

WARWICK LABOUR MAGAZINE

LEFT

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TRAPPED UNDER THE SHADOW OF NEOLIBERALISM: NEW LABOUR'S REFORMS

By Abhay Venkitaraman

CREDIT: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

AN ASSESSMENT OF WARWICK UNIVERSITY'S LEFT-WING CREDENTIALS

James Martin delves into the University of Warwick's relationship with the left-wing and how the university lacks 'wokeness.'

YOU'LL NEVER LIVE LIKE COMMON PEOPLE: CLASS CAMOUFLAGE AND THE LIFE OF A WIDENING PARTICIPATION STUDENT AT A RUSSELL GROUP UNIVERSITY.

By Liv Church

BORIS JOHNSON WAS NOT A CONSERVATIVE

By Ollie Chapman





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.

KARA EVANS

Editor-in-Chief

JOHN CHALLENGER

Chair of Warwick Labour



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to our annual printed edition of LEFT! In this edition, our writers have delved into the most recent news which has crossed all of our timelines. From classism on campus to calls for a new masculinity, you can find some of the best left-leaning opinion articles on campus in our magazine. I want to thank all of the writers in this edition for volunteering their thoughts and feelings throughout their pieces.

If you want to write for our next edition of LEFT or be published on our online blog, please keep an eye out for updates on our Instagram (@leftmagwarwick) and feel free to message us!

WITH LOVE & SOLIDARITY,
KARA + JOHN

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Boris Johnson was not a Conservative

BY OLLIE CHAPMAN

'SINCE 2019, WE HAVE NOT BEEN A UNITED KINGDOM, WE HAVE BEEN A POPULIST PLAYTHING.'

It is a distressing fact that the United Kingdom, under 'Boris Johnson and Co', was ruled by a right-wing populist regime. However, this distressing fact, worryingly, doesn't seem to have caused as much genuine outrage as it warrants. Perhaps this is because the spawn left behind by Johnson is quick to rush out in his defence, silencing the 'lefty looney woke agenda', as well as actual traditional conservatives with reasonable concerns. So, to avoid these near-fascist tadpoles, let's lay out the facts and explore what they mean.

'Crap haircuts aren't the only similarity between Trump and our very own Mr. Johnson.'

Populism poses a challenge in that it is incredibly difficult to define because it isn't an ideology in the same way as socialism or conservatism. Populism is most effectively implemented when it latches on to another ideology and then uses its damaging tools to elevate it. A simple way to identify a populist is to look at the political tactics they adopt. Some key populist tools include separatist rhetoric and inciting culture wars. All populist tactics are supplemented by one incredibly important thing, lies. This is why populists use what Albertazzi and McDonnell in 2008 described as the 'followers-leader' relationship. A clear example of this is Donald Trump, who used many methods to connect with his followers and spread his rhetoric. Crap haircuts aren't the only similarity between Trump and our very own Mr. Johnson.

How did Johnson and Brexit happen and how did he act in power?

The first words to leave someone's mouth when asked about Boris Johnson, prior to COVID-19, would have been Brexit. Alongside Nigel Farage, he was essentially the face of Brexit. The first glaring worry Johnson provided was that he didn't actually care about the outcome of the referendum, as shown by his decision to write two columns pre-election, one in support of leaving the EU and one in support of remaining. His focus was solely on a route into power.



We saw him throughout the campaign lugging out the populist handbook, separating the 'ordinary British punter' into 'us' and the 'imposing EU elites', alongside immigrants into 'them'. After the referendum was decided, we were treated to some classic populist rhetoric, wrapped up nicely with a bow into a simple slogan, the 'oven ready deal'. Please remind me, did anybody ever actually see this deal? The art of populism is to make everything appear to be so subtle that it couldn't be perceived as a tactic. Every detail down to Johnson's terrible hair and 'likeable chump' persona is a tactic for election.

Johnson's actions in power were even worse than his election and Brexit campaigns.

From his election to now, the Conservatives have been inciting a culture war, breeding hatred across the United Kingdom. But, why? If they can brand themselves as the 'no nonsense' party that will solve the 'common man's' problems, problems that they have amplified to be far worse than they actually are, then they have free votes. We can then look at Johnson's complete disregard for the law. Perhaps worst of all, whilst your beloved Nana was on the brink of death, he was partying away in Downing Street, doing the Macarena with Warwick University's own, Carrie Symonds. He then went on to lie to Parliament about it, amongst about 500 other things. Other disregards for law and conventions include announcing every COVID-19 update to the news rather than in the Commons. There is seriously not enough space on this page for me to list every breach of Parliament from even just one year of his premiership.

Johnson leaves behind an embarrassing tenure filled with corruption, ignorance, and hate perpetuation. It is made worse by the fact that so many refuse to acknowledge his mile-long list of downfalls. Johnson has luckily ruined the Conservative Party's role in politics, forcing other parties into their role of conserving some semblance of tradition. He has turned Britain into a country where some people find it amusing to see a dead refugee child in the English Channel. He has turned Britain into a country of vile hatred, achieving this with his never-ending lies and vilification of the innocent. Since 2019, we have not been a United Kingdom, we have been a populist plaything.

You'll never live like common people

BY LIV CHURCH

'BY IGNORING THESE STRUCTURAL ISSUES, THE APPROPRIATION BECOMES ENTIRELY SUPERFICIAL AND FAILS TO CONTRIBUTE TO ANY MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CLASSISM.'

Since coming to University, I think I must have listened to 'Common People' By Pulp more times than I've been outside. It's quickly become my karaoke song, and the song I have at one point sung so loudly that I've received a noise complaint. I live and breathe this song, all about a middle-class woman's misguided attempt to experience working-class life, as if it were a mere costume she could don and discard at will. I'm not here today, however, to discuss music- the appropriation of the working-class person resonates far beyond the realms of this song, and it has manifested the most I've ever seen it at university.

At its core, the appropriation of working-class culture in university is pretty easy to track back to its roots. Middle-class students, often sheltered from realities other than their own, may see elements of working-class life as intriguing or edgy, leading to the romanticization of experiences they haven't lived themselves. This has been seen widely in the rise of fashion trends such as 'Blokecore', and the way that Dickies has evolved from an affordable and reliable workwear brand for working men into fashionable branded clothes for young people. There is also the prevalence of the double standards that come with simple things such as working-class people wearing certain clothes or hairstyles, owning certain things, or even driving certain cars which are labelled as 'tacky', but when a middle-class person does it, they are perceived as edgy. This attitude is extended to things as serious as drug use, where cocaine, typically labelled a 'rich person' drug, is fun for a rich person to do but disgusting and irresponsible for a working-class person to do.

Furthermore, language, a carrier of cultural nuances and feelings, is another facet that experiences this appropriation. Working-class dialects and colloquialisms can be picked up and used by middle-class students to convey a sense of authenticity or edge. A Southerner myself, I haven't directly faced accent discrimination, but I've witnessed it within the university environment. Distinctive accents are sometimes met with stares or bemusement as if they belong to an alien lexicon. This underscores the intricate dance of cultural differences within the academic community, where language can both unite and divide, depending on how it's wielded.

In this way, the working-class finds themselves exoticized, and their livelihoods turned into fun things for others to try on. Whereas middle-class students want to feel different or feel a sense of desire to prove that they are not as well off as they actually are, working-class students are forced to just turn a blind eye- because, just as Jarvis Cocker puts it, they truly will 'never understand'. I don't think I could even count how many times the richest person I have possibly ever met has told me they are 'so poor right now' and 'have 20 pence to last them until next week' when you know very well if they called their parents, it would all be fine for them. I also don't think I could count on both hands the amount of council estate jokes, including one person I know likening them to the ghettos used during the Holocaust (just not funny is it), or the number of times people have thrown the word 'Chav' around without realizing it stands for 'Council Housed and Violent' and is actually very offensive.

Amid this landscape, a fundamental question emerges: How can universities foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding while addressing the pervasive issue of cultural appropriation? Universities already offer contextual offers, bursaries, and scholarships, and do their best to materially support widening participation students. But I don't believe their work is nearly enough, seeing as working-class students are still forced to work endless hours, may be carers for others, may have insufficient student loans, and yet still must work to the same standards as someone with none of the above to bother them. I believe that the answer lies not in suppressing self-expression, but in encouraging authenticity.

It is very easy to pretend to be a working-class person or think that you're the best ally to working-class people ever, just like the girl in 'Common People', but very difficult to understand your own privilege relative to another's. While the impulse to be 'edgy' and different is commendable, it should be accompanied by a willingness to delve deeper and unravel the histories, struggles, and structural realities that shape these cultures. By ignoring these structural issues, the appropriation becomes entirely superficial and fails to contribute to any meaningful conversations about classism. Rather than throwing around your bank balance to try and relate to someone who clearly won't be able to relate to you, perhaps think about what they have done to get into this very middle-class space and how they may feel.

Maybe then, and only then, they'll stop shouting the words to 'Common People' by Pulp at you.

A Call for a New Masculinity

BY MADIS WAINMAN

'HOW ARE WE LETTING A CULTURE OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY BUILD AMONGST A SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVE STUDENT BODY?'



Healthy masculinity is becoming increasingly hard to find, especially at Warwick. The phenomenon of 'Warwick men' is well known amongst women on campus, and there seems to be a subliminal message that we must accept toxic men. The group chat scandal showed that there's a problem in the way we view issues around women's safety on campus and this hasn't just disappeared. The Copper Rooms see incidents of spiking and sexual assault almost every week, and yet there are very few public reports. Which is dangerous because many of us feel safe until we're not.

'The particular men who are blaming feminism for the ills caused by the patriarchy are actively refusing to look for positive male role models.'

The recent rise in events such as these, I believe, can be traced to a new emerging masculinity. This is primarily due to annoying men getting their hands on microphones and making podcasts. Genuine quotes from one of these podcasts, the Fresh&Fit Podcast, include 'most of the things that women do are for male attention' and that a single woman must either be 'useless' or 'a whore'. PlayerFM even has a 'Best Misogyny Podcasts (2023)' list, which demonstrates the commercialization of hating women. Figures like Andrew Tate and the wider 'men's rights' movement have fabricated a new form of masculinity that arguably goes beyond toxic masculinity, harbouring a deep hatred for anybody who isn't seen as 'alpha'. This is affecting younger individuals, creating a rise in misogyny amongst Gen Z and Gen Alpha men in comparison to Millennial men.

So where are we going wrong?

Some are already pinning the reasons for this new rise in misogyny on feminism. Which if anything, further proves just how much we need feminism. Women and marginalized genders already have to worry about walking home at night, walking home during the day, saying no to dating a man in case he hurts them, saying yes to dating a man in case he later hurts them, the police, being too feminine, not being feminine enough, the gender pay gap, wearing clothes that are too revealing, wearing clothes that aren't revealing enough, equal access to healthcare, being too big, being too small, rights to bodily autonomy, using those rights in case their judged for having an abortion, also using those rights in case their judged for having a baby too young and, now, men with podcasts. So please, stop blaming us for the behaviour of men!

Men are actively choosing to place these figures on a pedestal. Yes, there are TikTok algorithms and alt-right pipelines that influence boys at a young age. The particular men who are blaming feminism for the ills caused by the patriarchy are actively refusing to look for positive male role models. These role models do exist and men in general should be platforming and teaching their children about them. Instead, many men will attempt to bring down any content that has a balanced, positive masculinity, because they're scared to embrace the co-existence of masculine qualities and feminine qualities in everyone. The first question I have is always why is femininity such a terrible thing anyway?

Toxic masculinity isolates young boys

from their 'feminine qualities', allowing for them to shut down and hate a part of themselves that is eventually externalised against women. If as a whole society, we do this, then alpha male podcasts are a manifestation of this century-long ideology that we are failing to eradicate.

Again, when I say that we are failing to eradicate it I do want to reiterate that this is the fault of the patriarchy and not a failing of feminism. There are plenty of healthy examples of masculinity created by feminism that men just seem to not appreciate that span multiple forms of media and genres.



Within books, there are explorations of masculinity and its damaging impacts, especially in modern literary fiction. Perhaps the best depiction of coming to terms with a masculinity that is restricting is within Caleb Azumah Nelson's 'Open Water'. Whilst also exploring Black joy and Black British culture, Azumah Nelson describes how ideals around gender and race intersect and make it harder for Black men to communicate their emotions. In an interview with the Guardian, Azumah Nelson discusses how 'when I was writing, I wasn't conscious that I

was trying to understand and sort through this idea of masculinity, I was exploring two people who were trying to be as honest as they could with each other. And I think so often in love, men aren't necessarily dishonest, but they don't know how to express the whole truth.' Within this book and his wider work, the limitations placed upon emotional expression for Black men in Britain are often revealed through relationships with Black women, and the intersection between gender and race is explored through the absence of communication. Within the novel itself is the quote, 'What you're trying to say is that it's easier for you to hide in your own darkness than emerge cloaked in your own vulnerability. Not better, but easier. However, the longer you hold it in, the more likely you are to suffocate. At some point, you must breathe.' Here, Azumah Nelson voices that it's down to men to emancipate themselves from the patriarchy and open up for the better of all. Yet, I hardly hear men talking about books that explore masculinity in a positive way, whether it's *Open Water* or another book, the fact is if one more man recommends 'Catcher in the Rye' to me I will scream!



Within film, there's a good example of men disrespecting femininity in the recent backlash to the Barbie film. Before I'd even seen the film, I saw negative reviews of it by Ben Shapiro and Piers Morgan, which obviously made me think I'd absolutely love watching it. Don't get me wrong, I did. The exploration of girlhood within Barbie's characterisation is beautiful and tragic at the same time, with the sudden realisation that men are more often than not predatory. For me, this rings very true to the experiences of many young girls who got catcalled

walking home in their school uniform or had other similar moments when they realised, they were not as safe around men as they thought they were. However, I couldn't help but feel slightly disappointed after watching it. Not necessarily of the film, but the fact that the outrage meant I was expecting a feminist manifesto but instead I found opinions I formed aged

'...yet there are plenty of men who, instead of applauding this message, have just ripped the film to shreds for being pink.'

12. The backlash to an introductory feminist piece from men made me realise just how far we have to go before they see our lives and experiences as being valid. In fact, the Barbie film speaks about men too and discusses how if we view men purely through their careers, such as 'Beach Ken', they will never feel enough and yet there are plenty of men who, instead of applauding this message, have just ripped the film to shreds for being pink. They really do hate femininity and they love invalidating our experiences, even at the cost of other men.

Within music, the main artist who springs to mind for me is Hozier. His music perfectly encapsulates the way in which the female gaze is not limited to women, with his beautiful descriptions of women in a way that is almost worshipping them. Hozier is famously a big hit with lesbians and I think it's this exploration of loving women without the influence of misogyny that allows for this. His works often explore this, but it is perhaps best shown in 'To Be Alone' where Hozier sings about how 'the anthems of rape culture' have overshadowed and corrupted male desire into something 'crude and proud' and he instead finds loving women healing. The subversion of the notion that men complete women here is poetic, and it certainly echoes the idea that men can behave properly and love women in a healthy way but many are influenced not to.

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These few examples are just the tip of the iceberg, there are many more positive role models that span more genres than this. However, men generally don't appreciate these examples, mainly because women like them. When something has a larger female fanbase, it's often referred to as inferior, unfunny, or unintellectual. Instead, they applaud so-called 'deep' movies like 'The Joker',

'Toxic men are actively choosing negative role models, and we're the ones both paying for it and being blamed for it.'

or reference Greta Gerwig, 'The Godfather'. Honestly, the shared laughter at that reference during the Barbie film really hammers home the issue here.

Toxic men are actively choosing negative role models, and we're the ones both paying for it and being blamed for it. So, men need to find a new form of masculinity that still celebrates femininity. Whilst this article is primarily discussing the negative attitudes of right-leaning men, there are certainly unhealthy forms of masculinity amongst men on the left and we need to do better to hold them accountable. Even just within a year at Warwick, I have met some incredibly scary views from supposedly left-wing men. How are we letting a culture of hegemonic masculinity build amongst a so-called progressive student body? We need to redress this by pushing for men to absorb healthier examples of masculinity and holding other men to account for their behaviour.

Trapped Under the Shadow of Neoliberalism: New Labour's Reforms

BY ABHAY VENKITARAMAN

'...WHILST THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, WE WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO GLEAN A CLEARER PICTURE ONCE THE PARTY ENTERS OFFICE.'

If there's one thing that New Labour's proponents often point to, it's the sheer success of the project's social policy reforms. Alongside what is arguably the crowning jewel of New Labour's welfare policies – the rollout of tax credits – the welfare state was also recast through policies such as the 'New Deals', which aimed to ameliorate long-term unemployment, and place-based 'Sure Start' schemes oriented around supporting households with children.

'Whilst it would be incorrect to suggest that New Labour was "Tory-lite", in many respects, the project co-opted the ethos of Thatcher and the New Right.'

In many respects, the programmes clearly succeeded. Tax credits resulted in substantial reductions in child and pensioner poverty; over 900,000 children and a million pensioners were brought out of relative poverty, with figures rising to two and three million respectively for absolute poverty. The New Deal initiatives delivered increases in employment rates, whilst Sure Start substantially improved children's quality of life – particularly in relation to health outcomes.

Despite these achievements, however, New Labour's approach to welfare policy entailed severe limitations. For one, its chosen strategy of "redistribution by stealth" and accommodation to the New Right

limited the durability of its policy successes, making them especially vulnerable to rollback by subsequent Tory governments. Moreover, the approach undertaken by Blair and Brown highlights the drawbacks of a strategy that solely focuses on expanding the welfare state without addressing British capitalism's structural flaws; whilst redistribution is crucial – on its own it is insufficient as a strategy for achieving long-term reductions in poverty and inequality.

Whilst it would be incorrect to suggest that New Labour was "Tory-lite", in many respects, the project co-opted the ethos of Thatcher and the New Right. This was apparent in their approach to social policy. Mainly stemming from the party's 1992 election defeat, prevailing public perceptions that Labour was "soft on scroungers", and strategies pursued by the Democratic Party in America, Blair and Brown pursued radical shifts in the party's stance on welfare. Out went the decommodifying social-democratic universalism of 'Old Labour', and in came policies and rhetoric oriented around means-testing, alongside encouraging (and oftentimes coercing) people into finding paid work.

Both in opposition and in government, New Labour figures actively perpetuated stigmatising narratives surrounding a supposed "culture of dependency": the notion that the welfare system had created a "workless class" of people who relied on the benefits of the welfare state. This

talking point actively informed New Labour's welfare reforms, particularly the 'welfare-to-work' New Deal initiatives implemented during its first term in office. Entailing a heavy dose of New Right paternalism, for most groups that were included in the scheme, participation in the programme was mandatory; refusal to do so resulted in benefits sanctions.



New Labour's co-optation of right-wing rhetoric and policies on welfare was accompanied by a strategy of "redistribution by stealth". Despite the substantial redistribution of income that the party pursued in power, it never attempted to make a persuasive case for redistribution. Barring the 2010 election, it never placed the success of its welfare reforms at the forefront of its election campaigns, meaning that the general public didn't associate improvements in their living standards with them. As such, New Labour failed to build a robust political coalition in defence of its welfare policies.

New Labour's rhetoric and policies about welfare, alongside its unwillingness to explicitly argue in favour of welfare state expansion and redistribution, had significant

implications for British public opinion. Attitudes towards benefits claimants and redistribution – particularly amongst Labour supporters – veered to the right.

Whilst the percentage of Labour supporters who disagreed with the statement that “Many people who get social security don’t deserve help,” was 64% in 1983, this plummeted to 49% by 2008. New Labour’s very own policy and rhetorical choices made it relatively easy for successive governments – particularly the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition, to roll back its expansions of welfare programmes.

New Labour’s reforms also highlight the structural flaws within New Labour’s overall ideological approach. Oriented around what economist John Kay terms “redistributive market liberalism”, this entailed increasing expenditure on welfare programmes and public services whilst leaving the central tenets of the liberal market economy intact. Redistribution through tax and benefits simply could not rectify the root causes of simmering discontent with Britain’s political economy. In particular, whilst New Labour’s welfare reforms reduced poverty and economic insecurity, they could not compensate for the consequences of post-1980s deindustrialisation. Benefits were unable to provide people and communities in post-industrial areas with the dignity, autonomy, and sense of purpose that they previously used to derive from well-paid, widely available manufacturing work.

Despite redistributing a large share of the proceeds of economic growth from rich to poor, New Labour failed to reduce income inequality. There were other problems – in-work poverty continued to persist due to issues such as low worker bargaining power, low levels of job retention and progression in large segments of the labour market, and the fact that large segments of the workforce continued to lack the skills necessary to seek higher-paid work. The lessons from New Labour are clear – redistribution can only do so much to

compensate for the ailments embedded within Britain’s economic model.

Fundamental structural change in areas such as industrial relations is crucial if we are to realise the aspiration of a fairer, more equal society.

It’s worth discussing the extent to which the present-day Labour leadership has taken these lessons on board. In terms of the need for making a positive case for a more generous welfare system and redistribution, there’s not a great deal of cause for hope at present. Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves – as part of their efforts to project an image of fiscal prudence – have largely shied away from advocating for significant welfare reforms, refusing to commit to even incremental measures like repeal of the two-child limit. However, the case for more redistribution and a more expansive benefits system does tie in well with some of the rhetorical themes Starmer had invoked repeatedly as leader. It will be interesting to see whether Labour’s ambition on welfare augments once the party enters government, or whether things will remain relatively the same.

'The proposed measures...would tackle the root causes of low pay and restore the dignity of work at the heart of Britain's social contract.'

Regarding the need for structural changes to Britain’s political economy, however, there’s a substantially stronger case for optimism. Rather than solely relying on welfare to tackle in-work poverty – the party has committed to a raft of ambitious employment rights reforms as part of its ‘New Deal for Working People’. The proposed measures, which include empowerment of unions through sectoral wage bargaining and stronger labour market regulation, would tackle the root causes of low pay and restore the dignity of work at the heart of Britain’s social contract.

Starmer’s commitment to further devolution of power within England in areas such as infrastructure development, and housing could go a long way towards redressing the UK’s uniquely high levels of regional ‘inequality. This could ensure that left-behind regions in England which have borne the brunt of deindustrialisation, particularly in the north, enjoy substantially more economic opportunities. Labour has also repeatedly committed to reforming a dysfunctional planning system that stifles the development of housing and infrastructure; were the party to follow through, it could result in a radical shift of wealth from rentier landowners to workers and businesses.

All in all, whilst it’s important not to underplay the sheer extent to which New Labour’s welfare reforms improved millions of people’s lives, Blair and Brown’s approach was fraught with shortcomings. Explicit political choices on New Labour’s part severely limited the reforms’ long-term durability, and more expansive benefits failed to compensate for the project’s failure to tackle the root causes of inequality and dissatisfaction with the political system. In essence, they were band-aids to the gaping wounds that were the structural shortcomings of Britain’s political economy. Whether the next Labour government learns the lessons of New Labour’s failures remains to be seen; whilst there are grounds for cautious optimism, we will only be able to glean a clearer picture once the party enters office.

Racial Biases & Riots in France

BY RAHUL RAJGOPAL

'...LONG-TERM ACTIONS ARE CLEARLY NECESSARY TO AVOID THIS BRUTAL, AND INEVITABLE, CYCLE OF SELF-DESTRUCTION.'

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ow did we get here? In the span of just a week, a plague of civil unrest shook the French nation to its core. Towns were ablaze, thousands arrested, hundreds injured, and even two confirmed deaths, throughout one of Europe's most developed countries. This fatal, self-inflicted destruction was attributable to the long-standing racial tensions rampant throughout the French government and police forces. Following the unlawful shooting of Algerian/Moroccan teenager Nahel Merzouk by police officers, these tensions reached a boiling point. The result was a national implosion; civilian demonstrations spread throughout major cities to shun these recurrent racially-charged attacks, as well as the systemic oppression of people of colour attributable to the historical French colonial legacy.

'What followed could be described as the French civilians, not only demonstrating their contempt but also reinforcing their collective power against the State.'

On the 27th of June 2023, Algerian/Moroccan teenager Nahel Merzouk was caught speeding in his Mercedes-AMG in the western Parisian suburb of Nanterre and police officers activated their warning signals to instruct the driver to stop. However, Merzouk ignored this and continued driving, allegedly committing multiple traffic violations in doing so, eventually being forced to stop due to traffic congestion. It was at this point events sadly very much within the realm of

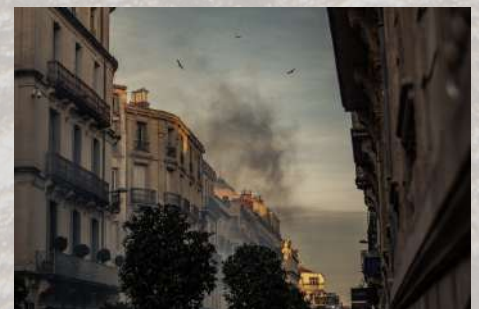
normality began to unfold. The officers walked towards the car and ordered Merzouk to turn off his engine, whilst pointing their guns at him. Unfortunately, the vehicle began to pull away causing Officer Florian Menesplier to shoot the driver at point-blank range. Contrary to the defence's case in subsequent trials, this was no act of self-defence. As the news spread, it was instantly apparent that

'Disproportionate displays of police brutality towards minority groups are no stranger to France.'

this shooting was representative of French law enforcement's systemic racism, in line with its history of disproportionately targeting black people/immigrants of Arab descent. What followed could be described as the French civilians, not only demonstrating their contempt but also reinforcing their collective power against the State. That evening, protests outside police headquarters rapidly escalated to rioting, concentrated in Nanterre. Vehicles were set ablaze and the streets were dazzling with lights from projectiles and fireworks. Urban unrest was spreading like an epidemic, and by the end of the 27th, there were 20 injured police officers, 10 damaged police cars, and 31 people arrested. Rushing to tranquilize the situation, 2000 police officers were deployed to deal with this outbreak.

Disproportionate displays of police brutality towards minority groups are no stranger to France. Despite proclaiming to be a secular (laïcité) state,

upholding principles of equality and justice, it was found that Black or Arab young men were 20 times more likely to be stopped by police than their white counterparts. Of course, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs firmly stood by the forces, asserting that they 'fight with determination against racism and all forms of discrimination'. One need only go back to 2016, to the death of Adama Traoré, to see through this. Adama, a 24-year-old black male, died whilst under police custody, and his death instantly became a symbol of the battle against police brutality and racial discrimination. It fuelled protests, demands for justice, and a 'March for Adama' organized by his family and activists to raise awareness about this widespread racial profiling. A series of events which almost mirrors those of this year, hence one may question the dedication of the government to address these concerns with Macron announcing plans to reform the police force to ensure greater accountability in 2020. Ultimately the officers responsible for his death were legally cleared of any wrongdoing, reigniting the public outcry.



It is likely that these racial divisions are attributable to France's colonial legacy. The French colonial administration used oppressive and violent tactics in

attempts to control indigenous populations and some of these methods probably percolated through into the policing of minority communities within France itself.

Let us return to the scene. It is the second night of violence and riots have spread to the likes of Dijon, Lyon, Lille, Strasbourg, and all around the Greater Paris area. Prisons and town halls are being bombarded with fireworks whilst 27 national police stations are attacked. It is evident that the chaos has escalated from a concentrated demonstration of national contempt against the police force into a much larger pandemonium. To an outsider, there is no purpose, nor rulebook, to guide this urban unrest. To counteract this; the deployment of 40,000 police officers.

It seemed as though the conflict had detracted from its original purpose. Amidst the violence, on the 29th a 'White March' was held in Nanterre in memory of Nahel in which several activists also took part. A vigil was held by Mounia Merzouk and on the same day, there was a rapid rejection of the officers' proposed grounds for the shooting and a voluntary homicide detention followed. One would assume this triumph for justice would mark the end of the chaos and pave the way for peaceful discussions to tackle institutionalized racism in France in the long term.

'...Macron's balanced approach was a rare demonstration of transparency on his behalf, being a critique of French law enforcement from government officials.'

Sadly, the win was to no avail. Demonstrations continued to grow in size, with protestors burning 2000 cars and damaging nearly 500 buildings across major cities. On the 30th, the police force officially declared themselves 'at war' whilst the largely untouched Parisian city centre was hit. Until the 30th, Macron's primary tactic

was officer deployment to contain the violence. He struck a balance between showing compassion for the killing of Merzouk, declaring it 'inexcusable and unforgivable' whilst also appealing to parents to keep their teenagers at home. He responded to this escalation with a ban on 'large scale events', including a pride celebration in Marseille, as most of the unrest had an epicentre at large young adult gatherings. In fact, Macron's balanced approach was a rare demonstration of transparency on his behalf, being a critique of French law enforcement from government officials. The far-right politicians criticized this response as ignoring 'constitutional principles in a bid to put out a potential fire', whilst



the left-wing politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon continued to call for police reform. Two political sides began to emerge from the riots - those who condemned the killing and widespread racism, and those who focussed on the baselessness of the escalated rioting, empathizing with the victimized police force.

Fortunately, by July 3rd, a noticeable decline in the intensity of the riots had commenced. This shift followed a demonstration organized to advocate for a 'return to Republican order.' It's important to note that the tumultuous state hadn't entirely dissipated - evidenced by the 24 buildings still marred in the Paris vicinity and the ignition of 150 cars. Nevertheless, as of July 5th, Interior Minister Darmanin officially proclaimed a trend towards 'calm,' attributing this positive shift to an extensive security operation encompassing event prohibitions and heightened police presence.

After the \$650m of damage incurred, as well as the immeasurable impact on French livelihood (with 2 deaths and 808 police injuries), one

'It is worth repeating, however, that France is familiar with such civil unrest, albeit not to this extent.'

needs to question what it was all for. Was this uprising merely transient, and likely to be repeated in the future, or did it pave the way for French officials to recognize the need for a long-term institutional change? Reflecting on the protests two months later certainly won't reveal the answer to this, and greater long-term scrutiny of French policing practices will be necessary. It is worth repeating, however, that France is familiar with such civil unrest, albeit not to this extent. From riots affiliated with unpopular pension reforms earlier this year to the Yellow Vest protests only six years ago. France is evidently a diverse cauldron containing tensions that have been bubbling for over a century. There is social, economic, and political discontent, and long-term actions are clearly necessary to avoid this brutal, and inevitable, cycle of self-destruction.

An Assessment of Warwick University's Left-wing Credentials

BY JAMES MARTIN

**'TRANSLATED THIS MEANS THAT WARWICK IS RUN LIKE A BUSINESS
RATHER THAN AS A PLACE FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN AND LIVE...'**



University students have always been at the forefront of progressive politics and universities have slowly caught up with student opinion, leading to less-than-favourable coverage in the right-wing press. Recently the Daily Mail published the findings of the think-tank Civitas, which found that universities are apparently hell-bent on "poisoning the minds of generations to come" with trigger warnings, acknowledgment of the existence of white privilege, and anti-racism materials. For many young people, these findings may provide a better guide to picking a university than the Complete University Guide, with universities such as Newcastle, Bristol, and Cambridge finishing ahead of Warwick in 8th.

'Political correctness has clearly not gone mad enough at Warwick, as it continues to let down, endanger, and generally disregard its students.'

However, many students at Warwick who are asking for the bare minimum of accessible buildings, a safe campus, and the ending of pay gaps might wonder where all the 'wokeness' is when they seek redress for their grievances, especially when such a reputable newspaper believes Warwick is so good at it. Political correctness has clearly not gone mad enough at Warwick, as it continues to let down, endanger, and generally disregard its students. If Warwick truly was 'woke'

then it would not rely on individual students and unpaid part-time Student Union officers giving up significant amounts of their time to fight SU and University bureaucracy over uncontroversial improvements that should have been made years ago.

But if Warwick is not 'woke', is it at least soft-left? Well, Tony Blair famous for his 'pro-business' attitude and refusal to introduce radical reform has previously said that "Warwick is a beacon among British Universities for its dynamism, quality and entrepreneurial zeal". Translated this means that Warwick is run like a business rather than as a place for students to learn and live, with those in charge embracing a

'...Warwick makes sure it is making money off its students at every possible opportunity.'

neo-liberal, nightwatchman approach to student welfare and staff demands for fair pay. Whether it is rent hikes, overpriced gym memberships, unaffordable sports fees, or taking the majority of the SU's money, and thereby students' money, through unnecessary rent for the SU buildings, Warwick makes sure it is making money off its students at every possible opportunity. But at least we have the Faculty of Arts building and another brand-new building on the way, whilst students are forced to work multiple jobs alongside their studies just to put themselves through university. The needlessness of the high cost of attending university in

England currently is demonstrated by the fact that there are no tuition fees in Scotland, whilst in Germany many universities are even free for international students. Yet, Blair, Cameron, Clegg, and Warwick have worked together to ensure English students continue to get screwed over no matter which party is in power.

One way the University could help students would be starting cooperative enterprises on campus, rather than letting another Costa or Caffè Nero open. This would have many positive impacts. Firstly, it would give students control over what they consume on campus and how much they pay to do so. It would also give students greater awareness of how business works, thereby imparting useful knowledge, in addition to providing inspiration. And most importantly, student workers could receive fair remuneration for their work, whilst providing extra wage and price competition for present establishments. Alas, Warwick is more Anthony Giddens than Anthony Crosland.



But even Mr Blair might find unconscionable the allegation published by Open Democracy that

Warwick helped BP, famous for causing the explosion of Deepwater Horizon which killed 11 people and led to 3.19 million barrels of oil leaking into the ocean, to spy on a student called Connor Woodman who was researching BP's archive, which is housed on campus. This is unlikely however because Mr Blair has a great relationship with BP, so cordial in fact that BP was dubbed "Blair Petroleum" during his premiership after he negotiated a merger deal for BP with fellow war criminal Vladimir Putin. Warwick was therefore embracing 'The Third Way' when it chose to collaborate with a corporation doing untold damage to the environment to restrict the academic freedom of its students by turning into Big Brother. Notice that the Daily Mail, the self-appointed defender of academic freedom, had nothing to say about this. However, in typical fashion, it did publish an article in 2009 blaming New Labour for "imposing unwavering suspicion, paranoia – and obsessive surveillance" through the introduction of CCTV cameras.

'Much still needs to be done at Warwick both in terms of admissions and inclusivity...'

Whilst the University may be a student of Blairism, its students have embraced a wide range of political ideologies. Most notable, is twice unsuccessful Tory leader candidate Andrea Leadsom MP who is alleged to have dated ex-Warwick Conservative Association Secretary Tim Loughton MP at the university, having potentially bonded over their opposition to gay marriage, a true-blue Love Story (Homophobes' Version). As well as Carrie Johnson and famous Brexiteer David Davis who was sacked live on BBC Radio 5Live as honorary Chairman of the Warwick Conservative Association in 2017 for being "unworkable".

More inspirational alumni for readers of this magazine include Labour Shadow Minister for Business and Consumers and MP for Feltham and Heston Seema Malhotra, Labour Lord and ex-MP

Vernon Coaker, and Labour Lord David Prentis (who was the General Secretary of UNISON).

These alumni are not Warwick's only left-wing credentials as the University was opened in 1965 as part of the large expansion of the university sector during the 1960s, which was influenced by the 1963 Robbins Report. The Report, commissioned by Harold Macmillan's government, highlighted the barriers working-class students faced when trying to get into university and the limited number of places available. In 1963 only 4% of British people went to university, whereas 24% of Americans did. Universities like Warwick were thus built to make Britain more competitive and egalitarian. Now, over 50% of people go to university in Britain. However, in 2021 only 80.7% of students



at Warwick went to a state school which ultimately highlights the failure of past governments to prevent the education system's reproduction of inequality in British society. Much still needs to be done at Warwick both in terms of admissions and inclusivity on campus as shown by the recent 'Let's Talk About Classism' campaign.

'It is, therefore, the responsibility of all left-wing students at the University to drag Warwick up the woke league tables..'

In conclusion, despite the honour bestowed upon it by Civitas, Warwick's policy is best described as a combination of Blairism and neo-liberalism with the odd performative 'woke' idea thrown in, leading to unhappy, unsafe, underfunded, and unheard students. Warwick could certainly be doing a lot more for its

students, but it will not do so unless it is forced to. It is, therefore, the responsibility of all left-wing students at the University to drag Warwick up the woke league tables and across the political spectrum in order to make students enjoy their second home as much as Rishi Sunak enjoys his second, third, and fourth.

Men Who Hate Women

By Laura Bates: A Review

BY ERIN LEWIS

I would fight in the front lines of the bloodiest battle the world has ever seen and come back with no limbs if it meant that it would guarantee me an ugly fat chick for life."- Advanced, Shy Boys IRL by Sara Gardephe

These words were part of my first introduction to the incel community Shy Boys IRL, the name of a student documentary that details the experiences of four men who are entrenched in this world. Throughout, they try (unsuccessfully) to chat up women and attempt to bond with one another. During the documentary they, unintentionally, highlight the black hole at the centre of the world for incels and members of the manosphere. They possess a clear hatred for women despite their being at the crux of their worldview. It's like complaining about a rotting smell in your fridge but still not taking anything out. Sooner or later the mould is going to prevent you from being able to use the fridge at all.

However, Gardephe's documentary was made in 2011- in terms of internet subcultures, that is equivalent to the Middle Ages. Whilst the thesis at the centre of the documentary is crucial there needs to be some form of update, there is nothing as thorough in their exploration than in Laura Bates's exceptional *Men Who Hate Women*. Prior to the release of this book, Bates was best known for her books *Everyday Sexism* and *Girl Up*, however, in *Men Who Hate Women* she delves into the world of the manosphere and tries to understand both these online

'I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT AT THEIR CORE ALL OF THESE MEN ARE GOOD, BUT IT DOESN'T STOP THEIR ACTIONS BEING PAINFUL..'

communities and how their ideology spills out into more mainstream rhetoric when discussing feminism.

The first part of the book takes great detail towards exploring the different aspects of the manosphere- Incels, Pick Up Artists, Men's Rights Activists, and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW). Whilst they are all part of the same overarching group, each subsection has its own ideas and behaviours. For example, both incels and MGTOW are often 'unable' to date women but for an incel, it is because of how they are, supposedly so repugnant they can't date whereas an MGTOW decides it consciously and opts out of engaging with women at all. The complex webs of ideology they weave through abbreviations and code speak often come across as jargon to the casual observer and are so dense that there is an Incel Wiki detailing their ideas and from the articles I've read, it is exactly what you expect it to be.

However, there is a slight flaw that becomes clear in these sections - the communities that Bates analyses are continually evolving. Terminology that was at the core of the eco-system can be discarded on a whim, new things can come up and radically transform the community. It is almost impossible that a traditionally published text like Bates's, which took months to research, write and publish, could provide a detailed analysis of all these things. So, instead of leaving herself tied to the manosphere, the second part of the book explores how elements of this

culture have festered within the mainstream, sometimes due to the impact of manosphere individuals but sometimes of their own accord.

Bates's argument in this regard becomes apparent in the chapter 'Men Who Hurt Women,' which explores domestic violence and how the ideologies that lead to these crimes being committed are not too dissimilar from the views of a member of the manosphere. There is the fundamental belief that the person whom the violence is being exacted against is somewhat deserving of it, that they are somewhat below the person inflicting violence towards them. Of course, it is not always a conscious behaviour, it would be reductive to assume it as such, but it is pertinent to understand the way that sexist rhetoric has bled through the world around us. Not everyone who works to perpetuate these systems is an incel, but they are involved in the continual undermining of the autonomy of women. I would like to believe that at their core all of these men are good, but it doesn't stop their actions being painful.

This, I suppose, is the conclusion that Bates has arrived at but instead of wallowing in this sadness, she tries to find some glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Whilst she still has an underlying level of scepticism that one is likely to possess when you are coming in contact with the levels of bigotry she has as a prominent figure or even the amounts that average women experience, there is the hope that the underlying sexism can be fought.

Heavy is the Head that wears the Graduate Cap

BY ADAM WALKER

'...WE NEED MORE BLACK STUDENTS IN TOP UNIVERSITIES LIKE CAMBRIDGE AND HE'S DOING JUST THAT. BIG UP BIG MICHAEL.'

big for your Boots star Stormzy has made headlines for his scholarship programme to help disadvantaged Black students attend Cambridge, known informally as 'The Stormzy Scholarship'. So far, he's been able to help 19 Black Students attend since the launch. The only immediate backlash this got was from reactionaries, such as Telegraph 'journalist' Ross Clark who described the programme as 'racial discrimination', stating that 'there are many white working-class children from challenging backgrounds in this country, too'. Clark seemed to have a lapse in his affinity for white working-class people by describing the multiracial working-class membership of RMT, along with their leader Mick Lynch as 'deluded' during the RMT's Industrial Action. Similarly, regarding higher education, these concerns for white working-class kids disappeared when Jeremy Corbyn proposed abolishing tuition fees and writing off student debt, which would have encouraged white working-class kids into higher education without the fear of it being a debt trap. However, this is no surprise to anyone on the left who could see this as empty posturing, but the most powerful dismissal of the reactionary argument was not from any leftist politico but by Stormzy himself on his track Crown, off where he says:

*'I done a scholarship for the kids, they said it's racist
That's not anti-white, it's pro-black.'*

But is there any reason for the left to treat schemes like this with any suspicion? Especially due to the involvement of HSBC, who have contributed £2 million to the scheme, which must be noted is 0.0117% of the

profit they have made just in the last 6 months. One could simply see this as reputation washing from one of the world's largest banks, which they need, following the exposure of their \$881 million money laundering operations for drug cartels, or their capitulation to the whims of state capitalist China. However, it should also be asked, should we care? At the end of the day, 30 Black students will be able to attend the number two university in the world, according to QS World University Rankings 2023, who otherwise wouldn't. While it is a small amount of money relative to their revenues, and HSBC may have dubious intentions and be practising 'woke-washing', the material effects will be huge for the students who attend.

There have already been several positive externalities from the Stormzy scholarship programme so far beyond the benefits for the 19 students and the 30 students yet to attend, and these externalities have been dubbed 'The Stormzy Effect'.

Over the duration of the Stormzy Scholarship scheme applications from UK black students rose by 131% with 141 black students admitted in 2022, compared with 61 in 2018. Outside of the direct addition of students through the programme, it has brought the discussion over diversity in elite academic institutions to the fore and has helped pressure Cambridge to increase its intake of Black students. On top of that, he has also been able to display that a degree from Cambridge is possible for a number of people who otherwise wouldn't have thought it was for them. People on the left rightly observe how these schemes

are small and are no substitute for a more comprehensive overhaul of the education system to better aid disadvantaged communities. However, I would encourage a 'yes and...' approach as opposed to a 'no but...' approach, which acknowledges how helpful schemes like this can be on the small scale whilst recognising the importance of systemic change which can help the entire Black British community beyond the students who will get to attend Cambridge.

An interesting dilemma the Stormzy Scholarships and similar programmes provide for the left is whether to embrace the era of celebrity-driven activism, which this programme as well as the case of Marcus Rashford and FareShare encapsulated. These programmes have had massive material impact to help people in the UK, but there is a question of whether there should be designated full-time political leaders, who can keep these causes moving forward without the time constraints of Tours or Matchdays. While it is frustrating for the left to have so few identifiable political torchbearers, we need to understand the value that these celebrities bring.

While there is justified apprehension over HSBC's involvement, the scale of the programme, as well as the implications of relying on a rapper to provide opportunities for social mobility, ultimately this is an amazing programme and in the words of Jacob Lewis, President of Warwick's Hip-Hop Society, 'we need more black students in top universities like Cambridge and he's doing just that. Big up big Michael.'

Taking back control of policy and the Narrative on Asylum

BY GRACE LEWIS

'THEY HAVE WEAPONISED THE SO-CALLED 'MIGRATION CRISIS' AND ARE PRESENTING IT AS A POLARISING AND DIVISIVE ISSUE...'

a few weeks ago, the Conservative government announced plans to house 520+ refugees on the Bibby Stockholm, a boat docked on the Coast of Dorset with the purpose, according to Suella Braverman, of housing refugees and migrants to save money. Despite there being various oppositions to moving people onto the barge from the likes of the Fire Brigades Union who were concerned over the fire hazards as well as various legal challenges from charities, human rights lawyers and even Labour Mayor of Portland Carralyn Parkes, the government wasted no time in effectively forcing people onto the barge or to face homelessness. Unsurprisingly just several days after their forced move onto the barge, it was declared unfit and unsafe prompting an evacuation. The government's approach was inhumane and cruel and no way to treat those who were asking for protection from war and persecution. It didn't take into account the safety of those onboard with one Twitter user referring to it as a 'floating prison' and it doesn't take into account the trauma that refugees have gone through, many of whom now fear the water after long dangerous journeys across the channel.

This decision is far from the only time that the government has acted irresponsibly and showed a lack of compassion when formulating asylum policy. It wasn't long ago that the government created plans to send Asylum seekers to claim asylum in Rwanda, but this was shortly cancelled after legal challenges deemed the proposal unlawful.

Going forward, once Labour is in

government, we need a more compassionate, understanding, and holistic approach to asylum including having a right to non-refoulement, a ban on forced patriation, and giving refugees equal rights in the job and housing market which will help them integrate into their new communities. We need to end detention and instead offer free English lessons to Asylum seekers and also professional mental health so they can get the support they need.

But the Tory government and other institutions such as the UK media don't only perpetuate xenophobic narratives through policies such as the ones aforementioned but also through language. They have weaponised the so-called 'migration crisis' and are presenting it as a polarising and divisive issue in elections such as Brexit. They utilise language recklessly but also intentionally. They use language to serve the purpose of creating fear, 'othering' the vulnerable and inciting hatred. Terminology such as 'swarms' or 'floods' is dehumanising and trivialising the struggles asylum seekers go through. And worse, the term 'invasion' (despite the irony considering Britain's history of colonisation) aids in creating this false "us vs. them" mentality that the media so desperately craves. The level of divisiveness that makes people think that the UK and their social and economic status are under threat and need to "be protected" only is imperative for creating a hostile environment.

The media's control of the narrative and the conservative

government's brazen xenophobia incites people to take to the streets, to become violent and to shout things like "We want our country back". Although these people are still complicit and guilty, they are also ideologically conditioned by those who have the power in our society. We have to remember that these institutions are self-serving, money-orientated and thrive on the imbalance of power. They don't want the marginalised in our society to unite because they would experience a shock to their reality, and also their wallets.

'...whilst negating irrational fears created by right-wing institutions that we are under threat.'

As a result, we as the left not only need to focus on progressive proactive policy focusing on listening to the needs of the marginalised but need to take back control of the narrative, and the language we use. We shouldn't focus on taking back control of "our borders" (whatever that means) but on meaningful education and preventing the conservative far-right propaganda from infecting the minds of the nation. We need to foster cultures of solidarity in our community instead and also prioritise showing empathy and solidarity to Asylum seekers whilst negating irrational fears created by right-wing institutions that we are under threat. To do this, we need to bring the power back to communities and away from the institutions that are harming society in order to ensure safety and dignity for all.

Extinguishing Elitist Traditions: The Class

Pay Gap

BY MATHEW STEPHENSON

The class pay gap is just an accepted fact of life. Unlike the Gender pay gap, the class pay gap just gets swept under the rug and isn't something that people ever talk about. This is something that has to change, especially due to the size of the gap.

The class pay gap is the comparison of pay between the average low socio-economic status person in a workplace to the average higher socio-economic status person. So, what is the issue? Well, surveys have shown that the class pay gap is up to 17% within professional industries between people from a lower-socioeconomic status and people from a higher-socioeconomic status. Exploring this issue deeper, reports have found that Britain's traditional professions such as medicine, law, journalism, and academia remain dominated by those from advantaged backgrounds - nearly three-quarters (73%) of doctors are from professional and managerial backgrounds with less than 6% from working-class backgrounds. Overall, the odds of those from a professional or managerial family ending up in a professional or managerial job are 2.5 times higher than those from less advantaged backgrounds moving to the top. However, even when people from low-socioeconomic backgrounds break down barriers and have the same academic attainment, roles, and experience as their more privileged peers, they still face a 7% pay penalty, doubling for women and ethnic minorities. So, despite careers in professional services still being

'...THESE TRADITIONS NEED TO BE EXTINGUISHED BEFORE WE CAN SEE THE END OF THE CLASS PAY GAP.'

dominated by those from more privileged backgrounds, when people from working-class backgrounds break into these industries, they still face a pay penalty due to their social class and this is exacerbated when people are from disadvantaged intersectional backgrounds.

So now that we have discussed the issue and the gulf in opportunity between those from lower and higher class backgrounds, we can look into why this is. There are a range of reasons suggested why this may be. Firstly, a widely used argument is that people from high socio-economic backgrounds usually are able to attend better educational facilities than people who are not, whether this is grammar or private schools or more prestigious universities. Another argument also used is that people from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to work in London and start at higher levels. These points in themselves are massive issues, however, I would argue that they can only be contributing factors to the class pay gap due to the fact that there is still a 7% gulf in pay between people whose only difference is their class. One argument I find particularly strong is that of 'cultural matching'. Employers will hire or not hire people depending on whether they can see the potential employee fitting into their culture. Studies show that there is a proportionately smaller class pay gap in fields of work such as nursing and teaching than in areas such as

finance. This could be due to the fact that areas such as finance are seen to have elitist cultures that do not accept people from that of a lower social class, due to 'culture-matching' stereotypes. This as a result makes it much harder for them to push back on pay demands. With all that being said, the class pay gap cannot be put down to just one factor and it is instead a culmination of elitist factors that negatively affect people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Lastly, there are a few ways in which this has been challenged in workplaces and some suggestions on how we can better close the class pay gap. The government put in place the Social Mobility Business Compact, which makes all signatories work with local schools and communities to help raise the aspirations of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, provide fair and accessible work experience, and internship opportunities, and make sure their recruitment processes are not discriminatory. Now while this can be seen as a step in the right direction, only 190 companies are signatories of this. To change the gap, there must be mandatory changes in companies that they must follow during recruitment.

This will only act as a starting point to solving this issue. Due to elitist traditions, people from lower class backgrounds face a myriad of problems when it comes to high pay and these traditions need to be extinguished before we can see the end of the class pay gap.

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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