (Even within their specific corner of the far left, Gerry and Ian are oddities.) It is that it is bound tightly to British imperialism.

A great many sitting Labour MPs voted for Blair's war in Iraq, a course of action that has led to uncounted deaths and the rise of IS. We know what is going on - these people, with real blood on their hands, would like to use comrade Gerry as a cheap way to buttress their moral credentials. We are not prepared to let them. His notions about the proper conduct of anti-imperialist struggle are risible, and must be exposed as such (and indeed stand exposed as such). But we do not consider the Labour Party's shadowy compliance unit, or David Cameron, or Andrew Neil, fit to judge such political subtleties.

Mutatis mutandis, take Jill Mountford. The comrade is a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, an organisation whose equivocations on the question of imperialism are - from our point of view - quite inexcusable. There has been more than one political formation in which the AWL has been the least healthy element and which would have benefited, were the AWL to be shown the door. Plainly, the Labour Party is not such an organisation. The priority now is to fight for a space for avowedly working class socialist politics *as it actually is* inside the Labour Party. That includes the AWL, but by the same token it includes crankier outfits like Socialist Fight. We do not suspend, for a moment, our polemical fire against them; but we recognise that they are our *opponents*, and not our *enemies*.

If these expulsions stand, who is next? The organisation formerly known as Workers Power has spent much polemical energy on defending the pro-Russian areas of east Ukraine against the 'fascist Kiev government', for instance. It is another, similar error: yet more Trotskyists bigging up the anti-imperialist credentials of reactionaries, whose opinions on gays and - who knows? - Jews might not play very well in the British public gallery. Organisations of the left are not under fire because their anti-imperialism is crude and moralistic, but because they *are* anti-imperialist.

When the Labour Party is cleansed of warmongers, city shills and cabs-for-hire, there will be time enough to deal with people whose anti-imperialism leads them to idiotic political conclusions; and with those, like the AWL, whose horror of the latter leads them to worse errors in the opposite direction. Hopefully the comrades will learn along the way. Until then, we deny the right of the Labour right to police the left *tout court* - no exceptions ●

OUR

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

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 ●

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Against all predictions

The job of American socialists is to channel the opportunities opened up by the Sanders campaign into the fight for class independence, argues **Jim Creegan**

Ever since Bernie Sanders announced his candidacy, his supporters have been set upon by numerous paladins of practical 'progressive' wisdom, from the left-Keynesian economist, Paul Krugman, and the editorial pages of *The New York Times* and *Boston Globe*, to myriad celebrities and prominent liberal elected officials, such as New York mayor Bill De Blasio and Ohio senator Sherrod Brown. Sanders, they incant along with Hillary Clinton, has some admirable goals, but the country is not ready to elect a Brooklyn-born (Jewish) socialist.

Even if elected in November - which despite his stunning win in Michigan still seems unlikely - Sanders stands no chance of getting his proposals for universal government health insurance, free public-university education and breaking up the big banks through a Congress of any party make-up, let alone the current Republican-controlled one. Especially in light of the growing possibility that the right-populist demagogue, Donald Trump, will get the Republican nomination, it is urgent for 'progressives' to rally behind a Democrat who is electable and knows how to 'get things done' in Washington, instead of wasting one's vote on an impossible dream.

So reads the Democratic establishment script. And it is being dutifully recited by the party's elected officials. Not a single mayor or governor has thus far endorsed Sanders. Of the 535 combined members of both houses of Congress, including its black and progressive caucuses, only two members of the House of Representatives - Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Raul Gijalva of Arizona (respectively black and Chicano) - have offered their support to the senator from Vermont.

In response to arguments based on pragmatism, Sanders acknowledges that he would be unable to achieve his programme merely by occupying the White House. He says it will require a "political revolution", with millions in the streets, to generate pressure for sweeping reforms and the election of a new Congress. Sanders, in other words, presents his campaign not simply as a chance for a new face at the top, but as a vehicle for deeper political change.

It is thus highly significant that just about a third of Democratic electors in Texas, Virginia, Minnesota, Ohio and Florida, around 40% in Nebraska, Illinois, North Carolina and Missouri and about half in Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Iowa and Michigan, 60% in New Hampshire, 67% in Kansas and 86% in Vermont voted for the "socialist". The lesser-evilist *Realpolitik*, on which the party hierarchy has leaned for so long to contain left impulses from below, is obviously losing its grip on a growing portion of the Democratic base. A breakdown of the Massachusetts, Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, etc results by age and income tell us who is defying the precedents. Sanders is clearly winning caucus-goers between ages 17 and 39, and those on lower incomes.

New Hampshire paints an even clearer picture. There, Clinton could only break even among voters from 45 to 64, and won only among those



Bernie Sanders: unprecedented opportunity for socialists

over 65. When it came to income, only those earning \$200,000 a year or more gave Clinton a majority. Sanders won in every other demographic, including women. One important thing these numbers tell us is that Sanders' appeal is hardly limited to university-educated young people and comfortable middle class liberals. He is obviously drawing in working class voters as well - and, as shown by Michigan, he is beginning to get a hearing from Afro-Americans.

Another time-worn Democratic stratagem that wilted in the snows of

Michigan: the use of identity politics as a counter to any signs of class-based voting. The Democrats habitually invoke their professed support of racial-minority, women's and LGBT rights - issues on which the ruling class is as divided as other social groups - to hide their corporate loyalties and burnish their 'progressive' credentials. Thus Hillary and her supporters have lately accused Sanders of conducting a one-note campaign that emphasises income inequality and the influence of big money in politics, to the neglect

of what they say are the co-equal evils of racism and sexism. (And it is true that the Sanders campaign, while not eschewing these themes, was a little slow off the mark in taking up the now volatile issues of immigration and police brutality.)

Campaigning on Clinton's behalf, her husband's former secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, declared on the hustings that there is "a special place in hell" for women who do not support female candidates out of gender solidarity. But the prize for bourgeois feminist fatuity must go to Gloria Steinem, the 81-year-old founder of *Ms Magazine* (and unapologetic 1950s CIA operative), who has also been hitting the boards for Hillary. On a television talk show, Steinem explained the surge in young women's support for Sanders by saying that they were flocking to his campaign because that's where the boys are. The programme's host, Bill Maher, replied that Steinem would have immediately branded any such remark coming from him as crudely sexist.

Steinem's subsequent apology was insufficient to stem the tide of female indignation that greeted her remarks, and, secondarily, those of Albright. Sanders supporters of what the media have called the "post-feminist generation" were highly insulted at the suggestion that their political choices should be governed by their gender instead of their overall views. Never has an attempt to invoke identity politics in opposition to nascent class-consciousness been more crass, and never before has it backfired so badly.

Whatever the final outcome of the primary process, a new constituency - one that first announced its arrival with the Occupy movement of 2011 - has now demonstrated that it has grown and is here to stay. Class disparities have become so palpable that standard Democratic Party tropes are failing to work their diversionary magic on a growing portion of the electorate. A division has opened up between an older, more comfortable layer of the party base, which continues to think pragmatically, cautiously and incrementally, and a younger cohort - students under mountains of debt, workers with ever slimmer prospects of upward mobility - whose conditions are bleak enough to warrant the casting off of old taboos and the taking of political risks. The feeling of having less and less to lose can be the germ of revolutionary consciousness. Will these malcontents remain within the Democratic fold?

Bernie Sanders has evinced a willingness to keep them there with his endorsement in advance of the Democratic primary winner (read: Clinton). But whether he will succeed in bringing them out in great numbers to vote for Hillary in the general election remains an open question - one that is causing the Democratic establishment more than a little anxiety. The grievances that moved them to throw the common sense of party elders to the winds in January, February and March will still be there in November. Sanders might have a harder time liquidating his campaign back into the mainstream party than did Jesse Jackson after his failed presidential bids at the head of his Rainbow Coalition in 1984 and 1988. These are leaner - and angrier - times.

Besides which, the party brass are not quite as certain of Sander's loyalty as they were of that of Jackson, a committed Democratic politician. Up until the primaries, Sanders always stood for election as an independent. Although he is part of the Congressional Democratic caucus, he also ran unsuccessfully against a Democrat for governor of Vermont in 1986. There is still some doubt as to whether his decision to run this time was an earnest indicator of his loyalty or a tactical move to gain access to voting lists, increase his exposure by participation in the candidates' debates, and avoid the political *oubliette* into which Ralph Nader was cast after running for the Greens in 2000. At 74, Sanders is not likely to begin a new phase in his political career. But there is uncertainty as to whether he will stump enthusiastically for Clinton come autumn, or make a merely *pro forma* endorsement.

But the bourgeoisie's uncertainty is the revolutionary's opportunity. The American two-party system is now in greater crisis than it has been at any time since the 1960s, and perhaps even the 1930s. Both parties are in disarray. For the first time since Jimmy Carter moved the Democrats decidedly to the right in 1976 - ie, in the adult memory of most people now alive - the party's leading contender is being forced to posture, however disingenuously, to the left. The Sanders bid has shaped the politics of the entire campaign. Many on the Democratic side see through Hillary's hypocrisy, and have suggested through their primary ballots that the lesser evil may no longer be good enough, and that they are not put off by the socialist label (though we know it is misappropriated by Sanders). They could form a constituency for an independent party of the left, in which Marxists would be able to fight for their politics.

But there is also another - more likely - possibility: that dissatisfied Democrats will strive to maintain a coherent presence of some kind within the party, and, following in the footsteps of Max Shachtman and Michael Harrington in decades past, attempt to channel the rebellious energies of 2016 into another vain effort to 'realign' the party to the left. Socialists must answer that those who control the party are far too tightly tethered to the country's ruling class and its empire ever to be transformed, and too well financed ever to be removed. Past practitioners of realignment have most often been realigned themselves - toward acceptance of the existing order.

We must reject the argument that whether to work inside or outside the Democratic Party is a purely tactical question. For socialists, political independence must remain a question of principle, not for the sake of being true to dogmas, but because beating the bourgeoisie on its own turf has been shown to be impossible. Those who said that the Sanders campaign reveals new possibilities clearly have a point. But the job of socialists is to channel those possibilities into an independent fight for socialism, and prevent them, like the hopes of past electoral insurgencies, from being interred in the graveyard of social movements that the Democratic Party has been accurately called