

WARWICK LABOUR MAGAZINE

LEFT

ISSUE 2

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WILL LABOUR SURVIVE STARMER?

By Bradley Barnes

**RICHARD SHARP RESIGNS
FROM THE BBC- SO WHAT?**

Jamie Beatty's follow up on corruption within the BBC and how its biased nature plays into the hands of the Conservative Party.

**THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS – WHO TO BLAME, AND
CAN WE HAVE HOPE?**

**INHUMANITY & IMMIGRATION
IN BRAVERMAN'S BABBLE**

By Kelvina Malaj





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THIS TERM

In the 10 months since the publication of the first issue of our magazine, Warwick Labour has had one of our busiest and most packed years on record. We've heard from speakers such as Zarah Sultana, Ian Lavery, Andy Burnham, and many more. We've campaigned for incredible candidates across Warwick, Leamington, and Coventry and have helped materialise real Labour gains in the recent local elections. We've even been on our first tour! Collaborating with Cambridge University Labour Club we took part in their iconic pints and policy event. Warwick Labour have had no shortage of socials ourselves, we've ran circles, charity events, BBQ's, and even brought back our annual 'Dress Like a Tory' bar crawl. We have also stood proudly alongside the UCU and our staff on the Picket Lines, we have joined the fight for fair pay and working conditions and backed our staff in their fight to make education fairer. Looking forward to next year we cannot wait to see the progress Warwick Labour makes, and I am excited for the big plans we have- starting with creating a regular blog, to our netball and football team, and also getting ourselves ready for a general election. Myself and the exec can't wait for the year ahead, and we hope you'll get involved with the biggest and best left wing society on campus.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Issue 2 of LEFT! In this issue our writers have given us a deeper insight into the most recent news which has crossed all of our timelines. From articles on Richard Sharp to the crisis in Sudan, I want to thank all the writer's who have volunteered their thoughts and feelings throughout their articles, as well as the 2023/24 Exec and all of our members who have supported LEFT across campus.

If you didn't get chance this time, look out for upcoming updates on our Instagram (@leftmagwarwick) for opportunities to get involved!

WITH LOVE & SOLIDARITY,
KARA + JOHN



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Richard Sharp Resigns from the BBC- So

What?

BY JAMIE BEATTY

Ding dong Sharp is gone.

This should be cause for celebration, after all, this is the BBC Chairman who facilitated an £800,000 loan guarantee to, none other than, then PM Boris Johnson during his application for said position. If corruption had a scent, the stench emitted from this could be observed overseas.

Why then, am I not happy?

'...the BBC these days is most certainly not impartial, but most certainly is wrapped around the raised middle finger of the Conservative Party.'

About 2 months ago, during the fallout from the Gary Lineker incident, I wrote an article detailing how the BBC in its current state is not fit for purpose. The BBC was founded with the intention of being a source of education, entertainment, and information, with freedom from political interference and commercial pressure being paramount. An admirable vision indeed, but due to a myriad of reasons I discussed, the BBC these days is most certainly not impartial, but most certainly is wrapped around the raised middle finger of the Conservative Party.

To summarize, the entire appointment process for decisionmakers within the BBC stinks. The Broadcasting Royal Charter demands that appointments for the Chairman must only be made following a 'fair and open competition'.

'DAVIE REMAINS, GIBB REMAINS, THE BBC REMAINS A TORY MOUTHPIECE... EVEN IF IT IS STILL BETTER THAN PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLICATIONS.'

Well, I don't know about you, but power over this lying with the Culture Secretary, advised by a government-appointed panel, and therefore the Prime Minister, doesn't sound particularly fair and open to me. It is a completely partisan process. When the government has the final say over who runs the BBC, of course they are more likely to choose a candidate that is favourable towards them.

That, unfortunately, is politics. What possible incentive would they have to appoint someone who is going to give them a hard time? They are Tories, what do we seriously expect?

This absurd system means that this so-called independent state broadcaster is anything but independent. The content, or lack thereof, that they put out confirms this. Examples of BBC bias towards the Conservatives are numerous at this point. As I write this, why on earth is the Phillip Schofield story getting so much coverage, for days, and days, on end?

'...I'm sure that given the same opportunities, a Labour government also would not be opposed to this kind of treatment...'

Conservative life peer Michelle Mone is quite literally on the run with £232 million of taxpayer's money yet does not get a mention by the BBC. Coverage of the Tories restricting the right to protest is negligible and the government is also currently being made to look very bad by trying to

cover its tracks and hinder the Covid inquiry. In fairness, they are reporting on this, but why does it deem the Schofield story as being of higher importance than a sitting government trying to, quite literally, pervert the course of justice? Are they trying to distract us, I wonder. One of Matt Hancock's aides has recently boasted of getting a negative article during the pandemic demoted on the BBC website, further highlighting the need for the inquiry. Behaviour such as this seems likely, with former BBC reporter Patrick Howse writing for the Byline Times that a lack of coverage for Jennifer Arcuri's revelations of a four-year sexual affair with ex-PM Boris Johnson, among other stories that cast him in a bad light, had 'come from the top'.



There we have it, Johnson appointed Sharp and in return Sharp was kind to Johnson and the government at large. That's certainly what it looks like at least, even if this is not the case, the BBC's reputation as an impartial news source is in tatters. This corroborates various claims of corruption and makes one wonder just how often this has occurred, and how much of the news that we are supposed to 'trust' is trustworthy? There are many more

examples to be found of the Conservatives leveraging their power over the BBC to serve their own goals. Frankly, I don't blame them. They have been allowed to get away with this, and I'm sure that given the same opportunities, a Labour government also would not be opposed to this kind of treatment from the nation's largest broadcaster. A herculean clean-up act is required to save the image of this once great institution and restore public trust, with it currently being seen as less trustworthy than rivals such as ITV News according to recent polls. After all, the BBC remains theoretically and occasionally empirically brilliant. Its ideals, as well as some of the work it does, such as its international coverage, are enviable. The recent 'Modi Question' documentary was truly eye-opening and clearly ruffled the right feathers, with its India office being raided for 'tax reasons' shortly after its release. It is this kind of fearless, independent, reporting that means the BBC is an institution to be marvelled upon. It is a tragedy that the domestic side of it must be tarred by the murky, undemocratic, and corrupt appointments process.



In my previous article I outlined various potential fixes, with the suggestion that the entire process should be reformed. It should instead be treated like appointments to the civil service, free from government interference, to allow it to be truly impartial and begin to restore trust. I implore any opposition party to adopt this policy, it should have always been this way. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it also seems like such an easy political win, I know of nobody who is satisfied with the BBC in its current state, we pay for its existence, so why do we put up with it? Of course, a government would

enjoy being treated well by the press whilst in power, especially the sleazy Tories, but it seems like an opportunity ripe for taking by an opposition. It is encouraging that discussion over this issue is being had, with veteran broadcaster David Dimbleby ruling himself out of contention to take over from Sharp and calling for a cross-party public commission to make the final recommendation. This would be a great step in the right direction, but unfortunately, it remains as just a suggestion for now. There needs to be greater public outrage to induce the change required.

'Sharp departing is like cleaning up one of our contaminated beaches, great news in the short term, but ultimately a hollow victory.'

Sharp remains in post until a successor is appointed in June, but whoever is appointed will be just as problematic, even if they are a hypothetically perfect appointee, hand-crafted by a higher power with the sole purpose of running the BBC. They will be tarred by the same undemocratic brush, no matter their intention. Sharp departing is like cleaning up one of our contaminated beaches, great news in the short term, but ultimately a hollow victory. More raw sewage is just going to be pumped into it, because the Tories continue to allow it; the next chair shall continue to stink.

I offer nothing new in this article other than doubling down on my previous stance, because Sharp leaving, whilst of course good, changes nothing. He was just a symptom of the corruption. Davie remains, Gibb remains, the BBC remains a Tory mouthpiece... Even if it is still better than privately owned publications.

What to Expect When you're Expecting?...

Local Election Results

2023

'AFTER 13 YEARS, A TIRED CONSERVATIVE PARTY LOOKS LIKE IT HAS REACHED ITS ELECTORAL LIMIT, WITH THESE LOCAL ELECTIONS SIGNALLING ITS WINNING COALITION IS BREAKING APART..'

BY WILL ALLEN

thousands of council seats changed hands at this year's local elections, redrawing the political battlelines as the parties head towards the spectre which will be the 2024 general election. With all the results declared, it looks as if the Conservative party's best days are now firmly behind them. On election night, Rishi Sunak's first ever electoral test, the party collapsed losing over 1,000 seats across England,

...it looks as if the

Conservative party's best days are now firmly behind them.'

The resulting losses spurred a swathe of victories for centre-left parties from Labour, to the Greens, and the Liberal Democrats. Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, separate council elections returned a Sinn Féin tsunami that further realigns the political landscape there, piling more pressure on a petulant DUP to finally jumpstart power sharing at Stormont again.

As the Conservative party collapses, Labour continues to look ever more ascendant. Even if the party's progress doesn't mirror the surge of the late 1990's, it looks now like a government nearly in waiting. Kier Starmer, who led Labour into his third set of local

elections, picked up wins in places like Medway, Plymouth, and Swindon, none of which were guaranteed and the last of which hasn't been won by Labour since 1999. It also regained control of councils like Brighton and Hove, while flexing its electoral clout in Hartlepool – coming within three votes of winning overall control. Overall, the party gained control of 22 councils and more than 500 councillors, which takes Labour back to being the largest party in local government; a feat not seen since the halcyon days of the early 2000's.

Critically, Labour regained swathes of support in areas that voted to leave the EU and then for the Conservative party in 2019, dramatically increasing its average vote share in those key wards by 7 percentage points. The swing towards Labour in these wards, coupled with wins in many other regions across England, signals, (with a deeper offering in 2024)



Labour has the potential to not only rebuild the so-called "red wall" at the

next general election, but unite a deeper coalition that will propel it into government.

Yet, despite headline wins for Labour, the results illustrate the party's needs to go further still. At 35%, the projected national share of the vote doesn't move the needle upwards from last year's local election results, suggesting the Conservative collapse may have played a part in the party's successes – as a result, the party needs to think about where it heads next in search of votes before 2024.

'Labour has the potential to...rebuild the so-called "red wall" at the next general election...'

Labour, however, wasn't the only party to profit off the Conservative's electoral woes. The Liberal Democrats ate into the traditional blue belt that surrounds London, taking control of Conservative councils in places like Windsor and Maidenhead – many of these places home to the parliamentary constituencies of Conservative stalwarts. In places like the Vale of White Horse, in Oxfordshire, the party wiped-out any remaining Conservative councillors. The Green party also unseated hundreds of councillors from the main parties, breaking through nationally. In a historic first the party won outright

control of its first council, unseating a Conservative administration in Mid Suffolk, making it the first and only Green administration in the whole of Europe.

'In a historic first the (Green) party won outright control of its first council...'

Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland the political landscape continues to be turned upside-down. Off the back of Sinn Féin's success in Stormont elections last year, the party swept to power in councils across NI. The largest party in both devolved and now local government, Michelle O'Neill clearly has a mandate to govern, while an intransigent Jeffrey Donaldson has been rebuked for stalling power-sharing. Yet, the DUP seem set to continue the boycott of Stormont while they court an ever-smaller pool of voters and political oblivion.

These elections reveal important trends. After 13 years, a tired Conservative party looks like it has reached its electoral limit, with these local elections signalling its winning coalition is breaking apart. Labour's ascension to power in 2024 isn't guaranteed but seems more certain when considering the wider regions of the UK, where the party is either dominant or seeing dramatic resurgence. While the headlines from the local elections represent opportunity for Labour and other progressive parties, only election day in 2024 will reveal whether the current electoral trends of centre-left ascension are correct.

The Unfolding Humanitarian Crisis: Sudan Conflict and the UK's Inadequate Response

BY RAHUL RAJGOPAL

**'INSTEAD, WE ARE DENYING OUR OWN PEOPLE SAFE
PASSAGE BACK AND FORCING THEM TO REMAIN IN THE
EPICENTRE OF A VIOLENT ARMED CONFLICT.'**



Over the past 20 years the political turmoil in Sudan has given rise to several coups and civil conflicts, with clashes emerging in 2023 between rival factions of their military government. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF),

the former dictatorial ruler Al-bashir was overthrown. Following months of protests and anti-government demonstrations against the deteriorating economy, Bashir was overthrown on the 11th of April and a power sharing agreement was reached between civilian groups, namely the Forces of Freedom and Chance (FFC), and the military. A 'transitional sovereignty council' swiftly took power, chaired by General Burhan (who was affiliated with the military) to whom Hemedti was deputy. The country then began to see a slight movement towards democracy under this joint committee.

Inevitably, the council began to experience tenuous internal relations, primarily due to the competing interests and ideological divisions between the parties. The military blamed several attempted coups in 2021 by Bashir loyalists on civilian leaders, whilst the civilian leaders accused them of misconstruing these attempts to gain more power in government. This tension was exacerbated by the fact that the military, as per the initial agreement, eventually would have to hand over leadership of the Sovereignty Council to the civilian government. This gave rise to the second coup d'état, when the Sudanese military took control of

the government, arresting the majority of the civilian cabinet. The civilian PM Abdallah Hamdok was placed under house arrest after refusing to declare support for the coup. Similarly, there was international refusal to recognise a transfer of power, with commentators continuing to recognise the Hamdok cabinet as 'the constitutional leaders of the transitional government'. Given this resistance, on the 21st of November, Burhan agreed to sign another power-sharing deal with Hamdok which reinstated him as PM, to the dismay of civilian groups like the FFC who thought this would legitimise the prior military coup. Nonetheless, Hamdok justified it on the grounds of economic stability.

'...the Tory government has fallen short in both of these areas, having failed to recognise the intricate history of the conflict itself.'

led by General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo (aka Hemedti) have been fighting since the 15th of April, resulting in over 1800 reported fatalities. Given the extent of these atrocities, one would expect the UK government to rush and mitigate the impact of the crisis by providing aid and effective exit routes for diplomats and citizens. Unfortunately, as this article will explore, the Tory government has fallen short in both of these areas, having failed to recognise the intricate history of the conflict itself.

A notable year to start is 2019, when



From the get-go it was evident that this agreement would not be fruitful, as history had demonstrated. Hamdok resigned on the 2nd of January 2022 due to increasing protests and civil

disobedience fuelled by the FFC. Like clockwork, tensions began to emerge in the government, particularly over demands that the RSF be disbanded and integrated in the army (The RSF developed from the infamous 'Janjaweed' militias used by the government in the Darfur conflict to suppress rebellions - their atrocities against the civilians were called 'crimes against humanity'). Hemedti, on behalf of RSF, insisted on a 10 year timetable for the integration, whilst the army, led by Burhan, demanded a maximum of 2 years. This disparity was obvious, as such an integration would require the cessation of power by the RSF. As neither leader indicated any backing down, a power struggle arose. Hemedti began to be closely associated with civilian groups such as the FFC, contradicting his prior commitment to the military. This was supposedly an attempt to embed himself as a senior state officer and to 'side-line Islamist-leaning Bashir loyalists'. Nonetheless, the intensifying rivalry led to the bloody clashes beginning from April 15th 2023, saturated in populous areas like Khartoum.

'...substantive aid is required from foreign countries, rather than merely calling for cease-fires and carelessly throwing money at the situation...'

Having now been labelled a serious humanitarian crisis, many Western countries responded with aid imminently, drawing up rescue plans for civilians, diplomats and humanitarian actors. On the 19th of April, countries such as the UK, Canada, France and Germany all issued a joint statement imploring the SAF and RSF to abide by international law and cease fire. The aid and peace proposals have been of limited aid, though. Hospitals remain understaffed, there are 'extremely acute' shortages of food and water and more than \$13m worth of food and aid had been looted before reaching the suffering civilians. It is clear that cease fires would be unrealistic and ineffective. The 72 hour cease-fire proposal on the 21st of April, supported by both parties, was

impossible to fully enforce and fighting still continued, even when RSF proposed an extension.



These complexities highlight how substantive aid is required from foreign countries, rather than merely calling for cease-fires and carelessly throwing money at the situation without scrutinising whether it will actually serve its purpose. MP Preet Kaur Gill raised a number of points in the House of Commons against MP Andrew Mitchell, Minister of State in the FCDO, challenging the UK's inadequate response. She raised concerns about the pace and effectiveness of our evacuation process. Communications with nationals was patchy and the evacuation process started significantly later than our allies.

On top of all of this, there were several cases where nationals were denied evacuation. Gill's constituent Lina Badr and her child were forced to make their own way to the border as a result of the UK evacuating officials before nationals and residents, and Gill drew similarities with the inadequate evacuation process in Afghanistan. Cardiff MP Anna McMorrin's (Labour) constituent's father was refused at the airport despite his wife and daughter, who both possessed UK passports, getting on the flight. There have been instances of NHS workers being denied evacuation by the Foreign Office, and pregnant women having to remain in Sudan having been in the process of sorting out UK citizenship. Clearly the government needs to cater for more nuanced situations, where individuals have a right to evacuate back to the UK but may not fall neatly into certain categories. Instead, we are denying our own people safe passage back and forcing them to remain in the epicentre

of a violent armed conflict.

To make matters worse, official development assistance has been facing cuts since the pandemic. In 2021, UK aid spending fell 21%, and specifically South Sudan saw a cut of £60m. Whilst the government did prioritise Sudan under these cuts, among other countries, clearly more has to be done to ensure the money and aid is invested effectively. More money and resources should be dedicated to this cause factoring in recent inflation as well. Jeremy Corbyn eloquently highlighted how merely pushing ceasefires is not a permanent solution nor does it imply peace. As this article has addressed, Sudan has an intensely complex political climate and a polarised military - the government should liaise with the African Union and the UN and invest in potential long term, nuanced solutions. Gill rightly criticised the Tories for expressing relatively little support for Sudanese people themselves, having demonstrated no willingness to retain a meaningful presence in the country in the long term.

Of course, none of this is to detract from the heroic efforts of frontline workers in these rescue missions, and thankfully, since April, the UK has been able to facilitate the departure of over 2300 people. This has included British nationals, dependents, Sudanese NHS medical staff and other eligible nationals. Further, HMS Lancaster has supported evacuation missions from Port Sudan to enable greater numbers to be transported. These efforts are immense and have worked greatly in saving the lives of thousands of innocent people. What should be criticised, however, is the general management of the UK's response to the conflict, which has failed to consider its complex backdrop and implement long term, effective strategies. This is to protect, not only diplomats and British citizens, but also the Sudanese civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict who have been massively underrepresented and neglected by the Tory government.

Inhumanity and Immigration in Braverman's Babble

BY KELVINA MALAJ

'...IT IS IMPERATIVE WE ALSO DO OUR BIT TO CHALLENGE THIS INHUMANE AND ILLEGAL LEGISLATION AND TAKE ACTION IN ANY WAY WE CAN.'

With the cost of living

skyrocketing, as wages become unliveable and food bank usage continues rising after 13 years of Conservative rule, the Party claim to have successfully pinpointed the culprit of criminality and social chaos: "illegal migrants".

Recently, Home Secretary Suella Braverman suggested with absolute conviction that people seeking asylum are actively undermining democracy and British values, building on her scaremongering speeches from the last few months, in which she described migrants and refugees coming to the UK as an "invasion on our Southern Coast" of thousands of people in criminal gangs.

'It bars people from seeking asylum if done 'without permission' and immediately denies all claims, regardless of legitimacy or severity.'

She went on to describe how she plans to fix the "broken" British immigration system. It is a system which has been run by her own party, who have pledged to 'fix it' since David Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010. A system run by her own party, who staunchly argued Brexit, or the Hostile Environment policy, or austerity would miraculously fix it.

Braverman explains it as an attempt to

reduce the number of small boat crossings; a debate which is being carefully and deliberately orchestrated in the midst of the UK's economic crisis as both a distraction from real Tory failures AND as a tactic to fearmonger voters. Contrary to the relentless propaganda from Braverman and co., the vast majority of those on small boats are the victims of modern day slavery in many forms, including that of forced agricultural, construction and sex work, or they are seeking asylum for various reasons, including the climate crisis or conflicts.

This legislation is essentially a death wish for thousands fleeing persecution, war, conflict, and abuse, or those who are subjected to modern day slavery, with the full awareness of this Tory government. It criminalises them and denies them their human rights in true fascistic, draconian fashion.

Not only is it morally reprehensible, it fails to even remotely appreciate the complexity and struggles of asylum seekers or to address the various reasons people are made refugees; 'small boat crossings' are not done for fun, nor are they done as an easy route or made as a simple choice.

So, amidst all of this criticism, how have the Tories attempted to justify it?

Frequently, anti-migrant arguments cite asylum

seekers coming from France, 'a safe country', or the false premise that refugees are 'meant' to flee to the next safest country. What this argument fails to acknowledge however, is that by international law, refugees and migrants are absolutely able to settle in any country - not exclusively neighbouring countries. For many, who have ties to the English language and who have family and connections in the UK, making the journey from France (or elsewhere) to the UK is understandable.



Furthermore, the idea that every asylum seeker miraculously makes it to Britain's shores is a total fallacy, deliberately emphasised by Braverman to fabricate a way of justifying this nonsensical policy. The facts reveal to us that 72% of those seeking asylum flee to their neighbouring countries and most refugees are primarily internally displaced and remain within their nation of origin. The UK holds only a minute 1% of the approximate 27.1 million people seeking asylum globally; the narratives of 'burden', 'invasion',

and 'migrant takeovers' are carefully fabricated.

Anti-refugee advocacy also frequently posits that people seeking asylum ought to do it through 'safe and legal routes'. However, since the 1951 Refugee Convention, there has been a globally accepted consensus that asylum seekers cannot be 'illegal', regardless of how 'irregular' the means they use are. This is quite simply decided on the basis that they are people seeking asylum, oftentimes without access to 'formalities', such as lawyers, internet access, their documents, contacts, communication in other languages, accommodation, etc. The small boat scaremongering is deliberately skewed: less than 45% of people seeking asylum arrived on small boats across the channel in 2022, yet it became such an important talking point for Conservatives.

'A belief...that the numbers of those who take dangerous and 'illegal' routes will lower is a complete fallacy and has never been proven correct.'

Home Office statistics show that more than 75% of claims are immediately deemed genuine and a further 12% during appeals processes. How can our politicians then argue these claims are ingenuine? That in actuality they deserve to be deported, detained, and robbed of their personhood and human rights as defined by international law?

A belief that by making the asylum system of the UK more inaccessible and more difficult, that the numbers of those who take dangerous and 'illegal' routes will lower is a complete fallacy and has never been proven correct. The ways and routes for people seeking asylum, especially from particular countries, to do so in the UK are difficult and non-existent in some cases. Yet the government also argues by removing all routes, asylum seeking in the UK will magically vanish...

This current government is all too aware of these statistics and absolutely understands international law and the

UK's migration system. They are deliberately choosing however, to challenge the European Court of Human Rights and to override international law, in an explicitly xenophobic, racist and inhumane attack on vulnerable people.



Additionally, the Tories have argued that people seeking asylum are acting as a 'financial drain' on the UK's economy, arguing refugees live lavishly on government handouts in fancy hotels.

Not only is it dehumanising and degrading to argue human beings fleeing their homes are 'financial burdens', but also the reality is the total opposite. The average payment for a person seeking asylum is £7 a day - most live in poverty, suffering from poor living conditions and health. It has been estimated also that the detention of people seeking asylum will cost over £9 billion in the first three years alone.

If the UK, the 6th wealthiest country in the world, is 'unable' to host and care for vulnerable people seeking asylum, then on who does the obligation fall? Currently, 72% of refugees are in low- and middle-income countries: Braverman's narrative that asylum seekers arrive in the UK for the financial benefit, to 'leech' off of the system is not only misguided but deliberately crafted to pit the working classes against poor refugees.

The most alarming part is not that Braverman's narrative and words are not simply ideas. They are bullets fired in the direction of vulnerable migrants in the form of policies which do not consider them human; policies which discourage others from seeing their personhood; policies which describe them as 'illegal', as 'invaders', as

'criminals'; policies which degrade the position of some of the most disadvantaged people in society even further.

It is estimated that this Bill will see 250,000 people's (including 45,000 children's) claims to asylum being automatically deemed ineligible for consideration.

'No one puts their children in a boat, unless the water is safer than the land.'

As poet Warsan Shire wrote: "no one puts their children in a boat, unless the water is safer than the land". Braverman's inhumane policy dismisses every single person for whom "the water is safer than the land". Every single individual who makes the difficult journey to leave their home. Every single individual who has been trafficked and forced to seek asylum elsewhere. Every single individual who is a victim of modern day slavery.

Though the legislation is scheduled to be challenged on various domestic and international legal fronts, it is imperative we also do our bit to challenge this inhumane and illegal legislation and take action in any way we can. Here's what you can do: contact your local MP, asking for more pressure to be put on the Lords for the next stage of the bill. And keep spreading the word - this government has attacked our rights to strike and our rights to protest, with maximum discretion.

Will Labour Survive Starmer?

BY BRADLEY BARNES **'...AS TIME WENT ON, ONE BY ONE THESE POLICY 'PLEDGES' WERE ABANDONED, AND HIS RHETORIC IS NOW COMPLETELY UNRECOGNISABLE FROM WHAT IT WAS JUST A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO.'**

In a 2020 article written for the guardian following the brutal 2019 election, Keir Starmer made 'the moral case for socialism' and stated that Labour 'must continue to be the party that opposes austerity, supports common ownership and champions investment in our public services'. But three years on, it seems much of his original vision has been conveniently forgotten, both by the party leadership and much of the mainstream media. Instead, Starmer is now claiming that Labour were in fact 'The real conservatives' all along, and judging from his numerous attempts to outflank the Tories from the right, perhaps he has a point. But how has this happened exactly? How has Labour gone from socialism to right of Tony Blair in just three years? Will this new strategy bring the party electoral success?

'This is not about the survival of a name but the essence of the movement, and I believe Starmer threatens that more than any previous labour leader; yes, including Blair.'

I am going to take a gamble and say labour probably will win the next election. I think the better question is whether this would even be something to celebrate anymore. I don't believe Starmer will hurt Labour as an electoral entity, he may even keep the Tories out of power for a generation. But without a vision for the country which will significantly improve the lives of

working people, is Labour even really Labour anymore? This is not about the survival of a name but the essence of the movement, and I believe Starmer threatens that more than any previous labour leader; yes, including Blair.



The first area where I believe Starmer has sacrificed Labour's values is by losing the moral high ground. Much attention has been given to the various examples of scandals and deceit within the conservative party in recent years, and rightly so, but Labour's behaviour in this period also deserves some heavy scrutiny. As alluded to earlier, Starmer's original pitch to the Labour membership was in line with the ideas of his socialist predecessors, promising to uphold many of the policies of the Corbyn era including higher taxation of the wealthy, common ownership of public services and the abolition of tuition fees. However, as time went on, one by one these policy 'pledges' were abandoned, and his rhetoric is now completely unrecognisable from what it was just a few short years ago.

Alongside the shift in public presentation, the labour leader has also changed his attitudes to internal party politics. Having initially promised to

embrace Labour as a 'A broad church', Starmer has done the exact opposite. From blocking Corbyn from standing as a labour MP to attempting to change party electoral rules to benefit centrist factions ; he has shown contempt for both the left of his party and the party's internal democracy.

Although I believe some pragmatism is required to win against a conservative party which is propped up by much of the country's mainstream media, Starmer's centrist rebrand lacks any strong principles or flagship policies and has only been made possible through deceiving and silencing the party's left. For all Blairs sins, he was at least honest in his initial pitch to the Labour party about the direction of travel and followed through when in government.

'...we now have something of an ideological vacuum; and with much of the previous agenda of nationalisation and redistribution abandoned, many are wondering what the New 'New Labour' Party actually stands for.'

Can the same really be said for Starmer?

The second area where I believe Starmer has failed his party is through some of the policies he has supported, and a good few of the ones he hasn't. I have already mentioned his abandonment of Corbyn era policies, something that would be a lesser issue

had Starmer provided any alternatives. However, instead we now have something of an ideological vacuum ; and with much of the previous agenda of nationalisation and redistribution abandoned, many are wondering what the New 'New Labour' Party actually stands for. Commitments to a national energy firm and an ambitious housing programme have been a step in the right direction but the lack of any serious challenge to the neoliberal consensus, or even policies that will directly benefit those on low incomes, is highly disappointing. Despite lacking his own ideas however, Starmer seems very committed to upholding authoritarian Tory policies and matching their rhetoric rather than challenging it. Recent examples include his refusal to commit to overturn the new Public Order Bill, which significantly affects the right to protest in the UK, as well as the Illegal Migration Bill, which shows unwarranted cruelty to desperate migrants. Moreover, Starmer has also put a heavy emphasis on Labour as the party of 'Law and Order', mirroring Blair's infamous 'tough on crime' approach; which papered over the cracks rather than addressing the root causes of crime.

'...it is deeply upsetting that the party who previously championed social progress have now turned a blind eye.'

Also worth mentioning is Labour's worrying shift to the right on social and cultural issues. Despite the various problems with the last labour government, they made great strides towards ensuring that previously marginalised groups had access to the same rights as the rest of the population. Blair both repealed the deeply homophobic section 28 and allowed gay couples the right to legal partnership; Brown then expanded upon this with the 'Equalities act' which built on previous anti-discrimination legislation and ensured Trans rights. Thirteen years on however, Labour has failed to take a strong stance against increasingly transphobic rhetoric from

the conservative party or challenge their attempts to dehumanise migrants. In a time where marginalised and vulnerable groups are more threatened than ever, it is deeply upsetting that the party who previously championed social progress have now turned a blind eye.



I, more than anyone else, would like to see the corrupt and callous conservative party removed from power for as long as possible. However, I would be lying if I said I felt any anticipation for the ambitionless, authoritarian, and increasingly socially conservative labour party which seems set to replace them. The only thing that should scare us more than a ruling conservative government, is a ruling labour government playing party politics and failing to criticise the British Conservative Party. This would leave the most vulnerable in society without a voice and the only party which can provide an ideological challenge to the Conservatives dead in all but name.

The Cost of Living Crisis – Who to blame, and can we have hope?

BY MATTHEW PRICE

**'I WILL NOT TAKE A LECTURE ON A MAGIC MONEY TREE, NOT NOW,
NOT WHEN THE TORIES HAVE HANDED MASSIVE CONTRACTS TO
THEIR MATES.'**

the Tories have been in government in the UK for the last 13 years. Sure, the cost of living crisis is a global issue. But the UK has been affected badly even on the world stage. Even if this wasn't the case, going by the rules they set for the New Labour government and Gordon Brown during the 2008 global financial crisis, it happened on their watch, and they must bear the responsibility. My own opinion, that Brown was unfairly blamed, especially given his significant role in getting the world around the table to discuss solutions, matters little here. The state of the country is far too dire and far too in need of a change in government for some twisted ethics debate on what we can and can't

'...the right have dumped their toxic waste into British politics, and indeed into our oceans, but we don't need to act as though we can't change things and turn off the pumps.'

blame Conservatives for. The blame must land squarely on their shoulders; they have had 13 years of their own way, and I worry about how the country will weather another 5 years of toxicity, corruption, and kicking public services to the side. I dislike calling it sleaze – for any other working person, it would be called corruption. (Take, for example, the near-quadrupling of fraud to £21 billion under Sunak as Chancellor.)

But it is all very well pointing the finger at the Tories. Labour needs to give its view of what it will do to solve it.

I think the fact that it is even a question people are feeling they must ask is emblematic of the problem. British politics right now feels as though it is far more about destructive rather than constructive ideas – a blame game, rather than an ideas game. Like most of our generation, I am no stranger to nihilism, but I don't think there is any point in surrendering to it. Elements of the right have dumped their toxic waste into British politics, and indeed into our oceans, but we don't need to act as though we can't change things and turn off the pumps. I can't help but feel that people might be less inclined to direct hatred toward desperate human beings who seek a better life if they were not looking down wondering if they might be next.

I don't just refer to the victims of the Daily Mail's vile tirades, who ironically seem to have more hope in our country than we do; I mean those who are forced to go without meals to get by, those attacked for seeking a more comfortable life as the gender that to them, they have always been, those that struggle against class barriers, for accommodation of their disabilities, physical or mental, and so many more.

So for crying out loud, please. We need serious, long-term, public investment in this country. We need to have hope, and back ourselves. There's no point in

trying to compete in the world economy with one hand tied behind our backs. Neoliberalism is dead, and Keir Starmer's tentative homages to New Labour aren't convincing anyone. Sure, he might be serious and sensible, but this wasn't this the same cover that Cameron ducked under whilst austerity needlessly killed people? Sensible might sound good, but sensible in politics usually translates to not rocking the boat and instead tinkering around the edges, not making change that sticks. Simply undoing the idiotic policies from the last 13 years of Tory government would help, and yet Starmer struggles to even commit to that. It feels as if there is not a week that goes by without him finding another pledge to renege on. Indeed, there seems to be collective memory loss over the proven fact that inequality makes everyone's life worse, even those at the top.



I understand the desire to strike a moderate balance that appeals to a wider amount of the electorate, but this does not mean Labour should base their own positions on issues off wherever the Tories are. Tracking

rightward alongside them could have equally dangerous consequences for alienating the left of the party, just as Corbyn alienated the right; taking votes for granted is never a long-term strategy for government, and Starmer is playing a dangerous game in doing so. Given the last 13 years of Tory rule, Labour can still benefit at the next election from the sentiment that at this point, anything is better. But fail to make any genuine progressive change in those 4 or 5 years? An incumbent Labour government could hardly purport to be a breath of fresh air.

There is a balance to be struck here. In the short term, restoring funding to public institutions, undoing other shoddy Tory policies, and making benefits and taxation actually fair on the average working person will do a great deal alone for the country, but setting out a longer-term plan for investment in the first 5 years is also crucial. There must be projects to point toward that show a vision: a greater protection of rights and a regeneration of public services and of governance structures. There must be genuine attempts to increase accountability and fairness of government, not just 'budget responsibility'. This includes electoral reform, not just things Starmer has indicated support for like votes at 16 (I am unsure as to whether this should be just at the local level or at the national too) but voter ID laws and the thing Labour cannot keep ignoring, electoral reform. Your vote should count the same wherever, and seats should reflect the number of votes. It is simply a matter of fairness and democracy. Some things take longer than others, and Labour must have a proper plan for government to make sure it all happens.

If you are going to evoke patriotism, use it to make the country a better place, not to create another to blame. Gordon Brown was right to point out the House of Lords as in dire need of reform, but local institutions too would benefit from greater agency including finances, to solve the issues that are most pressing for them. Restoring public services, not just the NHS, but

things like transport and education, would give the country something to be proud of. Our children, who are our future, suffer from record mental health issues and are behind in their learning thanks to COVID disruption - so invest in them to make sure they get the academic and indeed mental health support they need - give them the teachers they deserve.

'Ignoring these things doesn't make them go away - there is no point kicking the can down the line.'

There is other easy action to take against drivers and symbols of inequality. I have already mentioned the House of Lords, but there are many others such as acting against private schools; an easy thing to do would be remove any leniency they currently get from the state like charitable status, though my personal feelings lean more toward getting rid of them. Take responsibility for transport and bring it under public ownership. We should also remember we helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and start acting like it, by making concrete efforts to safeguard our basic human rights and start a serious consultation with the country on what else is needed, like further protection for victims of domestic abuse and an actual, mature conversation on creating a safe environment for the transgender population. Ignoring these things doesn't make them go away - there is no point kicking the can down the line.

I'm not going to sit here and pretend like simply injecting money will help, since throwing money at the problem alone is not an effective strategy for government. But I will not take the argument the country cannot afford it and I will not take a lecture on a magic money tree, not now, not when the Tories have handed massive contracts to their mates and let public sector fraud skyrocket. If we cannot afford the reform the country needs now, when do we plan to do it? It shouldn't be a question as to whether we can afford it; it is our country's future.

We must afford it. There is a need for long-term thinking that must start with the next Labour government; we've seen already what damage the revolving door of Tory leadership has caused with regards to governments thinking only in the short-term.

Keir Starmer has an opportunity to win a decent majority on a platform that could act as a mandate for genuinely big change, but only if he chooses to run on a platform that is ambitious, clear, and achievable. Right now, his policies are achievable, what little there is to assess. The origin of the country's ills is the Tories. But is the solution to the country's ills Keir Starmer? I sit here writing this, and honestly, I don't know. I genuinely don't know. When his policy platform is fully formulated in the run-up to the 2024 General Election, maybe I'll know. Maybe I won't know unless Labour wins, and he becomes Prime Minister. Maybe he'll be more left-wing than expected in office. Maybe he won't be. Looking at his background, and at him before he was Leader of the Opposition, I can't help but feel he personally feels differently to some of the things he has said in public. But I don't know that. This is all speculation.

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A Continuing Insurgency of Populism & Trump's Return

BY TIM MACY

'EVEN IF...SOMEONE LIKE DESANTIS TAKES THE GOP'S NOMINATION, THEY WILL HAVE DONE SO WITH TRUMP'S TACTICS.'

as many academics, media sources, and political addicts will attest, populism has been an ever-increasing presence in the world's public affairs over the past decade or so. To make this article digestible, we will ignore for a moment the fact that this is misleading as well as skirt around the tricky task of defining populism – a way of practising politics largely oriented at putting 'the people' against 'the elites.'

Populism in the USA did not die when Trump lost 2020: quite the opposite. The incitement by a sitting president of the most significant attack on the seat of government since we Brits burnt down the White House over two hundred years ago is vivid proof of this.

'...once the seeds are sown the weeds push through the cracks in the concrete of a political system, and soon become its lifeblood...'

The Republican primary is gearing up to become a battle of who can become the most anti-woke, anti-establishment, and anti-common-sense candidate. Trump will continue with his personal attacks predicated on lies and deceit. Ron DeSantis has built his national profile off the back of anti-vaccine, anti-LGBT+, pro-gun policy platforms. Other declared candidates include those delusional enough as to call American healthcare "the envy of the world." This is emblematic of the

nationalism which, despite being so vapidly transparent, is the fuel propelling American populism to its newest exospheric levels. It paints the USA as an infallible giant, a cultural hegemon, and – crucially – under threat from immigrants from below, and the woke elites from the top. While such painting is commonly done in crude crayon, it has been uniquely effective in mobilising swathes of the nation who chant empty slogans and buy into the violent rhetoric. This is why populism proves itself so insidious; once the seeds are sown the weeds push through the cracks in the concrete of a political system, and soon become its lifeblood – how can the Republicans ever return to decent, honest, policy-oriented campaigns like that of John McCain just four election cycles ago. The answer, I fear, is that they can't.



Trump has pushed the Overton Window further than he has separated migrating families. His unprecedented two impeachments overcame some of the most rigid institutional checks and balances to make them seem trivial. His encouraging of chants to execute his own vice president for the crime of

certifying a democratic election result forces even the rift between Jackson and Calhoun into the shadows. He has literally (as in literally) been found criminally guilty of sexual assault. The only challenge in articulating is blatant disregard towards the simple notion of decency is whittling down examples.

In spite – or more likely because – of this, he's run around the block and joined the queue to go again. That he feels he can is one thing; that he structurally is able to is quite another. As long as American politics remain in the grip of populists, standards will only be eroded further.

For what it's worth, I think Trump has a genuine chance of become the 47th Commander-in-Chief. He remains ludicrously popular in Republican circles and Biden has inspired neither the nation nor the Democrats to have the backbone to oust him. His verbal clunkiness, lack of defining policy, and age – despite being only one year older than Trump – are oven-ready attack lines to which most of America has already been tucking in. Trump will have an invigorated base of fanatics behind him, whereas Biden's defining feature is that, frankly, he isn't Trump. Such negativity is not how elections are won. Biden will also suffer from a reduction in postal voting, which delivered him his victory in 2020. Even if Trump crashes at the first hurdle and someone like DeSantis takes the GOP's nomination, they will have done so with Trump's tactics. Populism is here today, and still there tomorrow.



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