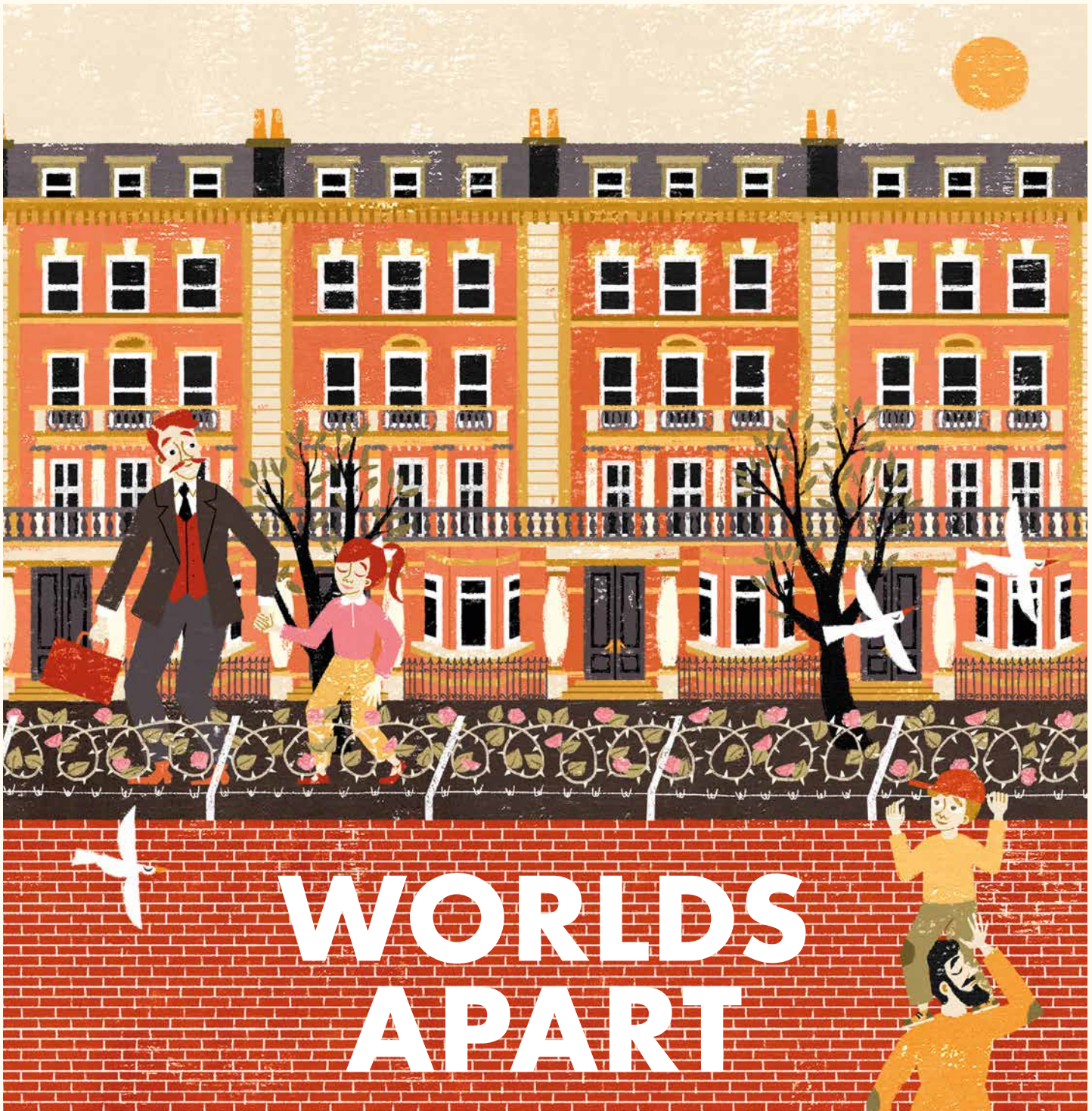


FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

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WORLDS APART

The impact of gentrification on our cities – and our political class – with Luke John Davies, Gloria de Piero and Loretta Lees p10 / Glen O'Hara looks ahead to the local elections p16 / Richard Leonard talks to Kate Murray p18 / Jon Cruddas and Frederick Harry Pitts on Marx and the modern Labour party p21

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FABIAN REVIEW

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**FABIAN
SOCIETY**

FABIAN REVIEW

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society. Like all publications of the Fabian Society, it represents not the collective view of the society, but only the views of the individual writers. The responsibility of the society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement.

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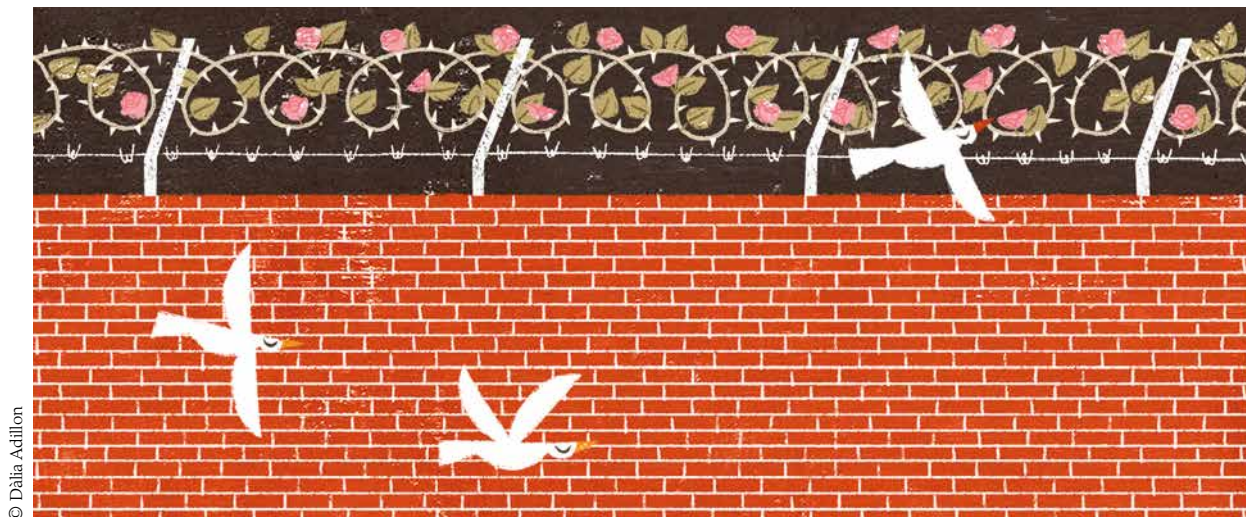
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Rising together

Labour must not see the world through a middle-class lens, argues *Andrew Harrop*

THERE HAVE ALWAYS been professional voices within the British left; the Fabian Society itself is proof of that. But the centre of gravity of the Labour party used to lie firmly with working-class Britain. Since the 1990s that has gradually changed as the make-up of Labour voters, members and elected representatives has gentrified.

A forthcoming Fabian report will show how this is playing out in the nation's political geography. The constituencies with the most working-class voters have been steadily drifting away from Labour, while those with the most professional voters have been increasing their support. At the 2017 election, Labour still won most working-class seats in England and Wales. But the party was barely ahead of the Conservatives in terms of total working-class votes; and it was behind when it came to skilled blue-collar electors.

Meanwhile, within the Labour party, the battles between Corbynites and moderates have largely been between two rival tribes of professionals and largely over their preoccupations, be that Europe, university tuition or the onward march of social liberalism. We must not become class-blind.

Traditionally, Labour's professional wing never dismissed class. Indeed, it was the unifying theme in Labour's 20th century political ideology, as the party shifted its attention from collectivism to egalitarianism. Tony Crosland, whose centenary falls this year, led that revisionist turn. In the 1952 *New Fabian Essays* he wrote 'the purpose of socialism is quite simply to eradicate [the] sense of class, and to create in its place a sense of common interest and equal status'. He argued that the British left should aim to eradicate the divisive feelings of an unequal class-based society, not just measurable economic inequality. This is what marked out British social demo-

crats from American left-liberals: Crosland was Rawls with class.

Looking forward, Labour's future is at risk if it can only see the world through a middle-class lens. For example, the left must exercise great care when it promotes social mobility and equal opportunities to reach the top. Progression is the lived experience of most Labour MPs, who come from working-class homes but are graduates themselves. By contrast Labour politicians who started on the shop-floor are an endangered species, with too few call-centre and social care workers replacing the miners and ships' stewards of old.

In their absence we risk forgetting that what matters is for entire communities to rise together, not for a lucky few to escape. Of course, people from every background are ambitious for their children. But the left's mission is not to create more affluent urban liberals, it is to reduce the inequalities that create barriers between whole communities. Labour must devote its energies to enhancing the quality of work and education for people in ordinary jobs, in ordinary towns; to tackling their anxieties and building their power and social standing; and to improving their living standards, homes and public services.

To do that the left needs to be *of* working-class Britain not just *for* it, with more politicians who have not been to university. As things stand many working-class voters look at Labour and see another branch of the professional public sector establishment, telling them what to do. Recent controversies about the renewal of housing estates are a case in point. I have no doubt that Labour councils have been seeking to act in the best interests of their working-class tenants. But when they sound like technocrats not pavement politicians they fail to bring people with them. The change the left brings must be *by* and *with* working-class communities, never just *for* them. ■

Shortcuts



CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

We live in radical times and that calls for radical reform

—*Alexandra Runswick*

The Palace of Westminster is famously in need of renovation. The dilapidated building, riddled with asbestos, leaking pipes, and mice running around, is an appropriate symbol for the state of our broken politics.

The Westminster model of politics is atrophying; it is stuck in an adversarial rut and unable to innovate or evolve. We bestow significance on arcane traditions and conventions that range from the benign, like the Black Rod ceremony, to the undemocratic – such as the Royal Prerogative power of Treaty Making, which deprives parliament of scrutiny and a default vote on international trade deals. Hours of parliamentary time are wasted every term whilst MPs queue up to walk through the voting lobby, in contrast to newer institutions like the Welsh Assembly where electronic voting is used to make sure every minute counts.

Just like MPs have clung onto a building that is subsiding into the Thames, so too they cling on to traditions and conventions that are not fit for a modern democracy. The political system we have in 2018 is one which is fundamentally not responsive to people's needs. On the whole, people don't feel like they have a voice, and they don't feel that politics is for them. And for a representative democracy, this is a crisis.

Democracy in the UK, and the uncoded constitution that underpins it, is fundamentally geared up to entrench power systems; it disproportionately benefits those with power. That is what you get from a political system that evolved from despotic monarchies.

In February, the Justice 4 Grenfell campaign paraded a series of billboards around London, asking: '71 dead', 'And still no arrests?', 'How come?'. Our political system did not start the Grenfell Tower

fire, but it did nothing for the people who lived there. It's clear to see why that tragedy resonated nationally; many people relate to the frustration of being not just ignored, but treated with near contempt by their elected representatives. For many in our society, accessing politics and holding politicians to account is simply not possible.

Our first past the post electoral system, as a further example, takes choice, influence and power away from voters. It is voters, rather than political parties, that are forced to make concessions on the issues that matter to them. When political parties or individual politicians aren't scared about being voted out of power, they aren't disincentivised from representing only those interests they choose to.

UK-style democracy is also one in which money speaks louder than words. If you can cough up £50,000 for the Conservative's Leader's Group, you get a seat at the table with the prime minister herself. Similarly for Labour, a membership fee of more than £1,000 will buy you access to the exclusive Thousand Club. Yet if you're homeless as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire, then it will be a challenge to have your voice heard by your own council.

So it's no wonder really that only 29 per cent of people think that parliament is doing a good job of representing their interests. Or that when it comes to picking a party to vote for, 56 per cent of people feel that no party properly represents the view of people like them.

Our uncoded constitution has allowed the government of the day – Conservative, Labour, coalition or otherwise – to bestow itself ever increasing powers. It also means that the rights and freedoms we have come to enjoy – possibly even take for granted – could be taken away with a majority vote of one. Our political system is in dire need of root and branch reform, and Brexit has thrust upon us a perfect opportunity for change. The strain Brexit is exerting on our archaic institutions has also exposed why the need for radical reform is so urgent.

In her Lancaster House speech, the prime minister was explicit about Brexit presenting a moment where we must "take a look at the kind of country we want to be." The vote to leave was, after all, propelled forward by the rallying cry to 'take back control', and it seems unlikely that those who cast their ballot in favour of leaving the EU envisioned

'taking back control' as meaning more powers for the executive and corporations.

A codified constitution – written by and for the people – could fix all of these problems or just some of them; it should ultimately be left up to the participants in a constitutional convention to decide what a new settlement between people and government should look like. However it would go quite some way towards creating a society in which politics works for people by defining inalienable rights and freedoms, placing clear constraints on government power, and clarifying the relationship between the four nations of the UK.

We live in radical times and that calls for radical reform. If we are tearing up the rulebook as we leave the EU and reshaping how we do things abroad, then we should also tear up the rulebook at home and make this a moment of transformative change. That means a codified constitution written by and for the people, that is fit for a modern democracy. **F**

Alexandra Runswick is the director of Unlock Democracy, the grassroots campaign for constitutional and democratic reform



HELD TO ACCOUNT

Pupils are missing out because of an arbitrary and toxic system

—*Emma Hardy*

The system for holding our schools to account is broken – and it's breaking both our children and our teachers. Schools should of course be held to account. But the current set-up, with its focus on centralised – and often arbitrary – targets, is distorting our whole educational system.

Despite all the rhetoric about increased power and choice for parents, their role and influence has been diminished. There has been little improvement in the educational outcomes for children leaving school since 2010 and the only things that have

dramatically risen in that time are teachers' workloads, cases of children's mental health problems and the number of children living in poverty.

Increasing numbers of children are being home schooled. There are worries that this is because schools are moving supposedly low-achieving children on for the sake of the exam league tables – a practice known as 'off-rolling' – or because parents refuse to allow their children to be exposed to modern day state education.

Many of our children face a limited educational diet because schools solely focus on English and maths in their fight to avoid being put into special measures. Time that used to be available for other subjects is swallowed up with extra maths or English 'boosters' or 'interventions', so inevitably other subjects suffer.

The behaviour policies set by some chains and schools are also under scrutiny, with some questioning whether they illegally damage the rights of children. The children's commissioner had to intervene and write to the previous secretary of state to ask her to remind schools that their behaviour policies should not violate the rights of children. Social mobility, if it ever existed, has stalled and now some – even those appointed by the government – are turning to dubious claims on genetics to excuse why some children fail to achieve.

To illustrate just one example of how our flawed accountability system has unintended consequences and drives unwanted behaviour I want to focus on school attendance.

Schools minister Nick Gibb has repeatedly stated that: "Even one day missed from school without very good reason is one too many" and, when launching the change to school attendance, his behaviour tsar Charlie Taylor said: "This is why good primary schools take a zero tolerance approach to poor attendance from the very start of school life."

Ofsted says for a school to be outstanding pupils should rarely miss a day and no group of pupils should be disadvantaged by low attendance. But the unintended consequences of these well-meaning statements can provoke real concern among parents: witness the thousands who signed a petition protesting against East Sussex County Council's school attendance campaign, a campaign they called 'aggressive' and 'offensive'.

A Facebook post from a parent explaining why she wouldn't let her child collect their attendance award was viewed and shared

over four million times and sparked a debate about the fairness of such policies.

I was a primary teacher for 11 years and attendance awards were just part of school life. But a recent visit from a constituent showed just how problematic they can be for those who cannot avoid missing school. This constituent was a parent of a child who had developed significant mental health problems and extreme anxiety. She had become very ill and was finding it impossible to attend school. The parent believed that the school were more focused on her child's attendance than her welfare.

During this difficult time the parent was seeking support from CAMHS, whilst facing the obvious delays in getting an appointment. The pressure from the school to force her child to go in was fuelling her child's anxiety and it was only when her child's hair started to fall out that they 'backed off.' The parent was going to be fined for her daughter's lack of attendance but luckily the judge in the case had some common sense.

When the parent tried to get her child into a different school, following a mental health diagnosis, the head of year called her into the school to set targets for her child's attendance. This school knew that the child had a mental health condition and that she had been out of school for months but still prioritised her attendance over her health.

The child never returned to school. The targets for attendance set back her recovery and her parent instead sent her to the local 14–16 college.



The attendance issue is not an isolated example. Our accountability regime means pupils are losing out in many ways: Fewer children are studying music, some pupils are not allowed to choose subjects they are interested in if the school doesn't believe they will get the top grades, while less time is being spent on sport despite the epidemic of childhood obesity.

The only way we will get the broad and balanced curriculum we need, make every child matter again and remove the fear that permeates every aspect of school life, is with a radical overhaul of our toxic accountability regime. ■

Emma Hardy is Labour MP for Hull West and Hessle and a member of the education select committee



THE RIGHTS APPROACH

Brexit threatens our work with the EU on global human rights, but there are also risks closer to home—*Julie Ward*

In February I received news that 34-year-old Teodora del Carmen Vásquez was to be freed after serving 11 years of a 30-year sentence for aggravated murder following the birth of a stillborn baby. Teodora is one of 17 El Salvadoran women whose cases are at the centre of a campaign initiated in 2014 by the Citizens' Group for the Decriminalisation of Abortion, many of whom are victims of rape or whose babies are medically unviable. Meanwhile, just last year 19-year-old El Salvadoran Beatriz Hernandez Cruz was sentenced to 30 years after she gave birth in a toilet without even knowing she was pregnant. Beatriz was the victim of repeated rape by a gang member.

I know and care about these women because the European parliament passed a resolution in December 2017 calling for their release and for an end to the inhuman laws that continue to criminalise women like them. Women's rights are of particular concern to the EU institutions: gender equality is a core principle enshrined in the treaties and continues to underpin our relationships with other countries. Whilst the

UK government has been embarrassingly slow to ratify the Istanbul Convention on eliminating violence against women, the EU has decided to become a party to the agreement through accession, thereby strengthening its role as a guiding force for member states. Brexit risks the UK becoming more susceptible to regressive views on a range of topics on women's rights and equality across the board with a danger, for example, that the Victorian values of the DUP and figures such as Jacob Rees-Mogg could shift policy in a subtle and dangerous way.

The European parliament has an active human rights sub-committee within the foreign affairs committee, but human rights can and should be everyone's business. I had worked before becoming an MEP on women's and children's rights, and once I went to Brussels I also found myself speaking up for imprisoned journalists and dissenting voices, writing letters of concern to presidents, prime ministers, heads of state, foreign ministers and the EU's own High Representative, Federica Mogherini.

The EU's role as a powerful actor in the field of human rights is not widely known. After I was elected in 2014, I was amazed at the level of attention I received from human rights activists and organisations seeking to build a rapport with the new legislature, anxious to press the cause of long-running cases in rogue states, or to warn of growing dangers to civil liberties. Every plenary session in Strasbourg the European Parliament tables debates and motions on 'human rights urgencies'. Recent cases have included the Crimean Tartars persecuted by the Russians, the homophobic rounding up of apparently gay men in Chechnya, loss of indigenous rights in Brazil, threats to persons with albinism in Malawi, child slavery in Haiti, and many more.

I am proud to report that our work frequently bears fruit. When I joined my colleagues in calling for the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab, director of the Bahraini Centre for Human Rights, in July 2015, I was thrilled to see him released two days later. Our criticism of the treatment of Iskander Yerimbetov, a Kazakh political prisoner, enabled him to have family visits. An urgent intervention to stop the extradition of a Turkish educator from Kosovo was immediately successful, much to the relief of family members. My twinning with the imprisoned HDP Kurdish MP Leyla Birlık resulted in her early release from detention.

So what impact will Brexit have on human rights issues aside from the loss of our role as powerful international

interlocutors? As I write the biggest threat to the hard-won rights and freedoms of British citizens in the EU and EU 27 citizens in the UK is now being played out in the corridors of power in Westminster. It's called the EU Withdrawal Bill and, in its current form, risks stripping us of equal rights with our European neighbours post-Brexit. Our experience as global human rights campaigners must now be turned to support ourselves. In the same way that we have stood up for the human rights of the poorest, most vulnerable and most persecuted people in the world, we must now be alert to any reduction of our everyday rights. In the age of Trump and Brexit we cannot take anything for granted. That is why I have established a citizens' rights friendship group in the European parliament, bringing together MEPs from different countries and various political groups to meet with concerned individuals and civil society organisations to fight for the rights of all citizens and their families in the Brexit process and beyond. We must make sure that the debate never loses sight of the individuals affected and the impact it is having on their lives. Our aim must be to end the use of citizens as bargaining chips in the negotiating process and secure unilateral guarantees for all UK and EU citizens now. **F**

Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for North West England



YOUTH BEHIND BARS

Young adults held in adult prisons are being failed
—*Sheila Chapman*

On a recent visit to HMP Pentonville, I spoke to a mature prisoner frustrated that the snooker table on his wing had been removed. Winter weather and staff shortages meant he had not been outside for exercise for weeks and a game of snooker during 'association' (when men are unlocked to have a shower, interact with one another or make a phone call) was something to look forward to. The table had been removed as a safety measure because a young adult prisoner had taken one of the snooker balls.

This is a minor incident in a prison described by Her Majesty's Prisons Inspectorate in 2017 as 'immensely challenging': a prison where, in 2016, 20 per cent of men were taking anti-psychotic medication and incidents of self-harm were up from 352 to 483: a prison where in the year from February 2016 to March 2017, two prisoners escaped, one was killed and six died in custody.

But minor though it seems, the snooker ball incident serves to highlight some of the problems flowing from the government's decision to accommodate teenagers in adult prisons.

Despite having reached adulthood as defined chronologically, young adults are typically far from psycho-social maturity. Young men in prison have overwhelmingly been exposed to chaotic lifestyles, abuse, violence or residential care often compounded by mental ill health. They have poor impulse control, are disproportionately involved in violent incidents within prisons, are highly likely to be involved in gangs and have the poorest outcomes in terms of recidivism. Many act immaturely with little thought for the consequences, like taking a snooker ball. This results in loss of the scant privileges that are available in prisons – a television, an extra phone call – as well as making life difficult for mature prisoners who, typically, want to do their time in peace.

The independent monitoring board's latest report notes that: "Young adults in Pentonville are adrift in an adult prison which has made no specific provision for them." This chimes with the Harris report on self-inflicted deaths of young adults in custody which called for them to be accommodated in small units with specially trained staff and a regime tailored to their levels of maturity and particular vulnerabilities.

The government, doggedly pursuing austerity and distracted by Brexit, is unlikely to change a policy which allows it to reduce capacity in the more expensive to run specialist young offender institutions. But there are steps that it could and should take to help young adults in prisons like Pentonville.

First, as urged in the Harris report, there should be unapologetic recognition of young adults' status as both victims and offenders.

Second, overstretched prisons like Pentonville should be paid a subsidy for holding young adults in the same way that schools receive pupil premium for students from low-income backgrounds to help improve their outcomes. Pentonville doesn't even have the budget to provide enhanced nutritional meals to reflect the needs of growing young men and many complain

of feeling hungry much of the time. Hunger is not rehabilitative.

Third, as recommended by the independent monitoring board, the number of young adults held at any one time in Pentonville should be capped. Whilst the prison can absorb a population of 60 to 70 young adults, when levels creep up, as they have been doing over the last few months, to more than double that, then, along with the rise in violent incidents and self-harm, the ability of the staff to run a normal regime is compromised. This then has an impact on the morale of staff and the experience of prisoners. The previous justice minister argued that a cap was “impossible to implement” because young adults are directed to the prison by the courts and the figure fluctuates depending on how many are remanded into custody. This is a bizarre response, suggesting as it does that government has no ability to influence either the number of young adults remanded into custody in the first place or the type of institution they are sent to. The reality is that the government could, via its response to Sentencing Council consultations, promote sentencing guidelines that take account of maturity, could invest in community-based alternatives to custody, could provide support to young people and their families before ever they become involved in the criminal justice system and could keep open institutions that house young adults only. All of which would over time save the taxpayer money.

Young adults should be given the best chance of all prisoners. Subjecting them to an environment and regime that doesn't address their needs or tackle their offending behaviour, not only makes a mockery of the notion of rehabilitation, it risks adversely affecting their development. And it also makes it less likely that they will be able to stop offending – in effect creating

career criminals with the inevitable economic and social costs that flow from that. **F**

Sheila Chapman is a lawyer, sits on the independent monitoring board of HMP Pentonville and is last year's winner of a Jenny Jeger prize for her writing for the Fabian Review. This article is written in a personal capacity



DRIVERLESS DREAMS

Money which could be invested in the transport network is being wasted on gadgets

—Christian Wolmar

Hardly a day passes without an announcement about the imminent advent of driverless cars. We are being bombarded with predictions that soon the roads will be full of self-driving pods, leaving their occupants to read a newspaper or, more likely, play with their devices while being taken to their destination.

The government has certainly contributed to this hype. In late February the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy announced £22m of grants to a variety of autonomous vehicle projects, which brings the total up to £120m for 73 different schemes. Legislation to allow ‘connected and autonomous vehicles’ to use public roads and to create a framework for insuring them is currently in parliament.

Yet there has been no proper debate about the desirability or feasibility of these

vehicles, let alone a proper analysis of their technical capability. These vehicles are being developed by a combination of auto manufacturers and tech companies like Google, whose subsidiary Waymo is the biggest player. Certainly, their development is not a response to any market stimulus since surveys have shown that most drivers are perfectly happy to continue being in control of their vehicles.

Initially, the companies producing autonomous vehicles thought that they were simply a natural extension of existing ones. But testing has shown that reducing the role of drivers to one of mere oversight means that they are not sufficiently alert when they do need to intervene. Since one of the key selling points of this concept is increased safety, the developers have been forced to go straight to level 4 capability (out of six levels from zero to five), at which point cars are able to drive themselves in all situations with no human intervention.

Technically, this has so far proved insuperable. Despite all the hype surrounding trials, these have been limited to relatively simple situations in specific geographic areas and good weather conditions. Moreover, there has nearly always been an operator ready to take over in dangerous situations and these interventions have been very frequent.

And there are all kinds of situations in which it is difficult to envisage how a driverless pod would cope: how would it distinguish between a traffic jam and a row of parked cars? How would two pods meeting each other on a single carriageway road resolve priority? How could security be assured when a pod would have to stop if someone with evil intent stepped in front of the vehicle?

The more that one analyses driverless cars, the less realistic they appear. The whole concept seems to be borne of the needs of the tech companies to find some use for their monopoly profits and the auto manufacturers who are terrified of being left behind by their rivals. Unfortunately, as ever with the tech companies, they present this development as benign – it will improve safety and relieve people of the burden of driving – when, in fact, the only motive seems to be creating a product to ensure their continued profitability. After all, self-driving cars will allow people to spend more time using Google products.

One could argue that a few million pounds of government money wasted on gadgetry is trivial, but in fact it has numerous damaging effects. Firstly, researchers in other fields of transport, such as those improving information systems or making buses more



fuel efficient are aghast that the limited funds available for government support of research and development are being wasted on these boys' toys. Secondly, the hype which these grants helps to stimulate encourages the view that autonomous vehicles will soon appear on the roads and therefore allows their supporters to argue that spending on alternatives, such as improved public transport, is a waste. Already, politicians discussing transport policy often use this excuse.

Thirdly, it is unlikely that a viable business model for driverless cars will emerge. None of the cars so far on trial have been priced but it is unlikely that any would cost less than a six figure sum. Even mass production might not make them affordable.

The immensity of the task of creating vehicles capable of self-driving in all weathers, on all types of roads (and off-road lanes) and in situations with large numbers of pedestrians may mean that these vehicles will never be feasible and the advantages, such as freeing up central city parking, reducing road casualties and allowing non-drivers to have access to cars, will never be delivered. Politicians must take note and not be conned by the hype. They must not allow transport policy to be determined by wishful thinking by the tech companies and their allies in the automobile industry. **F**

*Christian Wolmar is a writer and broadcaster and a former Labour parliamentary candidate. Signed copies of his book, *Driverless Cars: On a Road to Nowhere* are available for £10 post free from the author: Christian.wolmar@gmail.com*



PLUGGING THE GAPS

The nursing profession is haemorrhaging staff and it's putting our NHS at risk—*Donna Kinnair*

When you look at the big picture, it's sometimes hard to believe that we've come to this. There are 40,000 nursing vacancies in England alone, and that figure is growing by the day.

But of course, it's not just about the numbers. It's about nurses staying on after a 12-hour shift because their ward is so short-staffed. It's about care left undone as too few nurses struggle to cope with multiple patients with complex needs. It's about patients dying alone because there is no-one free to sit with them. None of this is acceptable.

Nurses outnumber doctors three to one in the NHS and for the vast majority of people, nurses will carry out much of their treatment and care, supported by healthcare assistants and other nursing staff.

Whether it is caring for a new mother on neonatal, helping a child with disabilities learn in a mainstream school, or easing the pain of a dying patient, nurses form the foundation of the NHS, from cradle to grave.

But failures of planning and policy are chipping away at that foundation, and collapse could be just one more bad winter away.

I'd like to tell you the government has a joined-up, effective and robust plan in place to increase recruitment and retention, and safeguard the nursing workforce of the future. Sadly it is simply not the case.

Instead we have a profession that's haemorrhaging staff left, right and centre. The decision to remove the nursing bursary is increasingly looking like a disaster – the latest UCAS figures show the number of applications for the next academic year has fallen by a third since the same point in 2016 – 43,720 down to 29,390, and by 4,310 on last year alone.

And more and more nurses, unable to offer patients the care they have been trained to provide, are leaving for Australia or America, or simply leaving the profession altogether.

On top of that we have an ageing workforce, a third of whom will be eligible for retirement in the next five years.

It's not surprising some hospital trusts have run up multi-million pound debts trying to cover the cost of agency staff, in a desperate effort to fill rotas.

So what are the solutions? The government points to apprenticeship schemes, but the truth is that the new nursing apprenticeship attracted just 30 trainees last year.

Apprenticeships alone will never be enough to arrest the devastating shortage of registered nurses – it's attempting to fill a swimming pool with a teaspoon. Evidence shows that a nursing degree is still the fastest and safest route into nursing, with improved outcomes for patients.

The reality is that we need to train more than 28 nurses per 100,000 of the population. The aim should be self-sufficiency – the UK has become used to relying on recruitment from overseas, yet Brexit has shown just how precarious that is. To achieve this, we need some creative solutions.

Here are a few suggestions. First, create a central funding pot within the Department of Health and Social Care. This could be used to cover means-tested grants, and allow for tuition fees write-off to encourage more students into the profession.

We also need incentives to tempt graduates of other subjects, and those already working in the NHS, to convert to nursing through post-graduate programmes, with sufficient financial support.

But it's not enough to look to the future – an immediate investment in our current workforce would go some way to making nurses feel valued again.

Too many have had career development opportunities snatched away as the Health Education England budget for continuing professional development has been cut by 60 per cent over the past two years, from £205m in 2015/16 to £83.49m in 2017/18.

These budgets must be reinstated, and the opportunities they present clearly communicated.

And until we achieve self-sufficiency, which in truth is years away at best, we need to make it easier for overseas nurses to come and work in this country. The Nursing and Midwifery Council must improve its processes, and do more to help both individuals and employers.

To pull all this together requires a comprehensive, long-term workforce strategy which determines the real demands that our ageing growing population places on health and care services.

And it's not enough to stop at the NHS. Given the significant proportion of nurses needed across all sectors, any plan based solely on the NHS, or even the wider public sector, will likely fail. There need to be enough trained nurses in our country that an individual choosing to pursue a career in the independent sector has no detrimental impact on the NHS – tens of thousands of nurses work in social care, outside the public sector.

We need an honest discussion about the standard of health and social care we want to see in this country and how we, as a society, are prepared to pay for it. **F**

Donna Kinnair is director of nursing policy and practice at the Royal College of Nursing

From flat caps to flat whites

A gulf has opened up between our politicians and many of those they represent. *Luke John Davies* looks at how social democracy was gentrified



Luke John Davies is a PhD student at Aston University and the chair of the Birmingham and West Midlands Fabian Society. He sits on the Fabian national executive committee as a local societies' representative and is also a member of the FEPS Young Academic Network

IN THE LATE 19th and early 20th centuries, an alliance was formed between the working classes and the progressive middle classes across Europe. Here in Britain working class trade unionists like Keir Hardie and JR Clynes stood shoulder to shoulder with their 'social superiors' such as the Fabian's own Sidney and Beatrice Webb. They united around a new-forged political tradition – social democracy – and they made great strides. They brought about welfare states, publicly funded healthcare systems, mass education and a whole host of progressive social changes. Sometimes haltingly, sometimes with reverses, but steadily, gradually, the alliance made the world better. Then something changed.

In the decades since the 1970s the alliance has gone. The working classes (as clunky and complicated as that term now is) are no longer integral to the picture. Social democracy has been thoroughly gentrified.

Thomas Frank, John Curtice, Daniel Allington, Phil Wilson MP and others have all sounded klaxons about the potential consequences. Richard Rorty's 1997 book *Achieving Our Country* reads as an eerily accurate prediction of the way Donald Trump rode working class disaffection to power. In Europe too many working class voters turned off by social democracy first seemed to stop voting but then threw their weight behind the likes of Marine le Pen, *Alternative für Deutschland* and of course the Brexiteers.

We can see more evidence of this gentrification in Labour's performance last year. We lost former working class strongholds like Mansfield, North-East Derbyshire, Stoke South, Walsall North and Copeland – all Labour since 1935 or earlier. Working class Tory support turned a swathe of once safe seats in the North and Midlands into vulnerable marginals; seats like Hartlepool, Darlington, Stockton North, Sedgfield, Bolsover, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Bishop Auckland, Barrow and Furness, Ashfield and Dudley North. At the same time we won seats traditionally

seen as affluent and middle-class such as Kensington and Canterbury.

It is not just our voters who are becoming gentrified. The parliamentarians and the party's focuses are as well. These are of course self-reinforcing phenomena. The people the working class encounter every day who make their lives worse are not the rich but middle-class graduate professionals – the call-centre manager, the job-centre worker, the letting agent. When they look at social democratic politicians they see not themselves but those same middle-class graduate professionals and so they stop supporting them. And as the percentage of middle-class people at the top of the parties increased, their focus switched to issues closest to their hearts and their presentation of the issues was increasingly framed for middle-class sensibilities.

My research is aimed at understanding what factors have driven this gentrification dynamic. In part it can be explained by a shift in the recruitment patterns for social democratic parliamentarians. As trade unions decreased in influence from the 1980s onwards, centre-left parties faced a functional need to replace them as recruiting grounds. The vacuum was filled by party youth organisations which at first supplemented and then supplanted the unions as the place to find prospective electoral standard bearers.

The numbers I have uncovered during my research are startling. Take Germany as a representative example. The proportion of SPD members of the Bundestag after the 1980 election who had previously held a formal role with a trade union was 26.52 per cent. By 1994 that proportion had halved and it has hovered between 12 and 14 per cent ever since. In contrast the proportion of SPD parliamentarians who had previously held a formal role with the party youth wing JUSOS rose sharply from 12.83 per cent after the 1994 election to more than half – 52.90 per cent – in 2017. A similar story is likely happening in other social democratic parties, including Labour. Most modern social democratic



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parliamentarians did their political apprenticeship in youth or student politics rather than the trade unions. We have far more Wes Streetings than Angela Rayners.

This matters because if you work for a trade union you are paid to do politics. Your outside circumstances don't matter. Participation in a youth organisation however is entirely voluntary. Its activities are conducted in the evenings and at weekends and it is frequently highly metropolitan (in the UK it is, at the top levels at least, exceedingly centralised in London). So the change in recruitment patterns has effectively barred anyone who does shift work, anyone on a low income, anyone who is a single parent, anyone who is a carer and anyone who lives further from London than about two hours travel from becoming a Labour MP. The pool of potential parliamentarians has increasingly become limited to metropolitan, graduate professionals.

None of this is to criticise any individual parliamentarian. Wes Streeting, a successful veteran of the student politics route, himself experienced poverty as a child as did many others. Their stories are the embodiment of the social democratic dream of working-class parents having middle-class kids. Nobody can question their commitment to improving the lives of the worst off in society and Labour has always had middle-class parliamentarians – not least Clement Attlee. But there used to be a balance – for every Alan Milburn an Alan Johnson, for every Roy Jenkins a Roy Mason. That balance has gone. Graduate professionals have crowded out the likes of their parents from the corridors of power.

This creates groupthink and a narrowing of focus. Most social democrats now subscribe to a Rawlsian progressive liberal perspective focused on an imagined individual, a mindset that unites 'Corbynites' and 'Blairites' alike but which ignores communitarian considerations of how individuals fit together in a diverse community.

You can see this in the way social democrats approach issues such as the regeneration of run-down areas. Labour often focuses on encouraging one employer or industry – often a cool, high-tech one such as green energy or robotics – when time after time we have seen that communities built on one dominant industry sooner or later collapse,

from Upper Clyde shipbuilders to Welsh coal miners to West Midlands auto-workers. The thinking pattern is: 'If I were an unemployed person there, what up-and-coming industry would I want to work in?' rather than: 'How can we build a robust, sustainable community with multiple industries so people can specialise in different careers?' so allowing the area to survive the failure of one employer or sector as well as giving people choice and agency.

The starkest example of this groupthink though is the social democratic obsession with education as the solution to poverty. There is no doubt that education as the route out of poverty works at the level of an individual. But it doesn't work at a system level. If everyone in the country had a PhD, we would still need somebody to empty the bins each week. Education should be open to all but however necessary it is in itself it is an insufficient response to poverty. Only by ensuring workers in low-skilled jobs such as rubbish collection, hospitality or call-centres have decent pay and conditions alongside an opening up of education will we make major inroads into poverty.

There are very few voices left at the top of social democratic parties with first-hand experience of that kind of low-skilled work beyond a part-time student job. So those workers no longer see themselves reflected in the public face of social democracy and a gulf emerges. Bridging this gap isn't about winning power. Labour and her sister parties across Europe might occasionally triumph thanks to the votes of the liberal middle classes. But policies will be done to the worst off in our society rather than with them. People are not problems to be solved and resent being treated as such. They are human beings with agency who wish to have a say in their own lives, something they feel they have lost as 'their' political parties abandoned them. There is a reason 'take back control' was the most powerful political slogan of our times.

If social democrats are serious about our historical mission of fighting to help the most disadvantaged in our society the class balance amongst our politicians has to be restored. Otherwise we will be speaking over rather than with those we seek to represent. We might win power. But we won't be empowering those who need it most. **F**

Smashing the class ceiling

Labour must not only speak for the working class, it must speak from the working class too, argues *Gloria de Piero*



Gloria de Piero is Labour MP for Ashfield

WHEN MARGARET THATCHER entered Downing Street in 1979, 98 of the 619 MPs in parliament had previously worked in manual jobs. In the space of three decades, the number has plummeted to just 19 – a mere 3 per cent of parliament. Ex-miners like Dennis Skinner, once two-a-penny on the Labour benches, are now lonely voices in a chamber dominated by professionals and the university-educated.

Parliament, like much of the country, has a class problem. As you move up the ranks of power, fewer and fewer working class voices are heard – more than a third of Theresa May's cabinet were privately educated, compared with 7 per cent of the country, and 14 of the 29 members went on to Oxbridge. While this isn't surprising from a party whose previous prime minister was a member of the Bullingdon Club, the reality is the Labour party also has a job to do. Seventy seven per cent of our elected MPs went to university and 7 per cent used to do manual jobs, whilst a quarter of MPs come from a new professional political class of organisers and advisors.

It would be too easy to conclude parliament is simply reflecting wider economic shifts over the last 30 years; that as heavy industries have declined and we've moved to a knowledge-based economy, horny-handed sons of soil are less an under-represented community than a relic of a bygone era.

But while the pits may have closed, Britain's working class hasn't disappeared. Instead, a new army of care workers, cleaners, Amazon pickers and supermarket packers

has emerged and replaced the pit jobs in constituencies like mine. There is a new working class of precarious and low-paid workers, but, bar a few notable exceptions, where are their voices in today's parliament?

This matters: class brought me to Labour and I wanted to become an MP to fight for my class. A two-bar electric fire to heat the whole house, being hungry in the run up to benefits day, standing in a different queue for free school meals, staying away from school on wear-your-own clothes day and spending half my childhood going without holidays or presents. These are scars that will stay with me, and drive me every day to fight for a Labour government.

I was lucky, I gained a place at university and from there my life changed. But for too many kids today, class is still the main factor in deciding their future. If you are born poor in Britain you're more likely to stay poor. Just one in eight kids from low-income backgrounds will go on to be a high-earner. And if you're unlucky enough to be born in a poor area you'll die earlier too.

In government, Labour was laser-focused on closing the gap between rich and poor that begins in childhood, lifting a million children out of poverty and opening 4,000 Sure Start centres. And it paid off, investment in early-years education saw the proportion of childcare settings rated good or outstanding by Ofsted grow from 50 per cent to 93 per cent between 2003 and 2016. We didn't completely close the gap but we were well on our way. That progress is now being systematically dismantled by a Conservative government that's scrapped the child poverty target and is

on course to push one million children back into poverty by 2020.

In coastal and ex-industrial market town constituencies like mine, class inequality is compounded by a lack of good local jobs and opportunities. Just 9 per cent of kids on free school meals in Ashfield make it to university, compared to 22 per cent of kids in a similar position nationally. There's as much talent on a council estate as a country estate but it's not reflected across our top professions.

But even if you make it to university and graduate with a good degree, the invisible networks and self-confidence of class – described by a headteacher in one of my toughest schools as a “the social edge that being advantaged gives you” – still operate against working-class candidates trying to break into top professions. Half of civil servants, half of journalists and a staggering 74 per cent of judges were privately educated. Politics isn't unique, it's sadly no different.

The Labour party was founded on the values of a working-class movement which fought against the constraints of a class-ridden country. It is written into our constitution that where you come from and who you are shouldn't determine your opportunities in life. We will always be a party who speaks *for* the working class, but we must be the party which speaks *from* the working class too.

So what can we do? In recent years our party has led the way in improving the gender balance in parliament and increasing BAME and LGBT representation. All-women shortlists have helped break down barriers for women MPs, and trail-blazers like Diane Abbott, Chris Smith and Angela Eagle have provided inspiration for countless candidates who've stood since. We can't afford to take our foot off the pedal on these fronts (particularly when it comes to the representation of disabled people in parliament), but it's time we used some of these tools to increase working-class representation too.

Shadow cabinet members like Angela Rayner and Jonathan Ashworth make me proud to be Labour, but they are the rare exception. If you don't see people like you in parliament, with accents like yours or life stories you can relate to, the message you're sent is: that isn't your world, you don't belong there.

Next, we must improve non-university routes into politics, including to jobs within our party. There's no coincidence that declining union membership has closely tracked the decline in working-class representation in politics. The shop floor was once the training ground for Labour candidates, but with union density in new, precarious working-class jobs at record lows, we've lost a vital route in.

Our constitution calls for selection panels to take account of the need “to increase working-class representation”. But it doesn't stop at selection. Standing for election is expensive, most candidates give up their jobs months before the election – some estimate the personal cost to be as much £30,000. If you're a single mum working a full-time job that's just not a risk you can take. The £150,000 fund announced by Tom Watson to train and back candidates from working-class backgrounds as well

as disabled candidates, has the potential to deliver a new cohort of talent across our party.

Increasing working-class representation means removing barriers to participation at every level of the party, right down to membership dues. We have an unwaged and a waged membership rate, but is it time for the Democracy Review led by Katy Clark to consider whether we can make membership fees progressive so a nurse isn't paying the same as a barrister?

Labour party meetings are often where talent is first spotted. But when local meetings are held on Friday evenings and sometimes run late into the night, how can we expect shift-workers, single parents, or people working night jobs and multiple jobs to participate?

Elevating the visibility and voices of working-class members within our party isn't just the right thing to do, it's also fundamental to the future of our party. Far from having a declining influence on elections, class is driving some of the most important shifts in politics today. The last election saw a 12-point swing towards Labour from middle class voters. But we lost former Labour strongholds like Mansfield and North East Derbyshire – seats we've held for almost a century.

In constituencies like mine, many working-class voters have turned to parties on the right or away from mainstream politics altogether. American academics Noam Gidron and Peter Hall recently wrote a blog for the

LSE entitled ‘Understanding the political impact of white working-class men who feel society no longer values them’. It argued that economic and cultural developments have operated together to increase support for populism – it's not just the loss of jobs in working-class, former industrial communities, it's also the loss of social status that comes with having a skilled job that generations of your family have performed and

once formed the heart of your community. Low-skilled, low paid jobs don't cover the cost of living and can't compensate for this perceived loss of social standing in a society so visibly run by and dominated by the university educated and professional class.

There's nothing heroic about growing up poor, every day I pinch myself I escaped it. But I'm also proud of my working-class roots, and know that it's made me who I am today. As the Labour party we must be ruthlessly tough on the causes of poverty, and on those who are happy to write off kids from poor areas like mine as not destined for university or a job in the top professions. But Angela Rayner is right about elevating the status of vocational qualifications, and we must also enable more non-university routes into top professions including politics, properly valuing critical jobs like care and fighting for decent well-paid work that affords people respect and a voice in society.

Increasing the number of working-class voices in our party will help, but by itself it won't solve the deeper alienation felt by many of our traditional working-class voters. For that, we must fight for a Labour government that will continue the work to eradicate child poverty, close the attainment gap for poor kids, provide the ladders up and deliver decent jobs in communities like mine. ■

We must be ruthlessly tough on the causes of poverty and on those who are happy to write off kids from poor areas

The turning tide

The state-led gentrification of council estates has alienated many residents from their – often Labour-run – local authorities, writes *Loretta Lees*



Professor Loretta Lees is an urban geographer who is internationally known for her research on gentrification/urban regeneration, global urbanism, urban policy, urban public space, architecture and urban social theory. She is currently professor of human geography at the University of Leicester

NEW LABOUR CAME to power in 1997 with a commitment to the renaissance of British cities and concerned that the social divisions blighting our inner cities shamed us as a nation. On the day after New Labour's general election victory Tony Blair launched the new government's regeneration policy from the Aylesbury estate in London, highlighting the estate's residents as Britain's 'poorest' and the 'forgotten', many of whom played 'no formal role in the economy and were dependent on benefits'. In New Labour's urban renaissance agenda the council estate played a symbolic and ideological role as a signifier of a spatially concentrated, dysfunctional underclass.

New Labour escalated the dismantling of council housing that the Tories had already begun under Thatcher, drawing heavily on the mixed communities policy that underpinned the US Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI programme of poverty deconcentration. This program was being used to demolish (predominantly black) inner city housing projects, like Cabrini Green in Chicago, and replace them with newly built homes for a new social mix of residents. Mixed communities policy was sold to the British public as a moral agenda that would reduce social exclusion and promote the social mobility of the poor by creating mixed tenure communities in which the social capital of the middle classes would trickle down to low income groups. This was a moral underclass perspective sold as a social integrationist one. The New Deal for Communities programme delivered this agenda.

Left liberals were persuaded by the moral tissue of mixed communities policy, after all who could be against the social uplift of the poor? But the emerging evidence base on the failure of mixed communities policy and its actual outcome – displacement of low income communities and gentrification by stealth – was conveniently

ignored by the responsible department at the time, the Office of the Deputy Minister, just as it was by its successor, the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Before moving on it is worth reflecting on the ideological content of New Labour's ideas about urban renaissance, and in particular to think about the 'place' they emerged from – gentrifying Islington in inner London. These ideas continue to dominate thinking today, and have had, for the most part, cross-party support.

Blair moved to 1 Richmond Crescent in Barnsbury in 1993. This gentrified house would act as one of the main stage sets of his rise to power, it appeared in the media and in Labour party promotional material. Barnsbury became known as 'the spiritual home of New Labour'; it became home, like the rest of the N1 postcode and Islington more generally, to a new sociological type – 'Islington person'. Islington person was the politically correct voice of the chattering classes and a remaking of journalist Nicolas Tomalin's 'conspicuous thrifters', gentrifiers who bought unspoilt houses in unpretentious districts, did them up seeking by the appearance of plain living to create the impression of high thinking and anti-vulgarity. The urbane ideologies and practices of Islington's gentrifiers and the social networks/political networking that developed between them (including New Labour politicians, sympathetic journalists, and other professionals), gave birth to New Labour's ideas on urban renaissance. What emerged was an urban renaissance agenda that was textbook gentrification. The interests and priorities of gentrifiers became a foundational element of the post-industrial city as growth machine in what amounted to a gentrifiers' charter.

Two specific ideas were at the forefront of New Labour's urban renaissance policy: social mixing and increased community participation (local democracy). Pioneer gentrification had long been associated with such ideals. Pioneer gentrifiers were part of a left liberal new middle class who

actively sought social mixing and social democracy, as seen in the fact that they were champions of the comprehensive school revolution of which Margaret Malden's Islington Green in Islington was a prototype. As Ken Pring, pioneer Islington gentrifier said: "The present trend towards a rising proportion of the middle classes in the population will continue. This will help create a better social balance in the structure of the community, and the professional expertise of the articulate few will ultimately benefit the underprivileged population".

Such words virtually echoed New Labour's urban renaissance rhetoric on social mixing and mixed communities policy. All political ideas are local and it is not without significance that many of them were manufactured in gentrifying Islington. There was, I would argue, a causal relationship between the local experience of gentrification and political reform (from old Labour to New Labour) in Islington and some of the key features of New Labour's urban renaissance policy.

It was long thought by gentrification scholars that London would never fully gentrify as pockets of council housing stood in the way, protecting low income groups from the ravages of the property market. But as we entered a new millennium it soon became clear that council housing was the final gentrification frontier and under significant threat. New Labour set out to demolish council estates and replace them with new mixed communities.

At first council estate communities were excited at the possibility of their homes being regenerated, attracted by the swanky new apartments and nice new spaces they were told they could move into. But as time went on people began to realise the smoke and mirrors of these schemes. Southwark's regeneration of the Heygate Estate became symbolic of the false promises and injustices of this 'renewal'. More than 3,000 council tenants and leaseholders were displaced (their homes and community destroyed), the estate was demolished and its 'mixed tenure' replacement, the newly built Elephant Park, marketed off plan in East Asia.

I am currently working on the first in-depth investigation of the impacts of council estate 'renewal' in 21st century London. We have now collated an evidence base about the scale of these schemes: since 1997 54,263 units have either been demolished or are slated for demolition on council estates of more than 100 units in London. If we take the London Housing Plan's average number of households per unit (2.5) a conservative estimate is that 135,658 London council tenants and leaseholders have been or are being displaced. In the case of the Heygate replacement social homes were promised but never materialised and tenants that managed to get rehoused (they had to go on the council's Homesearch waiting list) did so at some distance from the Heygate area

What has been (and indeed still is) disturbing is the number of Labour-run councils which – despite this evidence – have continued to promote the gentrification of council estates, from Southwark south of the river to Haringey north of the river. The democratic implications of

this are mind boggling – pushing these schemes through against the interests of those they represent. Some are believers in New Labour's social mixing agenda, some argue there is no alternative at a time of austerity and cuts (even as they make no effort to look for alternatives), some are in bed with developers, indeed many have ended up working for the regeneration industry. Councillors who promote these schemes are on the opposite side of the communities they claim to represent and Londoners are finally waking up to the reality of Labour-run boroughs destroying council estates and gentrifying out the poor.

Public understanding of the complexities of gentrification in London and in other British cities is growing, but it is still nowhere near what it is in New York City where gentrification has been a dirty word for some time now. Tottenham MP David Lammy, who once said that Tottenham could do with a bit of gentrification, has now come out against Haringey's HDV. Labour's current leader Jeremy Corbyn (who of course remained MP for Islington North, where I live, during and beyond New Labour's rise to power) has also recently come out against his own municipal Labour leaders 'regeneration' schemes. On the final day of the 2017 Labour party conference he belatedly talked about the 'forced gentrification and social cleansing' of council estates, pledging to offer residents the right to a vote in a ballot on future regeneration schemes.

In 2015 both the Conservative minister for housing, Brandon Lewis, and the Labour peer Lord Adonis touted the redevelopment of council estates with market housing as a way to address deprivation and increase housing supply without public funding. Claire Kober did likewise for the Haringey HDV. Two years later and the mood has started to shift and the tide seems now to be turning, costing Kober her job. But this turn has not been quick enough, vocal enough, or strategic enough. A much more concerted effort is needed to stop this process, not just future schemes (as Corbyn's ballot proposal might do) but also those schemes already slated for redevelopment, such as Cressingham Gardens in Lambeth. The Green party's London Assembly member Sian Berry has been trying to do this for some time: it is astonishing that the Labour party has only recently raised its head above the parapet. But rejecting these gentrifying schemes is only the first step, alternative strategies for maintaining council estates and building more properly affordable housing need to be developed. There is now a disconnect between voters in general – and council tenants in particular – and the Labour-run councils they see as promoting schemes which essentially push them out.

London is currently in a state of what I call 'hyper-gentrification', many of these council estate gentrifications are in inner London, Labour's key voting base. As such this has become a real problem for Labour. The question is now whether a real shift in policy away from the gentrification of council estates might rebuild the connection between people and the politicians who represent them. There is hope that this particular gentrification tide has started to turn, but the tide needs to go out and quickly. People's families, homes, communities and futures are at stake. ■

Alternative strategies for maintaining councils estates and building more properly affordable housing need to be developed

Poll position

Labour should do well in May – but beware of celebrating too soon, writes *Glen O'Hara*



Glen O'Hara is professor of modern and contemporary history at Oxford Brookes University. A former journalist at The Independent, he is the author of a number of books on modern Britain, including Governing Post-War Britain: The Paradoxes of Progress (2012) and The Politics of Water in Post-War Britain (2017)

THIS MAY, LABOUR FACES its first major electoral challenge since last June, when its unexpectedly strong showing raised spirits across the Labour movement. All of the councillors for London's boroughs are up for election, along with one third of councillors in metropolitan boroughs – including big cities such as Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester – as well as the same one-third count in 17 unitary authorities such as Portsmouth, Reading and Slough, and 68 second-tier districts such as Ipswich and Lincoln.

The opinion polls right now seem stuck, and as such might not be much of a guide to detailed local and regional performance. Both Labour and the Conservatives seem to be hovering a little above the 40 per cent mark that they both cleared back at the June 2017 general election. Labour, probably and slightly, have their noses just in front: but really, given the only middling record of British opinion polls, it is hard to be sure. Taken as a whole, the polls at the moment point to a Labour minority government, able to govern only with the help of the Scottish National Party, the Welsh Nationalists Plaid Cymru and the single Green MP, Caroline Lucas.

It is hard to avoid the impression that Brexit – and, more importantly, the cleavages of age, geography, social status and cultural outlook that it highlighted and revealed – has gathered voters in England and Wales into two tribes. The first, very crudely made up of relatively socially conservative over-50s who live in medium-sized towns and across a relatively settled 'Deep England' of suburbs and villages, has seen the majority of its Ukip supporters move over to the Conservatives. But there is a second Britain, mainly living in cities and radical university towns, and full of the under-50s trying to raise families or make their way in a punishing job and housing market – and in which Labour has hovered up most left-leaning Liberal Democrats, ex-Greens and voters who previously backed smaller left parties.

This situation seems unlikely to change until the reality of Brexit dawns, and a new prime minister takes over from Theresa May. Only then will some of the likely lines of the

next election become clearer. But these local elections – taking place this time only in England and Wales – will give us some precious pointers as to whether the country really is resolving into two hostile camps, eyeing each other warily in a kind of cultural Cold War.

On the surface, it might be a bit of a standstill contest. In mid-March, Labour led the Conservatives in the polls by just 0.6 per cent (41.3 per cent to 40.7 per cent), if we take an average of each pollster's last survey, while individual results varied between a Labour lead of seven per cent (with the polling company Survation) and a deficit of three per cent (recorded by Opinium): but the last time most of these wards were fought, in May 2014, the party had a slightly bigger lead. Labour's lead was just under three per cent that month, with a rather bigger range between a lead of seven per cent and a deficit of one per cent. On a uniform swing, given that Labour is not performing quite as well as against the Conservatives as it was early in 2014, we might expect Labour even to lose a few seats.

Except for three things. The first is that local elections do not throw up results exactly like general elections, even once experts have approximated the equivalent share of each party's vote on a normalised national basis. Put simply, voters simply do not always choose the same party to run their council as to govern the nation. The Liberal Democrats managed to gain 18 per cent of the vote in the 2017 local elections, just a month or so before they went on to gain under half that total at the general election only a month later. Labour was lagging in the polls at the time of the 2016 local elections, but in the end lost few council seats in a performance that was lacklustre, but not disastrous.

The second complicating factor is the precipitous decline of Ukip, which gained 17 per cent of the vote (and 166 councillors) in 2014. Ukip right now seems to be in advanced state of decomposition, with national leadership woes, defecting councillors and huge falls in its vote at council by-elections all contributing to the suspicion that they will lose almost all, and perhaps every single one, of



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the council seats they contest this year. The majority of that vote will move over to the Conservatives, as it did in 2017; but some of those voters will simply not now turn up at the polls, and some smaller but significant chunks of ex-Ukip support – for instance in smaller English cities or struggling coastal communities – might help Labour make up any deficit that emerges in ex-Ukip heartlands. Councils such as Hartlepool, North-East Lincolnshire and Great Yarmouth are worth watching in this respect. The Conservatives will probably lose seats this year, but their gains from Ukip – not only of wards, but of votes where they and Labour are close together – will likely blunt any widespread cull of their councillors.

The third and most important reason that we cannot extrapolate too far from polls in terms of council seats won and lost is where these votes are happening. London is set to be the most important battleground this year, and all indications are that Labour will do extremely well here. Labour did very well in the capital at the 2017 general election, achieving a swing of over six per cent and taking three Conservative seats. London is in general full of those under-50 remain voters, social liberals and renters who are increasingly slipping out of the Conservatives' orbit: in addition, European Union citizens are eligible to vote in these elections, they are disproportionately concentrated in London, and they are unlikely to look kindly on Mrs May's party.

Such is the increasing grip of the metropolitan media, that it is probably in London that the headlines will be made. Although the latest YouGov London polling in late February showed almost no changes in voting intention since the general election, there seems to have been a huge seven per cent swing from the Conservatives to Labour since the last time these boroughs were contested in 2014. Labour can certainly hope to take control of Barnet, and may even find themselves running Westminster: they might

just be able to manage to seize control of the Conservatives' flagship borough of Wandsworth too. If they do manage all that – and the last result would seem to be on a knife-edge – then Mrs May's leadership of her party could immediately come under even greater scrutiny.

Elsewhere, a number of interesting contests will be worth watching. Will Labour continue to make progress in towns that look more and more like distant London suburbs – in Reading, for example? Will they push their vote even higher in Hastings, where they did quite well in 2014 and which is part of home secretary Amber Rudd's very vulnerable Westminster seat of Hastings and Rye? Can Labour appeal in relatively blue-collar Harlow – a seat it held until 2010, but in which the Conservative Robert Halfon presently enjoys a 7,000-plus majority? What about Dudley, where the Conservatives did very well – in both Labour Dudley North, and Tory Dudley South – in 2017? There will be myriad clues in the details.

Altogether, Labour is likely to come away with a medium-sized haul of new councillors. But that should not breed the type of complacency that the 2017 general election – Labour's third defeat in a row – inexplicably seems to have evoked in many partisans on the left. Oppositions are supposed to gain councillors. Labour added 88 councillors in 1984, and 76 in 1988 – the first contests after its disastrous election losses in 1983 and 1987. After those admittedly very small gains as a proportion of council seats up for election, it still went on to lose the next election.

The real test is to be had at a more granular, and perhaps more challenging, level. Labour must break out of London, do well across areas where Ukip has previously done well, and show that it can move forward in seats that are marginal at Westminster. If it can do that, then it might be heading for government after all. ■

**Labour is likely
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THE HISTORY MAN

Richard Leonard sees himself fixed firmly in Labour's radical tradition. But he's also determined to make the party in Scotland fit for the future, he tells *Kate Murray*



INTERVIEWING RICHARD LEONARD in his modest Holyrood office is a bit like taking a history lesson on the British Labour party. The talk of Brexit, independence and the current challenges for Scottish Labour is interspersed with references to everyone from Keir Hardie to RH Tawney and from John Smith to socialist writer – and wartime minister – Thomas Johnston.

If that comes as a bit of a surprise to those who would caricature the Scottish Labour leader as a representative of Corbyn's upstart Labour party, then it shouldn't, says Leonard. "I eschew being called a Corbynista because I've been in the Labour party for 30-odd years," he says. "The Corbyn phenomenon is quite a recent one so I don't see myself being part of that new tradition which has been established – I see myself as being part of a longer standing radical tradition."

Radicalism for Leonard means – and here he turns to another historical reference – harnessing the 'spirit of 45' to rebuild public services and end the impact of austerity. "We need to think big and act radically in the way that that generation did in the creation of the NHS," he says.

"Out there people are hungry for change – a lot of people are disempowered, discontented and are looking for a Labour party to start to meet their aspirations, to start to offer them hope and to start to be the vehicle for the realisation of that hope. That's what I want the Scottish Labour party to be."

Yet the party faces an uphill battle: despite a better than expected general election result last year after the disaster of 2015, Labour now sits in third place in Scotland. Leonard therefore faces the tricky task of winning back both those voters who felt the SNP were a more radical force than Labour and those who have switched to the Conservatives, perhaps seeing them as the best defenders of the union and the strongest opposition to the nationalists. On the first part of the task, Leonard is firm that the SNP's radicalism is an illusion.

"We turn that [perception] around by pointing out that the SNP has been in power in Scotland for more than a decade and the fundamental question then to be posed is 'what's changed in that time?' How much land has transferred over from aristocratic ownership to community ownership, what changes have there been in the economy, where are we on questions like the extent of poverty and inequality? On all of those counts things have not got better, they've got worse," he says.

"So how does the Labour party become the radical party, or the insurgent party? I think it's by offering a prospectus of change, offering a prospectus based on a vision of a different kind of society."

On the second part of the challenge, winning over those who have shifted to the Conservatives, Leonard says holding a firm line on the continuing debate over Scottish independence is crucial.

"We oppose a second independence referendum because we've just had one. I don't take with a pinch of salt the claim that it was a once in a lifetime referendum – I genuinely think it was a once in a generation referendum," he says.

"So I'm clear that, under my leadership, the Scottish Labour party will oppose any moves for a second independence referendum. On that question we need to be clearer than maybe we have been. But all of my experience

tells me that if we are going to win back people who have drifted towards voting Conservative then we are also going to have to win the moral argument, one articulated in the past by people like John Smith, which is that poverty and inequality doesn't just diminish those people facing poverty and inequality but it also diminishes all of us as society."

While he might oppose a second independence referendum, Leonard wants to see the devolution resettlement

revisited, to ensure that it can achieve what those who fought for it had aimed for. The idea behind a Scottish parliament, he stresses, was not merely to create an institution to "replace the role of half a dozen Tory ministers in the Scottish office" but to build a "vehicle for change" which could address long-term problems around the Scottish economy, housing, local government, health and education. "After 20 years of devolution, we are at a point where it's reasonable to take stock and review what was after all essentially Labour's devolution project and whether or not it has lived up to the expectations that those of us who campaigned for it had hoped for," he says. He cites the issue of land reform – "a totemic issue in the Scottish psyche going back to the Highland clearances and before" – as evidence that it has not.

"The SNP just backtracked on that whole land reform agenda – a radical start by Labour was then muted and frankly reversed to the point where there's been very little progress on land reform since they took office," he says.

"It's for that kind of policy that the Scottish parliament was created and it's not achieved the level of reform that

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most of us would have expected." But isn't the case for full independence stronger now that Brexit is on the horizon? And shouldn't Scottish Labour fight against a Brexit which will not only harm Scotland but which the majority of its people opposed? Leonard says not.

"I campaigned for a remain vote: one because I believe leaving the EU will provide an economic shock but secondly because I was extremely concerned by the xenophobia of the leave campaign and all that stood for and what I thought frankly were racist undertones to what they were doing," he explains.

"But in the end we had a referendum in 2014 that said Scotland should stay part of the UK and the franchise for the referendum on Brexit was the UK and at that level people voted by a slim majority to exit so my simple principled position is that we need to respect both referendum results."

He adds, though, that the way the Conservatives are going about trying to 'hoard' all the powers repatriated from Brussels in Westminster and Whitehall is anathema to anyone who believes in devolution. "As things stand the Scottish Labour party would vote against any legislative consent motion which sought to pave the way for the withdrawal bill," he says.

Such is the chaos surrounding the Brexit negotiations that a satisfactory deal coming back is unlikely, Leonard believes.

"At that point, because there's now going to be a meaningful vote in parliament, I think there's a strong possibility that that deal will be voted down which I think would precipitate a constitutional crisis," he says. "It would be back in that ultimatum territory like in 1974 of 'who runs Britain?' and 'back us or sack us'. I think the pressure would be sufficiently great at that point for there to be an election and that's a much more likely scenario than a second referendum."

If Leonard is right and there is a snap general election, he'll be working hard to consolidate the shift towards Labour that he says he's already seeing on the ground. If he's wrong, the next target will be the 2021 Scottish elections. Given the turnover of Labour leaders in Scotland – there have been six leadership elections in a decade and since devolution the party has gone through more leaders than the SNP and Tories combined – it is perhaps not surprising that, just a few months in from winning the leadership last November, he has already faced questions about how long he will be in the job, as well as raised eyebrows over his relative inexperience as an elected politician. He says he is out to prove the doubters wrong. "When I was standing for the leadership, people said the one thing we're looking for is longevity. I said 'I'll give you longevity.'" he says. "I see this as being a chance to take the Labour party from third to first place. One of the things I think has impaired us at times in the past has been when we simply try to set ourselves up as a strong opposition. If we don't believe in ourselves why would we expect anyone else to believe in us and vote for us? We will stand in that 2021 election offering people the opportunity of voting for a Labour government, not a strong opposition to the SNP or an alternative voice to the Tories, but a distinctive Labour government with a great sense of the things we want to change."

The key battlegrounds for that distinctive Scottish Labour message, Leonard suggests, include the economy,

where he wants more accountability, a greater influence for trade unions and more employee ownership, and better public services, with investment in schools, hospitals, public health and a bold plan for a socialised care service. To achieve all of that, he has already signalled he wants to see big changes in taxation and has set up a tax and investment commission to look at how a fair division of the nation's wealth might be achieved. It's not about "taxation for taxation's sake", he insists, but about "how and where do we raise the resources to meet the levels of public investment we need and are going to need in the future".

"As socialists and people who believe in equality and redistribution I don't think we can responsibly ignore the fact that whilst income inequality is growing, wealth inequality is growing at a much larger rate," Leonard says. "It makes sense to explore the possibility of a wealth tax, either as windfall tax or as a recurring form of taxation."

There's some way to go, he admits, in making that case but he's heartened by the way Labour's messages are now being received. "One of the things I thought was striking about the general election was that once again the Labour party was talking about public ownership, the Labour party was once again clearly making itself an anti-austerity party and we were also talking of a redistribution not only of wealth but of power," he says. Leonard believes making the case for Labour values is crucial – and here is where Tawney and his famous 1931 essay *The Choice before Labour* come in. "The essence of what he was saying is the Labour party can have the best organisation in the world, it can have the best programme in the world but it needs a sense of creed, it needs to stand for something, it needs to have an inherent belief propelling it forward – those values about equality, those values about the different kind of society we want to build, this idea that there are big imbalances of power between men and women and between the people that own the wealth and the people that create the wealth."

Labour has lost support, he believes, when it has been unclear about its values. "What we need to try to do is to develop, a sense of who it is we are what it is we believe in and what it is we stand for."

He doesn't underestimate the importance either of bringing the party together as the party tries to get these values across to the voters. "My background is as a party activist, someone who's been an election agent in more elections than I care to remember, somebody who worked in the trade union movement for 20-odd years," he says. "I think I'm in a position to try to knit [people] together. On a weekend I'll speak at the Glasgow Art Club to the Fabian Society on a Saturday and at the STUC to a Morning Star conference on the Sunday. That exchange of ideas in the Labour party and the broader labour movement is absolutely essential."

The stakes are high both for Scotland and the UK.

"The simple truth is that unless Labour wins again in Scotland we'll not win again at a UK level. This is absolutely a critical battleground for us to get things right. People are on our shoulders in the Scottish Labour party to get this right. I'll do my best as leader. I'll be looking to the broader party and wider movement to try and build a campaign to project those kind of changes that I think we need to see." ■

Marxism revisited

Does Marx have a place in the modern Labour party?
An alternative reading of his work could inform a fresh agenda
for the left, suggest *Jon Cruddas* and *Frederick Harry Pitts*



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LABOUR MP CHRIS Leslie recently asserted that ‘Marxism has no place in the modern Labour party’. In terms of the party’s history and where it is today, this was way wide of the mark. It reflects a worrying misunderstanding of the party – not least amongst Labour MPs. For Marxism is resurgent within Labour today; it informs the most innovative thinking within the party. A new ecology of networks, publications and media platforms pays its dues to the great man. But stating the significance of Marx is the easy bit. Distilling the real meaning of this rehabilitation is more complex.

Labour today cannot be understood without an appreciation of how Marx has been received by a new generation of radicals. So we need to identify the Marxist resources the modern left draws upon. More generally, we might investigate Marx to discern a path through a number of the impasses on the contemporary left and tensions within what is emerging as ‘Corbynism’. There is a more general point here, as Leslie’s comment also misunderstands how past currents in the party – Blairism included – drew from Marx. Any visitor to a certain Islington home in the late 80s, for instance, could not have failed to notice the prominent display of Marx’s key texts on the Blair bookshelves. So, perhaps, a wider cross-section of the Labour party could benefit from a renewed appreciation of Marx.

A fashionable case in point

A good place to begin is with the most energetic part of the modern left. Undiagnosed by the mainstream of the Labour party, the political media and much of the academic world, a major intellectual renewal is currently underway across the left. It is fast becoming a new political movement and is best captured in influential articles and books discussing ‘accelerationism’, ‘postcapitalism’ and so-called ‘fully automated luxury communism’. Key thinkers and proselytizers include Paul Mason, Nick Srnicek and Aaron Bastani.

On one level, the origins of this new thinking lie in radical politics formed some 50 years ago. Autonomist Marxism has its origins in 1960s Italy and the workerist movement (‘operaismo’ in Italian), characterised by a muscular critique of the centralised, orthodox Italian left. It sought to build a politics autonomous from traditional forms of representative democracy, and emphasised direct action – in its early forms characterised by subversive struggle at work, often unmediated by traditional trade unions.

By the 70s operaismo had evolved into a ‘post-workerist’ or ‘post-operaist’ politics. This embraced a wider conception of anti-capitalist struggle beyond the immediate form of capitalist exploitation at work as a response to the automation of the Turin car plants. It also contained a corresponding redefinition of the working class triggered by technical change towards what was labelled the ‘social worker’ who labours in society at large.

Post-operaismo was popularised in the noughties by Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* – a work highly influential within the generational struggles behind the anti-globalisation movements of the time and, later, the militant millennials of post-crash occupations and campus agitation. Winding a route of increasing reconciliation with electoral compromise, these movements have mainlined post-operaismo into the intellectual undercurrents driving the Corbynist left.

Hardt and Negri proposed a break with the category of the working class in the wake of a crisis of work in capitalist society. This was encased in an enthusiasm for the new economy’s ‘multitude’ of ‘immaterial labourers’. Today, the most interesting quarters of the Labour left adapt this to fit new times. A narrative of left modernity and progress is built around a specific take on Marx’s value theory and the substitution of human labour – the working class – with technology. This, the theory goes, is something to be celebrated – indeed accelerated. The traditional class base of the left is replaced by a new urban, networked and educated

youth – a multitude in all but name. A ‘postcapitalist’ epoch beckons as the capitalist relations of production – class structures, legal and political frameworks – cannot manage the current shifts in the forces of production – advances in machinery and information and communications technology. As the academic Matt Bolton has noted, this is a key Corbynist holdover from orthodox Marxism.

Whilst the most astute advocates of this position claim to avoid charges of technological determinism – that technological change will automatically accomplish social and political transformations – the implication remains that we must adapt our politics to match the march of the machines, rather than vice versa. To challenge or resist this risks dismissal as parochial, reactionary or Luddite. History is on the side of the new left political subject – unfortunately not in this case the working class – as change is both ‘immanent’ (concealed within the present) and imminent.

A hybrid combination of tech savvy utopianism and an oddly vogueish transhumanism has emerged. One that pivots around a highly selective reading of Marx’s posthumously rediscovered but seemingly prophetic ‘Fragment on Machines’ and an embrace of a specific strain of continental philosophical abstraction.

The former, a mere few pages pulled from the *Grundrisse* (the notebooks for *Capital*), proposes that the ‘general intellect’ embodied in machines would come to replace direct human labour and create a crisis in capitalism’s capacity to capture value. This brings about an incipient communism arising from within the shell of a capitalist society rapidly passing into a new postcapitalist order. But crucially the salience of these slender few pages rests on an old-fashioned understanding of labour as the direct source of value that Marx himself would later go on to discard.

The second source of inspiration derives from a theoretical shift stemming from the failures of the workers and students revolts of 1968. This produced a dramatic and much-misunderstood reorientation within the continental post-Marxist philosophical Left. The superstars of post-modern cultural studies – Deleuze, Guattari, Lyotard – suggested an accelerationist approach to modern capitalism rather than a search to overcome it.

In short, what is on sale to young radicals today is the culmination of a series of political defeats and organisational rethinks, precise philosophical reorientations and

specific textual readings all mixed up with a youthful tech-utopianism. This can appear bewildering, indeed impenetrable, without an understanding of the development of Marxism and the alternatives within it. So, even those opposed to any vestige of Marxism in the modern Labour party would be wise to understand where it comes from in order to know their enemy.

Understanding Marx: politics and meaning

To understand what is going on we should first free ourselves from two basic assumptions about Marx’s work that usually – wrongly – place it out-of-bounds for those interested in building a modern Labour party.

First, that there is a specific kind of political programme contained in Marx’s work. Instead we should focus on the particular resources of critique and analysis Marx’s work offers those seeking to understand the world in order to open up visions of the way that it could be. Contrary to the oft-repeated injunction not to interpret the world but to change it, the situation is precisely the reverse: the imperative today is to comprehend the world in order to change it.

Second, that Marx’s work amounts to a total, closed theoretical system which diagnoses the past, present and future of capitalist and postcapitalist society. Instead, Marx’s work is unfinished, fragmentary, largely posthumous and received in translation, and accordingly is both rife with misinterpretation and open to radically divergent readings and applications.

Marxism today

This twin capacity for misinterpretation and the unevenness of Marx’s output, provides a route into the assorted ‘Marxisms’ on offer within the modern Labour party and with it the contested terrain that is Corbynism. These take two basic forms.

On one hand, the older, more traditional Leninism of the long-dormant hard left. On the other, the younger, savvy postcapitalist left dealt with above. These competing Marxisms define the modern Labour left. In one sense, they could not be further apart in terms of assorted readings of the texts, democratic cultures, and competing identifications of the ‘base’ of the left, to name a few instances of divergence. But, the irony is that these generationally and politically distinct rival sides of the Corbynist coalition actually share a lot in common.

In both, unpublished and repackaged fragments of Marx’s thought – Bolton identifies the 1859 preface to *The German Ideology*, to which we can add the aforementioned *Fragment* – are used to support a crude determinism where the ‘superstructural’ relations of culture, morality, ideology, law and rights are conditioned by economic forces at the base. It translates into a cold utilitarianism; human beings are considered little more than carriers of these economic forces driving the laws of history, and politics shrinks from view.

In both the Leninist and postcapitalist kinds of Marxism, a conventional labour theory of value bestows all powers of creation in the hands of a traditional working class sure to inherit the wealth they are owed, as the forces of production reshape and explode the relations of production that constrain them. In reality, this economic theory of value owes more to David Ricardo than to their cherished Karl



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Marx. A politics based on the centralised control of the means of production flows directly from this.

Both Marxisms provide overly optimistic prognoses for the possibility of substantial change within the context of a crisis-ridden capitalism. Within each, a similar tale is told: the inevitable utopia accrues to those who produce a plentitude of value, the upwards arc of history flows from the technological unfolding of the forces of production, and a liberation focused on labour, whether from it or through it.

Marx's recruitment to the cause of Corbynism seems seamless in the hands of these intellectual and political strands. But it can only be so on shaky theoretical and empirical foundations. Theoretically, where Marx's theory wound up in the work he did publish – Capital ranking chief among it – it is typically overlooked in favour of relatively minor parts of his output, and with it any wider politics capable of confronting the issues around value, money and commodification that Marx captured so well therein.

Empirically, the concrete conditions that make possible the kinds of epochal shifts on which these visions hinge are simply not in evidence to the extent described. The effect of automation on unemployment, for example, is contested to say the least. It may be that current public and political hysteria about this is nothing more than a moral panic in which the postcapitalist left themselves have been swept up.

Politically, orienting a programme for the left around errant theoretical derivations from disputed repackagings of Marx's work and empirical speculations of a future that may or may not come to pass is unwise and potentially dangerous. It involves promising the world on a plate when there may well be nothing there at all, and is a distraction from addressing problems in the present in the expectation that 'the future' will soon come to pass. It is one hell of a political bet based on a partial reading of the texts.

Both forms of technological determinism provide little role for actual struggle – for politics. The laws of history unfold and take us to the world of communism or postcapitalism. Of greater importance still is that both of these Marxist traditions reject humanism and ethics. And between them they offer only a limited insight into the true value of Marx for the contemporary Labour party.

Another Marx is possible

Is there an alternative way to read Marx that helps to rethink a contemporary left agenda for the Labour party? How can we use his work to drive a clear-sighted critique and analysis of the opportunities and challenges that confront us today rather than hit and hope on a historical horizon that may not exist?

Marx focused on how we exercise a human essence, defined by our capacity to transform the material world into a world of things useful to us. Yet he then sought to describe how material things escape the grasp of those that create them, as goods are alienated from those who produce them. His core insight was to identify how humans create structures of power – commodities, markets, states, laws, rights, technology – that then constrain and control us.

Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism in Capital shows the extent to which the relationship of monetary exchange, through which we trade, changes the very things we produce into mysterious and compelling forms. Far from increasing human agency, the commodity form comes to

control us. This idea informed many assorted critiques of consumerism throughout the twentieth century, but is much more than mere condescension about what people like to wear or eat.

The fetish concerns how the entire material and intellectual world we create resembles a double-edged sword whereby our labour realises our desires and designs but disappears into products and structures on which we then become dependent. This is as much the case with machinery as anything else. Though springing from our innovation, it exerts a debilitating impact on us in production, seldom liberating and more often driving our work towards ever-greater levels of drudgery. This approach implies a certain pessimistic perspective nowhere to be found in the optimistic prognoses of the contemporary postcapitalist left!

This reading of Marx also suggests that, contrary to economic determinism, not everything follows from the rational progression of the forces of production at the material base. Rather, the material world is co-constituted by superstructural relations of culture, identity and ideology that any left politics must address. For example, houses and jobs alone are not sufficient to beat the often-dangerous politics of belonging that today threaten liberal democracies.

This more complex take also impacts upon how we assess the prospects of progress. The hopeful portrayal of human liberation inherent in the leading contemporary strands of Marxism in the Labour party sees a teleological line charting a clear path to and through the future where none actually exists. Contrary to the theoretical and empirical optimism of all sides of the Marxist left in Labour – Blairism included! – things don't only get better, they can get worse. Politics must remain aware of this contingency and the experience of defeat and be realistic in its objectives.

This alternative reading of Marx also tells us that there is something essential about productive activity and struggle around it that makes an anti- or post-work politics insufficient to address human needs or wants, even if this sometimes makes life harder than it might otherwise be. Advocates of a world of automated worklessness supported by a universal basic income might bear this in mind.

Marx speaks from the past to warn today's radicals that the escape from or glorification of work or labour cannot be the overriding focus of radical politics. We must instead consider how the work we do is conditioned in certain ways by the relations that structure it and the forms which its results assume. In other words, a politics of production must be accompanied by a politics of consumption and beyond.

Between the lines of Capital come other warnings for the Labour left today. The understanding of technology as a liberating force cannot be simply read-off from fragments of Marx's wider project. This ignores – at a huge cost – what machinery means for workers engaged in production in capitalist societies where our human creative essence is subordinated to other ends.

This all brings us to a Marxism that, contrary to most applications, neither asks for the world on a plate nor sells believers an expectation of it. Rather, like Marx himself in his own life, it strikes compromises with the forces that constrain us in the here and now, which in many respects the contoured imaginaries of Marx in the contemporary Corbyn-led Labour party do not. ■

Promised land?

The Brexit that 'leave' voters thought they were voting for is a long way from the one they are likely to get, as *Thom Brooks* explains



Thom Brooks is Dean of Durham Law School and author of Becoming British

BREXIT IS NOW only a year away. The big question now is not whether Theresa May's government will go ahead with our exit from the EU – it will – but whether the Brexit ministers will deliver will be a future that more than 17 million leave voters thought they would get when they voted out.

A referendum vote is not a general election. In a general election campaign, the parties publish manifestos spelling out the programme they will implement if they are elected. The EU referendum campaign was not like that. Advocates for both sides made different and sometimes contradictory claims about what a vote for leave or remain really meant.

Tellingly, Theresa May captured this muddled picture in her famous phrase after the referendum result: 'Brexit means Brexit'. Few knew what she meant – but those words sum up the void at the heart of the Brexit negotiations: Brexit's meaning is in the eye of the beholder, shifting from one definition to another depending on who you ask.

In fact, we know more about what Brexit is not than what it is. And since the referendum, we have seen that Brexit might mean leaving – but it doesn't mean what the electorate thought it did when they voted.

Start with the three key pledges of Vote Leave. First, it was claimed there would be huge sums of additional money – as much as £350m per week – for public services like the NHS. We now know nothing like this will happen.

Second, it was said that freedom of movement would end on 29 March 2019, but now we know that free movement would continue under any transition deal.

Finally, Vote Leave proposed introducing a points-based immigration system to control numbers better. But we have since learned that no such system will be brought in for EU citizens. Ironically, few noticed the UK has had a points-based system for non-EU migrants for a decade. As someone who came to Britain through that system, I could have highlighted this for the government if only they had bothered to consult with migrants on migration policy.

Yet the fact that the prime minister said no to all three of Vote Leave's main pledges on Brexit does not mean that leave voters will feel betrayed. While whatever Brexit we get might not be the one voters were promised during the referendum campaign, the government has focused on two key central issues that, will, May hopes, be more popular with leave supporters than the official campaign's signature promises.

The number one issue for those voting leave was immigration – and the desire to control it more firmly. Theresa May has pledged to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands, an election promise she has made and stuck to despite failing to meet it with the numbers reaching record highs. She has since claimed that leaving the EU will allow the UK to meet its net migration target more easily.

But this approach is likely to go down badly with those who backed Brexit. Voters wanting a brake on immigration may be unsatisfied with any number greater than zero net migration. To think that reducing the figure to 100,000 or fewer will be enough to satisfy these sceptics is fantasy. For the rest of us, of course, the policy misses

Voters wanting a brake on immigration may be unsatisfied with any number greater than zero net migration



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the real issue – migration-related impact and underinvestment in public services. Cutting the number of migrants does not mean less pressure on public services. Migrants are more likely to be in A&E as doctors or nurses than patients. Cutting migrant numbers won't shrink NHS queues given that there will be fewer staff to support the public. Scapegoating migrants for funding shortfalls in public services is both dishonest and inflammatory.

Moreover, if May really wants net migration cut to under tens of thousands, the inconvenient truth is that she could do this now without Brexit. Visas could be stopped for all non-EU citizens seeking work or studying, thereby meeting her target. The power is already in her hands. There are of course, good reasons not to act. Big cuts to non-EU migration risk damaging the economy, underfunding universities and sending out a signal that Britain is closing itself off to the world. But May's failure to meet a target which is already in her grasp – or to come clean about why it is misguided to blame our EU membership for migration totals – only raises expectations for the future which there is no reason to think she will meet.

The other big reason for voting leave was focused on sovereignty. The government has interpreted this in two ways. First, a commitment that the UK will no longer be under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and, second, an insistence that the UK will forge its own trade deals independently from the EU.

These are the two areas where most of May's battles are being fought – and she's unlikely to make a success of them. Getting Britain out of the ECJ's remit is sold to the public with the argument that the highest court should remain our UK Supreme Court. The problem here is if the

UK wants to strike a deal with the EU then there would need to be some institutional arrangement for handling any disputes, such as a post-Brexit ECJ plus UK representation – or in other words the ECJ today. Some similar body will be inevitable. Whether or not there is a trade deal between the UK and France can't be a matter for only one side to judge should there be a conflict, if you want to have a deal at all.

The insistence on absolute freedom to forge trade deals is the reason why the prime minister opposes membership of a customs union, citing the constraints it would place on reaching agreements. It is far from clear how her plans for a customs 'arrangement' are different from a union, but one clear implication of rejecting any union is that we will need to have a hard border in Northern Ireland. Not every statement from EU negotiators should be taken as fact when there is much that can still change. But their draft proposal for moving the customs border to the Irish Sea remains the only serious plan put forward by either side for how a hard border could be avoided.

So while leave voters will not see any of the three main pledges for Brexit honoured, the government hopes that reducing net migration to under 100,000 when freedom of movement eventually ends in a few years' time; Britain being subjected to a different international body from the ECJ, but not the ECJ; and being able to make new trade deals will best respect the views of the 52 per cent who voted to leave.

One lesson to learn from all this is that promises made during a referendum aren't binding. What the public gets will almost certainly be very different from anything most were sold. The second lesson is to think twice about triggering an unprecedented upheaval like leaving the EU before having any clear, realistic view about what you want to gain from it. There is a clear 'making it up as you go along' feel to every step of the government's handling of Brexit that is recklessly irresponsible.

I suspect we may learn a third lesson: that the key to winning support for a Brexit deal from leave voters (and remain supporters too) will come in creating hope among voters who feel left behind and alienated. This insecurity cuts across virtually all areas from educational opportunities to housing availability and from financial prosperity to security about the future. For many in leave-voting areas, the country seems to be going backwards and those affected feel increasingly disconnected from the political class. There could be no greater mistake than to address this by trying to reverse the clock to a pre-EU Britain. The world has moved on and the post-Brexit settlement must move with it.

If I'm right, then the reason why leave voters have not been as furious as one might expect about the vanishing £350m per week and remain committed to Brexit is because they're crying out for change. They want an end to governance as usual. No technicality over customs arrangements or Northern Irish borders will bring the wholesale changes they want – and the government is mistaken to think otherwise. Getting Brexit right then is about much more than Brexit itself. If the outcome of all this doesn't address the insecurity and alienation many leave voters feel, then simply delivering Brexit won't be enough to win these voters over. ■

The rural paradox

Labour must offer hope for those who love living in the countryside but struggle with the realities of rural life, argues *Tobias Phibbs*



Tobias Phibbs is a researcher and assistant editor at the Fabian Society

THERE'S A PARADOX to living in the countryside. On the one hand you benefit from the beauty and variety of the landscape, the richness of rural community life and a gentler pace of life. The pride of belonging to a distinctive place which is your own, in which you have status rather than urban anonymity and where you still know your neighbours. An outdoorsy upbringing for the children and the possibility of genuine quietness and darkness unspoilt by light pollution.

On the other hand, you are faced with creaking public infrastructure, rural poverty and an ageing population left without effective care provision. Substantially lower incomes – especially for young people – combined with often higher living costs. The lowest levels of social mobility in the country. The steady erosion of the civic assets that constitute community life, the pubs and post offices, bank branches and independent businesses – not to mention the rapid loss of the small farms that prop up rural economies and steward our distinctive landscapes.

This rural paradox is matched by the discrepancy between where people would like to live and where they actually live. As work from Centre for Towns and others has shown, rural communities have been worst affected by the so-called brain drain by which young people, especially graduates, leave the place they are from in search of economic opportunity and do not return. Those who are left are ageing – and this trend has been exacerbated by the net movement of nearly 600,000 people aged over 65 to small villages over the last three decades.

Yet new Fabian Society/YouGov polling shows that those living in rural areas have little desire to move to somewhere more urban. We asked rural respondents on a scale of 0–10 to what extent they would like to a more urban area, with 0 representing 'I would definitely not like to move to a more urban area' and 10 'I would definitely like to move to a more urban area'. The average score was just 2.4. This score held roughly constant across class and regional divides, party political voting intention and referendum vote, and even across age groups. By contrast, when we asked urban respondents the question in reverse the average score was 5.1, with even many young people in towns harbouring a desire – however romanticised and removed from the reality it may be – to move somewhere more rural.

When areas lose the industry that once provided work and the institutions that sustained a common life,

many young people – especially graduates – will leave in search of economic opportunities, however invested in their home they feel. A young former Labour activist from rural Cornwall described to me her first-hand experience of 'forced migration' by which young people fail to find suitable work anywhere near their home and so are 'compelled to leave for better opportunities'.

To resolve this rural paradox, Labour's priority for rural areas must be the development of an industrial strategy which will enable people, if they wish, to stay put and lead a decent life rather than encouraging them to abandon their home and culture in the name of social mobility – a necessary corollary of which is the left behind. The countryside must also be supported so that it may retain its economic, cultural and aesthetic distinctiveness, rather than collapsing into commuter towns, retirement villages and endless suburbia.

The new Fabian Society report *Labour Country* argues that this would involve a tripartite economic strategy for rural areas consisting of: support for a rebirth of small-scale manufacturing and enterprise; place-based investment with legislation to protect pubs and high streets and regional banks created to invest local capital in local enterprise; and support for technical and vocational education. Rural infrastructure will also require investment. We are also recommending that the appalling cuts to rural bus services be overturned and a long overdue review of Dr Beeching's cuts to the railways take place. And to address the hidden housing and homelessness crisis in rural areas, housing must be built with locals involved in planning to ensure it fits with the local environment and prioritises locals rather than wealthy second-home owners or those buying up houses as assets. Finally, we need to support agriculture as we leave the EU. Without the restraints of the common agricultural policy, a Labour government will be able to rebalance support for farming in favour of small and marginal farms and those delivering public goods such as positive environmental and health outcomes.

Such an approach has the capacity to resolve the rural paradox and bring together our divided country, preventing our ageing rural communities becoming further politically, economically and culturally adrift. The potential rewards are significant – both for the countryside itself and the political party that can seize the moment. **F**

Labour Country is available at www.fabians.org.uk

Books

Courage then and courage now

Megan Corton Scott finds resonances in a sprawling chronicle of the women who fought for the right to vote



Megan Corton Scott works on women's rights policy for a Labour MEP and is a member of the Fabian Women's Network national executive

It is an interesting – and pertinent – time to be reading a book that has been hailed as the definitive history of the suffragette movement. Diane Atkinson's *Rise Up, Women!* joins many other texts currently adorning book-sellers' displays: some new, some old, but all sporting the purple, white and green garb of the suffragette movement as we mark the centenary of the first women winning the right to vote. Yet Atkinson sets her book apart by focusing not only on the ringleaders of the movements, important though they were. In fact, it is her determination to display the social breadth of the movement to win the vote that makes this book the important – and unsurprisingly weighty – volume that it is.

In some modern feminist circles, the glorification of the suffragettes is regarded as slightly passé. While we push forward conversations around inclusivity and diversity within feminism, the problems with the suffragette movement have overshadowed their achievements. The suffragette story we are told usually excludes women of colour and working-class women and the suffragettes themselves are often characterised by their most famous leaders, notably the wealthy Pankhurst family.

Atkinson's book, then, feels like an almost direct retaliation to this top-heavy version of suffragette history, describing a movement that is far more sprawling. For the reader, this makes the book feel more like a collection of short stories and gathered anecdotes than a cohesive narrative. But for the feminist, it is this slightly frustrating structure that makes it feel so relatable.

Modern-day feminism has many different forms. Fierce disagreements amongst fellow feminists are not only commonplace but to be expected, as the movement swells to encompass people from all backgrounds. This is why the seemingly cohesive structure of the suffragette movement had never felt applicable to me. But *Rise Up, Women!* chronicles those women on the edges, the women doing their own work, making the struggle their own. From running soup kitchens to organising protests to writing en masse to local representatives, Atkinson paints a picture of a movement that is messy and uncoordinated and occasionally contradictory – but full of passion. She also manages to capture the courage of these suffragettes on the margins; women who faced not only brutal state action, but also the loss of friends and family because of their dedication to equal rights. This retaliation against



Rise Up, Women! The Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes
Diane Atkinson,
Bloomsbury,
£30

equality has morphed over time, but it still exists. Indeed, it is bittersweet that the centenary of the suffragettes comes at a time where there is a social and political backlash against feminism, from far-right populists preaching 'traditional values', to the surge of men's right activists, emboldened by the anonymity of the internet. If nothing else, it is the courage of those who strike out for the good of all women that links us across 100 years, and across multiple struggles.

It would be remiss to talk about this bravery without mentioning the brutality of the state. From direct police orders to sexually assault suffragette protestors, to the inhumane treatment of the women who were imprisoned, the violence inflicted on women by the institutions there to protect them was breathtaking. At the time, they were seen as terrorists by some in government, and treated as such. *Rise Up, Women!* does not shy away from this, and gives a more detailed and gruesome chronology of the state's actions against women than I had realised was the case. One hundred years on, it is now cuts to the state that hurt women, as opposed to the state itself. Government discrimination against women is less obvious but no less pernicious today: cutting funding for domestic violence refuges and police capacity, not to mention the heavily documented burden that welfare cuts place on women.

Contemporary groups such as Sisters Uncut continue to practice direct action, from regular protesting outside Downing Street to storming the red carpet at the BAFTAs. At a time when Theresa May plays lip service to feminism, a thorough reading of the violence against the suffragettes is an important reminder that equality has always been fought for, never given freely. The legacy of the suffragettes has been celebrated across Westminster and beyond, and although we should celebrate the parliamentary progress this represents, we should not allow this struggle to be institutionalised. To do so would be to ignore the inequality these institutions continue to perpetuate.

Rise Up, Women! is a book which is huge and flawed – much like the movement it seeks to chronicle. And yet it is also the book I would recommend to anyone seeking to gain not only a truer understanding of the suffragette movement, but inspiration and courage in pursuing gender equality battles today. **F**

For better or worse?

An analysis of marriage shows that inequality runs deep within the institution, writes *Andrew Harrop*



Andrew Harrop is general secretary of the Fabian Society

Marriage makes me uncomfortable, whether the reason is political, historical, cultural or aesthetic. No matter how many married couples I see living modern equal relationships, for me, the whole concept is tainted by its patriarchal past. I say 'for me' with good reason, as I have dozens of friends and comrades who disagree. This is a fault-line issue that divides socialists and feminists amongst themselves.

In *Against Marriage*, Clare Chambers makes the case for why egalitarians and liberals should reject marriage. It is political philosophy at its most practical and readable. Historically, marriage has always enshrined inequality and male domination (it was only in 1991 that rape within marriage became a crime). Chambers argues that symbolically, marriage cannot escape these roots: "Its status as a tradition ties its current meaning to its past." And she points out how modern attitudes and practices with respect to marriage remain highly gendered, with women more likely than men to place marriage at the heart of their life ambitions.

This inequality still plays out in the proposal, planning and celebration of most marriages: weddings are perhaps the most highly gendered rituals in which left-leaning people still engage. But Chambers shows how inequality within marriage runs much deeper. The share of domestic labour is far less equal among married than co-habiting couples, reinforcing economic inequality and gender stereotypes. More worrying still, long-term, coercive control of women by some men is associated with marriage.

This is the backdrop to current proposals for opposite-sex civil partnerships, an idea that has raced from the margins to the mainstream in a few short years. In May, the Supreme Court will hear the case of a woman and man who argue they have suffered discrimination because the law permits civil partnerships between same-sex but not opposite-sex couples. Already the Court of Appeal has accepted the couple's argument that, as they cannot in good conscience marry, they are being treated unequally in a way that engages their human rights. The court only ruled in the government's favour because ministers are planning to review the policy.

A Conservative, Tim Loughton, is leading the charge for opposite-sex civil partnerships. But in February his private member's bill was gutted by the government and it now

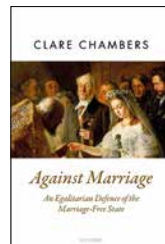
provides only for the promised review of policy. The outcome of this review is far from certain, as the government could scrap same-sex civil partnerships not extend them to all. Chambers points to numerous cases overseas where this has happened.

Ending civil partnership would deprive people who reject the symbolism of marriage the chance of a legally recognised relationship. But for the Conservatives proposing reform, an argument based on political belief is not attractive. They prefer a pragmatic case linked to the stability of relationships. Millions of opposite-sex couples already choose to live together and bring up children outside of marriage. The widespread use of civil partnerships would therefore bring greater stability to child-rearing and better legal protection for women when relationships end.

Protecting women in the event of separation is something left and right agree about, and the case for civil partnerships is being prosecuted by a curious alliance of anti-patriarchal egalitarians and pro-family conservatives. But for the left, is it enough to create an alternative to marriage while it still remains the default choice? Chambers argues not. She is prepared for marriage to continue as a private cultural practice, but says it should have no legal recognition; a liberal state should not promote an institution that advances a particular version of the good life, with inequality at its heart.

For Chambers, replacing marriage with civil partnership would be an improvement. But even this would still confer rights on couples only, to which others such as care-givers and lone parents might have good claim. This is an argument Peter Tatchell has made recently too. He suggests that any two adults should be able to form a commitment pact, which would involve them selecting from a menu of rights and responsibilities those that are right for them. Chambers also wants non-sexual relationships included within a legal framework and for the duties and obligations of marriage to be unbundled. But against Tatchell she says specific rights and duties should derive directly from the performance of the various functions of a relationship, rather than from legal agreement.

For now these ideas are on the fringes, but the debate on legal unions has moved very fast in 20 years. Immediately the priority is to legislate for opposite-sex civil partnerships. But the debate on how we regulate relationships is nowhere near its end. **F**



Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defense of the Marriage-Free State
Clare Chambers
Oxford University Press, £25

Permeating politics

The early Fabians soon earned a big reputation – even if it was not always an entirely positive one, as *Phoebe Downing* explains



Phoebe Downing is currently a senior associate at Learning First, a global school policy research and consulting firm. She completed her DPhil on the early history of the Fabian Society at the University of Oxford in 2015

The Fabians form, in a theoretical respect, an exceedingly cloistered little world, deeply provincial, despite the fact that they live in London. Their philosophical inventions are necessary neither to the Conservatives nor to the Liberals. Even less are they necessary to the working class, for whom they provide nothing and explain nothing. These works in the final reckoning serve merely to explain to the Fabians themselves why Fabianism exists in the world. Along with theological literature this is possibly the most useless, and certainly the most boring, type of literary activity.

Leon Trotsky, *The Fabian 'Theory' of Socialism* (1925)

ANY COMMENTARY ON the early history of the Fabian Society has first to confront the perception that it is an interminably dull topic. In his 1925 essay, Leon Trotsky famously berated the 'literary methods' of the Fabians not just for betraying the socialist movement, but for being 'boring', 'useless' and irrelevant.

Trotsky was rehearsing a familiar characterisation. Similar portrayals of the jejune Fabian technocrat populate the writing of academics, notably Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, who defined a century of British political historiography. Indeed, cultural critic Richard Hoggart could in 1970 coin the colourful (if inelegant) phrase 'doctrinaire, anti-imaginative Fabian-sterile single vision' to describe the 'assured narrowness of some intellectuals' because of the almost Dickensian stature of the Fabian bureaucrat.

A simple roll-call of early members is enough to start unpicking this Fabian stock character. Aside from the most famous early Fabians, such as Bernard Shaw and H G Wells, the early society boasted scores of professional writers, including Edith Nesbit and Hubert Bland; novelists Emma Brooke, Grant Allen and Arnold Bennett; dramatists Harley Granville Barker, Alfred Orage and Ashley Dukes; translator Constance Garnett and her husband, critic Edward Garnett; writers and translators Aylmer and Louise Maude; and literary critic Holbrook Jackson, to name but a few.

But this short commentary does not seek to argue that the Fabians were professionally engaged in the arts. Rather, it is to highlight just how removed the popular figure of the Fabian technocrat is from the society's earliest reputation, and to suggest a few reasons for how and why this caricature emerged.

From their first entrance into public life in 1884, the Fabians had to fight to establish who they were, what they stood for, and where they belonged relative to established political poles. London in the 1880s and 1890s was an international political haven. England's liberal printing laws attracted political émigrés from around the world who flourished alongside British radicals, socialists, freethinkers, Liberals, Conservatives and everything in between. But the founding Fabians entered this vibrant scene from a weak position: they needed to find a voice and an audience in this highly contested intellectual and political field.

The Victorian and Edwardian periodical press is rich with articles by and about the Fabians as they first entered public life. With online periodical databases, we can for the first time systematically analyse this discourse to paint a clearer picture of who the Fabians were, how they presented themselves, and how their contemporaries responded – a necessary first step in questioning their eventual portrayal in subsequent scholarship.

Indeed, the early Fabians themselves wanted to know what was being said about them and by whom in the contemporary press. In 1893, the Fabian executive authorized a subscription to the print-media clipping agency, Romeike and Curtice, to find out just this. And the results are surprising.

The early Fabian Society was popularly regarded as a literary society, an image they cultivated themselves. Writing in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1891, for instance, Grant Allen advised readers that 'the Fabians are mostly art-critics, designers, musicians, men of letters.' Earlier, Sidney Webb had introduced the society through its intellectual and creative credentials:

"They are the intellectual Proletariat of England, composed of men like George Bernard Shaw, the fine musical



© LSE Library

The Webbs and Shaw: *the 'intellectual proletariat'*

critic, novelist, economist, and speaker; Graham Wallas, an Oxford graduate and political historian; Grant Allen, the disciple of Herbert Spencer, a biologist and a famous novelist; May Morris, the daughter of William Morris, himself a fine artist; and many others, poets and journalists, economists and historians..."

Another Fortnightly commentator wrote in 1908 that 'a few young litterateurs founded the Fabian Society' as a more 'academic' alternative to the socialist movement. And a 1909 Times piece claimed that while '11 Fabians are members of Parliament, and the society supports the Labour party... its real work lies outside of politics, and is carried on chiefly by the distribution of literature and lectures. It contains several well-known writers, and may almost be called a literary society.'

This characterisation was common before the 1920s, and explains why literary modernists including Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf targeted the 'scrubbing and demolishing... elderly' Fabian 'experts' in their own efforts to seize cultural authority in the 1890s and 1900s.

But this 'literary' image exposed the Fabians to attack from political commentators when they did intervene in organised politics. When in 1893 for instance Bernard Shaw called on English voters to abandon the Liberal party, one Liberal observer warned it was a 'distressing' signal that 'the Fabians would come down from the clouds and enter the field of practical politics.'

The early Fabians at times struggled to communicate how they balanced their intellectual composition with practical engagement, partly because they rejected recognisable political ideology in favour of the as yet ill-defined notion of 'Fabianism.' Bernard Shaw described their unique *modus operandi* in an 1896 pamphlet:

[The Fabian Society] brings all the pressure and persuasion in its power to bear on existing forces, caring nothing

by what name any party calls itself, or what principles, Socialist or other, it professes, but having regard solely to the tendency of its actions, supporting those which make for Socialism and Democracy, and opposing those which are reactionary.'

This quintessentially Fabian theory of action – 'permeation' – confused some contemporaries, and angered others. When the Fabians publicly claimed credit for the 'unsectarian demands' and 'amendments' in the London Education Act passed by Balfour's Conservative government in 1902, for instance, it was roundly denounced as a gross act of 'Tory Fabianism' by the left and right alike.

Britain's first Labour prime minister and one-time Fabian Ramsay MacDonald voiced a widely held view that this instance of 'permeation' illustrated the 'futility of socialism as a practical political guide when propounded by the bureaucratic experts who lead the Fabian Society.'

And denying the Fabians were 'socialist' by any accepted definition, Conservative commentator John Beattie Crozier complained to Fortnightly readers in 1908 that 'unless the Fabians and the 'Intellectuals' of the Socialist party are bent on confusing and confounding all possible categories and issues, they have no right to lend the weight of their prestige, their intellectual status, or their authority among the cultivated, to the name Socialism as a separate political party in the State.'

These few press clippings show the seeds of the eventual Fabian caricature. They were 'useless,' because they operated 'outside practical politics'; 'boring,' because they chose 'persuasion' over revolution; and 'bureaucratic,' because they collaborated with any party to further their goals.

But the press did protest too much: the Fabians' reputation emerged specifically because the founding members held significant political and cultural capital at the turn of the twentieth century. ■

Listings

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS
Details and information from Luke John Davies at bhamfabians@gmail.com

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT
27 April: Lord Roy Kennedy – ‘Delivering the homes we need’.
25 May: Cllr Simon Letts, leader, Southampton City Council.
Meetings at the Friends Meeting House, Wharnccliffe Rd, Bournemouth at 7.30pm.
Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com for details.

BRIGHTON & HOVE
27 April: 7.30pm AGM followed at 8pm by Dr Paula Bartley – ‘Labour women in power: cabinet ministers in 20th century Britain’.
8pm at Brighton Friends Meeting House, Ship St, BN1 1AF Details from Ralph Bayley at ralphbayley@gmail.com

BRISTOL
Contact Ges Rosenberg at grosenberg@churchside.me.uk for details.

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON
8 May: speaker tbc
26 June: Fiona Twycross, GLA member
All meetings at 8pm in Chiswick Town Hall. Details from Alison Baker at a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

COLCHESTER
19 April: 7pm for 7.30pm – Kate Murray, Editor, Fabian Review.
17 May: Professor John Denham – ‘Why England needs its own parliament’.
21 June: Ann Black from Labour NEC – ‘Politics today’.
Meetings at 8pm in the Hexagonal Room, Quaker Meeting House, 6, Church St, Colchester. Contact Maurice Austin at Maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop for details

COUNTY DURHAM
12 May: Sarah Batty, welfare rights practitioner – ‘The impact of universal credit and other reforms’.
Regular meetings at the Lionmouth Rural Centre, near Esh Winning DH7 9QE, Saturday 12.15pm – 2pm
Details from Professor Alan Townsend at alan.townsend@durham.ac.uk

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM
Regular meetings. Contact Deborah Stoate at deborah.stoate@fabians.org.uk for details

FINCHLEY
Regular meetings. Contact Mike Walsh mike.walsh44@ntlworlds.com

GRIMSBY
Regular meetings. Contact Pat Holland at hollandpat@hotmail.com

HAVERING
22 May, 7.30pm
26 June, 7.30pm
Contact David Marshall for details of regular meetings.
haveringfabians@outlook.com

ISLINGTON
New society now holding regular meetings. Contact Adeline Au at siewyin.au@gmail.com

LEEDS
New society forming. Contact the secretary Luke Hurst for details at luke.will.h@gmail.com

GREATER MANCHESTER
New society forming.
If you are interested, contact Deborah Stoate at the Fabian Society at Deborah.stoate@fabians.org.uk

MERSEYSIDE
Contact James Roberts at jamesroberts1986@gmail.com

NEWHAM
For details, contact Rohit Dasgupta at rhit_svu@hotmail.com

NORTHUMBRIA AREA
1 June and 6 October, both at 7.30pm.
For details of meetings and venue, contact Pat Hobson at pathobson@hotmail.com

NORTH EAST LONDON
For details, contact Nathan Ashley, nathanashley88@gmail.com

OXFORD
9 May: Professor Glen O’Hara – ‘How can ‘experts’ help government think?’.
6pm – 7pm John Henry Brookes Main Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building, Headington Campus, Oxford. Details on how to register from Michael Weatherburn at admin@oxfordfabians.org.uk

PETERBOROUGH
27 April: John de Val – ‘Our economic state and Brexit’. All meetings at the Dragonfly Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough at 8pm. Details from Brian Keegan at brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH
Contact Juanita Carey for details on dewicary@yahoo.co.uk

READING & DISTRICT
Details of meetings from Tony Skuse at tony@skuse.net

SOUTHAMPTON AREA
Details of all meetings from Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com

SOUTH TYNESIDE
27 April: Annual Dinner with speaker Mike Parker from the Dartmouth Street Trust. Details of venue and price from Paul Freeman at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

SURREY
Details of meetings from Warren Weertman at secretary@surreyfabians.org

TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS
Regular meetings. Contact Martin Clay at martin.clay@btinternet.com

YORK DISTRICT
Meetings at Jacobs Well, Micklegate, York. Details from mike.collier@talktalk.ne

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 29 June:
Morning conference on education, Peterborough
Details from Brian Keegan at brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk
Tuesday 10 July, 2pm:
House of Commons meeting and House of Lords tea on ‘Is Britain more divided?’ Further details to be announced.

FABIAN QUIZ

BULLSHIT JOBS

David Graeber



Back in 1930, the economist John Maynard Keynes prophesied that by the century’s end,

technology would see us all working 15-hour weeks. But instead, something curious happened. Today, average working hours have not decreased, but increased. And now, across the developed world, three-quarters of all jobs are in services or admin, jobs that don’t seem to add anything to society. In Bullshit Jobs, David Graeber explores how this phenomenon – one more associated with the 20th century Soviet Union, but which capitalism

was supposed to eliminate – has happened. In doing so, he looks at how we value work, and how, rather than being productive, work has become an end in itself. He considers the way in which such work maintains the current broken system of finance capital; and, finally, how we can change things.

Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, answer the following question:

In which region of the UK is the economy most dominated by the service sector?

Please email your answer and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk

Or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 61 Petty France, London SW1H 9EU

ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 18 MAY 2018





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