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LIBERATION, EQUALITY AND FOWARD-THINKING

WARWICK LABOUR

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FOREFORWARD



Warwick Labour had a great year post-pandemic with members finally able to meet in person. Last year we enjoyed our weekly chats on current affairs, had the pleasure of welcoming guest speakers such as Zarah Sultana, Anthony Owen and Shahnaz Akhter, campaigned successfully for the likes of Chris King, and also held some great social events like the Dress Like a Tory Bar Crawl, Warwick Labour goes to Kasbah and Warwick Labour's first ever circles.

With over 145 members last year, Warwick Labour remains the University's largest political society. We would like to take the time to thank each and every one of you who engaged in our events, came campaigning or stayed updated with our social media last year. It has been a pleasure getting to know so many of you. Looking forward to the future, we have big plans - starting with this new magazine, to holding bigger and better socials and also taking Warwick Labour on our first-ever tour. Myself and the new exec are all excited for the year ahead and we hope that left-leaning students on campus will continue to be so active in our society.

The aim of this publication is to allow students of the left to write on issues important to them, whilst simultaneously reflecting and amplifying voices and opinions which have too often been overlooked in journalism. By facilitating this, we hope our readers feel empowered and enlightened regardless of their place on the political spectrum. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our contributors for their time and the hard work they have put into their submissions. And to our readers, we hope you find the articles as interesting as we have with submissions including those covering the housing crisis, football, the music genre 2 tone and the energy crisis.

With love and solidarity ... always,

Grace Lewis

CHAIR OF WARWICK LABOUR 2022/23



THE HOUSE IN WHICH WE LIVE: UNEARTHING UNINHABITABLE CONDITIONS IN HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS - LUCY YOUNG

You wake up for work in the morning and go to the bathroom to wash, but forget that yesterday's bath water is still sitting in the tub. The drain is clogged, and you were too tired to scoop the water out with a jug after yesterday's busy shift. You live next to a half-way house, so the noise keeps you up until early hours of the morning. This is less than ideal, as you work in education, and have seen the same, stagnant paycheck month on month, despite rising costs in food and petrol, and an increased workload. Before you leave, you make sure to close all the windows, ones left open due to the persistent damp and mould in every room. You grab your keys and open the front door, the one that should've been replaced a while back due to lock issues - you've been waiting for two years now. While you walk to work, you look back to the memories of move-in day, where the housing association shipped you into the place with bare concrete floors, no furniture or fittings; you remember how grateful you were to finally have a stable roof over your head. You know that there are people less fortunate than you in a similar situation, and understand that despite it all, you're actually privileged to be in such a secure position.

This is an article about what it's like to live in a property owned by a housing association. The aim of this article is to make sure you get an insider scoop, and understand that there is no quick fix for safe and sustainable housing - it requires long-term investment in strong property development and maintenance. I will explore policy on social housing later, but I would first like to acknowledge that no politician that I recognise in the Commons is truly capable of understanding the qualitative nature of many working class social issues that we see in front of us today. Sure, MPs can observe and learn about the state of social housing, but they can't possibly understand homelessness, hotel-hopping or no-fault evictions from the heights of their middle class mansions.

The dynamic between landlords and tenants has always been home to power imbalance, and housing associations are simply an exaggeration of this framework. They are vast national networks of properties with no singular caretaker to hold responsible. Instead, reporting faults goes through a call centre, and wait times are in excess of anything from one week to over a year. Repair vans are also difficult to predict, as it is rare that prior notice is given, and visits are often made during working hours.

It is almost as though associations fall for the stereotype that social housing tenants simply don't work, after all, it's a line that Daily Mail readers often truly believe and rely upon when justifying their electoral voting pattern. Having submitted a fair number of complaints myself, the only route of action that managed to gain traction was a personally humiliating public expose on social media. For those that don't use online platforms, one could ask how anything is addressed within the organisations that handle millions of Britain's properties. The existence of housing associations, like Clarion Housing or Peabody Group, can be traced back to Thatcher's Right to Buy initiative which still exists. Housing associations offer the Right to Buy to tenants, as opposed to perpetual renting. Rishi Sunak has been a big advocate for continuing the initiative across all council and association properties. However, since the Tories came back into power, almost 200,000 council homes have been lost to this framework, and only around 10,000 have been rebuilt back into the system, leaving low-income individuals in a state of despair and hopelessness. Back in 2019, Labour promised to invest and 'build for the many', by boosting council house construction over a five-year period if elected. The shadow chancellor, John McDonnell MP promised to enhance impoverished communities through the Social Transformation Fund, which reprioritized funds to constituencies and initiatives that needed them most. While the Tories have promised to reinvest funds into building council properties, and loved to say that 'they've built twice as much as Blair's government', the total invested in construction is about 1% when compared with other types of property construction. This is not good enough.

On the upside, it is good that tenants can be reassured that they cannot be evicted with no wrongdoing, and it is a framework that exists to support working class individuals from the perpetual cycle of 'renting-to-be-evicted' which is often seen in and around London. Although housing associations cannot perform no-fault evictions, like a regular tenancy, occupants may find themselves in a perpetual state of renting, with minimal choice to move unless a total stranger wants to do a property swap. In fact, properties owned by housing associations are ones which could be seen to trap tenants in living conditions that are well below the average standard of living. Prime examples can be seen in videos reposted by social housing activist, @KwajoHousing, where excessive damp, infestations and leaky pipes are almost an expectation.

Most properties owned under the social housing network are low quality, old and in a state of dilapidation. I will take it upon myself to remind readers that housing associations and local councils are different, and therefore hold different motivations; while a local council is funded by local citizens and has a legal obligation to ensure sound living conditions, housing associations are privately funded and profit-minded.

In September 2021, Clarion Housing Group reported a revenue of £511.9M for the previous financial year. In 2018, the Peabody Group (a self-described 'not for profit' organisation) made a turnover of £609M, and they merged with Catalyst Housing in April 2022, having jumped from owning about 2,500 properties, to now owning and managing over 100,000. The maintenance and handling of someone's home should not be a statistic in a private company's financial closure report. Properties are severely lacking the attention required to keep living standards sustainable, especially in consideration of fluctuating extreme temperatures and increasing electricity and gas bills. Many 'homes' in my own town, Luton, and in other major cities, are actually repurposed office blocks, creating a disturbing living environment for families. Those who have been forced to leave their homes, due to heightened rental costs, are either faced with 'hotel-hopping' or temporary accommodation. These are conditions which lead to chronic stress, alongside all other stressors presiding over the working class in the modern age.

We could look to further investment in home-building, but most modern developments are lagging behind previous decades. As found by ShowHouse, 'the only years when housebuilding exceeded 300,000 homes a year [the conservative pledged aim] were when councils were building almost half of them'. The London Assembly reported that the cost of constructing houses is at a 40-year high, and when coupled with a construction labour shortage, the sector is facing great pressure over the next decade. However, this isn't the only issue that low-income constituents face on the housing front; the Levelling Up funds demonstrably missed a lot of impoverished Labour constituencies, and seem to favour more affluent Tory regions, as found by The Times. The political game is starving our most deprived areas in order to gain political leverage, leaving private individuals having to live paycheck-to-paycheck. Political corruption is unashamedly pungent within the Conservative Party, and real Labour ought to take the reins.



THE RESURRECTION OF GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY - LUKAS HUBNER

At the beginning of 2021, German social democrats polled at abysmal 14 percent. We were stuck in a coalition government with the conservatives for years and were unanimously seen as a dying breed. Everything we achieved – like introducing a minimum wage and even legalising gay marriage – was absorbed by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Everything we couldn't achieve was made our fault.

Even after the disastrous 2017 election, it was a very hard decision to enter the coalition government once again, after the talks between conservatives, liberals and greens failed. In order for Germany not to be ruled by a minority government, we "put the welfare of the country before the welfare of the party", risking further sloping down in the polls. And that was exactly what happened. Between 2017 and 2021, we lost further six percent, even hitting an all-time-low in 2019 with eleven percent. After the next elections, we said, we will not become the conservative CDU's junior partner again. Instead of even dreaming about forming a government, we hoped for the purifying power of the opposition bench.

And yet, on 8th December 2021, SPD candidate Olaf Scholtz was sworn in as the new German chancellor. The SPD had become the strongest party, overtaking Merkel's Christian Democrats. How could this be? How could the SPD, rather shortly after reaching its lowest polling result since the refoundation of the party in 1945, have thrown the CDU from the throne?

It was most likely a mixture of strategic cleverness, timing and luck.

The SPD recognised what voters were looking for. Voters certainly wanted social justice, more taxes for the super-rich, better wages, and increased effort in the fight against climate change. But they also wanted this to happen in a controllable way. Rather than fiery speeches, Germans wanted a feeling of stability. Olaf Scholz more or less personified this. Despite Germany not electing its chancellor directly, the person of the chancellor candidate plays a huge role during parliament elections.

Olaf was one of the most prominent figure of the SPD, having been Hamburg's mayor for seven years and Minister of Finance as well as Merkel's vice since 2018. His experience, calm and even technocratic aura worked wonders. When Covid hit, he proved to be an excellent crisis manager and fired a fiscal "bazooka", avoiding massive social and economic damage.

With their choice of candidate, the party proved to have a knack for timing. Instead of waiting for too long, the SPD nominated their candidate early enough. The party leadership has learnt its lesson from a mistake that was made in past elections. There, the nomination of a candidate was often delayed, which only led to an uncertainty the people did not want.

Yet, Scholtz is no angel. He is part of the party's more moderate wing and was criticised for his role during the Cum Ex scandal. There was resistance among some young socialists to nominate Scholtz to be the SPD's chancellor candidate. Nevertheless, the SPD showed an impressive party unity. Everyone knew that winning the chancellery could only work if everyone would stand together. Members knew that the place and time to challenge Scholtz was not in public right and right before the election but rather in private or when building the new government after election day.

Facing the Conservatives and the Greens as two serious opponents, the SPD was also quite lucky. While we had popular Olaf Scholz, other parties' candidates were haunted by repeated blunders. 2021 was the election year where Merkel would not stand again. The conservative CDU therefore had to make a choice which candidate to nominate. Instead of choosing Bavarian state premier Markus Söder (who even surpassed Scholz in popularity), they went with mousy Armin Laschet, state premier of North Rhine-Westphalia. While visiting the areas in his state that were hit by a catastrophic flood killing 180 people, Armin Laschet was caught on camera laughing and joking with his companions, killing what was left of his popularity, too.

What was even worse for Laschet was that Scholtz had some historic parallels on his side. Legendary SPD chancellor Helmut Schmidt very successfully commanded the rescues at a flooding 60 years earlier.

This storm tide happened in 1962 in Hamburg where both Helmut Schmidt and Olaf Scholz grew up. The notion of the "hanseatic navigator" might therefore have profited Scholz.

The Greens on the other hand, experienced a similar situation. They chose Annalena Baerbock, who first appeared a very promising candidate. Nevertheless, public trust in her eroded after it was revealed that she had amended certain details of her CV. She claimed to be a member of organisations she was no part of and presented herself as an international law expert with only a one-year master from LSE. Baerbock has also quite obviously copied passages in her book without marking them.

These weaknesses of his opponents contributed to voters' hearts moving to Olaf Scholtz. The SPD emerged as the strongest party and Scholz was elected chancellor. If you look at the situation of traditional socialist parties in Europe beyond Scandinavia, the results look rather bad. What lessons could they learn from the unexpected turn of the tide in Germany? The recipe of the SPD's victory cannot be directly translated to other countries, but some concepts are might be applicable elsewhere, too.

1. Know your peoples' minds. In Germany, people wanted stable change and there was a broad consensus for more social justice. That was what the SPD recognised and built their promise around. Socialist parties need to anticipate what keeps their voters up at night.
2. Let your actions speak for you. Establish a track record and make sure that your accomplishments are also attributed to you.
3. Choose the right timing, whatever this means for you. For the SPD, it was choosing the right candidate at the right time, for other socialist parties it might be something else.
4. Keep united as a party, even if you have personal or political differences.

If other socialist parties act clever, use good timing and happen to be lucky, too, they might win power in their country. The example of Germany shows that even the worst results can be turned into victory in the end.

THE REAL FOOTBALL HOOLIGANS - RORY EDENS

The 2021/22 football season has seen the longly awaited return of fans to football grounds following the previous Covid-19 restrictions seeing essentially the whole of football in this country being played behind closed doors since March 2020. The return of fans has been a desperately welcome return, for both the clubs and fans alike. However, the return of match-going fans has also correlated to a rise of footballing violence by almost 50% since the previous season fans were present at games. Is this rise a sign that football fans have taken the lack of matches in the last year as an excuse to return with an aggravated avengence? Or, more realistically, has this rise been fuelled by a ruling class hellbent on maintaining their snobbish contempt for those who travel up and down the country watching their team play.

Never one to miss out on an opportunity to paint football fans in a negative light, using the rise of a disorder as a pretence, the mainstream media have almost gleefully produced works such as The Times' mini-documentary labelled 'Cocaine and kids - the new face of hooliganism' in a valiant attempt to bravely expose this rise of violence at football games by showing such horrors as slightly intoxicated 20 year olds walking peacefully to support their local team. The coverage of football fans historically, and especially with the return of them to games, has clearly been littered with classist undertones to the point where it suggests that anyone who wears a Leeds t-shirt or a Stone Island jacket at 3pm on a Saturday is a mindless, violent thug intent on fighting any innocent bystander they come across. In reality, the rise of disorder at football can be attributed to the largest, most powerful and meanest footballing firm out there - the police.

As a match-going fan myself I can only stress how overpoliced my experience has been when I go to games. Stepping off trains and being met at times by a wall of police officers, whom at times take it upon themselves to film groups of fans who are doing nothing but walking to either the pub or the ground causing no disorder but singing chants about their favourite players or team. Being forced into train stations post-game and a feeling of constant heavy handed surveillance every Saturday is not something that promotes the idea of decreasing disorder and cooperation between fans and police. My experience is not unique either. A follow of @FairCop on twitter, an account dedicated to supporting fans against heavy handed policing, is littered with examples of such. Tweets exposing clubs trying to find young individuals to go undercover in the stands as a secret steward, or clips of police officers kicking a fan doing nothing but walk in a straight line are not rarities and in fact are common occurrences up and down the country every weekend.

Yet surprisingly there is no significant mention of police officers kicking innocuous fans, or beating up 16 year olds with batons in documentaries by The Times or reports by the Met on violence within football. Instead, on the sly policing attendance within football grounds has gone up by 20% post-lockdown. Coupled with the police holding such disdain and contempt for any fan associated with football is it therefore at all surprising that their heavy-handed presence had led to aggravated behaviour and higher arrests.

The classist undertones found within how the sport is policed is clear. Sports with stronger ties to the upper class, such as rugby and cricket, do not share the same militia of police at their games, nor have draconian rules around supporters - such as the banning of alcohol consumption on vehicles towards the game. This classism is not unique to the police or media class either, Virgin Trains sent out an email ahead of the 2015 Rugby World Cup advising passengers to be ready for 'jovial songs' by Rugby fans - the company previously fined a football fan for chanting on one of their trains.

There has undeniably been violence at football following lockdown. Some of which is clearly inexcusable and despicable, such as the racist abuse sent towards players both on and off social media. However, the increased politicisation of football fans following lockdown coupled with the rising demonisation of them throughout the media is something that is clearly a classist attempt to prevent a subculture largely made up by those seeking to enjoy themselves after a Monday-Friday grind by instead handing them down drastic punishments such as Football Banning Orders leading to restrictive zones in city centres where those with these Orders - which are given out for little as encroachment on the pitch after a dramatic goal - are prevented from being in a radius of their own city on match days.

The solution to this? Realise there is more solidarity between football fans and other marginalised groups against the police than what one might think. When topics such as the police response to the Sarah Everard vigil come up do not create an 'us v them' mentality against football fans, complaining about apparent lack of policing towards them during major tournaments but realise that it is instead an 'us vs them' mentality against an overreaching, heavy-handed, increasingly authoritarian police force that needs to be tackled for the benefit of all cultures within British society.



NORTHERN IRELAND - CALLUM DOHERTY

TO STOP THE TORIES WRECKING NORTHERN IRELAND,
LABOUR MUST HAVE ANSWERS.

Last month the government passed the long-awaited Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, their new strategy for dealing with the issues surrounding Northern Ireland's approach to its past. The legacy bill, a concoction largely supported by the Conservative base and British veterans groups, has been characterised as a way to finally 'move on' from the era of inquests, trials and the ambiguous status of combatants. It issues a blanket amnesty to those who contribute information and ending all investigations into Troubles killings.

The Northern Ireland Office has justified the plans by saying it will bring "an immediate end to the divisive cycle of criminal investigations and prosecutions, which is not working for anyone and has kept Northern Ireland hamstrung by its past.". It should not be a surprise that in the heated world of Northern Irish politics this has been greeted with fierce condemnation, but the unanimity of condemnation that has come from both nationalist and unionist circles is rare. Not only did the NI Assembly vote to condemn the plans back in July of 2021, not a single Northern Irish MP voted for the bill. Activists, community leaders and politicians have lined up to voice their opposition from Stormont to Westminster to the United States Congress. How has the government produced something so out of touch with the people it claims it's trying to help? Why, in the face of such caustic opposition, has it pressed through with it? The answer, as has become all too common when discussing Northern Ireland policymaking in Westminster, is that it is primarily driven by interests divorced from Northern Ireland and the peace process, and instead by the base concerns of the English Conservative party.

When the bill says that the proposed amnesty will cover everyone who gives evidence, it means everyone. Not just the former IRA and Loyalist militants who partook in the Troubles, but also all British soldiers, an aspect that has long been red meat for the tabloid press and conservative members. The bill follows, not by coincidence, last year's controversial Overseas Operations Act which protects soldiers from 'vexatious claims' five years after any purported incident.

This act, roundly criticised by human rights groups for the effective shield it gives British soldiers who partake in torture or otherwise abuse human rights, wasn't enough for some in the Conservative party.

Johnny Mercer, who resigned as Defence Secretary over the bill, complained that it didn't extend to past veterans, in particular Troubles veterans. Now, instead of maintaining the investigative work currently done by the PSNI Ombudsman, the bill would create an 'Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery' (ICRIR), to passively 'review' the 1200 unresolved killings that occurred during the conflict. As for the 1000 or so Troubles-related cases in various stages of the UK court system? They will be discontinued, much to the frustration of victims seeking recognition and justice from the state.

The bill is part of a wider legacy plan lined out by the NI Office and Secretary of State Brandon Lewis. Observers of this plan may be encouraged by some of the restorative elements for victims and communities that have been long absent in the punishment-focused discussion of Northern Ireland's legacy.

There are plans for an oral history archive, a reconciliation group and ways for families to access information about their loved ones. In a time still defined by austerity, however, there are precious few new policies for supporting community services and mental health initiatives for the region, which has the highest rates of suicide and PTSD in the UK. Closer inspection also reveals that much of the plans are just a butchery of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement - a cross-party set of policies derailed by the collapse of the assembly in 2017 - with the proposed Historical Investigations Unit notably absent. The UK government's policy of discontinuing formal investigations whilst depending on anonymous information may seem like an ineffectual downgrade, and the more that is revealed about the modern Tory party's attitude, the more that appears to be the point.

For all the affected concern by the government, the legacy plan is at its core a cynical attempt to prevent investigations, embarrassment and a fundamental baseline of accountability for the past actions of the British state in Northern Ireland. The bill has already cut short a case pertaining to the Miami Showband killings of 1975 with victims and families, some of whom firmly believe a full case would prove collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and British forces, forced to accept a payout from the government. The shutting down of investigations was described by one legal representative of victims as an attempt at immunity "so far wide-ranging that it would've made Pinochet blush in Chile."

The Tories have never truly reconciled themselves to the realities of devolution, a fact best demonstrated by the rift in attitudes between English Conservatives



and Conservative representatives in Scotland. Brexit and the increasing use of the Labour-SNP electoral scare tactic has preceded a clear shift in the rhetoric of English unionism. The Tories have never truly reconciled themselves to the realities of devolution, a fact best demonstrated by the rift in attitudes between English Conservatives and Conservative representatives in Scotland. Brexit and the increasing use of the Labour-SNP electoral scare tactic has preceded a clear shift in the rhetoric of English unionism. Where once the government would take a neutral line on Northern Ireland, government sympathies have skewed closer to unionism in the past decade. Where once the Tories embraced a banal sort of unionist rhetoric, a more combative line has emerged on the matter as an area where unionist policy is overdue. Comments by both Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss have belittled the status of the devolved governments as annoyances to be ignored. Meanwhile, so long as the government is explicitly hyper-unionist in NI, the DUP are empowered, as they have been since the confidence and supply agreement of 2017, to frustrate any attempt at forming a new government.

From its reckless hard Brexit, to its cack-headed threats to revoke the NI Protocol in EU negotiations, and now its arrogant and ill-informed approach to the peace process, the Conservatives are wrecking Northern Ireland. It's clear, given the quality of those competing to be Boris Johnson's successor, that the fragility of peace in the region is made more and more fragile with every passing Tory government. Labour, meanwhile, has been unwilling to take forward the bold visions for the union that were laid down by the party in the 1990s, and has yet to explicitly reaffirm its impartiality on the Northern Ireland question. Instead Northern Ireland, much as it does in the UK as a whole, remains outside the range of party consciousness. With all the instability the Conservatives have caused, and the prospect of a Irish unification referendum becoming more plausible, now is the time for Labour to discuss Northern Ireland party-wide and articulate plans for the future. Otherwise the narratives surrounding the union, which could soon become the next great national issue, will be left entirely in Conservative hands. Labour must not make this mistake..

POWER OVER PARTY - MAUREEN ONWUNALI

[after Starmer's anti-strike stance]

Roses are red
Democracy is a myth
A first-past-the-post
electoral system based on
plurality rather than
proportionality
(encouraging parties to go
against their own principles
in the name of gaining a
majority) means that
political ideologies have no
place within it

THE ENERGY CRISIS: A CALL FOR NATIONALISATION

- JOHN CHALLENGER

Energy. It quite literally powers the world. In October of 2021 the average energy bill was £1,400 a year, but just a year later Ofgem have set the energy price cap to £3549, that's an increase of over £2000 and is set to rise even more in the new year. So what has caused this sharp increase in price? And how do we bring it back down?

The increase has been caused by a greater demand for gas following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions and is due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions placed on Russian oil and gas. With less gas being exported from Russia the wholesale price has boomed, an increased demand and an increase in wholesale price of gas has caused energy prices to increase drastically. But, we are supposed to have systems in place that safeguard against events like this causing spikes in gas prices. Our energy price cap, which limits the amount companies can charge consumers for their gas and electricity usage, has done little to soften the blow felt by households up and down the country. The current situation has demonstrated the futility of having an energy price cap that keeps increasing and fails to properly protect the poorest in our society.

So what's the solution? Countries like France, who import a higher level of gas from Russia as the UK do have been able to freeze their gas prices and have limited the increase of the regulated price of electricity to an annual 4%. Why have they been able to do this? Well the French system uses a mixture of subsidies from the government and a public energy system. Having a nationalised energy system has allowed them to respond more effectively to a sporadic global gas market and has allowed them to reduce the effect that global issues affecting gas prices have on their consumers.

In fact, EDF Energy, an energy company owned by the French Government that operates in the privatised UK energy market, makes profits off of UK consumers and then uses them to subsidise energy costs in France. This is exactly what our government could do, and instead of consumers in the UK helping lower energy prices in France, they could be paying less for their energy under a publicly owned energy system.

The last few months have plainly shown a privatised energy system doesn't work in protecting consumers and has made the case for why we desperately need public ownership. While public ownership isn't a panacea, it would allow us to reinvest profits how we see fit. E.ON, Britain's biggest energy supplier, has announced £3,000,000,000+ in profits in the last 6 months, rather than having profits syphoned off to CEOs and shareholders we could reduce the burden for people by subsidising their energy bills; making a real difference at a time when people are having to choose between heating and eating.

Public Ownership is the only answer at a time when every day more people are forced into poverty and the class divide in the UK is rapidly increasing. This should be a main policy for the Labour Party, rather than something they've abandoned. It's not good enough for Labour to call for a windfall tax. With Starmer's objective to be as inoffensive as possible he has miscalculated the desire of the British public for real, forward thinking, progressive solutions to issues that are being handled ineffectively, and to the detriment of the public by the Tories.

According to a recent Survation survey 66% of adults support the nationalisation of our energy system with only 22% thinking they should be run privately. Nationalisation offers real solutions to the issues facing the average Brit.

It would allow us to better regulate the level of CO2 produced by our energy consumption - helping us hit climate targets and make a real difference in the fight against climate change. This is becoming more and more prevalent as we see the effects of heatwaves that are causing droughts and adding to the dire situation already caused by the energy crisis.

But of course the energy crisis is not a singular issue, it is intricately interconnected with other issues that plague Britain. However, nationalisation would kick-start a real set of solutions to many of these issues, it would allow us to make an active difference in the fight to reduce our effect on the climate and subsequently help us work towards ending water shortages being felt in hundreds of towns in the South of the UK.

The failure of the government to use nationalisation to effectively tackle these issues openly demonstrates their uncaring nature for the environment and the people of the Country they govern. In 2008 Gordon Brown warned of the effect a volatile global gas market could have on consumers in the UK, but for the last 12 years the Conservatives have ignored this, favouring profit for CEOs and shareholders, rather than energy security for the poorest in society. It is the role of the Government to protect those who are at risk of falling into absolute poverty and to learn the harsh lesson about leaving energy prices in the hands of an uncontrolled gas market.

In a time of a global energy crisis we cannot be inactive. Now is the time for real, radical action, and that action can only come in the form of the nationalisation of our energy system.



THE RADICAL POLITICS OF 2 TONE - WILLIAM LAMB (CHAIR OF WARWICK LABOUR 21/22)

Last year during Coventry's year as the UK's City of Culture I was lucky enough to visit the first major exhibition devoted solely to 2 Tone – "2 Tone: Lives & Legacies" at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum in Coventry. In the late 1970s, 2 Tone was a new musical movement that sprang up in Coventry mixing a rich black musical tradition of traditional Jamaican ska music with punk, and was created against a backdrop of high unemployment, deindustrialisation, strikes and a rising far-right movement throughout Britain. This inclusive movement sought to promote a message of anti-racism and anti-sexism, celebrating solidarity across communities and demonstrating working class joy.

From that exhibition I learnt that to understand the history and people of 2 Tone it is essential to understand the socio-economic and political atmosphere of Britain at the inception of the movement back in the 1970s. Throughout the 1970s, the National Front, an extreme right-wing party, formed in the late 1960s whose policies included the "compulsory repatriation of black and Asian immigrants" had threatened both a street-fighting and electoral breakthrough. The growth of fascism and neo-Nazism on the street of British had been ignited after the infamous Enoch Powell 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968. By the mid-1970s, Powell's rhetoric was being repeated on stage and in interviews by the most famous rock musicians of the age such as Eric Clapton. The movement 'Rock against Racism (RAR)' was started in direct opposition to Clapton, and with collaboration from the Anti-Nazi League organised a series of carnivals and concerts across the UK to counteract rising racist attacks. The Specials, the founding 2 Tone band, formed at this time in 1978 and performed at these RAR concerts. Their lead songwriter Jerry Dammers said anti-racism was intrinsic to the formation of the Specials. After finding popularity and success with their debut single 'Gangsters' they formed the 2 Tone Records Label in Coventry signing Madness, The Selector, The Beat, and The Bodysnatchers who all found success in 1979. This year however would prove to be monumental for all the wrong reasons.

When Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government was elected in 1979, it marked the start of 2 massive changes throughout Britain.

First, she broke from the post-war economic consensus and imposed a neoliberal shock doctrine throughout the UK resulting in a widespread exacerbation of already growing unemployment hitting working class communities throughout the country. The industrial West Midlands which included Birmingham and Coventry suffered some of the worst of this between 1979-81 due mainly to the decline in the motor industry. Second, Thatcher oversaw the mainstreaming of anti-immigration sentiments and racism. In a 1978 interview a year before becoming Prime Minister she said "By the end of the century there would be four million people of the new Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture." The message was clear. You don't need to vote for the National Front because the Tories will do their job but swapping the skinhead look of the National Front for a respectable suit and tie.

The Specials and the rest of their 2 tone label stood for an entirely different version of 'this country' to Thatcher's. The nation celebrated and embraced their music via riotous gigs and frantic dancing, mixing up the anarchic energy of post-punk with the original sound of Jamaica's Prince Buster, Desmond Dekker, Harry J. Allstars and others. And they did this whilst dressing up to the nines in 2 tonic suits, loafers, button-down collar shirts. These bands helped to reinvent Ska as a musical movement in the multicultural spaces of Coventry, Birmingham and North London. The song 'Ghost Town' can be seen as 2 Tone's most enduring musical legacy. Recently ranked No.2 in a 2020 Guardian list of the 100 greatest ever UK No.1 singles, the song reflected what the band had seen whilst touring, "In Liverpool, all the shops were shuttered up, everything was closing down. Margaret Thatcher had apparently gone mad, she was closing down all the industries, throwing millions of people on the dole. You could see that frustration and anger in the audience. It was clear that something was very, very wrong." Ghost Town was powered by despair and anger, both at the state of a country in which unemployment had risen by nearly 66%, and by 82% among ethnic minorities. The song's time at No.1 coincided with the 1981 Brixton 'riots' which spread to

cities across the country and had been sparked by Thatcher's introduction of new police stop-and-search powers named Operation Swamp 81 (commonly referred to as suslaws) which disproportionately targeted the black communities. Ghost Town was one of those rare songs which accurately portrayed the nation's mood and lay bare the reality of Thatcher's Britain. Deeper into the 1980s the ska/2 Tone scene would produce celebrated protest songs such as 'Free Nelson Mandela' by The Specials which contributed to making Mandela's imprisonment a cause célèbre in the UK as well as becoming an anti-apartheid anthem across the world, and 'Stand Down Margaret' by The Beat which became an anti-Tory dance number throughout the decade.

2 Tone for a brief moment at the end of the 1970s and early 80s showed us a future very different from the one we know today in Britain. The sight of young working class multiracial bands performing music that harkened back to a black music tradition fused with charged political lyrics and societal commentary presented a vital opposition to Thatcher's Britain. This is why the legacy of 2 Tone today is more important than ever. In our present as right wing xenophobes and bigots in the Conservative Party and throughout our media seek to divide working class communities and stoke anti-immigrant rhetoric, it is our responsibility like the 2 Tone movement before us to show that a different, groovy and more joyous future is possible.

My five '2 Tone' must-listens:

1. Ghost Town – The Specials
2. On my Radio – The Selector
3. The Tears of a Clown – The Beat
4. Too Much Pressure – The Selector
5. Whine & Grine/Stand Down Margaret – The Beat

Further Reading:

2 Tone: The Sound of Coventry
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00105h9>

2 Tone: Lives & Legacies Exhibition (Online Recreation)

<https://culturespacecoventry.com/two-tone>
A Cultural Study Of Two-Tone In The Socio-Political And Economic Context Of The 1970s
<http://clouk.uclan.ac.uk/23006/1/23006%20Conduit%20Susan%20Final%20e-Thesis%20%28Master%20Copy%29.pdf>



THE PROBLEM WITH WARWICK SU - ZACH SMERIN

WHAT IS STOPPING OUR STUDENTS' UNION FROM REACHING ITS TRUE POTENTIAL OF BECOMING A VEHICLE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE?

Any honest evaluation of our Students' Union as a body representing the interests of students should expose significant shortcomings. For societies, it can often be more of a nuisance than a help; the welfare system is inadequate, especially for students from marginalised communities; and when supposedly standing up to the University's profit-seeking initiatives, it has demonstrated little effectiveness in action. All these symptoms are certainly connected to the fact that in no way can the Union be seen as representative of the general student body - how could it be, with pathetically low election and ASV turnout rates (especially for postgraduate students, whose voting numbers usually gravitate around most opinion polling's margin of error) and a largely unrepresentative and unelected SU trustee body?

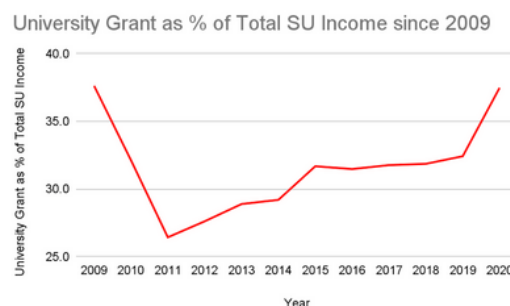
It's possible to view these problems as caused by specific individuals within the Students' Union not doing their jobs properly, or the general student body being too lazy to get engaged in defending its interests. But given that this situation seems to have been going on for a while, a more accurate viewpoint should recognise that the issues at hand have systemic causes, influenced by the existing material conditions. One important area for reform is the internal student bureaucracy - how through inaction and obfuscation, the SU is able to take in well-meaning and motivated students elected into positions and bog their actions down, including at the trustee level. As I never held any post in the SU, there are better people than me to write about this, and I hope that their struggles continue to be articulated to ever wider audiences. Personally what I would like to focus on is what I believe to be a crucial factor that is less frequently discussed - the Union's dependency on the University.

What dependence am I talking about? In theory, the SU should be free from Warwick Administration's pressure, for obvious reasons. The Union's goals of maintaining improving student wellbeing clash with University House's goals of milking the students (and staff) out of as much money as possible. This is not some conspiracy of malevolent greedy actors, but rather the well-documented economic doctrine of

'marketisation' that higher-education administrations have followed in particular since the 2008 financial crisis. There are almost countless policy examples that illustrate this discrepancy of interests - accommodation costs, seminar class sizes, staff conditions - and from our side, it should be the Union leading the organising efforts towards improving Warwick in the interests of all students, present and future, not of multimillionaire corporations and the University's bureaucratic elite.

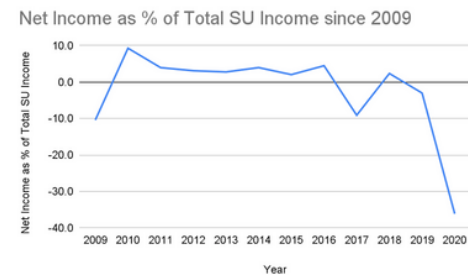
The problems with this pretty vision of a fighting Students' Union arise when we, first of all, snap back into reality and see how much interest the SU generates for the large majority of Warwick students; and second of all, when we have a look at the Consolidated Financial Statements of the SU between 2009-10 and 2019-20, readily available on the Union's website.

Here we can clearly see what I believe to be the key point of the matter: the annual university grants provided to the Warwick Students' Union, has accounted for almost a THIRD of total annual SU income. After a two-year drop between 2009 and 2011 from 37.6% to 26.4%, it has steadily risen over the last decade by nearly six percentage points, before peaking to levels not seen in 12 years, mostly influenced by the decrease in food and beverage revenues caused by the Covid pandemic (there is still no information on the Union's finances of the 2020-21 academic year). Additionally the University also owns the building which the SU occupies, leased to the Union "at an agreed rent".



To focus on the small increase of university grants as a percentage of total SU income would be to miss the point. While visually interesting, it is in practice irrelevant, because even during the year with the lowest grant level on record (2011) over a quarter of the Union's money still came directly from the University. I'm not a financial expert, but I don't think that any organisation can continue to function normally without 25% of its money, especially an

organisation which has not had a double-digit annual surplus in over a decade and whose most recent budget's deficit was equivalent to 36% of its total annual income. It makes the Union financially beholden to the University's administration in the House behind the Lord Bhattacharyya Building.



This might not seem concerning to you. The University is about as reliable a partner to the SU as can potentially be found outside the student membership (more on that later) and its cash injections could be seen as the extension of a helpful hand towards another organisation providing important student services. This appears to be the perspective of the authors of the aforementioned 2020 Report, who comment on the Union's Relationship with the University Administration by stating that "There is no reason to believe that the block grant or equivalent support from the University of Warwick will not continue for the foreseeable future, as the Education Act 1994 imposes a duty on the University to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that the Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances". The goals of University House and the SU are also not viewed as mutually exclusive, but complementary - they are to 'work alongside' to "ensure that the affairs of the Union are properly conducted and that the educational and welfare needs of the Union's members are met", albeit with the Union being subject to the paternalistic language of the law.

However, aside from the Act's vague assurance that the University is to ensure that the SU operates in a "fair and



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democratic manner and is accountable for its finances" it gives no explicit protection to the Students' Union from the University withdrawing its funding for any reason it wishes to. Nor could I find any such guarantee in Warwick's Ordinance 10, which deals with the Union, or the Articles of Association and bye-laws, the SU's governing documents. SU Regulation 8 only descriptively states that "Budgets provide the financial base for the Union for the next 12 months and it is extremely difficult to make changes once they have been set", but such a short period could only offer very limited assurance.

All this legal analysis is written to indicate that even when the SU comes out against University House policy, like by supporting the University and College Union strikes in 2019-20, or opposing the scrapping of the Residential Life Team scheme more recently, it can apply very little pressure to the University, while much pressure can be applied on it in turn. Were the Union to explicitly galvanise students and staff to an extent that could seriously threaten the Vice-Chancellor's authority, it would have no guarantee of the security of its operating funds.

The odds are incredibly skewed in favour of the University administration, with the SU having an invisible gag placed on it against any actions that could potentially shift the balance of power and thus lead to meaningful change at Warwick. Does this not impact the decision making of the Union's sabbatical officers, even on a subconscious level? And I suspect the same situation exists on other campuses.

Any call on the University to do anything, as can be read frequently throughout candidate manifestos in annual SU elections, is therefore bound to be largely ineffective - if the problem of financial dependency is not systematically addressed.

So then, what can be done to change this situation? Can diverse reliable sources of revenue be found, ones which create less perverse incentive structures?

First of all, under no circumstances should the recognition of the Union's structural problems result in general apathy towards it by progressive students. Just because change is difficult does not mean that it is impossible, and failed attempts at going through the current system may generate valuable experience which lead towards more creative reimaginings of what could be. Even keeping out Tories and other reactionaries from positions of power is a good enough reason to vote.

Regarding solutions to the actual problems at hand, some housekeeping might initially be in order. A more efficient bureaucracy would save money unnecessarily going down the drain, and a more effective and representative SU could encourage more people to cough up the Society Federation fee (perhaps on a monthly or term basis - the large up-front cost probably scares away a lot of people) with a portion perhaps going towards broader SU operations. Better SU outlets would also increase revenues. But a truly systemic solution would include external funding - some level of (socially responsible) external sponsorships and grants, as well as initiatives akin to the Preston Model, with local authorities engaging with 'anchor institutions' in order to maintain regional money circulation. What would really interest me is the feasibility of some sort of credit union - instead of tens of thousands of students keeping holdings in commercial banks, could they not deposit them within a non-profit financial cooperative, generally more stable and trustworthy, under which they could hold direct democratic control?

I'm not going to pretend to know concrete policy solutions to complicated financial problems regarding sums of money consisting of millions of dollars. But I'm willing to bet that there are those at Warwick that do, or could lay out more detailed plans for action. Of all places, universities should be places of practical academic inquiry in the interests of the world entire, but especially of their students, staff and local communities. That's not exactly the reputation Warwick currently enjoys, but could it not be different in the future?

However, the writing up of practical solutions made in the spirit of noble values is not enough to enact the changes needed for actual implementation: for that, you need people who will be popularising them through all possible

avenues: during friendly conversations and heated debates; in print publications, but also through podcasts and videos. These individuals can unite to combine their power, among other places, at an electoral level and work towards actually delivering the changes that are so sorely needed to our university and wider society. In other words, to create and develop a popular social movement.

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THE IDEAL UK - HANNA MAKWANA

WHAT WOULD AN 'IDEAL' UK LOOK LIKE POLITICALLY AND THEREFORE SOCIALLY?

"YOU HAVE TO ACT AS IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO RADICALLY TRANSFORM THE WORLD. AND YOU HAVE TO DO IT ALL OF THE TIME"
- ANGELA DAVIS

'Ideally', of course, there would be a mass spreadsheet entailing everyone's singular views on what the 'perfect' UK may look like. Though, this would be strenuous to organise it would be the most democratic solution to sort our collective views on how the UK may be. However, the following will be one person's (therefore biased) view on how the UK ought to be or has the potential to become. This is informal, shallow and it's 'simple' and soppy and 'wishy-washy'. It is essentially a 'putting the world to rights' chat you'd have with your best friend's mum at teatime. Although most importantly, this 'utopia' IS achievable.

GOVERNMENT

To begin with the nitty-gritty of the governmental officials: the elected local representatives convey messages to an overarching body who simply organises funds, solves issues and coordinates power (of which they have been hired based on their talents not their friends, bank accounts or for sheer tokenism). In terms of the climate crisis, government officials would hold, certain slave driving, billionaires to account and therefore have the resource to create needed responses. On the topic of accountability, we would have a government which takes accountability for their actions, so a relationship of trust is built between people and the wonderful world of politics. MP's are not paid extortionate wages, or 'dinner allowances' for example, and people are given living wages that are actually wage appropriate for the cost of living. Public services are publicly owned and are not used as temperamental corporate bargaining chips. Our government would ensure specific plans for pandemics, natural disasters and similar events on account of past actions. On past actions, the officials accept and honour mistakes and again are honest, they do not hide or 'embezzle' their wrongdoings.

PERSONALLY

People's main burden of income is lessened, they are paid an appropriate amount and they can afford to work less hours. People are not crippled with fear to ask their boss for a day off because their daughter is sick, people take days off work to fuel their mental health, people generally are not split with the fear to be productive at all hours of the day. People are healthier both mentally and physically. They are silly, they make silly art, they sing silly songs, they do silly things that bring them joy – they have the freedom and security to do so. People spend their earned wages on sustainable items, fleeting experiences, precious loved ones and they still have savings for a rainy day. People fuel their local communities, farm from their gardens, share family recipes, borrow friends' items. People listen to one another, properly listen. All because they have a government that provides, listens and represents them.

FOOD AND CLOTHING

Pretty self-explanatory as people are paid adequate amounts people can afford the food choices they prefer. There is also a heavier societal focus on consuming less but consuming well and repairing items they love. The government ensures the safety of workers in garment businesses and all along the food chain. High streets are bustling with fresh faces, food options and plenty of independent shops. There are healthier fast-food shops, and there is a mountainous wealth of sharing of food and clothes. Often, there are initiatives like Vegan Mondays and no waste grocery shopping therefore many people perform sustainability imperfectly - over a tiny percentage doing sustainability perfectly.

HOUSING AND BILLS

The 'housing crisis' is lessened as houses generally have the appropriate numbers of residents in them. Renewable and affordable energy is in place with the basics of solar panels and mini windmills on each accommodation. People highly value biodiversity and have wild areas in their gardens to attract pollinators and breed a variety of plant species. There is overwhelming local produce (including water and power) within the UK that is efficiently distributed as people carefully and consciously consume. And items from overseas are sorted through trustworthy deals and through mutually beneficial conditions. And overall, the bills people must pay are not extortionate in relation to the average wage in the UK. People's homes are well maintained and are safety checked.

HEALTHCARE AND TRANSPORT

The NHS are well funded and supported, its appointment and A&E services run well with, little to, no delays due to said funding, patience in training and better support for healthcare professionals. Public transport is publicly owned and runs like clockwork with safe travel options throughout the night too. Said transport is affordable and accessible (it also encourages community spirit whilst being better for the climate). As people again are paid proper amounts for their labour, people are under less strain 'to make ends meet' so their overall health is generally better, so the NHS is less strained. Refugees and migrants are greatly welcomed, whilst our aging population is cared for effectively.

SOCIALLY

People often do more for their 'neighbours', people are more helpful and trusting as they have the ability to do so with a political system they believe in and that supports them well. Generally, people pass on their personal histories to their children and people share stories of their pasts intently. Evidence of social change through vandalised statues and countless petitions are savoured and stored and reminisced. In society, people are welcoming, open minded and willing to change. Historical events (positive and negative) are widely taught about, and a variety of cultures and spiritual practices are honoured throughout the UK.

Even though I have done you the liberty of splitting this joy up into sub headed masterpieces of utopia. It is essential to know the root of all the solutions is our country's politics, our choice of government and their consequent actions. So, dream, make plans and find solutions. Make political decisions that work for your visions (and we'll be here supporting you the whole way there).

SQUID GAME: A CAPITALIST CRITIQUE? - GRACE LEWIS (CHAIR OF WARWICK LABOUR 22/23)

Moving into University in September 2021, one of the first activities my flat and I did was binge the 9 episodes of the highly acclaimed South Korean thriller - Squid Game. Despite the dramatics and the threat of life or death, I couldn't help but see the outside world in Squid Game as an allegorical representation of society and also a critique of capitalism in the 21st Century.

The show consists of 456 'players' selected to compete in a variety of games where the stakes are life or death. All players have been chosen to participate because of their financial vulnerability and their high personal debt accumulation with examples including refugees and members of the working class, who are promised 45.6 billion Won - the UK equivalent of over £28.5 million for their victory. The only caveat is, that only one of them can and will survive.

In an initial episode - fittingly titled 'Hell', players are faced with the decision of whether the money is worth risking their life for and deliberate the morality of the game. After all, none of them were physically forced to compete against their will but there is a clear illusion of free will. Despite the majority of them continuing with the game, it is blatantly obvious that none of them are risking their lives because they have any other choice, for many this game is their last shot. Surviving in the outside world is worse than fighting for your life inside the arena because at least inside, the players have a chance at winning. As one of the players remarks 'out here the torture is worse'. This phrase really encapsulates the injustice and unfairness under capitalism and is representative of so many players giving up their hope of the American dream. Throughout the season we see different people's stories and see how society has marginalised them, we see some have been forced into lives of crime, gambling addictions and the journey across borders with hope for a more secure life. We see these people endure horrific working and living conditions all while they are taken advantage of by factory owners, lawyers and loan sharks. Like in real life, we see the rich get richer as the poor get poorer.

In the show, the game on the inside is just as same as the game on the outside just with slightly better odds.

Paradoxically despite it being continually remarked that inside the game there is equality and fairness, towards the end it is realised that this game is purely for ultra-riches entertainment and to satisfy their desires of seeing suffering and pain inflicted. I couldn't help but see these 'players' who were dehumanised by the use of numbers as victims of both the system and the upper classes. The outside world had failed them and inside they were, quite literally both numbers on a screen and pawns on a board just as workers are to the bourgeoisie.

The writer of Squid Game, Hwang Dong-hyuk, remarked that he based the main character Seong Gi-hun is based on one of the organisers of a car plant strike which is in my opinion so important in raising awareness of the real-life issues and wealth disparities that are exacerbating within South Korea and the rest of the world. As parts of the globe are undergoing rapid industrialisation and the standard of living appears to be increasing, on the whole, it is important that the rest of society do not get left behind. Capitalism as a system thrives off division and separation and pitting the working classes against each other. People are led to believe in meritocracy which in reality, I am sure readers know is a myth. As we have seen from elections in the UK, there are often games of identity politics. Karl Marx describes how 'workers of the world must unite and in this case, it is blatantly clear. Regardless of race, sexuality, gender and nationality and other characteristics, in order to take back power in the system, we all need to stand up for each other. The writer announced that he "wanted to write a story that was an allegory or fable about modern

capitalist society, something that depicts an extreme competition, somewhat like the extreme competition of life". The show blatantly highlights how there is one rule for the rich and one rule for the poor (as seen by Boris' party gate scandal) with there being elements of tautology within the show. One of the first scenes is the shows protagonist gambling in an attempt to win money to treat his daughter, and then in the last episode it features the upper-class betting on which player will come out victorious. In addition, this scene also demonstrates how the rich blatantly take advantage of and dehumanise the poor by betting on them for financial gain.

In one of the final scenes, Gi Hun is called into the bank and is sold investment opportunities. When he leaves he asks the banker for the equivalent of £5. Once again there is a pure irony here because in early episodes before he had 'accumulated' fortune, people were a lot less willing to help him out. He was seen as lesser within society until he had money. Money not only defined his status but defined his self-worth. Much of this has been seen recently following the death of the Queen. The elites of society gathered in Westminster Abbey for a funeral costing millions of pounds as we are in the worst cost of living crisis in decades.

To conclude, the harsh parallels which Squid Game draws with 21st Century life make it a damning but accurate critique of modern capitalism.



THE RISE OF INFLUENCER CULTURE AND ITS EFFECTS ON FAST FASHION - SERENA LOLA

We all know it. Fast Fashion is destroying our planet. I am guilty and you're probably guilty of buying into the world of fast fashion and its allures, especially when you're seeing it all over social media. From clothing hauls to outfit inspo and Tik Tok's telling you to 'run to Primark', the rise of influencers and their lifestyles is promoting an unsustainable way of living by normalising overconsumption. We are driven by the instant gratification that fast fashion provides us with.

This age of influencer marketing has generated an environment in which we can never be truly satisfied with our wardrobe, but did you know fast fashion generates mass amounts of global emissions into our atmosphere and aids the oil industry being one of the biggest causes of emissions. According to Charpail 70 million barrels of oil are used each year just to make polyester. I mean you probably did but we have been conditioned to ignore/desensitised that we don't truly see or understand the impacts fast fashion is having on our planet but also our own mental health as we strive for this lifestyle that influencers appear to have. This is true of influencers who to us can appear more like the average person unlike traditional A-list celebrities where we see a clear gap between them and us.

With influencers, there is a blurred barrier in which we can then feel like we can lead that life (which is partly true with apps like TikTok creating overnight fame) but for the average person is a slim chance.

However, this blurring of boundaries is the perfect tool that companies capitalise on in order to market their products and promote the lifestyle in which they appear to have an endless wardrobe of clothing.

Now, sustainable clothing can be expensive and therefore not accessible to everyone but do we really need people buying an £800 basket of clothes from Shein for a 30-second TikTok or 15-minute YouTube video. Now yes for many people doing these videos pay their bills but is it really necessary to buy a whole new wardrobe every other week? If they're able to spend 100s on Shein and Prettylittlething then they can definitely afford to buy sustainable clothing rather than feeding into the consumerist culture that promotes a need for a new outfit every day. This can then feed down into their audience to make more sustainable choices when it comes to clothing. Influencers are the product of social media and it is in their name of 'influencers' that they can have the power to help direct people towards more sustainable fashion.

Now sustainable fashion is growing with resale apps becoming more popular and people turning to more environmentally friendly brands/charity shops.

Huge fast fashion brand Pretty Little Thing has also just recently started PLT Market place for users to resell their clothes,

but this doesn't eradicate the fact that they are an ever-growing fast fashion brand with a known history of not being sustainable. Yet they are promoted by huge influencers on all social media platforms from Molly Mae being the creative director to recently added ambassador Gemma Owens. It is these influencers that play a large role in how we as consumers view fashion and style as we aspire to be more like them. However, it is not entirely their responsibility, they are a mere cog in a much larger machine.

The business models that run these fast fashion brands are based on rapid production and consumption, with an increased demand (as promoted by influencers) leads to increased production and so whatever initiatives these companies may put in place it won't really matter until they slow down production. This can become more likely if the demand decreases which is down to us as consumers even though the core issue does not reside within us, we are still a contributing factor and until money making companies see that they are suffering a huge loss, change will not be made. So maybe next time you're thinking of buying some new clothes be a bit more cautious in where you are buying from but also questioning whether you need to buy new clothes or why you gravitate towards certain brands?



Chats
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Campaigning

Liberation
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International
Tour

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We pride ourselves on being one of the biggest and most active Labour societies in the country. We run a variety of events open to all on the left.



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