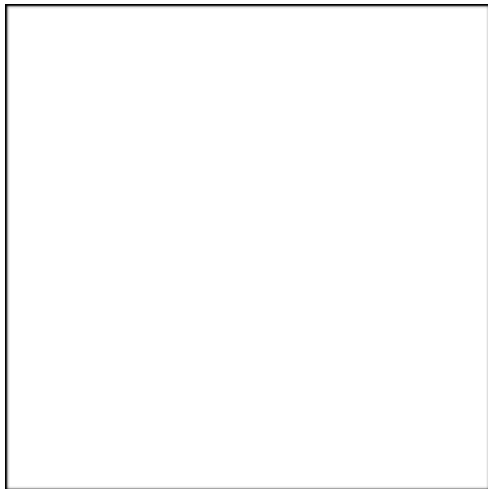


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**A view from the side lines - 1974 to 2024
- 50 years of declining living standards
the Climate Crisis and "Foreverwars"**

By Brian Salisbury

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Introduction

The following is an analysis of the political/economic events that have taken place in the UK during the fifty year period between 1974 and 2024. It's been undertaken to try and make sense of how and why the living standards of working class

people have deteriorated over that period, analyse the response to the Climate Crisis and the basis of "Foreverwars"

"I start with the event which was the real significant point of my political enlightenment at a time when opportunities were available to bring about political and economic change. I was privileged to play a small part in the events of that period by being a member of the delegation of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee who met with Tony Benn in London in November 1974. At that time I was an active shop steward based in Birmingham and an active participating representative at Combine meetings; it wasn't until much later (1979) that I was elected as Combine Chairman. I make no apologies to making reference to the Combine and the Lucas Plan on a number of occasions in the following text because I consider it relevant to the subject matter". (BS)

While a prolonged boom in the 1950's and 60's led to relative social peace in industrial relations, it provided the opportunity for trade union organisation and strength to be built up at shop floor level. This

enabled organised workers, in the early 1970s, to successfully resist the newly elected Tory government's onslaught on the working class. For the first time in Britain's history, workers occupied their factories; between 1972 and 1974 there were more than 200 factory occupations. These occupations followed on from the example set by the workers at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971 who occupied, took over and continued to work their shipyard after it was threatened with closure; the workers' positive response to the shipyard closure forced the government to back down and the shipyard survived.

Strikes swept Britain with engineering, steel, transport, councils and national press affected. 250,000 workers struck on unofficial strike in support of five dockers who were imprisoned for defying the government's anti trade union laws. As a result of the strike the five dockers were set free.

The final blow for the Tory government came in 1974: miners went on strike for an increase in pay and brought coal production to a standstill; they were

supported by other trade unionists who refused to transport coal and oil to power stations.

Heath, the Tory Prime Minister responded with a snap election and ran the campaign on the basis of “the government should be running the country and not the trade unions” The electorate responded by voting a Labour Government into power in 1974.

The 1974 Labour Party Manifestos promised much; including shifting the balance of power and wealth to working class people. However when the opportunity came to put that promise into practice (the Lucas Plan was just one of many opportunities) the Labour Government came down on the side of the established order; snuffing out the opportunity to channel the trade union rank and file energy, which had brought down the Tory government, into a force which would have lead to an alternative economic and political outcome in favour of working class people.

Instead the grass roots militancy was considered a threat to the economic status quo favoured by government ministers, trade union officialdom and management who as a long established alliance,

resisted all attempts to prevent the maintenance of the existing "coming to a compromise" relationship within the existing order. So as a result of this long established "unholy alliance" the rank and file activists and their progressive ideas were controlled and contained.

So the Labour Government squandered the chance to achieve its manifesto commitment and take advantage of the opportunity, which was available, to transfer wealth and power to working class people.

Labours failure to grasp that opportunity enabled the Tory government of 1979 to begin the demolition of the Welfare State and drastically lower the living standards of working class people; the results of which are now affecting day to day living.

Thatcher's belief in an unregulated free market led economy resulted in a lack of state financial investment in companies and brought about massive de-industrialisation. The trade union rank and file, weakened by the introduction of anti-trade union laws, were not able to take action to prevent the destruction of large sections of the manufacturing industry and the resultant large scale job loss.

Thatcher also put into practice a pre-thought out plan to privatise nationalised industries; the long term effect of which has shown to be detrimental to the interests of working class people and the country.

“Following on from the above background I have detailed events which have taken place and that have relevance to the reasons why, in a country with the sixth largest economy, working class people are struggling to survive. I hope to have shown that the reduction in living standards is a result of pre-planning by those with wealth and power, assisted by the media, and put into practice by Tory governments. Also I’ve illustrated the failure of the Labour Party, when in power, to halt and reverse the tide of neoliberal economics that have had such a profound detrimental effect on working class people’s lives. Putting it bluntly; during the last 50 year period the Tory’s have been far more successful in satisfying their wealthy donors than the Labour Party, who while being created and funded by the trade union movement, have failed to address working class interests when the opportunity was available”(BS).

Following the tax funded bail out of the banking system in 2008 the ten year period of austerity accelerated the rate of U.K. inequality and massively cut public services.

The lost wage gap amounted to £11,000; a drop of 37% (based on wage growth prior to 2008). While since the Pandemic the wealthy have become wealthier with the richest 1% having more wealth than 70% of all other Britons.

Local Services have been cut back to the bone.

Councils have suffered a total cut of £15bn between 2010 and 2020 with council tax being increased by 25%.

One area that has experienced growth is the increase in the number of foodbanks.

It's estimated that the total number of foodbanks in the U.K. exceeds 2600 which is far more than the outlets that food provider Mcdonald's operate.

The Climate Crisis demands a transition from a carbon economy to one that's green, entailing the need to redefine economic models and policies to

ensure environmental sustainability and social well-being.

The Tory government having legislated that the UK economy should be carbon free by 2050(Net Zero) were not on track to meet that target; encouraging the continued use of fossil fuel instead of switching to renewable sources of energy. While the Labour Government have promised more action, the rush to increased militarization means that measures to address the Climate Crisis very much take second place.

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the workplace could have a catastrophic effect on jobs unless workers are effective in negotiating its introduction without suffering redundancies; although predictions of job loss vary, it's estimated that between 3% to 14% of the global workforce will be adversely affected.

In common with governments approach "of leaving it to the market" the introduction of AI will not be regulated, despite warnings from those involved in its design and development of the need for government regulation of its implementation.

Due to the UK operating a “first past the post” electoral system the outcome of the 2024 General Election was predetermined: after 14 years of declining living standards under the Tory’s, Labour were elected. With Labour offering much of the same; the electorate were not given a choice. The option of considering an alternative set of policies that answer the needs of working class people were not available from Labour. In government Labour have paved the way for more austerity; indicating that “things will get worse before they get better”

Since the 2024 General Election decisions have been made by the Labour Government which don't reflect public opinion and are not in the interests of working class people. Given that the U.K.is now being governed without consideration for public opinion brings into question the validity of our so-called democracy.

Given that Labour, when in government, haven't made any serious effort to shift the balance of wealth and power in favour of working class people - which was the reason for its existence - extra-parliamentary pressure is the only option

available to resist the ongoing decline in living standards. In addition the current neoliberal narrative needs to be challenged to show, given the political will, an alternative economic policy that addresses working class peoples needs could be implemented. Also, alternative policies could be implemented to more effectively tackle the climate crisis and operate a foreign policy that empathises peaceful coexistence with other nations.

In the period prior to the next General Election, resistance needs to gather pace to oppose the ongoing march of neoliberalism.

Given the failure of the political class to address the living standard needs of working class people, a coming together of a "progressive alliance" formed to mobilise a grass roots "bottom up" approach to actively resist the ongoing march of neoliberalism and develop and fight for "alternative policies" that are people centred and in tune with the environment. Given that opinion polls are indicating increasing support for the reactionary Reform UK organisation, there's urgent need for the "progressive alliance" to combine and develop and pursue an Alternative

Plan for UK between now and the 2029 General Election

For the longer term the "progressive alliance" should pursue aims as modern day Chartists that propose changes to the current capitalist economic system and pursue root and branch changes to our outdated democracy.

The solely for profit capitalist economic system commodifies working class people, is anti-democratic, leads to an erosion of human rights and national sovereignty while it incentivises imperialist expansion and war. Capitalism exists purely to operate against the interests of working class people whose everyday efforts are the mainstay of the country's economy and wellbeing.

There's need to move to an economic system that answer the needs of working class people; not one that results in boosting the wealth of a minority. The Capitalist economy is an exploitative system and should be replaced by an a economy that is Socially Useful; not one that's sole aim is to maximise profit but one that answer's social needs; many of which the market led economy fails to address.

A devolved more participatory democracy could provide the opportunity to take a transitional step towards more socially useful work

A devolved democracy which puts power in the hands of working class people plus an economy that is based on social value rather than profit making should be pursued as a longer term Chartist's aim by the "progressive alliance".

This country like all other countries is totally reliant on working class people; the economy would collapse and the country would grind to a halt if the working class withdrew its labour: for that reason they deserve a better deal.

Capitalism cannot survive without a working class, while the working class can flourish a lot more freely without capitalism.

Terry Eagleton Professor of English Literature

1.The Combine, Tony Benn and the Lucas Plan

11th November 2024 was the 50th anniversary of when 34 Lucas Aerospace shop stewards met with

Tony Benn at the Department of Industry office in London. They were there on a mission; to clarify if the newly elected Labour Government intended to nationalise Lucas Aerospace.

When the shop stewards stated that the company was pursuing a policy of rationalisation and redundancy, Tony Benn suggested that the shop stewards should consider developing an Alternative Corporate Plan.

Benn's suggestion to give Lucas Aerospace workers the power to determine the future direction of their company was very much in line with his political philosophy; the need for a root and branch extension of democracy in the workplace and at community level.

- *As a result the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee developed and attempted to implement its Alternative Corporate Plan for the company. The aim of the plan was to retain workers, who would otherwise be made redundant, utilising their skills and technology to design and manufacture non aerospace*

product's, that had been identified by the workforce, which answered social need.

Although the plan's aim made overall common sense and received national and international support due to it benefiting the community socially and financially, its concept challenged both political and economic orthodoxy; first by workers adopting the role of decision makers, rather than the company management, and by designing and manufacturing products for their social use value rather than the profit they made. For that reason management rejected the workers' plan.

Given that the concept of the Plan related to the 1974 Manifesto commitments of the then elected Labour Government; which called for “defence cuts”, a “shift in the balance of power to working people” to “make power in industry genuinely accountability to the workers and the community at large” and promised legislation “to introduce industrial democracy”, the Combine shop stewards were confident that the Government would use its political and financial muscle to “persuade” management to negotiate with them; especially as the government's

Secretary of State for Industry had encouraged them to compile an Alternative Corporate Plan for Lucas Aerospace.

It was not to be: management refused to negotiate and with Tony Benn demoted to a lesser Government role, political status quo was restored; promises were made and despite the Combines Plan being supported and adopted as Labour Party policy, no Government pressure was ever applied on Lucas Aerospace management to negotiate with the Combine.

The majority of the “official” trade union movement didn’t help either; despite the Combines Plans aims being in line with policies which for years they had unsuccessfully failed to achieve; the Trade Union General Secretary’s lack of support and, in some cases, their outright resistance stood in the way of their own shop stewards in the Combine succeeding. The one exception was the Transport and General Workers Union who wholeheartedly showed their support.

2. Trade union strength and the Labour Government’s weakness

So an opportunity was lost to bring about a change in the balance of power: the Lucas Plan was just one example of workers at that time taking control of their own destiny: the 1971 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in and the 1975 Meriden Triumph Motorcycle Cooperative, both of which were actively supported by Benn, also stand out as initiatives which could have been built upon if the political will had existed.

The 1970's was the decade when an opportunity to shift the balance of power in favour of working people, which was the basis for the Labour Party's establishment, was not acted upon: this was a political choice. Those, within the labour movement, who favoured tinkering with the established democratic and economic status quo rather than change it; knowingly or not sowed the seeds of neoliberalism. Rather than encouraging the resistance being shown from the trade union grass roots movement to the market led economy to protect their standard of living and to bring about political and economic change, the Labour Government introduced draconian measures to protect the market economy brought about a

confrontation with the trade unions resulting in the so called “winter of discontent”

3. Margaret Thatcher and the Market-led Economy

The election of Thatcher in 1979 accelerated the rate of attack on trade union organised labour with a combination of anti-trade union legislation and decimation of the manufacturing base; including Lucas Aerospace and its parent company Lucas Industries with the loss of 90,000 well paid jobs. The brutal oppression of the mining communities in 1984/5 was the centerpiece of Thatcher’s attack on organised labour where she used all of the state’s apparatus to defeat the National Union of Mineworkers, leading to the elimination of the mining industry, the resultant unemployment and the breaking up of close knit coal mining communities

The post war political consensus of a mixed economy was the next target; Electricity, Gas, Water and Telecoms were among a number of Publicly Owned Utilities privatised. Although sold off on the basis of giving working people the opportunity to purchase the utility shares, they inevitably ended up

mainly in the hands of overseas buyers; including foreign nationalised companies such as the French State owned EDF.

The sale of Council owned houses to sitting tenants also took place: government policy not to allow Councils the opportunity to replenish the resultant reduced social housing stock, contributed to the current housing crisis.

4. Clause IV and the New Labour Government

Labour in its return to Government in 1997, while initially welcomed, didn't promise that its approach to the prevailing economic and political policies would radically change. Confirmation of that was the decision to disassociate the Labour Party from one of its founding constitutional principles.

The Labour Party Rule Book included Clause IV, as follows, was adopted by the party in 1918.

- *To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that maybe possible upon the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.*

and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.

The redrafting of Clause IV, see below, was fundamental and illustrated the Labour Party's political shift to embracing the market led economy that they had inherited from the Tory's..

- A dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and cooperation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper, with a thriving public sector and high quality services, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them.

The changing of Clause IV was the defining moment when the party became referred to as "New Labour" after a fundamental recasting of its original political principles. The redrafting of Clause IV gave every indication that the Labour Party had abandoned all ambitions of shifting power and wealth from those

who benefitted from the everyday efforts of working class people who on a day to day basis create the wealth through their labours.

Another fundamental event that occurred while Labour was in power was the Iraq War in 2003. Despite worldwide demonstrations against the joint U.K/U.S led exercise, the invasion took place on the basis that Iraq had developed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and posed a threat to world peace. Subsequently, following the end of the war, it was acknowledged that no evidence was ever identified of the existence of WMD's in Iraq. Kofi Annan, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, called the invasion "illegal under international law", a view confirmed by the Chilcot Report, a UK government initiated inquiry, that concluded that "the war was illegal and therefore unnecessary"

Although no one knows for certain the exact number of Iraq casualties since the illegal invasion occurred in 2003, the Watson Institute of Brown University calculates that between 280,771 and 350,190 have died as a result of the invasion and subsequent

events. Many more have died as an indirect effect of the war due to damage to basic services.

- *Another casualty has been the truth: Julian Assange, an Australian born journalist was incarcerated in Belmarsh Prison for over 4 years while his legal team fought to prevent him being extradited to the USA on a charge of espionage; he was accused of publishing evidence of war crimes committed by the occupying forces of Iraq and if he had been extradited and found guilty could have been imprisoned for life. Thankfully due an organised international campaign he was released as a consequence of a plea bargain deal in 2024.*

In contrast Tony Blair the U.K Prime Minister at the time of the invasion was, in 2022, knighted: over one million signed a petition opposing the award; accusing Blair of war crimes.

5.The Bank Crisis and the Taxpayer

There is definitely going to be another financial crisis around the corner because we haven't solved any of the things that caused the previous crisis.

Mark Mobius Business man

September 2007 saw the first run on a British bank in 150 years; while Northern Rock initially needed support from the Bank of England other banks also came under pressure creating a financial crisis; necessitating the Labour Government to stabilize the financial system by injecting billions of taxpayer's money.

A National Audits Office report indicated the level of financial support given to the Banks, at its peak, amounted to £1.162 trillion. An assessment, showed a total figure of £456.33bn to be outstanding in March 2010; equivalent to 31% of GDP

- *The 2008 financial crisis began in the U.S. with cheap credit and lax lending standards that fuelled a housing bubble; when the bubble burst, the banks were left holding trillions of dollars of worthless investments in subprime mortgages. The seeds of the international financial crisis were planted during years of rock bottom interest rates and loose lending standards that fuelled a housing bubble in the U.S. and elsewhere, including the U.K.*

The deregulation of the U.K. banking system was introduced by the Tory Government in the mid 80's at the time that they were privatising public owned utilities. The aim of making London rise to the top as a financial centre was achieved at the expense of the smaller banks being taken over by the larger banks who then dominated the financial market.

- *The banks that grew after deregulation were so big that any one bank failing was bound to bring down the rest, necessitating the Government being forced to provide a financial bailout when the crisis hit the U.K.*

The bank H.B.O.S., for example, consisted of several building societies and banks that had merged and acquired a huge amount of subprime debt which was seen, at the time, as a profitable investment; however once the U.S. housing market began to drop, the bank found itself in a serious situation. It became one of the flagships of failure for U.K. banking and had to be bailed out by the government.

It's now recognised that the banks grew too quickly, thus creating a ticking time bomb; a situation that

could have been avoided if it had been managed by the government in a more measured way.

- While the Conservative Government (1979-97) were responsible for deregulating the banking sector, the Labour Government being in power when the financial crisis occurred, were blamed for the financial cost arising from bailing out the banking sector. The note "I'm afraid there is no money" left by Liam Byrne (Secretary to the Treasury) to his Tory successor, proved to be a gift for the Conservatives in the run up to the 2010 General Election. The Tory's used it to good effect; painting a picture of Labour being the party of fiscal mismanagement.
- Although the Independent Commission on Banking recommended wholesale reform of Britain's banking system - with the big banks high street operations being ring fenced - that reform has never taken place. Failure to implement that reform could result in a future bank crisis necessitating another taxpayer bailout

6. Tory/LibDem Coalition and Austerity

From 2010 to 2015 the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition governed and initiated a decade of imposed austerity. The imposition of a Public Sector wage freeze and draconian cuts to public services underlined an attack on the living standards of working class people. The Progressive Economy Forum stated that a decade of austerity resulted in more than half a trillion pounds of lost public spending and a weaker economy. A report by the think tank says that over the 2010-2019 period, public spending would have been £540bn higher if previous plans had been adhered to. The PEF report said that the austerity measures led to weaker growth, a low wage economy and contributed to the result of the referendum vote to leave the EU, with the voting public blaming membership of the E.U. as being responsible for the fall in living standards.

- *If the 3% growth inherited from the previous Labour Government had been maintained alongside public spending increases with matching tax rises, this would have reduced the debt burden by 2019. The report concluded that “after more than a decade of austerity, the UK lives with private affluence - for the privileged*

few - amid public squalor. This did not have to be the case and certainly does not have to be the case in the future”

Councils faced a £15bn real terms reduction to core government funding between 2010 and 2020 resulting in Council Tax being increased by 25% to offset the government's reduced contribution.

The effect on public services as a result of a decade of the austerity policies of the government is as follows:

- Public Libraries - between 2010 and 2020 the numbers reduced from 4,456 to 3,583; with expenditure reducing from £1bn to £750m (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy).
- Youth Services – expenditure was reduced by 74% representing a cut of £1.1bn between 2010 and 2020. Resulting in 4,500 youth worker jobs being lost and 750 youth centres closed.(YMCA)
- Young Children’s Services - children centres cut from 3,615 in 2010 to 2,273 in 2021 with Council spend being reduced by a third.(HM Gov)

- Education - between 2010 and 2019 total public spending fell by £10bn, or 8% in real terms (Institution for Fiscal Studies)
- Homelessness - funding restraints have contributed to 39% fewer accommodation providers and 26% fewer bed spaces since 2010.(Homeless Link)
- Social Care- between 2010 and 2018 average per person spending for the over 65's fell by 31% (IFS) with reduced government spending of £86m; this despite increasing demand.(AgeUK)
- NHS -The NHS's average annual budget rise in its first 70 years was 3.7%, while between 2010 and 2019 it was just 1.5%.(Kings Fund)

7. The Cost of Living Crisis for the Many but not for the Few

If wages had continued to grow as they were before the financial crash of 2008, real average annual earnings would be £11,000 more than they currently are; a 37% lost wage gap!

The difference between typical UK household incomes and comparable countries has widened:

German households are now £4,000 better off than British compared to £500 prior to 2008. Low growth and high inequality mean that poorer households are 22% poorer than their French equivalent.

The U.K.'s inequality rating is not comparable with other developed economies being a lowly 29 out of 33.

“The wage stagnation of the past decade and a half is unprecedented. Nobody who is alive today has ever seen anything like it. This is definitely not what normal looks like and we urgently need an economic strategy to turn this state of affairs around” (Torsten Bell –Resolution Foundation –March 2023)

In 2021 14.4 million people were living in poverty in the UK; with around 4.2 million children being affected.(HM Gov) While the overall poverty rate has stayed the same over the last 28 years, which is shocking in itself, it has accelerated recently due the increased energy and food costs; people are now having to choose between heating or eating.

The Trussell Trust saw record numbers seeking help between April 2022 and March 2023 with more than 760,000 forced to turn to the charity's food

banks for the first time. According to the House of Commons Library; in July 2022 there were 1,400 Trussell Trust food banks in the UK in addition to at least 1,172 independent ones; far more than the 1,350 McDonald's food outlets. Meanwhile the wealthy Few have seen their wealth increase.

- Since the Pandemic the richest 1% have more wealth than 70% of all other Britons; the four richest Britons have more wealth than 20 million Britons

The richest 1% have a total wealth of £2.8 trillion; compared to 70% of the population, who have a wealth total of £2.4 trillion. (Credit Suisse)

- Oxfams Survival of the Richest report shows that the richest 1% captured 54% of global wealth in the past decade accelerating in the last 2 years to 63% while 37% went to the remaining 99%.

95 food and energy corporations have more than doubled their profits in 2022. They made £251 billion in windfall profits and paid out 84% of those profits to rich shareholders. Excess corporate profits have

contributed to more than half of the inflationary increases in the UK.

- *“The ultra rich are the biggest contributors to the climate crisis. The richest billionaires, through their polluting investments, are emitting a million times more carbon than the average person. The wealthiest 1% of humanity are responsible for twice as many emissions as the poorest 50% and by 2030 their carbon footprints are set to be 30 times greater than the level compatible with the 1.5C goal of the Paris Agreement” (Oxfam)*

Over the last 40 years governments worldwide have slashed income tax rates of the richest; at the same time they have raised taxes on goods and services (VAT), which fall disproportionately on the poorest in society.

While working class people pay their fair share of income tax the wealthy and business corporations make every effort to avoid paying theirs. HMRC estimated that the financial loss in 2019/20 from tax avoidance was £1.5bn, while the cost of tax evasion was £5.5bn. HMRC figures also indicated that

£15.2bn of tax was lost to fraud; they are also of the opinion that billions of pounds had been shifted away from the U.K. to tax havens by multinational companies. The Labour Government's decision to raise national insurance tax for employers rather than targeting wealthy individuals and excess profit making business corporations, will have a detrimental effect on working class peoples wages and employment opportunities when employers pass on the costs incurred.

In Taxing Wealth Report 2024 Professor Richard Murphy of Sheffield University Management School shows that by making up to 30 relatively simple changes to existing UK taxes, £90bn of new taxes could be raised every year. The Labour Government's commitment to harsh fiscal rules appear to promise more austerity yet if the Taxing Wealth Report recommendations were implemented, money would be available to address current social problems and only those in the top 10% of income earners would be affected. The full content of the report is available on www.taxingwealth.org

- The introduction of a wealth tax and a clamp down on those that evade tax, would raise sufficient funds to meet inequality needs and fund depleted public services. While this is surely the answer there's no indication that a wealth tax will be implemented by the Labour government; indicating their ever closer links to the the most wealthy in society.

The Comfort of the rich depends upon an abundant supply of the poor

Voltaire (1694-1778)

8. Enough is Enough – the fightback!

The government's failure to protect the living standards of working class people and rising inflation rates of over 10%, has resulted in workers through their trade unions, taking action; NHS staff, including nurses and doctors, have been on strike; as have teachers, railway workers and a host of others.

Workers have realised that only coordinated action will bring results and they have been rewarded for their strike action by being offered improved pay offers. At long last some General Secretaries of the

trade unions involved have led the battle from the front and have presented a coherent and articulate argument, to hostile media outlets, for justified pay increases. Although the Labour Government has responded more positively to the wage claims it's made clear that it will continue the neoliberal policy agenda of the previous Tory administration.

Given the current state of the economy and the Labour Government showing no sign of generating income from, for example, a wealth tax; worker's will have to continue to exert their trade union muscle to achieve a living wage.

9. The Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn

The attack on working class standards of living was a political choice; and well planned. However, an opportunity was missed in both 2017 and 2019 to elect a Labour Government which promised an alternative political approach; if elected the policies outlined would have shifted more power and wealth in the direction of working people.

This Labour Party change of policy direction was a result of Jeremy Corbyn being elected as leader. His election, although a surprise for many, came about

as a result of a hard fought campaign that proposed a radical socialist alternative to that of the Tory's and the previous New Labour administration.

Labour under Corbyn faced a vitriolic onslaught from the Tory's, the US, the media and all that supported the neoliberal status quo. Disgracefully, the Labour Party right wing establishment never accepted the democratic decision of the members and Corbyn was faced with resistance from day one of his leadership: this came to a head when he was confronted with a no confidence vote from 174 of his fellow Labour Party MP's. As a result he was forced to submit to a leadership challenge; resulting in him being voted in by the party membership, again as leader, with an increased majority. Still the hostile pressure remained on him, from both the media, Labour MP's and staffers within the Party machine.

The 2017 election result surprised everyone; despite being 20 points behind in the opinion polls at the start of the campaign, Labour fell short of getting into government by only a few thousand votes. A subsequent investigation found that Labour funding resources had been deliberately wrongly allocated

thus enabling marginal seats to be won by political opponents.

The 2019 General Election, with Corbyn still at the helm, was fought on policies similar to the 2017 election; the only difference being the influence that the result of the referendum on Brexit in 2016 had in determining the election outcome: whereas the 2017 election was fought by Labour on accepting the democratic referendum decision for the UK to exit the European Union; the 2019 election tried to saddle both horses: to either leave Europe and/or and give the UK electorate another vote, the so called People's Vote, to see whether there had been a change of mind. This was a policy decision of the Party Conference and Corbyn had no other option but to run with it.

That outcome of that confused policy position was disastrous for Labour; the Tory slogan of Get Brexit Done resonate with voters and was influential in enabling them to romp home with an 82 majority. To illustrate the “Brexit effect” on the election was the number of Red Wall constituencies, previous Labour safe seats, which were captured by the Tory’s: the

great majority of the people in those constituencies had voted in the referendum in favour of Brexit!

Jeremy Corbyn has unfairly suffered the consequences of Labour losing the 2019 election; politically and financially. From the time of him becoming leader, the opposition, the media and the majority of his own MP's ganged up against him. Given he has devoted his life to fighting racism it's ironic that he was accused of leading the Labour Party at a time when it failed to deal with complaints of antisemitism. Although Corbyn was never identified as being anti-Semitic, those opposing him were successful in weaponising antisemitism enough to distract from his political message of a more equitable, peaceful and just UK.

Politically he has been marginalised by the Keir Starmer leader led Labour Party: first by him having the whip removed, then prevented from being selected to represent Labour in the Islington North constituency; the MP of which he has been for the last 40 years.

Jeremy Corbyn has also suffered a considerable financial loss: two individuals initiated legal action

against him which they withdrew from just prior to the case going to court; a tactic used in an attempt to bankrupt him. These actions necessitated legal representation in preparation for actions that were never judged upon: Corbyn's initial legal costs amounted to well over £1 million which has been reduced to £140,000 due to a successful Crowdfund appeal which is still in operation.

Not only were Jeremy Corbyn's policies popular, as seen from opinion polls and the 2017 General Election result, but the Labour Party membership increased to over 600,000 while he was leader; making it the largest political party in Europe: the Labour Party financial situation also improved considerably.

- *The decision of the Labour Party's governing body, the National Executive Committee, to prevent Jeremy Corbyn standing as the Labour candidate in a future General Election was undemocratic. Islington North Constituency Labour Party had the right, like all other CLP's, to determine who should be their candidate. Corbyn had been the serving MP for 40 years;*

increasing his majority in all his 9 General Elections: there was no valid reason why he should have been prevented from standing as the candidate and 59 of the 60 CLP delegates (1 abstention) of Islington North constituency party confirmed that opinion.

Other MP's and Councillors have suffered the same fate; despite Keir Starmer previously declaring that selection of candidates should be decided locally by CLP's. Labour have been ruthless in replacing sitting MP's and councillors who didn't conform to the right wing drift of Kier Starmer's Labour Party; James Driscoll the sitting North East Lord Mayor was just one example of this undemocratic witch hunt: his "crime" was attending a presentation with Ken Loach when the socialist film director was visiting the North East!

10. Brexit Effect

Subsequent events following the Tory election victory of 2019 were disastrous for working class people including the exit from the European Union. In October 2021 the government's Office of Budget Responsibility calculated that Brexit would cost 4%

of GDP per annum over the long term; the equivalent to £32bn per annum of taxpayer's hard earned money. In comparison, the UK's membership fee to the EU in 2018 was £13bn. Research carried out by Michigan State University estimated that withdrawing from the EU led to a decrease in the annual income of UK working class people of between £850 and £1700 per household.

However, for those that promoted Brexit and swung the referendum vote their way, it has been successful; a bonfire of European regulations was undertaken by the Tory Government leading to additional less restraints on the market led economy: Farage and his fellow Brexiteers have achieved their political objective of exiting Europe to the detriment of working class people's living standards.

Meanwhile, Keir Starmer who, prior to the 2019 election, led the Labour Party campaign for a People's Vote has now changed tack; accepting Brexit in its entirety.

11. The Pandemic

Covid 19's effect on the UK population has been catastrophic; over 240,000 died and many more

have suffered long term severe after effects. A decade of austerity reduced NHS staffing and services to the bone, making it extremely difficult for the medical staff to deal with the complexities of the Pandemic; but deal with it they did, heroically, despite the lack of adequate protection equipment. The NHS workers were justly applauded at the time and “rewarded” by the Tory Government in 2022 with a well below inflation salary increase; resulting in them taking justifiable strike action.

- *Although a mock exercise, code named Cygnus, was undertaken by the government in 2016 the recommendations arising from that exercise were not acted upon, so consequently, no relevant preparations were in place to cope with the Pandemic.*

The long awaited Public Inquiry has exposed the government’s inadequate handling of the Covid Pandemic. The following are issues that are currently being addressed:

- *The lack of Personal Protection Equipment resulted in NHS staff and care home workers being left exposed to Covid.*

- No discernible benefits resulted from the £37bn spent on the Track and Trace programme.
- Contracts for PPE being handed to Tory supporting companies rather than being subject to the normal tendering procedure.
- Care Home residents and their carers suffering the deadly consequences of coming into contact with untested, released from hospital, Covid infected patients.
- Mistimed lockdowns resulting in thousands of needless deaths.
- The Prime Minister lying to parliament by denying knowledge of social gatherings taking place within Downing Street; at the same time he was informing the general public not to carry out such social activities.

The Public Inquiry has identified the government weaknesses in handling the Covid Pandemic; it should now apportion blame where the blame lies and make recommendations that lead to any future Pandemics being tackled more effectively.

- Failure to apportion blame and prepare for future Pandemics will further justifiably outrage those families of the 240,000 love ones who died as a result of the government's mis-handling of the Pandemic.

Primary Pandemic Prevention costs 5% of lives lost every year from Emerging Infectious Diseases

Science Advances – April 2022

On the basis that prevention is better than cure, total emphasis should be put on preventing future pandemics; a study led by Dr. Aaron Bernstein of Science Advances shows that the expenditure of \$20bn per annum would be less than 5% of the lowest estimated value of lives lost from emerging infectious diseases every year. Overall being less than 10% of the total economic costs arising from the consequences resulting from the Pandemic, and provide substantial co-benefits.

The study looked at every new viral disease that has spilled over from animals into humans since 1918 that have killed more than 10 people, including HIV,

the Spanish Flu, SARS, West Nile, Covid19 and many more. The estimated value of lost lives is - at a minimum - \$350bn a year, with an additional \$212bn in direct economic losses.

- Three cost effective actions were identified to prevent future pandemics; by stopping “spillover” of diseases from animals into humans; better surveillance of pathogens and better management of wildlife trade, hunting and reduced deforestation. These actions also help avoid carbon dioxide emissions, conserve water supplies, protect Indigenous Peoples rights and conserve biodiversity.

12. Socially Useful Production and the Ventilator Challenge

While the Lucas Plan identified socially useful products that the workers could have produced if their plan had been implemented, the opportunity arose at the height of the Pandemic to enable aerospace workers to put socially usefulness into practice, by designing and manufacturing a much needed medical product.

The Tory government, ill-prepared for dealing with the Pandemic, recognised that the NHS had insufficient ventilators to deal with the demand for treating seriously ill Covid patients. As a result, they launched VentilatorChallengeUK and approached a consortium of aerospace companies with a view for them to switch from aerospace manufacture to the design and manufacture of ventilators.

The design, development and manufacturing work was carried out at the £20m Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre in Cymru; a Welsh Government owned facility managed by the University of Sheffield. Located at Broughton, a UNITE trade union organised initiative ensured that 500 of their Aerobus members worked a three shift system, day and night, to design and manufacture the ventilator units to be used by people suffering the effects of Covid19.

- The VentilatorChallengeUK initiative is an excellent example of the government identifying a national social need; with employers.

unionised workers and academics working in partnership to answer that need. A true definition of a product that was designed and manufactured for its social use rather than solely for profit; resulting in many lives being saved.

It proved, if proof was needed, that given the political will, production can be switched from manufacturing products that kill people, for example BAE produce weapons that rain down on Yemen and Gaza, to ones such as ventilators that save people's lives.

- Many of the products identified by Lucas Aerospace workers in their plan answered medical needs; Kidney Dialysis Machines were in short supply and the rationing of their use resulted in many people dying from kidney failure. Although Lucas manufactured them, a decision had been reached to discontinue their production and make the workforce redundant. The Labour Government could so easily of persuaded Lucas to have stepped up production of the machines by offering to purchase them for the NHS;lack of political will was the only reason they didn't!

The strength of discipline of working class people, came to the fore when they were called upon by the government to respond collectively to laid down decisions to combat the Pandemic.

- When the Pandemic was at its height and the death toll was accelerating, there developed a feeling of community togetherness; combatting a common enemy with the handclapping weekly appreciation of the NHS staff in recognition that they were providing lifesaving support to those affected; risking their own lives in the process due to many times being clad in inadequate Personal Protection Equipment. Neighbours became more neighbourly while transport workers and delivery drivers were more appreciated for keeping the country and its economy ticking over; some sadly losing their lives as a result. It was only through the combined efforts of working class people that the country was able to function. When called upon, they responded diligently to lockdowns and social distancing;

- At the same time, it later emerged, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson disgracefully ignored the instructions he gave to the U.K. population by partying with his Tory acolytes.

After being exposed as a liar, Johnson's fellow Tory MP's deposed him as Prime Minister and Parliament disciplined him for his disregard of his own instructions. He tried unsuccessfully to deny his involvement in the frequent drinks parties at his Downing Street residence. This led to him resigning as a Member of Parliament.

- Boris Johnson's record as Prime Minister was a catalogue of lies and errors of judgement;while the policies he pursued were detrimental to working class interests.The electorate were led to believe that Brexit was the answer to their declining living standards;the opposite has proved to be the case with the U.K.and individual members of the population now significantly worse off. The electorate were conned into voting for the Tory's in 2019 and are now having to live with the consequences of that decision. The defeat of Labour, whose

programme for government promised to shift power from the Few to the Many, was a missed opportunity that working class people are continuing to pay a heavy price for.

13. Ukraine and Russian war

All war represents a failure of diplomacy

Tony Benn (1925-2014)

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 led to the belief that conflict between nations was to be less likely in the then foreseeable future; that was not the case. Instead we live in an age of forever-war: The Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen and Syria are all conflicts that have resulted in countless deaths, injuries and material damage. In the majority of cases the wars have created more ongoing problems for the country's than they've solved.

- The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 was justifiably condemned; however the seeds of the war were sown long before that

date. Jeffrey Sachs the University Professor and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and advisor to three United Nations Secretaries-General is of the opinion “the war was provoked by the US in ways that leading US diplomats anticipated for decades, meaning that the war could have been avoided and should now be stopped through negotiations”. He then went on to identify the two main US provocations. The first being the US intention to “expand NATO to Ukraine and Georgia in order to surround Russia in the Black Sea region by NATO countries alongside Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey”. He identified the second provocation as being “installing a Russophobic regime in Ukraine by the violent overthrow of Ukraine’s pro-Russian President, Victor Yanukovich, in February 2014”.

This was followed, again in 2014, by the start of an armed conflict, in the form of a civil war, in Eastern Ukraine. Over the next eight years the Ukraine nationalist military attacked and killed 14,000 eastern Ukraine people. The eastern region, known

as the Donbas, was occupied by people who considered they had more in common with Russia than a Ukraine government; which represented nationalist and pro-western interests. In an effort to resolve the dispute Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany drew up the so-called Minsk Agreements which, while putting a temporary stop to the fighting, were never implemented.

However it would seem that Ukraine never intended to resolve the conflict, or for that matter neither did Germany.

- *According to former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Minsk agreement served to buy time to rearm the Ukraine military; “The 2014 Minsk agreement was an attempt to give Ukraine time” Merkel told the weekly Die Zeit in December 2022 “It also used this time to become stronger, as you can see today”.*

The day to day bombardment of the civilian population in the Donbas region by Ukraine military forces is a contributory factor as to why Russia decided to invade Ukraine in February 2022.

Recognising that the war was provoked doesn't justify Russia's invasion but it does help to understand why it took place and how to end the conflict. A far better approach from Russia would have been to step up diplomacy with Europe and the non-Western world to explain and expose US military unilateralism. The relentless US push to expand NATO is widely opposed throughout the non-Western world so Russian diplomacy rather than an invasion would have been a more effective way in halting ever increasing U.S. militarism.

14. U.S.militarism

- *In February 2023 it was revealed that the US is the world's pre-eminent military power; operating 750 military base sites abroad in 80 countries and territories, according to the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft; this is at least three times more than all other nation - combined.*

Even past Presidents are critical of the US military record; Jimmy Carter said to Donald Trump in April 2019

“Since 1979, do you know how many times China has been at war with anybody? None. And we have stayed at war”.

Over its entire 242 year history, the United States has only enjoyed 16 years of peace, According to former president Carter, this makes the US

“The most warlike nation in the history of the world” he went on to say “We have wasted, I think, \$3trillion (on) military spending. China has not wasted a single penny on war and that’s why they’re ahead of us in almost every way”.

- *In confirmation of the Jimmy Carter statement the Peter G Peterson Foundation in April 2023 identified that the United States spends more, with a total of \$877 billion, on national “defence” than China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, UK, Germany, France, South Korea, Japan and Ukraine combined. (\$849 billion)*

15. U.K. and the Defence Industry

A report from the Commonwealth think tank indicates that the UK Government wastes millions of taxpayer pounds on Corporate Welfare for arms

manufacturers that is siphoned into massive shareholders returns. Despite weapon manufacturers being “supported in a way no other sector is” they fail to deliver on time for government work.

- The report found that BAE Systems pays just 14.35% of its R&D costs, despite boasting of having £21.25bn available in revenue (2022). Analysis showed that the UK arms industry averaged 12.5% returns on invested capital between 2013 and 2020 compared to a FTSE100 median of 11.7%.

Overall the CommonWealth report shows the arms industry to be inefficient in delivery, heavily subsidised by the taxpayer and very profitable to the shareholders; while employment is insecure and less labour intensive than other sectors. Also its contribution to the overall economy is small in comparison to other sectors.

A follow up report produced by Khem Rogaly, a Common Wealth Senior Researcher, launched in October 2024, analysed the arms industry and proposed a transition from military production to

green manufacture on the basis of workers using their skills and technology to tackle the Climate Crisis.

The report: A Lucas Plan for the 21st Century; From Asset Manager Arsenal to Green Industrial Strategy, was drawn up following 21 interviews with workers and trade unionists in the military industry. The report explored the potential of converting productive capacity in the military sector towards green manufacturing

The following were identified as the key findings of the report.

- Between 1980 and 2022 employment in the military industry fell from 405000 to 164000.
- That at least four of the UK's naval shipyards – on the Forth, Lagan, Tyne and Mersey – already make products for the offshore wind sector, showing that there are close adjacencies between the skills and technology used in ship building and those needed for manufacturing products for offshore wind.

- Almost all of the 21 workers and trade unionists interviewed were open to their sites, either partially or fully; making the transition from military to green production. Seeing it feasible on both technological and worker skill grounds.
- One naval shipyard's experience of collaboration with private offshore wind developers indicated that the public procurement and development of green energy and transport would be necessary to provide clear and sustained demand for transition sites while they invest and innovate to repurpose production.

The Policy Priorities of the report were:-

- *Establish Lucas Holdings, a publicly owned off-balance sheet company independent of the MOD to allow workers through their trade unions to coordinate and lead the transition from military to green production. Lucas Holdings would have the means to invest in repurposing projects and enable the workers to draw upon research capacity from outside bodies such as universities to draw up socially useful workers plans.*

- Use the public ownership of energy generation and transport to ensure demand for the repurposing process. Existing programmes such as Great British Energy, Transport for London and Scotsrail, should support transition clusters using coordinated procurement.
- Deliver a strategic independent review of military commitments and military industrial strategy.

A Lucas Plan for the Twenty First Century: From Asset Manager Arsenal to Green Industrial Strategy report, which was featured in the Guardian, attracted widespread support. Karen Bell, professor of social and environmental justice at the University of Glasgow, was quoted as saying

“The UK arms industry is responsible for significant environmental and social harm but is often justified in the name of preserving national jobs. The Common Wealth report highlights that there are alternative employment possibilities in the form of decent, secure green jobs”

Alex Gordon, President of the RMT union, said his union backed the report which "emphatically supports our policy for an end to the ramping up of arms spending by UK governments" He added

"The best traditions of our trade union movement include working for peace and recognising that the working class and their families are always the victims of war ...the RMT campaigns for socially useful, well paid unionised jobs to replace investment in arms production, including a commitment to build a campaign for defence diversification on the principles of just transition, so that skills, jobs and the communities that depend on them are safeguarded"

The report "A Lucas Plan for the Twenty First Century: From Asset Manager Arsenal to Green Industrial Strategy" can be accessed on the website <http://www.common-wealth.org>

16. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) expansion and Ukraine

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada and several other Western European nations including the U.K. to provide collective security against the perceived threat of the Soviet Union. As a countermeasure, the Soviet Union coordinated The Warsaw Pact.

In 2023 the U.S. spent an estimated \$860 billion on defence; the biggest budget of all the NATO members. The U.K., who was the third highest, spent almost \$66 billion. While the US contributed 16.2% to the total NATO budget, the U.K. share amounted to 11.2%.

- *In 1991, twelve months after German reunification, the Warsaw Pact was disbanded. Despite the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of The Warsaw Pact, NATO remained and expanded eastwards to include nations, that had previously been Warsaw Pact members. All are in close proximity to Russia's borders. It's in these circumstances that Russia considers NATO to be a threat to it's security.*

The eastward expansion of NATO has occurred despite assurances given to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on February 9 1990 that this wouldn't happen.

- *These assurances formed part of an agreement that led to the re-unification of German, according to declassified US, Soviet, German, British and French documents posted in December 2017 in the National Security Archive at George Washington University (<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu>). The documents reinforce former CIA Director Robert Gates criticism of “pressing ahead with expansion of NATO eastwards, in the 1990’s, when Gorbachev and others were led to believe it wouldn’t happen” Despite these assurances, given at that time and in subsequent meetings, NATO expanded eastwards and now has land borders with Russia that total 1,584 miles; involving the countries of Norway, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Finland.*

The threat of Ukraine joining the list of NATO countries on the Russian land border was the last

straw and is considered to be one of the reasons why Vladimir Putin decided to invade Ukraine in February 2022.

While the NATO countries continue to supply weapons to Ukraine in the belief of Russia being defeated, the war will continue with the corresponding loss of civilian and soldiers lives.

According to the BBC the US has been the biggest donor of military aid to Ukraine; committing \$46.6bn between January 2022 and January 2023 with the UK being the second biggest donor committing \$5.1bn. Despite previous assurances, more sophisticated weapons are now being supplied by NATO countries to Ukraine and the threat of nuclear weapons being used in the future has been raised.

- *The Labour Party leadership wholeheartedly supported the previous Tory Government's policies of supplying armaments to Ukraine and following the Labour Government election in 2024, the Prime Minister Kier Starmer has pledged to provide Ukraine with £3bn per annum "as long as it takes"*

- The Labour Government policy of totally supporting NATO expansion is at odds with the 1974 Manifesto commitment where it supported NATO existence “as an instrument of détente no less than defence” and “...the ultimate objective.....must be the mutual and concurrent phasing out of NATO and the Warsaw Pact”

Professor Jeffrey Sachs the US economist based at Columbia University is of the opinion that “the key to peace in Ukraine is through negotiations based on Ukraine’s neutrality and NATO non-enlargement”

- Surely all rational thinking people would agree with the seeking of a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict; especially for those caught up in this war: a war that could have been prevented through diplomacy and negotiation. More emphasis should be put on seeking a settlement, rather than further escalating the conflict by the provision of yet more sophisticated weapons. Further escalation will result in more deaths and destruction and the danger of a nuclear conflict.

- Following Trumps election as US President in November 2024 he has started the process of opening a dialogue with Putin with the aim of reaching a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia. At this stage it would seem that Ukraine and Europe will play a minor role in the outcome of the US/Russia dialogue.
- Meanwhile, while Trump appears to be seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict, EU countries and the UK are aiming to increase their armament spending to compensate for Trumps objective of reduced military aid to Ukraine. To meet this objective the UK will reduce the Overseas Aid budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of GDP at the same time increasing the Defence budget to 2.5%. Priorotising the increased manufacture of arms at the expense of the worlds most deprived has generated justifiable criticism!

17. The Climate Crisis

“There is still time for us to avert the worst impacts of climate change if we act now and we act boldly, but there is no time left for dead ends,

wrong turns and false solutions. We have the technology - in the form of renewable energy, storage technology and efficiency and conservation measures. The only obstacles at this point aren't the laws of physics, but the flaws in our politics”

Professor Michael E. Mann

While the Ukraine war rages on and the casualties mount up, the biggest threat being faced by mankind is not being addressed sufficiently enough to prevent a global catastrophe. Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it's happening more quickly than first feared; as United Nations Secretary-General Antonia Guterres warned

“If nothing changes we are heading towards a 2.8 degree temperature rise – towards a dangerous and unstable world”

- *No part of the world is immune from the devastating consequences of the temperature changes to the climate; rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural*

disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic destruction, conflict and terrorism: sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying and forests are burning.

It's clear that business as usual is not good enough; as the infinite cost of climate change reaches irreversible highs its way past time for bold collective action to prevent billion tons of Carbon dioxide (CO₂) which are released into the atmosphere every year as a result of coal, gas and oil production; human activity is producing greenhouse gas emissions at a record high with no signs of slowing down, yet according to a ten-year summary of UNEP Emission Gap reports we are on track to maintain a "business as usual" trajectory.

- The last four years were the hottest on record; according to a September 2019 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report; we are at one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels and close to what the scientists describe as an "unacceptable risk". The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change called for holding

eventual warming “well below” two degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees; If we continue business as usual and don’t slow global emissions, temperatures could rise to above 3 degrees by 2100 causing irreversible damage to our ecosystems and life threatening consequences for millions of people. The people who live in the Global South will suffer the worst effects of a change to the climate, despite it being recognised that the more developed fossil fuel fed economy’s are mainly responsible for global warming.

Glaciers and ice sheets in polar and mountain regions are already melting faster than ever, causing sea levels to rise. Almost two thirds of the World’s cities, with populations of over five million, are located in areas at risk of sea level rise and almost 40% of the World’s population live within 100 km of a coast. If no action is taken entire districts of New York, Shanghai, Abu Dhabi, Osaka, Rio Janeiro and many other cities could find themselves underwater within the current generations lifetime, displacing

millions of people thus adding to the current world wide refugee problem.

Climate change is a major threat to international peace and security, heightening competition for land, food and water; increasingly leading to mass displacement of populations. The droughts in Africa and Latin America will become more frequent and long lasting, leading to more political unrest and violence; in the absence of tackling climate change, the World Bank estimates that 140 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia will be forced to migrate from those regions by 2050.

Climate change is a world-wide problem that necessitates total cooperation between all nations. Continuing to compete for economic superiority and dwindling resources will lead to more conflict and accelerate the climate crisis - not resolve it. The effects of war on the climate are catastrophic; during the first seven months of the Ukraine war 100 million tonnes of carbon was released into the atmosphere while the sabotaging of the Nord Stream pipeline led to a release of methane; a potent warming gas. The fighting has resulted in widespread deforestation

across Ukraine and damaged the country's renewable energy systems: 90% of the country's wind power and 50% of its solar energy systems have been taken off line since the war began. The detrimental changes to the climate will accelerate the longer the war in Ukraine continues.

- According to results published in the Environmental Research Letters journal in 2014 the UK is more responsible for global warming than any other country – if global carbon emissions are allocated using per capita calculations. Based on this formula, the UK is rated the world's top carbon polluter, followed by the USA, Canada, Russia and Germany. Despite this fact, the UK Tory Government did not take appropriate action to make the switch from fossil fuel energy generation to renewables: the governments own climate committee expressed in 2023 dissatisfaction with the lack of progress being made to achieve the carbon free Net Zero target of 2050.

The 2023 Progress Report to Parliament by the Climate Change Committee stated that following the

previous year's High Court judgement, arrived at as a result of a successful legal challenge against the Government, by campaign groups Friends of the Earth and Good Law Project, the government had published its plans to achieve Net Zero. However, it was pointed out that policy development had been slow and the committee raised new concerns regarding the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan; their confidence in the UK meeting its medium-term target decreased in 2022 and a key opportunity to raise the overall pace of delivery was missed. Among the key messages outlined by the committee were:-

- *A lack of urgency; while the policy has continued to develop it has not happened at the required pace for future targets.*
- *To stay firm on existing commitments and move more quickly towards delivery.*
- *The need for the UK to regain its international climate leadership*
- *Priority action is needed in a range of areas to deliver on the Governments emissions pathway.*

- Develop demand-side and land use policies; current strategy has considerable risks due to its over reliance on specific technological solutions some of which have not been deployed at scale.
- Inpower and inform households and communities to make low-carbon choices; a coherent public engagement strategy on climate action is long overdue.
- Planning policy needs radical reform to support Net Zero
- The expansion of fossil fuel production is not in line with Net Zero, making it necessary to move away from high-carbon developments.
- The need for a framework to manage airport capacity; there being continued airport expansion in recent years, counter to our assessment that there should be no airport expansion across the UK.

This damning indictment by the Government's own climate committee gave an indication of the Tory government's failure to deal with the climate crisis.

- Despite the threat of the climate crisis being at the tipping point of becoming irreversible, the government funding available bears no comparison to what's made available to fund the military; while £5.8 billion was made available between 2015 and 2021 for international climate financing, £45.9 billion was made available in 2021/2 (alone) for military use. In addition the Tory government provided Ukraine with £2.3 billion of military aid in 2022 and matched this amount in 2023.
- Following the 2024 General Election victory Kier Starmer, the Labour Party Prime Minister, has pledged to support Ukraine by providing £3bn per annum "for as long as it takes"

Whatever the arguments are for prolonging the war by providing weapons, the overall damage to the climate by pursuing that policy, as indicated earlier, is beyond question.

- In 2023, despite the need to abandon the use of fossil fuel, the Tory government issued 130 new licences for North Sea oil and gas exploration; they have also given the go ahead for the UK's

first new coal mine in 30 years, at Whitehaven in Cumbria. As a result the government faced a legal challenge by three campaign groups on the basis that the decision to issue the offshore oil and gas licences was unlawful and should be reversed. They are arguing that the issue of the licences is incompatible with the UK's own net zero rules and international obligations

The Tory Government's international response was also questionable; the Guardian reported that the government had drawn up plans to drop the UK's funding pledge of £11.6bn; the pledge was the UK's contribution to the global \$100bn a year commitment to developing countries who are suffering the main consequences of a climate crisis that was none of their making. Developed nations, particularly the UK, are responsible for the build-up of CO₂ from the time of the Industrial Revolution and the promise of an overall contribution of \$100bn to those countries affected, was made to offset the problems they are facing. Clare Shakya the strategic director of the International Institute for Environment said at the time

“A decision to drop the pledge of £11.6bn is somewhat unsurprising given cuts they had already made to programmes that would have used that funding. But it’s no less disappointing. Not only could that funding have helped the most vulnerable people already facing the droughts, flooding and wildfires brought on by climate change, its provision was also a demonstration of the UK’s leadership in the face of the climate crisis”.

- *So all in all the Tory government’s response to the climate crisis was inadequate. This despite parliaments decision in June 2019 to agree the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, which committed the Government to a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared with 1990 levels. This is referred to as the Net Zero target.*

While this seemed to be a move in the right direction, the lack of detail of the net zero plan was met with intense criticism from experts and environmental groups; an additional document had to be drawn up after the High Court ruled the government’s plans were not detailed enough.

A central plank of the Tory government strategy was Carbon Capture and Storage; basically storing CO₂ under the sea. Scientists say even this plan will not move the UK closer towards meeting its legally binding carbon commitments. Dr Chris Jones, an expert in climate change at the University of Manchester, said at the time

“This latest government energy strategy is a weak response to the UK’s zero carbon energy needs; the regressive measures on fossil fuels won’t really make any real impact on our bills and energy security, but they are enough to downgrade the UK’s role as a leader in tackling climate change”

Although carbon capture is a way to remove CO₂ and sites have been identified, academics are concerned that it could allow the UK to keep using oil and gas rather than focusing on switching to renewable energy.

Confirmation of the government’s intentions emerged from research carried out by the House of Commons library which showed that investment in clean energy and the low carbon economy decreased by 10% in the UK from 2021 to 2022 from

\$31bn to \$28bn while other nations increased theirs; the US increasing investment by 24% and Germany by 17%. Across the EU, investment in energy transition away from fossil fuel rose by \$26bn to \$180bn during the same period.

- *Further criticism of the Tory governments approach came from Dr Paul Balcombe, senior lecturer in chemical engineering and renewable energy at Queen Mary University of London said:*

“The most sustainable way to be low carbon and increase security is to reduce our energy demand: the stated intention of insulating 300,000 out of more than 20 million homes is clearly insufficient when we have such a poorly insulated housing stock”

In July 2023 the Tory government published their Third National Adaptation Programme setting out a five year plan to tackle climate change impact. While the production of the plan was welcomed, its contents were widely criticised. For example; Professor Dame Julia King Chair of the Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee said:

“This is progress on previous plans, but we are disappointed that the Government hasn’t gone further to build the UK’s resilience to climate change. In another summer of gruelling hot temperatures, water shortages and wildfires, it’s hard to make sense of that decision. We are at the stage where promising further action is not enough.....sadly this is not a plan containing extensive new commitments. The argument for a stronger commitment has not been won across government. I urge Ministers to build on this with much greater ambition. The scale of the climate impacts we are seeing make clear that resilience to climate change should be a much greater priority”

Energy UK, which is the trade association of the energy industry, were also critical of the government's approach by saying:

“Investment would be made by companies if the planning laws were changed to allow land based wind turbines to be erected”.

Analysing the Labour Governments first 100 days in power, following their 2024 General Election victory,

Greenpeace UK's Co-Executive Director Areeba Hamid said:

“Kier Starmer’s government has got off to a strong start despite some missteps along the way. Within days it put wind in the sales of offshore wind farms, boosted budgets for renewables and stepped back from the last government’s attempts to max out the North Sea and open a new coal mine.....key appointments and promising words will need to be transformed into action – not least by coming up with a real plan for protecting Britain’s wild places and ratifying the Global Ocean Treaty....there is huge potential still to unlock money for jobs, lower peoples bills and reign in fossil fuel and agribusiness companies. The solutions are just waiting to be implemented...the government may be reviewing Treasury restrictions on investment in infrastructure...but is maintaining the UK's unjustifiable optimism about nuclear and carbon capture and storage for energy, and has committed billions of pounds that could be better spent.

18. Environment Campaign Groups

Historically, political change has been brought about as a result of pressure from the “bottom up” by grass root activists. Social improvements such as the vote, free education and a free at the point of delivery health service are examples of benefits which were fought by those with the aim of improving the lives of working class people. Nothing has been given: all campaigns are achieved through struggle, sacrifice and in some cases, the loss of life.

Environmental activists who are justifiably critical of government's inaction on tackling the climate crisis are stepping up their campaigning by either generating grass roots support for coordinated demonstrations or by taking direct action.

18.1 Green New Deal

The New Green Deal Group involves those with an expertise in politics, economics, environment, climate and inequality issues; formed in 2007 it drew inspiration from President Roosevelt’s New Deal which was a response to the 1930’s US Great Depression. The GND aim was to kick start a rapid transition to a new economy shaped to tackle climate change, create green jobs and transform a

failed financial system. The Green New Deal is a ten year game changing plan for the government to tackle climate breakdown and build a world where all can thrive. The plan's aim is to

- *Rapidly cut emissions by transitioning to an economy based on 100% clean energy*
- *Create millions of secure and well paid jobs that benefit communities and transitioning workers from high carbon employment into jobs that conform to green credentials*
- *Transform the economy to serve the needs of the people with more democratic ownership, better financial regulation and expanded public services for all*
- *Protect and restore ecosystems ensuring a healthy environment for all*
- *Promote global justice by ensuring the UK does its fair share to tackle climate breakdown and supports low income countries to do the same.*

The Green New Deal Bill has been introduced in parliament by supportive MP's as the first step towards achieving its aims and while efforts are

continuing to gather more political support. Unfortunately the Labour Government is not currently supporting the Bill.

18.2 Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion(XR) is a UK headquartered global environmental movement established in 2018 with the stated aim of using nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, biodiversity loss and the risk of social and ecological collapse. Taking direct action resulted in XR being accused of alienating potential supporters; so in January, 2023 XR changed their tactics from disruptive direct actions to organised collective action involving a broad church of campaigning groups, trade unions and academics; By combining they demonstrated their collective strength XR stated:

“....everyone has a role to play. This year, we prioritise attendance over arrest and relationships over roadblocks, as we stand together and become impossible to ignore”

Following on from this statement XR approached other campaigning groups and trade unions and

called upon people generally to congregate around Parliament in April 2023; at the time XR stated

“What’s needed now is to disrupt the abuse of power imbalance, to bring about a transition to a fair society that works together to end the fossil fuel era”.

While recognising that greater collaboration between different campaign groups is a difficult undertaking, XR stated:

“No one can do this alone, it’s the responsibility of all of us, not just one group...As our rights are stripped away and those speaking out and most at risk are silenced, we must find common ground and unite to survive”

Following on from the successful demonstration of unity outside Parliament referred to as “The Big One” XR have built on that success by creating a network of groups nationwide.

18.3 Just Stop Oil

While coordinated action is an effective way to demonstrate resistance to the Government’s failure to achieve its own Net Zero targets, direct action has a part to play: Just Stop Oil is a UK based

international environmental activist organisation, which uses civil resistance and direct action with the aim of getting the government to commit to ending new fossil fuel licensing and production. In taking direct action such as delaying the traffic and disrupting sporting events it attracts both approval and criticism. While it could be argued that such activities alienate the public more than attract support for their aims, their day to day direct action activities keeps the subject of fossil fuel use as a daily news item and therefore it is constantly brought to the notice of the general public. Therefore, it could be argued that Just Stop Oil direct action should be regarded as complementing XR's coordinated action approach and not be criticised as being counterproductive.

- *It needs to be recognised the sacrifices that are being made by people of all ages taking direct or coordinated action for the good of the environment and a sustainable future for generations to come; are, as a result, falling foul of governments draconian undemocratic anti protest laws. In many cases this has resulted in*

a number of those activists being taken to court and sentenced to long prison sentences.

It also needs to be recognised the excellent work undertaken by other more longstanding environmental groups; Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have been campaigning tirelessly for decades about the environmental dangers to the Planet.

- *The knowledge of campaigners involved in the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth groups accumulated, would, and should, make a valuable contribution to a combined well coordinated resistance, as extolled by XR, to government not taking sufficient action to tackle climate change and generate support from the public for a future people orientated economy in tune with the environment; applying that much pressure to the extent that government or a future government conforms to public opinion.*

19. Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a term used to refer to market oriented reform policies resulting in reducing

government influence in the economy by eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers, privatisation, austerity and, through the introduction of legislation, reducing the power of trade unions. The result of neoliberalism has come about as a result of the economic policies pursued by Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US.

Neoliberalism was put into practice by Thatcher following on from the 1979 Tory election victory. The adherence to neoliberal economic policies has resulted in a decline in the standard of living for the vast majority of the UK population. Wages have stagnated and large sections of the Welfare State have been decimated. The NHS once the envy of the world has been underfunded, subject to privatisation and neglected to the point that it no longer sets targets let alone meet them. The Tory Government's cuts imposed on Public Service workers for over a decade resulted in waves of strike action. For the first time in its existence The Royal College of Nursing balloted its members for strike

action, resulting in the nurses voting overwhelmingly in favour of taking action; they made that decision knowing that an enhanced pay award would result in more nurses being attracted to the profession; easing the pressure they were under due to understaffed wards: Junior Doctors and Consultants also took strike action.

While strike action has brought about pay increases, in many cases they were well below inflation levels that had dramatically increased as a result of company profit making. Energy prices have soared giving working people the option of either heating or eating while at the same time energy companies profits have multiplied – astronomically. The Tory government's answer of subsidising people's bills with taxpayer's money meant that the energy companies were indirectly being subsidised! Meanwhile high inflation led to the Bank of England raising interest rates which resulted in a corresponding escalation in mortgage rates; the Tory Government answer to that problem was to encourage people to extend the mortgage life, which related to the government's plans to fix the retirement age at 70; the time people will be entitled

to a state pension that's, incidentally is one of the lowest in Europe.

The Office for Budget Responsibility in 2023 forecast a 7% drop in household incomes over the following two years, capping what one of its officials described as a “dismal decade” for growth; this will be the biggest fall in living standards since records began. The drop in household spending power will be made worse due to wage rises failing to keep pace with inflation and interest rate rises.

While the justified unrest to the drop in living standards has understandably resulted in workers taking strike action; the Tory government's answer was to pass legislation that banned effective strike action and the right to protest. The Labour Government have yet to repeal the anti-union legislation.

- *The drop in living standards experienced by working people and the corresponding increased wealth of the rich has been arrived at by design and the Tory government's mismanagement of the economy resulted in low growth and double figure inflation. Working class people have paid*

the price, suffering further cuts to their living standards following on from 10 years of austerity. The Tory Party is funded by the wealthy and they are rewarded handsomely for their patronage. Keynesian economics practiced in the post-war period was swept aside following the 1979 General Election; neo-liberalism or free-market capitalism has been the economic model since with privatisation, deregulation, globalisation, free trade, monetarism, austerity, reductions in government spending and laws passed to prevent the right to strike and protest

The Labour Government elected in 2024 has, while offering more rights to workers, made no promises to reverse the downward trend in living standards, basing their economic strategy on creating more growth.

20. Welfare Benefits subsidising the Private Sector

The Tory government's insistence that work was the route out of poverty is not backed up by the facts: most people who are poor are in work. In July 2023 43% of all working families in the UK were supported

by benefits; the welfare state having to subsidise the public and private sector by topping up wages that are too low to live on. Contrary to widespread perceptions, the welfare bill to support the unemployed amounts to £1 billion (U.K.Gov 2022/3) while £130 billion goes to support those who are in work but are paid too little to make ends meet; the free-market benefitting from taxpayers handouts as a result of poverty wages being paid to workers: a case of the free-market capitalism having their cake and eating it!

21. Grenfell Tower disaster

- One of the more tragic examples of free-market capitalism resulted in the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower on the 14th of June 2017 causing the death of 72 people. The fire broke out as a result of an electrical fault in a refrigerator on the fourth floor and engulfed the 24 storey block of flats; the fire spread rapidly up the exterior of the building, accelerated by dangerously combustible aluminium composite cladding and external insulation. A public inquiry has been

taking place and was due to report in late 2023.
The 2023 deadline was not met.

At this stage it seems obvious that lack of government regulation was responsible for allowing the defective material to be manufactured and installed on the building: the lack of adequate budgeting, poor fire safety systems, the Council ignoring residents safety concerns and an under sourced fire service were also contributory factors.

- The Grenfell Tower disaster which led to the death of 72 people, would not have occurred if people's welfare and safety had been the main consideration when refurbishing the building. Instead the emphasis on cost cutting and maximising profit with minimum government and council regulation, which epitomises neoliberal economics, brought about the tragedy. The inquiry evidence, so far revealed, shows that the practices associated with "free market capitalism (neoliberalism)" was responsible for the deaths of 72 innocent people. The problem is that that appraisal would bring into question current economic policy and the establishment will move

heaven and earth to prevent that being the outcome of the inquiry.

Meanwhile, according to government estimates there are between 6,000 and 9,000 buildings between 11 and 18 metres high that are deemed unsafe due to cladding or other safety defects; leaseholders are faced with a bill to remove the cladding and are not in a position to sell their properties even if they want to.

22. The 2024 General Election and the Labour Party

Love's Labour's Lost

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Given the Tory governments record it was no surprise that the 2024 General Election resulted in a victory for the Labour Party. Although the Labour overall majority of 167 indicated overwhelming support for the Party a close analysis of the result painted a different picture. Less votes were cast for Labour in 2024 (9.7m) than in 2019 (10.3m) with the share of the vote remaining roughly the same (33%). The analysis shows that the Labour majority came about as a result of the collapse of support for the

Tory's (share of vote decreased from 43.6% in 2019 to 23.8% in 2024) rather than enthusiasm for the election of a Labour Government. An indication of voter disinterest was obvious from the voter turnout of 60% (67% in 2019).

The collapse of the Tory vote was an indication of the total rejection of their government policy decisions which had decimated working class people's standard of living. Johnson's lies and deceit had caught up with him to the extent that his own MP's voted him out of office; Liz Truss replaced him but she only lasted 49 days before suffering the same fate as Johnson as a result of her proposed economic policies spooking the market; the result of which cost the taxpayer £30bn!

It was no surprise that the voter turnout was low given the lack of ambition shown by Labour prior to the election. There was no promise of radical change from the policies previously pursued by the Tory's and this was confirmed once they were in power.

Labour's drift to the right occurred long before the 2024 General Election and resulted in many Labour

Party members resigning their membership. Overall membership of the Party plummeted between 2019 and 2022 due to Keir Starmer abandoning the 10 pledges he made when pursuing his successful leadership bid and by imposing candidates for selection against the wishes of local constituency parties, resulting in many long standing and hard working Councillors and MP's being deselected.

Peace and socialist groups have been proscribed and any member of the Party having had association with them, before or after being proscribed, have been subject to disciplinary action; resulting in many cases of them being expelled. Member's comments on social media have been subject to scrutiny and any criticism of Israel's United Nations recognised genocidal treatment of the Palestinian indigenous population has in many cases been termed as anti-semitic.

Keir Starmer's influence on determining what amounts to anti-semitism is in line with his "unqualified support for Israel and Zionism" which he's on record as stating.

- ***Ironically, a large proportion of Jewish members have been expelled; accused of anti-semitism for showing their support for the Palestinians. Jenny Manson, co-chair of Jewish Voice for Labour, who is herself under investigation by Labour, said***

“For the first time in my life as a Jew living in the UK I feel persecuted, hated and stunned by the apparatus of the Labour Party and the loud voices of some sections of the Jewish community. The weapon used too often is to call us JVL activists anti-semitic. Bizarre and wicked”

- ***The JVL which represents 350 Jewish members along with 800 non-Jewish solidarity members have submitted a report to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission saying that Kier Starmer’s Labour “is purging Jews from the Party” with Jews almost five times more likely to face anti-semitism charges than non-Jewish members. The JVL submitted its report to the EHRC because it believes its members “increasingly experience administrative***

persecution by the Labour Party as a form of discrimination”

The accusation of anti-semitism was also made against many others who have criticised Israel: Academics and those in the entertainment industry were subject to accusations of racism for supporting the Palestinian people. David Miller was sacked by Bristol University while Lowkey the Rapper and peace activist was uninvited from the 2021 Tolpuddle Festival; Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame had to resort to taking legal action to preserve the right to continue performing his concerts. Keir Starmer who supported attempts to stop Waters performing, confirming his unqualified support to Israel. This despite Amnesty International condemning Israel’s apartheid policies (against the indigenous Palestinian people) labelling it “a cruel system of domination and crime against humanity” and the International Court of Justice declaring that Israel should stop settlement activity in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem and end it’s illegal occupation of those areas and the Gaza Strip.

Given this background and the ongoing genocide being pursued by Israel on the Palestinians, a number of General Election candidates, including those deselected by the Labour Party, stood as Independent's, in the General Election, in a number of constituencies. Five were successful in their election bid including Jeremy Corbyn who retained his seat in Islington North.

23. Israel, HAMAS and Gaza

It was reported in January 2023 that more than 170 Palestinians, including 30 children, were killed across the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2022. In January 2023 alone at least 29 Palestinians including 5 children were killed. Despite this ongoing slaughter of the innocent since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the more influential of the world's politicians ignore the suffering of the dispossessed Palestinian people and the main stream media stay silent ignoring their plight.

- *In retaliation a major escalation took place on the 7th of Octob 2023 when members of the military wing of Hamas, the governing body of the Gaza Strip, crossed the border and killed*

1200 Israeli's and kidnapped a further 220. The resultant over reaction by Israel, in their stated aim of destroying Hamas, brought about air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground invasion. The result has been catastrophic for the Gaza population; between the 8th of October 2023 and the end of December 2024, over 45,000 Palestinian's had been killed; the 70% of which were innocent women and children including a one day old boy and a 97 year old woman. Lancet estimate that the total death toll will amount to 186,000. Those killed include 141 journalists and over 500 health workers. The majority of homes, hospitals and schools have been destroyed; in addition, electricity, water, fuel and internet services have been cut off by the israeli's with only limited humanitarian aid being allowed to enter: mainly from Egypt.

While western politicians were vociferous in their condemnation of Hamas, they were more muted in their criticism of Israel's retaliatory response; insisting that Israel "has the right to defend itself": not taking account of the long standing unresolved problems faced day to day by the Palestinian people

in the occupied (by Israel) territories since the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The reaction from the governments of both the U.K. and US is to be expected given their total unqualified political and military support for Israel.

The following statement made by Anthony J. Blinken the US Secretary of State, back in June 2023, is a confirmation of their unwavering support for Israel.

“The US continues to support Israel by providing \$3.3bn in foreign military financing to Israel each year. On top of that Israel receives \$500 million in funding for missile defence and tens of million more for new counter-drone and anti-tunnelling technologies..... we are also delivering an additional \$1bn in funding to replenish supplies for Israel’s Iron Dome....that has saved countless lives”

- *This statement represents in plain terms that the US have no interest in helping to sort out a problem which has been unresolved since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948; in fact by pledging so much military support for Israel (and not the Palestinians) re-enforces the view that US foreign policy aims are inconsistent*

with the Palestinian peoples 75 year fight for justice (as recognised by the United Nations).

The UK also provides military support to Israel; in the past eight years the government have authorised £472 million worth of armaments, including support for the combat aircraft that bombed Gaza during the 2023 humanitarian crisis. The UK has been selling armaments to Israel since 1967, in spite of Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. In recent years Israel has carried out four major military assaults, carried out in 2008/9, 2012, 2014 and 2021 which resulted in the killing of almost 4000 Palestinian people.

In October 2024 Israel bombed and invaded Lebanon with their stated aim of eliminating Hezbollah. The invasion and the bombing of Beirut has resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians. Hezbollah, which is a Shia Islamist political party that provides social welfare and religious services, supports the Palestinian peoples struggle for self-determination and statehood. To show their support for the people of Gaza, Hezbollah have been firing rockets from South Lebanon into Israel.

In retaliation Israel has assassinated a number of the Hezbollah leadership based in Lebanon and Iran. As a consequence Iran has responded with a missile attack on Israel.

- *This escalation by Israel, by invading Lebanon and missile striking Iran, is not surprising given Israel leaders often repeated declarations of aiming to extending Israel boundaries in Palestine from the River to the Sea and beyond and thus have a controlling influence throughout the Middle East region.*

Meanwhile, the US, UK and EU, while calling for a ceasefire, continue to arm Israel on the basis that Israel has the right to defend themselves.

Despite the Labour Party Conference policy of supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for statehood and recognising Palestine as a country in its own right, those Labour MP's who form the Friends of Israel group use their influence to ensure the policy never materialises into effective Party action by giving recognition.

This is not surprising given that the Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer is on record as saying that "he

gives unqualified support to Israel and Zionism”. Given Kier Starmer's dictatorial control it's no wonder that the majority of Labour MP's, when in opposition and now in government, dragged their feet in responding to the call for a ceasefire. Kier Starmer's rejection of the view that Israel is an apartheid state is at odds with international opinion. He has shown a cavalier disregard for the expressed views of Amnesty International, many Labour Party members, key sections of the broader Labour movement, the international human rights community and the united voice of Palestinian civil society.

- *Kier Starmer is consistent when it comes to ignoring decisions made by relevant reputable organisations. For example, he's selective in determining which Labour Party Conference decisions result in becoming Party policy. This dictatorial approach of ignoring the views of conference and those in the wider Labour Movement, has resulted in Labour policies which fail to address the problems faced by working class people. This failure to provide a radical alternative to Tory policies has led to thousands resigning their membership of the Party. As a*

result Labour Party membership has reduced from 552,000 in January 2018 when Jeremy Corbyn was leader to a total of 385,324 in July 2023

24. Labour in Government

Starmer made it clear prior to Labour being elected in July 2024 that there would be no significant move away from the neoliberal policies pursued by the Tory's; this at a time when there needed to be radical economic and political changes if Labour was to fulfil the reason for its formation and ongoing credibility: to shift power and wealth from the Few to the Many.

Based on manifesto commitments and policy announcements made, Labour will not be addressing the following existing problems:-

- Water remaining in private ownership with shareholders benefitting from £70 billion while raw sewage is pumped into our rivers and coastal waters.
- Energy companies making excess profits while working people can't afford to pay their heating bills.

- Running the NHS into the ground through underfunding, staff shortages and privatisation of services.
- Working class kids driven into poverty by the arbitrary policy of denying parents who have more than two children, their rightful entitlement to child benefit.
- Privatising education and reducing accountability, by taking schools out of local authority control into the hands of people who enrich themselves, at the expense of the education budget, through bloated executive salaries.
- Stopping the Winter Fuel Allowance to the majority of pensioners (introduced by the Labour Government soon after they were elected in 2024)
- Lumbering working class students with vast university debts which they may never be able to pay off - due to rip off interest fueled repayment terms.

- Working people's wages have stagnated due to a decade of austerity measures while the already wealthy have become wealthier.
- Systematically abuse and humiliate sick and disabled people by forcing them repeatedly to go through "fit for work" assessments that cost more to administer than they save through booting people off disability benefits.
- Labour are intending to cut the cost of Benefits by £5.5bn through imposing stricter limits on Personal Independent Payments to those receiving disability benefits
- Impose economic sanctions on ourselves, as a consequence of Brexit negotiations, by setting up new trade barriers between the UK and our biggest trade partners in Europe.
- Print £800 billion in new money (Quantitative Easing) then spend it knowingly to benefit the very wealthy at the expense of everybody else.

There are many more examples of what is meant by accepting "More of the Same", none more so than the war in Ukraine, referred to earlier; Keir Starmer

has promised, since becoming Prime Minister, to provide Ukraine with £3bn annually “as long as it takes” (until Russia are defeated). This is in line with when Labour were in opposition when they were fully in support of providing arms to the government of Ukraine, to the extent that they threatened to withdraw the whip from those Labour MP’s who signed the “Stop the War Coalition” letter which called for peace negotiations.

The 1974 Manifesto commitment to regard NATO as an instrument of détente is long forgotten. The Warsaw Pact may be long gone, but the promise of pursuing the demise of NATO, as called for in the '74 Manifesto, is no longer the aim of Starmer’s Government.

Quite the opposite; Keir Starmer now recognises NATO as a major achievement of the 1945 Labour Government and therefore should be fully supported. Labour’s foreign policy like the Tory’s is slavishly following policies as determined by the United States.

The ongoing commitment to fund Ukraine, without identifying the source of providing the £3bn, is at

odds with the stated intentions of Rachel Reeves, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is on record as stating the need for the government to maintain fiscal discipline.

The unilateral commitment made to fund Ukraine, without identifying the source of such funding, and the decision to withdraw the whip from the 7 Labour MP's who voted in support of an SNP amendment to the Kings Speech to extend benefit payments beyond 2 children is an indication of where the Labour Government priorities lie.

A further indication of the direction of travel being pursued, is the decision to means test the funding of winter payments to pensioners and to not honour the previous Tory Government's decision to meet social care costs of up to £85,000. The Labour Government is also aiming to reduce the Benefits bill by £5.5bn by depriving the disabled of Personal Independence Payments.

Despite the Trump administration making moves to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Ukraine/Russia conflict, Keir Starmer is at the forefront of European nations efforts to jeopardize

the moves to peace by attempting to organise the stationing of NATO troops in Ukraine as part of any future settlement. Not surprisingly Russia has rejected this suggestion.

Portraying Russia as a threat to UK security, the Labour Government has stated the intention of increasing the Defence budget to 2.5% of GDP at the expense of the International Aid budget which will decrease to 0.3% of GDP.

While Labour's approach to tackling the climate crisis was initially more positive than the Government; that has now changed. The commitment to borrow £28 billion per annum from day one of a Labour Government until 2030, to invest in green jobs and industry, has now been downgraded; it will now possibly be borrowed half way through the 5 year government term. Another indication of a "backing off" on environmental issues resulted from Labour's failed attempt to overturn a Conservative majority in the Uxbridge & South Ruislip by-election in July 2023. The reason for the failure was identified, rightly or wrongly, as the London Lord Mayors intention to extend the Ultra

Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which imposes a daily charge on the most polluting vehicles, to the outer limits of London.

Resisting pressure from Starmer to halt its implementation the Mayor also successfully defended a legal challenge from London Conservative controlled councils, and implementation of the ULEZ went ahead at the end of August 2023.

- *Another indication of Labour's lack of commitment to tackling the climate crisis is its response to the government's decision to issue 100 licences to energy companies; Kier Starmer has assured the company's that the Labour Government will not reverse the decision to issue licenses.*

Labour's reason for its retreat on tackling the climate crisis was according to the Chancellor Rachel Reeves, "the existing poor economic performance and rising interest rates". This decision is based on Labour's attempt to prove its "financial credibility".

This is at odds with its decision to invest £22bn on Carbon Capture Technology, a technology much

criticised by environmentalists on the basis that CCT is a means to maintain the continued use of fossil fuels.

- The Guardian reported in June 2023 “that it understands that Labour has been looking closely at how to keep other areas of major spending within its fiscal rules. Insiders said the party had been looking to make sacrifices in areas it had already flagged as important to demonstrate its focus on economic credibility”. It also reported that Reeves said “the priority is to stick to Labours fiscal rule, that debt must be falling as a share of national income after 5 years” In sticking to that “fiscal rule” Reeves has ruled out reversing all those laws, introduced by the Tory’s, that threw more children into poverty. Extending child benefit beyond two, to all children, would lift an estimated 250,000 children out of poverty at a cost of £1.3bn. Obviously Reeves and the Labour Party do not regard lifting working class kids out of poverty as a priority

If Keir Starmer renewed his pledge to tax those with wealth, a promise made in pursuing his leadership bid in 2019, fiscal discipline could be maintained at the same time as meeting social objectives, such as - alleviating child poverty and refunding much neglected public services.

- An annual tax of 1.5% on those with wealth of above £100 million would raise £15 billion per year. Wealth taxes have huge popular support according to TAXJUSTICE.UK: 78% of people support higher taxes on those who own assets worth over £10 million.

Even some of those with wealth are concerned about the current worldwide extreme inequality; In January 2022, one hundred millionaires and billionaires from nine countries published an open letter to government and business leaders calling for ongoing annual wealth taxes on the very richest to raise revenue to fund public services, including healthcare, and help reduce extreme inequality.

- According to analysis carried out by the Fight Inequality Alliance, the Institute for Policy Studies, Oxfam and the Patriotic Millionaires, a

wealth tax starting at just 2% annually for millionaires and rising to 5% annually for billionaires world wide could generate \$2.52 trillion a year; enough to:-

- Lift 2.3 billion people in the world out of poverty
- Make enough vaccines for all world wide
- Deliver universal healthcare and social protection for all the citizens of low and lower middle income countries (3.6 billion people)

Politicians remain unmoved; not surprising given the lobbying that takes place from those wealthy enough to influence political party's policies through the provision of financial donations and control of media outlets; giving them overall control of the levers of power.

Another indication of Labour's adherence to market values is its abandonment of taking the energy and water industries back into public ownership, despite opinion polls showing that 66% of the UK public are in favour of such a move. While energy bills soar the profits of energy providers multiply, benefiting shareholders at the consumers expense.

Six firms dominate nearly 80% of the energy market; this near monopoly has resulted in prices and profits going through the roof.

- Despite privatisation being promoted in the 1980's as an opportunity for working people to purchase the electricity and gas shares; in the long term this has not been the case. Five of the six companies are foreign owned; only British Gas remains under British ownership. EON and Npower are owned by the German company E.ON EnergyAG, the Spanish company Iberdrola own Scottish Power and EDF is French Government owned

In July 2022 the Trade Union Congress (TUC) published a plan to bring the big five energy retail firms into public ownership at a cost of £2.85 billion. They promoted the plan on the basis that the ending of shareholder dividends, of which £23 billion was paid out in the last 10 years (to mainly foreign investors), would be made available to cut bills and provide more investment for energy efficiency.

The then TUC General Secretary Francis O'Grady said in presenting the report

“It is time to lift the burden of failed privatisation off families. No more shareholder pay-outs. No more fat cat bonuses. No more taking the money and running companies that collapse overnight. Just fair prices from an energy company owned by us all and run for our benefit”

The recommendations of this TUC report and a similar initiative undertaken by UNITE have fallen on deaf ears - being totally ignored by the Labour Government: notwithstanding the social and economic benefits outlined in the reports.

- *The policies of taxing wealth and bringing Rail, Energy and Water into Public Ownership has popular support. Wealth redistribution is a necessary answer to existing inequality while bringing energy into public ownership at a time when the UK is reliant on overseas supply is necessary; especially as the transition from fossil fuel to renewable green energy generation takes place.*
- *Despite public support for the above policies the Labour Government are showing no inclination*

of putting the policies into practice instead concentrating on depriving children in poverty, the elderly and disabled of the necessary funding to meet their needs.

- Given that politicians, when elected totally ignore public opinion, devolving power and finance from Parliament to the communities is a necessity if the UK is to move to a participating democracy.
- Also “levelling up” cannot be left to central government to determine what constitutes levelling up: it can only be determined by people in their own communities identifying the social and economic needs required and then be provided with the necessary finance by central government to meet the costs of implementing them.
- Workers as the wealth creators and care and health providers have no decision making powers in their work environment: this is akin to wage slavery and not in line with other European

countries. Germany companies involve their workers as partners in the decision making process at all levels on the basis of Co-determination. The Bullock Report produced in 1978 proposed a system of Industrial Democracy which advocated workers in the UK should have the same decision making powers as the shareholders; the Bullock Report should be revisited with a view to implementing its recommendations.

The Labour Government's policy decisions not to resolve the social problems inherited from the Tory's is due to Kier Starmer's Labour Party embrace of neoliberalism and being more closely aligned to the business community, than the needs of working class people. Labour are benefiting financially from that alignment by means of seeking and accepting donations from companies who have a vested interest in shaping future government policy commitments. Labour have gone out of their way to make links with the business community and policy announcements so far made reflect an alliance that will not challenge the current market led economic model.

Kier Starmer's influence on the Labour Party's direction of travel to the right indicates his ongoing support for the neoliberalism status quo. Since his election as leader, his ruthlessness in eliminating socialists and socialist policy have transformed the Party into one that is no real alternative to what was on offer by the previous Tory government. His ten pledges to honour the policies pursued by his predecessor, Corbyn, were dropped once he had been elected as leader and his reversal of previously stated objectives have revealed a lack of honesty and integrity.

- *The commitment made in the 1974/2017 and 2019 Labour manifesto's to shift power and wealth to the Few from the Wealthy is abandoned with Starmer on record as saying, when interviewed by the Economist.*

“We’re going to have a core partnership with business....we will deliver the missions together....we’ve been having intense discussions with business. This is about building new relations with business....we’re pro-business”

So despite a crying need for a radical alternative to Tory government policy, Labour advocated “much of

the same” with a promise that living standards for working class people will only improve as a consequence of growth in the economy; in other words - possibly at a date sometime in the future. The focus of the Labour Government, as stated by the Chancellor Rachel Reeves, will be to maintain fiscal discipline at the same time as adhering to a policy of what amounts to - “trickle-down economics”.

Working people's living standards have been in decline since the election in 1979 of the Thatcher government. While the 1997/2010 Blair/Brown Labour Government may have provided much needed funding to vital services neglected by the Tory's, no changes were made to bring about a change in the power relationship between those with power and wealth and those working class people who struggled to make a living.

- *The brief period between 2015 and 2019, when Jeremy Corbyn was leader, was the first time since the 1974 General Election Manifesto that Labour proposed policies reminiscent of its founding principles.*

Promoting policies that addressed inequality, climate change and an ethical foreign policy. It promised hope when working people were witnessing despair.

Such policies provoked an onslaught from the market led establishment who saw it as an attack on the neoliberal status quo.

While it's to be expected that the onslaught would be mounted by the political opposition and the mainly billionaire owned media, it emerged later that the majority of Labour MP's, Labour Party staff and Party dignitaries went out of their way to undermine Corbyn's leadership and prevent Labour being successful in the 2017 and 2019 General Elections.

- The film "Corbyn - the Big Lie" is being shown nationwide, illustrating the duplicity involved within the Labour Party establishment. Because the film is critical of the current Labour leadership, efforts have been made to prevent its showing with UNITE banning it from being shown at any of its premises.

As previously stated, the trade unions brought the Labour Party into being to give working class people a voice in the running of the country by having representation in parliament. While, when in power, it has passed legislation to the benefit of working people, it has never shifted the balance of power from the Few to the Many. There have been a number of false dawns and the achievements of the 1945 Atlee government stand out as an example which should have been built upon.

The 1974 Wilson government promised much but at the end of the day never attempted to put more power in the hands of working class people.

Although opportunities materialised, mainly as a result of trade union shop steward action, the Labour Government always acted in the interests of the established order; in power relations they maintained the status quo.

- *A good example of maintaining the status quo was experienced by the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee during the period 1976 to 1979. The stewards were encouraged by the*

Secretary of State for Industry (Tony Benn) to draw up an alternative plan for their company, which they did with the involvement of the workforce; when they sought to encourage the government to put pressure on the company to implement it they were met with all manner of excuses and bureaucratic obstructions to prevent it happening. This despite the Combines plan closely relating to Labours manifesto commitments and the shop stewards efforts being supported by Labour Party Conference. At the end of the day the Combine shop stewards initiative, fully described on their website

lucasplan.co.uk was about bringing about a shift in the balance of power relationship was “kicked into the long grass” by an unholy alliance of management, government ministers and trade union full time officials (who were in fear of losing what little influence they had).

The Combines Lucas Plan is just one of many grass root initiatives that sprung up in the 1970's that challenged the established order and if built upon could have shifted the balance of power in favour of working class people. Failure to encourage, support and take advantage of those initiatives by the 1974/9 Labour Government resulted in the economic status quo being maintained: until working class people were subject to the full onslaught of the 1979 Thatcher government and the introduction of neoliberal economics that have proved to be detrimental to working class living standards.

Apart from the 2015/9 Corbyn leadership period, the Labour Party has continued its political journey away from its founding principles; as the market led economy became more prominent it bent to its will, adopting rather than challenging its orthodoxy, and never ever offering an alternative option to the electorate.

This adherence to economic and political orthodoxy, which have proved to be detrimental to working class people's advancement, brings into question whether Labour as a political party can continue to

be identified to represent working class interests. It's in these circumstances that a number of trade unions are considering whether to continue funding and give ongoing support to the Labour Party.

In effect the electorate were faced with no significant choice at the 2024 General Election. Both the Conservative Party and Labour offered much of the same with economic, social and foreign policy following the same pattern; it was clear that neoliberalism would not be challenged by either party and the “first past the post” electoral system prevented any significant breakthrough by other political parties; Labour’s “alternative” is to manage the capitalist economy more efficiently within tight fiscal rules; improved living standards will only materialise if future growth and increased productivity targets are achieved.

Given their large majority the Labour Government are in a strong position to resist pressure from other political parties and from within their own ranks. An example of Keir Starmer’s ruthlessness was evident when he removed the whip from those MP’s who didn’t toe the government line by voting to support

the SNP amendment on the 2 child benefit rule. Only pressure from the “bottom up” will bring about change on a Labour Government that’s locked in to maintaining the neoliberal status quo.

25. Trade union action!

The trade unions are leading the fight against the cost of living crisis and have been successful in fighting for wage improvements: railway workers, NHS hospital consultants and all those in between have recognised that only by taking action will wage increases be achieved. In the current political landscape trade union organised coordinated strike action is the only way to achieve improvements to wages and conditions of service for workers.

26. Starmer and the Trilateral Commission

The Trilateral Commission was formed in 1973 by billionaire banker David Rockefeller as a network for elites from the US, Europe and Japan. Rockefeller was close to the leadership of the CIA at that time. The Commission describes itself as a “global membership organisation” which seeks “to discuss and propose solutions to some of the world's

toughest problems”. Its meetings are strictly off the record.

Keir Starmer joined the Commission at some point between March 2017 and October 2018, leaving at some point between April 2021 and June 2022.

Jeremy Corbyn who was the Labour Party leader in 2017 was not aware that Starmer had joined the Commission. Starmer spoke at meetings of the Commission alongside two former heads of the CIA and in the presence of former heads of M15 and GCHQ.

In this period Starmer was one of only two British MP’s who were members of the Commission, the other being Rory Stewart the Conservative MP. In 2019 a “security source” told the Daily Telegraph (according to Declassified) that Stewart served 7 years as an MI6 officer before moving into politics.

James Schneider, who was Corbyn's spokesman while he was leader, told Declassified UK “Starmer did not inform us that he would be joining the Commission while serving in the Shadow Cabinet, if he had we would have put a stop to it because the Commission is a body dedicated to corporate power

which was plainly incompatible with Labour's then stated policies of redistributing wealth and power from the few to the many"

Keir Starmer is the only British former member of the Trilateral Commission who is now in public service, according to the group's latest information. Starmer did not respond to Declassified's questions about his membership of the Commission and never declared it to Parliament as some other British parliamentarians have done.

27. Tackling Climate Change

- *Environmental groups are stepping up their resistance to the use of fossil fuel and are fighting for the use of renewable energy. The efforts of XR to co-ordinate the activities of all environment groups to pressure the government into taking more decisive action in tackling climate change is encouraging in that they are recognising the value of coordinated action. While pressure, mainly from young political activists, continues to be put on politicians*

of all parties to support the Green New Deal Bill.

28. Ukraine and Gaza

- Peace groups need to co-ordinate their actions and speak with one voice to call for a halt to the continuing conflict in Ukraine by virtue of a just negotiated settlement before it escalates beyond control and bring pressure to bear on politicians to stop the arms sale to Israel as a means of halting the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the occupied territories.

29. Socialist Alternative

- Socialist groups and Independent MP's who are disenchanted with the Labour Party's abandonment of socialist principles, should form a common front as suggested by the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and make their voices heard to show that there is a socialist alternative to that being pursued by the Labour Government and

that such policies are in the best interests of working class people.

30. False accusations of Anti-semitism

- There's need to confront and call out those that make unfounded accusations against individuals of antisemitism. Many who are critical of Israel, have falsely been accused of antisemitism because of their support for the United Nations and Amnesty International recognised human rights of the indigenous Palestinian population, resulting in many anti-racist people suffering loss of livelihood and/or political influence.

All of the problems outlined above are the direct consequence of the Tory Government austerity policies in their period of government between 2010 and 2024. Despite being critical of the Tory government policies, the current Labour Government is not proposing to fundamentally address the problems created by the Tory's; making U turns on promises previously made.

Therefore in the circumstances that the Tory's were responsible for the problems faced by working class people and the Labour Government not coming up with the necessary radical alternative policies to address these problems, a combination of extra-parliamentary action supported by progressive MP's is the only possible way to exert pressure on government to bring about change and is therefore essential.

30. Combine - from the bottom up - Resist and Plan

There would have been no Lucas Plan without the Combine.....

Phil Asquith (former Lucas Aerospace Combine shop steward

There's widespread opposition to the neoliberal route being pursued by the Tory's when in government and the current Labour Government. Opinion Polls indicate majority opinion for a different approach to the problems faced by working class people and the majority of campaign groups promote policies that are in line with that majority

opinion. Opposition to the neoliberal status quo is widespread but, at the moment, fragmented. There needs to be a coming together of committed individual activists to campaign for a more equitable, environmentally friendly, peace loving and anti-racist socialist country. Acting individually within their own groups as they do now (not jointly), competing with each other for support and donations, weakens their effectiveness to bring about overall change. While differences in campaigning and tactics may be evident, all groups and individuals are pursuing aims totally at odds with the market-led world that currently exists; a neoliberal world that politicians persist in pursuing.

- *An Alliance for Social Progress” (ASP) made up of trade union shop stewards, environmental group activists, peace campaigners, socialists and academics should draw up an agreed agenda which reflects their aims: putting differences aside because there is far more to unite them than to divide them.*

While political party strategic thinking is constrained by the electoral cycle resulting in parties having to operate on a short term basis, those involved in a ASP would have more experience and knowledge of the issues involved and would be best placed to offer a more considered approach to the problems faced by the country; both in the short and long term.

An example of successful joint coordinated action took place in the 1970's when the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards established their Combine Committee to address issues that affected the whole of the workforce. When Lucas management decided on policy, they played a game of divide and rule; pitching one site or group of workers against another. By combining all sites and workers through their trade unions in one all-embracing committee, the workforce were able to speak with one voice and when it came to addressing matters of common interest, there was more to unite them than divide them.

- *Just as the Lucas shop stewards benefitted from “combining” their experience, knowledge and strength, the progressive*

activists (ASP) should also combine to resist neoliberalism and unite to promote an alternative democratic and economic strategy and with the support of more progressive MP's bring pressure to bear on the Labour Government to implement it.

31. An Alternative Plan for the U.K.

The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

Socrates

The current state of the country and its detrimental effect on working people's lives is not a result of Government ineptitude but by fore-planned design. Neoliberalism which constitutes a market led economy and the necessary measures to enable it to function unfettered by government controls or organised resistance was introduced following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979.

The upsurge in trade union grassroots activity in the 1970's at workplace level had resulted in many defeats for the established order: most notable was the Miner's victory which led to the downfall of Ted Heaths Tory Government in 1974 and the corresponding election of the Labour Government.

- Once elected Thatcher took action to shift the political pendulum by taking on the trade unions, privatising the nationalised industries, de-regulated the financial markets and introduced a market-led economy

Prior to the Tory election victory the party prepared the ground for radical reform of the country. In 1977 Tory MP Nicholas Ridley co-authored the Final Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group; the report became known as the Ridley Plan. Ridley, the son of a wealthy family whose coal and steel interests had been nationalised under the Attlee government, was implacably opposed to public ownership. The Ridley Plan amounted to a ruthless battle plan for privatisation; being a blueprint for the Thatcherite assault on the nationalised industries,

trade unions and de-regulation of the market economy: the effects of the Ridley Plan sowed the seeds for the problems now being faced by working class people.

- *The Ridley Plan prefigures almost all the key moments in the long neoliberal assault on public ownership, from the open war against the miners to the privatisation “by stealth” (Ridley’s own words) of the NHS. The plan recommended Thatcher to pick her battles; provoking confrontations “where we can win”, while taking steps to create the conditions for eventual victory against the more powerful trade unions.*

Ridley proposed the fragmenting of public services into independent units that could later be sold off; describing it as a long term strategy of fragmentation; a cautious “salami approach”, but by the end - the lot gone; “slice by slice” into the private sector.

In a controversial appendix entitled “Countering the Political Threat”, leaked to the Economist in 1978, he even anticipated the pitched battles of the miner’s

strike, highlighting the need for “a large mobile squad of police who are equipped and prepared to uphold the law” against what he saw as “violent picketing”

- *The Ridley Plan should be required reading for those progressive left activists so they can have some understanding of how neoliberalism materialised. and the importance of pre planning. In doing so they should also take account of the fact that despite a Labour Government being in power from 1997 to 2010 no attempt was ever made to challenge the political landscape created by Thatcher: in fact Blair and Brown embraced their inheritance, turning their back once and for all on the achievements, including Public Ownership, of the 1945 Atlee government.*
- *The Ridley Plan and Thatcher’s successful implementation of its recommendations is a good example of how the Tories have been successful in pursuing their political agenda; while Labour have failed to bring*

about the fundamental changes which are necessary to answer the needs of working class people. Labour have had plenty of opportunities but have lacked the political will!

A good example of an opportunity missed occurred in 2008 while Labour was in government; the banking crisis provided an opportunity to challenge the power of the finance system.

- The failure of the banking system was exposed for all to see but the moment passed without the government pushing to curb its power with an alternative approach. The system regrouped, with all radical proposals for change seen off and the power of extractive finance reasserted itself.

Banks like RBS were bailed out with taxpayer's money with no strings attached and no meaningful public control, with the ultimate aim of sending them back into the private sector. Full separation of retail and investment banking was not imposed in favour of a softer "ring fence".

After a few years, the same toxic financial products that helped cause the crisis were allowed to proliferate again.

- *The Ridley Report and the 2008 Banking Crisis are two examples of the difference in approach by the Tory's and Labour in taking advantage of political opportunities when they arrive. The Tory's are ruthless in approach, ignoring whatever collateral damage is imposed on working class people, to carry out their plans; on the other hand Labour have never challenged the power of capital, preferring to at best tinker with or "better manage" economic orthodoxy.*

Given Labour's past and ongoing failure to challenge economic orthodoxy and its adherence to US led foreign policy, brings into question its role as representing the best interests of working class people.

- *With the current "first past the post" electoral system preventing another political party emerging to promote an alternative viewpoint on domestic and foreign policy, emphasises the need for the forming of a extra-parliamentary*

pressure group (ASP) as referred to previously, campaigning against the ongoing political neoliberal status quo. In time it may evolve into a political party with its own agenda with candidates standing for election, operating on the basis of a political realignment which put working class people first and is at one with environment. To prove its credibility It would need to develop and promote an “Alternative Plan for the UK” laying out in detail how people would benefit from supporting such a plan. The promotion of the plan should aim to attract maximum support amongst the UK public leading to the formation of a mass grass roots pressure group.

It will take time to break down the entrenched barriers that exist which prevent a coordination of expertise and activity; however, hopefully sufficient progress will have been made prior to the next General Election to enable the “progressive alliance” to develop and promote an “alternative manifesto” to that put forward by both the Tories and Labour.

- Labour's 2017 manifesto proved popular with the electorate; if the campaign had been given total support by the party, it could have resulted in a Labour Government being formed: on that basis the 2017 manifesto could be considered as the "alternative" put forward by the "alliance"

The decision of the Labour Party NEC preventing Jeremy Corbyn to stand as a Labour Party candidate for the 2024 General Election despite being chosen by his Constituency Party, was disgraceful; given his 40 year record as a constituency MP.

- However the problem he's faced provided Jeremy Corbyn with the opportunity of standing as an Independent M.P. Given that he was re-elected, he along with other Independent MP's, who are currently acting collectively, could be the voices promoting the "The Alternative Plan" in parliament; unfettered from the shackles of Starmers Labour Party, Corbyn along with other Independant and progressive MP's from other parties, would be free to express their support for working class interests domestically

and internationally, within the framework of the ASP policy.

While any future General Election would provide the opportunity for ASP to test out the electorate with a radical alternative political view, it will also need to develop policies for the longer term which address the fundamental problems faced by working class people.

- Democratic reform and changes to existing economic orthodoxy are crucial if working class people are to truly benefit from their everyday efforts to maintain the efficient running of the U.K. Unless radical democratic and economic improvements are made, working class people will not be justly rewarded for their daily hard work.

32. Democratic Reform

Our democracy should aspire to be more democratic.

DaShanne Stokes

The democratic process needs to be extended beyond the current system of electing a member of

parliament every 5 years and having to live with the consequences of that voting decision. An example resulting from the current system illustrates its weakness. The 2019 GE was won by the Tories due to Johnson's election campaign emphasising that the UK should leave the European Union; realising the strength of feeling generated as a result of the 2016 referendum vote.

- *“Get Brexit Done” was a clear message that resonated with voters backed up with the promise that the EU funding saved would be used to financially support the NHS.*

The situation in 2024 was all-together different. The Pandemic and the war in Ukraine had dominated the agenda of the government and the electorate had had no involvement in the decision making involved in dealing with those issues. Meanwhile the decision to leave the EU has proved to have had a detrimental effect on the UK economy with costs estimated at 2.5% of GDP and inflation pushed up by 1.7%. It's estimated that the decision to leave the EU has led to an annual cost of £404 for the average UK household. Despite the promises made by those

promoting the “leave” campaign, the NHS did not benefit financially; it continued to be underfunded in comparison to European standards.

There were also changes at the head of government. In 2022 Johnson was booted out as Prime Minister by his own MP’s, he then resigned his seat and left parliament in disgrace. He was replaced by Liz Truss (elected solely by Tory members), whose “crazy” economics in the short time she was PM cost the UK economy £30 billion; resulting in her own MP’s bringing about her demise. Rishi Sunak was then elevated to PM, again elected by his own MP’s, and was in place until the July 2024 General Election.

All this took place without the electorate having any say in the rights or wrongs of those “elected” and the political decisions made: surely that cannot be the way that a 21st Century democracy should operate!

- *Failure to participate in decision making may suit those that wield power but it’s against the interests of those that create the wealth and provide the care in society - the working class. There needs to be a root and branch*

re-evaluation of the current outdated democracy model to enable maximum participation of all at every level, getting rid of outdated institutions that maintain power and wealth for the Few at the expense of the Many.

Demonised in Life, Patronised in Death

Tony Benn (1925-2014)

Tony Benn fought all his parliamentary life for a more democratic and inclusive society: for economic democracy in the workplace and political democracy of the state. He was a consistent opponent of class privilege having renounced his hereditary peerage on becoming Lord Stansgate. He served a remarkable 50 years in parliament, filling a number of Secretary of State post's in Wilson's governments. For him the ongoing existence of the monarchy was a symbol of the unfinished democratic revolution begun by the Levellers and Chartists; so as one of his last acts in parliament, in 1991, he composed and championed a Commonwealth of Britain Bill.

The Bill proposed abolishing the British monarchy, with the aim of the United Kingdom becoming a "democratic, federal and secular Commonwealth of Britain" in effect a republic with a codified

constitution. Among the measures proposed was abolition of the House of Lords and government made up of elected members from constituencies with each seat being represented by a male and a female MP.

The Commonwealth Bill never achieved a second reading; the lack of support confirming Labour's adherence to supporting the existing feudal institutions - including maintaining the monarchy.

- *Benn's Commonwealth Bill contained all of the elements that would equip the UK to be a fully fledged democracy fit to grace the 21st Century. A long term aim of ASP should be to revisit the Bill with the intention of including it as a suitable model for the future. In effect a modern day Chartist aim.*

In December 2022 the Commission on the UK's Future produced a report entitled "A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy" was launched on behalf of the Labour Party.

The report highlighted the need to devolve political and economic power away from Parliament to the

regions, thus enabling people locally to identify and resolve their own employment and social needs. It recommended that the House of Lords be replaced by an elected chamber and additional devolved powers for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The report identified Local Government as needing additional powers and resources to enable devolved power to be delivered to local communities.

The report was thorough in its analysis of the social and economic problems that exist with its arguments backed up with factual evidence. It was critical of government policy, neoliberal economics and exposed the sham of the attempts to “level up” those areas of the country worst hit by imposed austerity.

- *However, unlike Benn’s Commonwealth Bill, the report didn’t address the existence of the inbuilt feudal institutions that prevent the country being truly democratic: no recommendations were made to be rid of the very institutions that currently place power and privilege in the hands of the entitled few who are not accountable to the public at large.*

Although the report was commissioned by the Labour Party, there has been no confirmation that the recommendations made will be acted upon now Labour has been elected to government.

While the results of the 2024 General Election gave Labour a large overall majority a number of Independent MP's were elected. Along with Jeremy Corbyn, four others were successful as a consequence of their support for the people of Gaza. The five Independent MP's are working together with the aim of co-ordinating their approach to everyday parliamentary debate and any forthcoming legislation.

- Given that agreement is being reached on a co-ordinated approach by the Independent MP's to pursue a non-neoliberal agenda, an opportunity could arise for them to explore the possibility of representing the interests of ASP in parliament regarding the New Britain report and following analysis arrive at a set of achievable improvements to the democracy and pursue them as a policy objective.

33. Cost of Living, Climate Crisis, Forever Wars and Neoliberalism

The very design of neoliberal principles is a direct attack on democracy.

Noam Chomsky

It's without question that a market led - neoliberal - capitalist economy first initiated by the Thatcher government in 1979 is responsible for the current bad state of the country. The lack of government regulation, the attacks on trade unionism, limited political choice and restrictions on the right to strike and protest have resulted in drastic cuts to public services, greater inequality and reduced living standards for working class people.

The **Cost of Living Crisis** where people have to make a choice between eating or heating, while the profits of companies soar, is a symptom of the inequalities that exist. While working class people have seen their wage levels stagnate, the wealthy have benefitted by becoming wealthier.

Failure by the government to adequately tackle the **Climate Crisis** is also neoliberal related; inaction in

pursuit of short term political gain by both the Tories and Labour means previously laid down objectives in achieving a carbon free economy have been cast aside without consideration of the long term climate consequences. While Net Zero is government policy, it's doomed to fail unless government regulation on the market is implemented. Leaving it to the market will not achieve Net Zero: given that a market led economy has created the climate crisis it's impossible to believe that that same market will solve it.

- While fossil fuel use has been universally identified as the main reason for global warming, the market having recognising its value as a very profitable industry, will endeavour therefore to make a case for its continued use whatever the environmental damage. Ignoring the need to switch to the renewable generation of energy despite the obvious environmental benefits. Pressure from environmentalists will need to be maintained on the Labour Government to intervene and regulate the market to ensure that Net Zero is achieved. The current "soft touch" form of regulation by

government is not the answer if the Climate Crisis is to be effectively tackled.

At a time of **Forever Wars** the war in Ukraine continues with only incremental gains being made by one side or the other; thousands have died on both sides and calls to end the slaughter by negotiating a just settlement fall on deaf ears; with those calling for peace being accused of lack of patriotism: the only winners from this war are the shareholders of the armament companies that have seen profits escalate; in a market led economy war is a very profitable business, There's a crying need for a negotiated settlement!

- **The cost of living crisis, failure to tackle climate change and ongoing conflicts have a common thread; a market-led economic unaccountable system that operates on exchange value rather than use value; answering the needs of the already wealthy at the expense of the rest of the population: with the wealthy having the power to determine how much if any of their**

accumulated wealth is allowed to “trickle down”.

As pointed out in Wikipedia

“Capitalism is inherently exploitative, alienating, unstable, unsustainable and creates economic inequality; it commodifies people and is anti-democratic leading to an erosion of human rights and national sovereignty while incentivising imperial expansion and war: benefitting a small wealthy and influential minority at the expense of the majority of the population”.

34. Corporations and Democracy

Claire Provost and Matt Kennard – members of the Centre for Investigative Journalism – have exposed in their book “Silent Coup – how corporations overthrew democracy” examples of the totally undemocratic control exercised by powerful multinational companies over national governments and local populations in the pursuance of profits and exploitation. The corporations are able to exert their interests by means of a body that acts as “a jury and executioner”. The little known “International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes” (ICSID)

enables corporations to challenge democratically arrived at decisions by nation states in pursuance of the corporation's right to invest and profit from their intervention. Many decisions are arrived at despite it not being in that particular country's interest. The ICSID which was established by the World Bank in 1944 has dealt with an explosion in the number of cases in recent years; by 2021 almost 900 had been heard and decided upon.

- *The authors argue that the facts reveal are “about corporate justice, corporate welfare, corporate territories and corporate armies – all on a global scale. This is a story that affects you no matter where you live” The book details many examples where democratic decisions arrived at locally and nationally are reversed as a result of the ICSID arriving at judgements in favour of corporate interests.*

35. Corporate Welfare

- *Ironically, capitalism ongoing survival as an economic model has depended upon successive governments using tax payers money to bail it out whenever “the market” operated in such a*

manner that it either threatened U.K. economic disaster or when its modus operandi was threatening the ongoing existence of an individual enterprise.

The 2008 bank crisis is an example of this practice; when the government injected an estimated net total of £137 billion, as a rescue package into the banking system: individual banks who were responsible for the near collapse of the entire banking system benefitted at the taxpayers expense.

While the cost of Social Welfare dominates the newspaper headlines Corporate Welfare gets no mention. Hardly a week goes by without a news story exposing some person supposedly “fiddling the system” .While benefit fraud amounts to an estimated £1.6bn per year unclaimed benefit is calculated to be £17bn.At the same time no mention is made of the vast amounts of taxpayer’s money which is given to private businesses. The IMF estimated that the 2008 banking crisis upfront costs amounted to £342bn while the projected costs of government support as a result of the Pandemic are estimated to have been £99bn.

State financial support for private businesses goes way beyond the periodic crises such as happened in 2008 and 2020. Subsidies, capital grants and tax benefits are part of the daily mix that make up core corporate welfare provision. And beyond this the government provides a host of direct and indirect benefits such as research and development costs that enable private businesses to flourish with little or no accountability.

- *Kevin Farnsworth a senior lecturer at York University has researched and published studies of corporate welfare for well over a decade. A report he produced in 2015 revealed that £93 billion in corporate welfare handouts were made to private businesses in the financial year 2012/3. While corporations keep financial gains they pass on financial losses to the State; summed up as “Privatising profits and socialising losses” More recent information on corporate handouts can be found on the corporate-welfare-watch.org.uk website.*

In addition it's estimated that tax avoidance amounts to £122bn per year!

So Capitalism as an economic model is maintained whatever the cost to the tax paying workers class or the environment. All aspects of ever day life are geared to maintain its ongoing existence. The tax funded education and health service acts as a conveyer belt that “educates” and keeps people fit and healthy to meet the needs of the market.

There’s no escaping “the market”; even in your own **living room**. We are bombarded with television adverts, which possibly cost more than the programmes they interrupt, promoting goods that we may not need but are persuaded to buy.

Celebrities are paid more money to take part in advertisements than what they could earn performing their everyday profession; the hope being that their involvement in selling products (which they very likely don’t believe in) may influence people to max out their credit cards on the latest or more up to date consumer item.

- *The corporate business world have always fought to maintain total decision making control over their own businesses; resisting government regulation of any kind. At the same time the*

corporate world benefit at all levels from government financial support. Neoliberalism has accelerated the shift to more tax payer's funded corporate support with even less accountability. The corporate world is only able to function as a result of day to day financial support from the public purse. If that is to continue then the input of tax payers money should only be provided if its linked to clearly identified social objectives, to the benefit of working class people and the environment; through, for example legally binding Planning Agreements.

36. Transition to a Socially Useful Economy

You can never change things by fighting the existing reality, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete

R.Buckmaster Fuller (1895-1983)

Given that the capitalist economic model is one of the main reasons for the current problems faced by the UK and the world as a whole, what would an alternative economic model that all could benefit from would consist of and how could it be implemented?

While it's recognised that capitalism is based on exchange value that mainly benefits the few a more equitable economic model would need to be based on use value if the many are to benefit.

Moving to an economy which answers social need will take time given the grip that capitalism has on everyday life and will most likely only be achieved through taking transitional steps towards what would be a more equitable and humane economical model.

An opportunity may arise as a consequence of the need to urgently tackle two issues which will materially affect people's lives: the accelerating Climate Crisis and the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into every day life including the workplace.

Failure by government to adequately deal with the climate crisis is well documented and referred to previously; while AI technology is so well advanced that implementation is imminent. Even those involved in the development of AI are concerned about how it would impact on people's lives and are calling for it to be regulated.

Notwithstanding the calls for regulation the governments preferred option most likely will be self-regulation with workers exposed to employers free to implement AI as a means of improving profitability. This “leave it to the market” neoliberal approach, based upon past experience, will not be in the best interests of working class people.

Despite past promises made that advances in technology would favour working people leading to more leisure time, that has not been the case. The introduction of new technology into the workplace has led to deskilling, job loss and the emergence of the gig economy.

While the advances in technology, such as AI, could and should be beneficial to people as a whole, it's use in a neoliberal capitalist economy will benefit those whose sole aim is maximise profit; the detrimental effects, arising from it's introduction, on people and the environment will be disregarded.

Faced with the twin threats of the catastrophic effects of the climate crisis and the introduction of AI and the failure of government and the market to positively respond, then it's necessary for the

working people of this country through their trade unions to resist job loss and along with community activists take action to bring about an economic model that works for them; both in the workplace and the communities where they live.

Moving to an economy which meets the needs of all people rather than the current market led model (which is geared to boost the wealth of a select few), will not be easy and will only be achieved by building on models already emerging or ones that have been tried in the past including Public Ownership of essential services.

- While the government policy of a carbon free economy by 2050 (Net Zero) means individual places of work will have to radically change the way they operate, it does provide an opportunity in trade union organised workplaces to negotiate outcomes which create “green” well paid jobs. The best way to achieve that goal is for the shop stewards to draw up a “workers plan” prior to negotiations which will identify the taking of transitional steps to meet the Net Zero target; at

the same time identifying emerging employment opportunities.

To draw up a credible workers plan it will need to be developed from the “bottom up”. The shop stewards will have to carry out an in depth consultation with the workforce, seek advice from environmentalists and academics and insist on being given total support from their own trade union Full Time Officials.

- *The models for workers plans are available; the most famous being the Lucas Plan. Not only did it undertake to be an alternative to making workers redundant but in doing so it proposed an alternative economic model democratically arrived at.*

The plan identified many examples of how the market led economy didn't answer social need; in proposing an alternative it identified that Socially Useful Production would be the main ingredient of a circular economy; which wouldn't waste valuable natural resources, would be more beneficial to the environment, didn't deskill workers and didn't destroy jobs.

- *In total proposing the social and peaceful use of technology: emphasising use value over exchange value by identifying unmet socially useful needs*

In proposing their plan the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards were not suggesting that all of their future workload would come under the category of being socially useful, although they may have desired that, they recognised that the main body of their work would mainly remain the same mix of Civil and Military aerospace component manufacture operating within the market led economy. In addition workers, not undertaking aerospace work, would be employed designing and manufacturing products that answered social need. In other words it was a transitional step away from a solely for profit economy, to an economy which answered social need.

- *The Combine Shop Stewards Lucas Plan primary aim was to save jobs but in doing so the shop stewards were also proposing an alternative use of technology, a more skilful way of working and taking a transitional step towards*

a socially useful economy. In developing the plan the shop stewards took account of wider community interests; acting as consumers as well as producers.

The Lucas Plan was developed to prevent further job loss at a time when the company's rationalisation plans had reduced the workforce, during a five year period, from 18,000 to 12,000. The plan proposed that workers should remain employed, rather than being made redundant, using their skills and the available technology to design and manufacture socially useful products. All the products were identified by the workforce emphasising the peaceful use of technology; including those that were environmental compatible and those that answered medical equipment needs.

- *The costs involved in retaining the workers in employment would have been met by redundancy payment savings, government grants and unpaid taxes that Lucas benefitted from at that time ie Corporate Welfare. If the Lucas Plan had been implemented it would have been a transitional step from a market led*

economy to a socially useful economy with the Lucas workers having identified products that answered the needs of society.

- As a means of achieving the aim of implementing the Lucas Plan the Combine shop stewards were successful in attracting funding from charitable trusts to establish and jointly manage centres in two different geographically placed Polytechnics. Both the Centre for Alternative Industrial Technology Systems(CAITS) and the Unit for the Development of Alternative Products(UDAP) provided the shop stewards with valuable research and product development back up in pursuing their aims.
- Given that both CAITS and UDAP are no longer in existence, the establishment of a similar present day centre for shop stewards to develop Workers Plans is necessary. Shop stewards would be a better served if they were able to draw upon research and academic support from a network of researcher's, academics, fellow trade unionist's and economist's.

- The think tank Common-Wealth is currently in support of establishing a centre for shop stewards to develop Workers Plan's and subject to attracting the necessary funds, the centre will be operational at some time during 2025.

37. UNITE and the Green Economy

The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.

Robert Swan, OBE

The Lucas Plan was considered by UNITE the union, as a model that could have been adopted by their worker members when they negotiated, within their own workplaces, the transition from a carbon to a green manufacturing process.

In their February 2023 Environment Quarterly Report (Issue 6) UNITE announced that their Environment Task Force were aiming to undertake a Just Transition Survey entitled:-

- Winning a Just Transition in the Workplace – Evolving the Lucas Plan to Address the Climate Emergency.

The project, which had socially useful production as a core component, would, if it had been approved by senior UNITE officials, workers being asked what they could and should do to decarbonise the production process in their workplace. The respondents to the project would have been encouraged to answer the questions by considering themselves in their dual role in society; both as producers and consumers.

- *The aim would have been to identify what workers should do in their workplaces, homes and communities to tackle climate change. The project aimed to break down the fabricated division that suggest there's no connection between those who work in the factory and the community at large. Survey questions would have involved community campaigns on recycling, reuse and repair. This wholistic approach would have stressed the importance of individuals tackling climate change collectively as workers, consumers and members of the local community.*

The proposed UNITE project would have recognised that workers in the manufacturing industry express their intelligence not so much by talking but how they organise and take action in their places of work. The project would have taken this positive approach into account when undertaking the survey.

- *The end goal of the project was to create a shared resort that could be used in a worker led Just Transition towards a decarbonised economy and society: the threat of job losses to be resisted and the project used to fight for the creation of good well paid green jobs for existing and future workforces.*

The proposed Taskforce aim was to distribute a provisional electronic survey amongst Combines and National Industrial Sector Committees within UNITE; initially to the Aerospace, Shipbuilding and Automotive sectors, with the aim of rolling it out to the other industry sectors at a later date.

In the case that the Taskforce had been successful in achieving the aims of the project, then this UNITE initiative would have been the gateway to workers' plans being developed in all of UNITE's organised

manufacturing bases, leading to negotiated well paid socially useful green jobs. The importance of the proposed UNITE's Taskforce "Just Transition in the Workplace" cannot be underestimated; it was recognised as an initiative that could have resulted in taking a transitional step towards a more socially useful green economy.

- Given the importance of this initiative it's regrettable that decisions were made by UNITE senior officials that the proposed Taskforce project wouldn't go ahead. This decision will be detrimental to the interests of UNITE's workplace shop stewards who had no say in the decision making. They will therefore will not now benefit from its adoption making it more difficult for them to make the transition to a green economy, with the resultant secure employment opportunities, in their own individual workplaces.
- The proposed UNITE project, of workers taking the initiative in meeting the decarbonsided government set target of Net Zero by 2050, could serve as a model which other workers in

the private and public sector and community organisations could and should adopt.

38. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

“Artificial Intelligence presents both opportunities and challenges for socialist movements. On the one hand it could be used to increase social wealth and productivity while on the other hand, it could be used to further entrench capitalist power and deepen the exploitation of workers”

Samir Amin Economist

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already having a profound effect on society, an impact that promises to become even greater as the technology becomes more sophisticated. Given that working class people or their trade union representatives have had no say in how AI will be used, there is no guarantee that its implementation into the workplace will be beneficial; in fact quite the opposite, given the negative effect the introduction of new technology into the workplace has had in the past when its introduction led to the loss of jobs, the deskilling of workers and an increase in profit making.

Forecasts of job loss resulting from AI's are frightening. McKinsey & Company reckon that AI will displace between 400 to 800 million jobs by 2030 with potential shifts in occupations affecting 375 million workers (3 to 14% of the total global workforce) who will need to switch jobs and learn new skills. They also predict the emergence of new jobs geared to service the needs of AI - and the market.

An example of the effect of job loss brought about by introducing AI at company level was reported by the Financial Times in August 2024. The FT revealed that the Swedish company Klarna "aims to extend artificial intelligence-driven cuts to its workforce with plans to axe almost half of its staff" The Klarna Chief Executive stated that the workforce, which had already been reduced from 5000 to 3800, could employ as few as 2000 employees in the coming years as it uses AI in tasks such as customer service and marketing. The C.E. was reported as saying "not only can we do more with less, but we can do much more with less" (employees). He indicated that if AI leads to lower employment then " it's an issue for government to worry about"

The transition to a more automated world will be a major challenge for many countries, as ensuring that workers have the skills and support needed to transition to new jobs will not be easy.

It's forecast that those most affected by AI will be workers currently employed in low skilled jobs, such as administrative tasks or logistical services. In other words those who haven't had the advantage of higher education and which has lead them to experiencing limited employment opportunities. If left to the market led economy, AI will lead to a growth in income differentials and mass unemployment.

For those that don't suffer job loss, increased automation, as a result of AI, will change the nature of employment, making workers more directly subordinate to technology and the commands of the market.

- AI technology is increasingly coming under the control of Big Tech companies. Since 2007 Google has bought 30 AI companies building themselves a huge monopoly. In 2016, Google, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon together with the Chinese mega - players spent

up to \$30 billion out of an estimated global total of \$39 billion on AI related research, development and acquisitions. Big Tech companies monopolising the market is dangerous; such concentration of power could lead to huge tech companies being able to exert undue influence over the decision making of democratically elected governments.

AI could be a force for good if control was not in the hands of those that mean to profit from its use; under democratic control it would enable people to benefit from more leisure time with AI being used for the common good. However in a market-led economy that's not the case and like the introduction of technology into the workplace in the past, only organised resistance will result in workers surviving its implementation.

To survive, workers will have a battle on their hands and the threat of AI will demand the need for a collective response which can only be achieved in trade union organised workplaces. However, the threat of AI as a destroyer of employment in the

market led economy could provide an opportunity for a transitional shift to a socially useful economy.

- Again, the Lucas Plan is a model which workers can take account of when they fight to retain jobs; drawing up workers plans of their own to negotiate secure employment which may involve, reduced working hours, retraining and a transitional step to socially useful employment, alongside the market led employment; in every workplace.

Every worker in every workplace is going to experience AI being a threat to their livelihoods; only through trade union organised resistance will they be best able to survive the onslaught.

- In the market led economy where workers are treated as a commodity and seen as a hindrance to maximising profit, replacing people with technology in the form of Artificial Intelligence will be an opportunity that the owners of capital will not hesitate to take advantage of. Only trade union organised workers that are committed to fight for well paid jobs will stand any chance of surviving

*catastrophic job loss and the chance to prosper,
as a result of AI being introduced into the
workplace.*

39. Socially Useful Work

The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.

Coretta Scott King (1927-2006)

In the community, work of a socially useful nature has been undertaken since the 2nd World War as a result of Atlee's Labour Government establishing the Welfare State. The National Health Service is one of the best examples of socially useful employment; there's nothing more socially useful than a tax funded, free when in need, service that heals the sick and restores people's wellbeing; the NHS is a beacon of our nation's social responsibility. However like all other public services the NHS has been affected by the shift to a market-led economy with it being subject to privatisation; the private health sector having benefited from numerous lucrative contracts.

An analysis carried out by the think tank We Own It revealed that £6.7 billion, or £10 million each week, left the NHS's budget in the form of profits on all private contracts given out by the NHS in the period between January 2012 and May 2024

The services provided by Local Authorities are also good examples of a socially useful economy; Council Housing, Care Workers, Social Workers, Library staff, Gardeners, Refuse Collectors and all the other numerous services provided by Councils throughout the country are there to provide support for all in their own localities.

However, the post war consensus of the market led economy operating side by side with taxpayer funded public services was systematically dismantled from 1979 onwards with a planned assault taking place on public services and the Welfare State.

- What is left is an underfunded, understaffed NHS and Council services stripped back to the bare bones; with the remaining public service workers pushed to pursue unachievable targets resulting in stress levels that have led to them

being alienated with the role that they undertake. While the managers exert extreme pressure on workers to perform their duties, the people being provided for express their displeasure at being victims of a declining service. Despite the problems they face on a day to day basis, Public Service workers go beyond their stipulated duties to provide a valuable socially useful service to the public.

40. Poverty and Community Support

Despite assurances from the Tory government in 2019 that Austerity was a thing of the past, government policies continued to satisfy the needs of the wealthy to the detriment of working class people; According to government statistics 14.4 million people were living in poverty in 2021/2 with 4.2 million children being affected; making it necessary for those affected to pursue their families nutritional needs by taking advantage of the food banks that have been established. Despite being elected, in July 2024, on the basis of bringing about change, Labour Government policies and policy

announcements indicate a continuing period of austerity being inflicted on working class people.

The Trussell Trust supports a network of 1300 foodbank centres in the UK, which provide a minimum of three days nutritionally balanced emergency food to people who have been referred; as well as support and advice to help people maximise their incomes and lift themselves out of poverty.

- Between April 2022 and March 2023 food bank centres in the Trussell Trust network provided 3 million food supplies to people in crisis, a 37% increase on the previous year. The Trust are opposed to the need for foodbanks, and have indicated in a five-year strategic plan that they've launched, how that is possible. Although the plan is ambitious they believe it's achievable. In the short term the Trust is calling on the government to make the amount paid in Universal Credit to at least cover the cost of life's essentials; such as food, household bills and travel costs.

FareShare is the UK's national network of charitable food distributors, made up of 18 independent organisations. Together, they take good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and distribute it to nearly 8,500 frontline charities and community groups; each week they provide enough food to create almost a million meals for vulnerable people.

- Three million tonnes of good food is wasted by the UK food industry every year which is enough for seven billion meals. At the same time, millions people are struggling to afford to eat. FareShare addresses both these two issues by redistributing the food industry surplus, which would otherwise go to waste, to the people who need it most.

According to The Food Foundation nine million adults and four million children struggle to get enough to eat as a result of the cost of living crisis: the numbers having dramatically increased since the height of the pandemic.

At a time when families were having to choose whether to eat or heat, a coalition of 140 charities,

MP's and relevant organisations sent an open letter to the Tory Prime Minister in September 2023 calling for a long term solution to the UK energy crisis as households face record winter bills which were 13% higher than in 2022. An NEA poll showed that 34% of people struggle to pay their heating bills without government support. A consultation on a social tariff - cheaper bills for people claiming universal credit, pension credit and other benefits, previously promised by the government - had not been carried out by November 2023.

- *The Warm this Winter campaign revealed that energy firms operating costs amounted to £242 of the annual cost of customer's bills, with more being spent on marketing, such as TV adverts and sponsoring football teams, than is spent on customers call centres. The campaign pointed out that energy suppliers are expected to make an additional £140 million in profit from the nation's energy bills over the next 12 months, equivalent to £64.70 per customer, following changes to the Ofgem price cap which came into force in October 2023.*

The TUC's assistant general secretary Katy Bell is on record as saying :-

- *“The UK's energy system is broken and the poorest households, who pay a disproportionate part of their income to keep their homes warm, are the most affected; a social tariff is urgently needed and the energy utilities should be brought back into Public Ownership”*

Zarach is yet another charity that's been established as a result of the lack of a basic need – a bed for children to sleep in.

Bex Wilson an Assistant Head Teacher at an inner-city Primary School in Leeds, has created a charity that “delivers beds and basics to children in poverty” with the aim of helping families in crisis “rise up from surviving to thriving” Thousands of children in Leeds are going to sleep hungry and cold; without a proper bed of their own. Poverty is a problem that has a significant effect on a child's education. By providing something to eat and a good night's sleep Zarach gives every child an equal chance to learn and succeed at school.

Bex Wilson set up Zarach after her experience in the classroom.

- “Whilst teaching an 11 year old boy, I noticed he was scratching his tummy. He told me he and his younger brother shared a cushion to sleep on. A cushion that had bed bugs which made his tummy itchy. At the time I was in the middle of teaching a lesson on irregular tense verbs. I realised I had a choice; to be satisfied that I’m teaching him grammar because it’s what I’m paid to do, or to continue to be the best teacher I can be whilst also using my time and influence to make sure every child in our city has their basic needs met, gets a good night’s sleep and an equal opportunity to get the best education at school”

Zarach sees the problems that poverty causes every day and considers that the government should do more to help: meanwhile Bex Wilson is using her skills and passion to make an immediate difference.

- Zarach are dealing with 35 referrals a week and up to now have delivered 4,150 bed bundles; to all the 400 school partners in their referral

network. A Zarach bed bundle consists of a brand-new bed, mattress, duvet, pillow, bed sheets, pyjamas and hygiene kit. They also work with local partners to include food parcels and, if needed, a school uniform.

The above examples are just a sample of the effects of the market-led economy which has been governed by the Tory's between 2010 and 2024. While politicians of all parties argue about the best way to prevent desperate people from crossing the English Channel and talk-up the merits of spending billions of pounds on increased militarisation; children are relying on charitable donations to be adequately fed, kept warm and have a bed to sleep in at night. The previous Tory government and the current Labour Government and their adherence to neoliberalism has failed those kids.

- Neoliberal economic policies initiated by the Thatcher government have destroyed the Welfare State to the extent that those who are most in need will only survive as long as charitable donations are forthcoming. The funding of public services is increasingly reliant

on charitable donations. Not a day goes by without the call for the public at large to contribute to services which should be state funded by means of an equitable tax system.

While the shift to charity funding of public services and people in need is an abdication of government responsibility and should be opposed, Trussel Trust, Fareshare and Zarach and all the other charities should be congratulated for the way that they've responded to the needs of the victims of neoliberal economic policies.

- Likewise, it needs to be recognised that the charities efforts would be in vain if people did not respond by volunteering to, for example, distribute the food donated to the foodbanks. As always when required; the working class donate and organise to support their fellow working class people when they are in need.

The cost of living crisis has also resulted in the emergence of community based initiatives in support of families in need. Community Hubs and Social Café's provide cheap meals, benefits advice and social activities on a daily basis. This again is

evidence of grass roots organised support when the state and the market-led economy fails to provide for working class people.

- *The emergence of these community based grass root initiatives, organised to provide support for those in need, is evidence of what could be an emerging fringe economy which is none profit making and answers social need. Given different economic and political circumstances these Community Hubs and Social Café's could evolve into none profit making businesses and worker cooperatives; providing employment opportunities while answering the needs of the community where they are based.*

41. Energy Company Profits and Community Based Solutions

Fossil fuel companies such as Shell and BP have made record profits from increased demand following the Covid Pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

According to Bristol Energy Cooperative, Shell made global profits of nearly £12bn in the first six months of 2023, this on top of record profit making in 2022. No tax was paid on these profits: Shell instead received a tax return of £8mn from the government. Loopholes allow fossil fuel companies to claim back 91% of the government levied windfall tax if they spend the money on developing new oil and gas projects.

This means the British people are effectively funding companies, through their taxes, to fossil fuel further climate catastrophe.

Bristol Energy Cooperative (BEC) is one of a number of community based non-profit making projects generating renewable energy for people in the communities use.

- BEC have attracted investment from over 1500 people and since 2011 have distributed over £350,000 in direct community benefit funds to the local region as well as £40,000 a year savings to their

rooftop host sites. BEC are calling for the government to increase the current grant of £10mn for community energy initiatives. Increased government funding will give people an incentive to satisfy their own renewable energy needs; at the same time community renewable energy generation will make a valuable contribution to achieving the governments laid down Net Zero aim of being carbon free by 2050. For more information on BEC see <https://bristolenergy.coop>

As a result of the astronomical rise in energy prices and the corresponding energy company profit making, people in the community, either individually or collectively, such as the BEC example, are taking control of their own energy needs by installing solar panels and domestic wind turbines. In the absence of the government urgently shifting from fossil fuel energy generation to renewables, community based renewable energy initiatives should be encouraged to flourish and be financially supported.

42. Devolved Community Power

“Levelling up” is being undertaken by the government in answer to their interpretation of the social and economic needs of communities which have been “left behind”. Who or how the decisions to allocate resources are arrived at is unsure, but it most certainly is determined by those who have limited knowledge of the actual needs of the community involved. Community needs should be identified locally by those most affected and not by those based centrally or Metro-Mayor level.

Every community should be encouraged and assisted by the relevant Local Authority to develop its own community plan identifying local needs and aspirations. If this occurs it will start the process of working class people either individually or collectively being in charge of their own destiny; participating in the decision making to improve their communities and be enabled to bid for the necessary resources to undertake those improvements.

During their 14 years in government the Tory’s market-led policies decimated working class

people's living standards and cut public services to the bone. Refusing to be browbeaten, working class people have responded collectively to support each other; especially those in most need. Whether it be through their trade unions pursuing wage claims, contributing to and helping out at food banks or volunteering to provide support in the community; working class people have combined their efforts in an attempt to offset the worst effects of the cuts to their living standards.

Taking an optimistic view of the future is difficult given the ongoing drift into a closed authoritarian society, yet mainly due to the resilience of working class people a number of community based initiatives show promise and could be built upon to provide employment opportunities and answer local needs.

If the Labour Government is serious in its intention to truly devolve power, decision making and the associated funding should be put into the hands of the people in the communities most affected.

The Preston Model is one example of how community led self sufficiency can tackle market led

austerity. Following the failure of an economic development plan based on attracting inward investment, Preston City Council saw the need for a new approach to address the growing needs of the city and its people. In 2013, they enlisted The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to help make it happen. Preston decided to challenge trickle down economics by harnessing the potential of its existing wealth within local public bodies as anchor institutions. CLES, drawing on their Community Wealth Building initiatives in Cleveland (USA) and Mondragon in the Basque Country adopted the same approach to Preston. CLES undertook a study of the procurement policies of Preston Council, the University of Central Lancashire, Lancashire County Council, Preston's College, Cardinal Newman College, Lancashire Constabulary and Community Gateway Association. In 2013, CLES identified that 95% of total spend on goods and services that the above public bodies bought in were from suppliers outside of Preston, while total spend outside of Lancashire amounted to 61%. To meet the needs of the community CLES managed to cajole and encourage the public bodies to form a partnership

with Preston Council in redirecting their expenditure needs, through community based businesses, back into the Preston and Lancashire economy. When necessary, Cooperatives and non profit making businesses were created to fill the gap in meeting the procurement needs of the partners. The Preston Model insisted that the businesses involved adopted corporate social responsibility policies and paid the living wage to employees.

As a result, an evaluation of the Preston Model carried out in 2016/17 showed an increase in spend by the partners to Preston based organisations amounted to 18.2% (from 5%) equivalent to an extra £75m to the local economy. While in the County of Lancashire it amounted to 79.2% (from 39%) providing an increase of £200m.

These results are impressive and the economic and social benefits of the Preston Model is a good example of community self-sufficiency; making it worthy of consideration by other Local Authorities.

43. In Conclusion.....

An analysis of the events that have taken place over the last fifty years hopefully gives more

understanding on why this country, which has the 6th largest economy, has arrived at a situation where working class people are suffering from a decline in living standards, a climate crisis, escalating energy prices and “forever wars”.

A summary of the analysis and conclusions arrived at are as follows:-

42.1 Tory and Labour Governments

- The 1974/9 Labour Government failed to take political advantage of the upsurge in working class resistance which took place in the workplace and at community level to the economic and the social status quo.
- While the opposition to the radical economic and democratic change being proposed at grassroots level was to be expected from those who represent the interests of the corporate business world, failure by Labour Government Ministers and Full Time Trade Union Officials to challenge corporate power prevented radical change to the relationship between those who accumulate capital and those working class people who create it. One example of the many

opportunities the Labour Government had of challenging the economic status quo was their refusal to exert pressure on Lucas Aerospace management to adopt the Combine shop stewards Lucas Plan. Implementing the plan would have resulted in making a transitional step to a democratically arrived at socially useful economy.

- The consequences of the failure of the 1974/9 Labour Government to take advantage of the many opportunities presented to them by grass root activists to bring about radical economical and democratic reform, was to open the door to subsequent Tory Governments (representing corporate interests) to enact policies that have led to the current economic and social problems being experienced by working class people.
- The 1979 Tory General Election victory aim was to quell the grassroots unrest, by enacting economic policies that destroyed the post war consensus of a public/private mixed economy. State owned assets were privatised, financial markets de-regularised, anti-trade union laws

introduced and income tax was reduced (benefitting the highest earners) and replaced by the more regressive VAT and Poll Tax.

Thatcher's revolutionary free-market economic anti-working class policies established the groundwork for today's social and economic problems. In effect sowing the seeds of dismantling the Welfare State.

- The 1997/2010 Labour Government made no attempt to reverse policies, introduced by the Tory's, which were detrimental to working class peoples interests and the country as a whole; failing to live up to the expectations of those who elected them by embracing rather than regulating the neoliberal economy.
- The opportunity for a change of political direction in favour of working class peoples interest offered by the Labour Party, was available in the General Elections of 2017 and 2019. That opportunity was missed as a consequence of an orchestrated campaign from those in support of the neoliberal status quo and from those less progressive Labour Party elements.

- The election of the Tory's in 2019 was instrumental in further reducing working class living standards as a result of Brexit and the needless loss of many lives as a consequence of the governments mishandling of the Pandemic.
- The electorate, in the 2024 General Election, were faced with the choice of the two main political parties proposing policies which did not materially address the domestic and international problems faced by working class people
- The past 50 year period has illustrated how the Conservative Party have been politically successful in achieving their political aims by creating an unfettered market-led economy, cutting working peoples living standards and privatising public services. At the same time the Labour Party has missed a number of opportunities to achieve it's founding ambitions of shifting the wealth and power in favour of working class people. Labour have maintained the status quo, managing the capitalist economy

rather than challenge it; maintaining the power and wealth with the Few at the expense of the Many.

42.2 Working Class living standards and the wealthy

Living standards and the public services that working class people very much rely on have dramatically deteriorated to the point that many people, both working and unwaged, rely on foodbanks and charity to survive. At the same time those with wealth have become wealthier.

- The 2023 U.K. Poverty report showed that in 2021/2 there were 13.4 million people (20% of the population) in poverty.
- The richest 10% of households have 43% of all wealth with the top 0.1% seeing their share of total wealth double between 1984 and 2013.
- By contrast the poorest 50% own just 9% of the total wealth.
- By 2022 incomes for the poorest 14 million people fell by 7.5% whilst incomes for the richest fifth saw a 7.8% increase.

- The number of U.K. billionaires has increased from 15 in 1990 to 171 in 2023.
- Other developed countries such as Spain, Norway and Switzerland don't have the same high levels of income inequality due to them introducing a tax on wealth.
- *TaxJustice.UK identified of how £50bn could be raised by taxing wealth on the same basis as taxing income, a policy supported by the Resolution Foundation, the IMF and many other organisations. YouGov polling shows overwhelming public support for the policy with 78% being in favour. The £50bn raised could be used to restore funding to the austerity hit public services and address the needs of those experiencing poverty.*

42.3 Energy; consumer costs and Corporate profits

- While household energy costs have soared the energy companies are using surging

profits to vastly increase shareholder pay outs; following the Pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the corresponding increased demand for energy has resulted in the energy company profits vastly increasing while householders are having to choose between eating or heating.

- The household gas price in October 2023 was 60% higher than 2021 while electricity bills increased by 40%.(HMGov)
- The 45 energy firms made an average of \$237bn a year in windfall profits in 2021/2.(Forbes)
- Shell declared profits of £32bn in 2022, BP made £23bn, while Centrica, who owns British Gas, tripled its profits of the previous year to amass £3.3bn out of which £200 million was paid to shareholders.
- A Common Wealth think tank report revealed that Britain's energy network operator National Grid, has paid out almost £28bn in dividends since privatisation while the pace of investment has stagnated.

- Opinion polls indicate that 66% of people consider that energy should be under Public Ownership instead of its generation, transmission, distribution and supply remaining privatised.
- Public Ownership of energy would have saved U.K. consumers £45bn in a year: equivalent to £1800 per household. This would have prevented the massive increases to energy bills in 2022. (UNITE the union report) The estimated total* cost of Public Ownership would be £90.3bn
- Consumer prices are 20/30% lower in countries where energy is publically owned.
- The think tank WeOwnit report estimates that the cost of partially* bringing the energy system into public ownership would cost between £24bn and £36.6bn. WeOwnit say that the yearly estimated savings of £3.2bn paid to shareholders, means it would only take 10 years to recoup the initial investment.

*UNITE costs are based on all functions of the current system being brought back into public

ownership; involving its generation, transmission, distribution and supply. While Weownit public ownership costs are based on some functions remaining in the private sector.

Due to the volatility of the energy market, individual householders and non-profit community based organisations are taking control of their own energy needs by installing equipment that will self-generate electricity and reduce their carbon footprint.

According to the Energy Saving Trust there are a number of ways to self-generate renewable energy. Solar panels, wind turbines and biomass systems are all suggested; with the installation of solar panels being identified as being the most cost effective way of generating green electricity.

- *The Trust says that a typical domestic solar PV system would cost between £5000 and £8000 while the necessary addition of a solar hot water system would cost a further £3000 to £5000. The Trust estimate that the average payback time on a solar panel system is 7.5 years. Which makes the self generation of energy needs a*

viable option and should be encouraged, with financial incentives being made available by government

42.4 The Climate Crisis

The Climate Crisis is the biggest threat faced by the human race and demands leadership by all politicians to take action to prevent environmental disaster; disgracefully that action is not taking place. The Tory Government put their short term electoral interests as a priority rather than the interests of future generations. That government's own Climate Change Committee was critical of action not being taken to meet laid down targets. The necessary switch from fossil fuel energy generation to renewable sources was shown not to be a priority shown by the following:

- Hundreds of North Sea oil and gas licences granted by the government in 2023.
- Tax breaks of £24m per week given to oil and gas companies (Channel 4 - The Big Climate Fight).

- The Tory Government plan for green industrial revolution revealed that low cost renewables such as onshore wind turbines and solar photovoltaic farms were excluded, more speculative and controversial technologies such as “advanced nuclear” and carbon capture utilisation were preferred at a cost of many millions of pounds.(Scientists for Global Responsibility) While the Labour Government have made incremental moves to address the Climate Crisis they are following in the footsteps of the Tory’s by investing £22bn in carbon capture technology and including nuclear power and fossil fuel in the future energy need mix.
- Despite opposing the fourth Heathrow runway while in opposition, in January 2025 the Labour Government announced the go-ahead.This decision was reached despite the environmental implications
- UEA organised COP 28 was criticised for compromising 2023 climate talks; the chairman being a climate change sceptic and

using the opportunity to negotiate fossil fuel deals with those attending the talks. Similar criticism has been levelled at the COP29 Chairman of the climate talks taken place in 2024.

- Failure of U.K. government's and the business world to adequately address the Climate Crisis is indicated by the failure to be on target to achieve the 1.5 degrees above pre industrial temperature level by 2050. Without taking more radical action its predicted that a temperature rise of 2.6 degrees will materialise. In these circumstances it's important that "bottom up" action from a combination of environmentalists, trade unionists, academics and scientists is maintained to bring about a change in government direction. However it will not be easy to achieve given that many environmentalists are being criminalised for taking protest action, with a number of Stop Oil environmental campaigners being

imprisoned for protesting against government inactivity. It's to be hoped that Extinction Rebellion are successful in their efforts to coordinate environmental groups to hold mass protests and so influence government climate policy.

42.5 Defence spending and Armament Sales

The threat posed by the Climate Crisis demands a concerted effort by all countries to maximise their efforts and resources to tackle the threat. However despite the need to cooperate their efforts, conflict in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Gaza and other theatres of war are diverting attention and resources away from tackling environmental changes which will detrimentally affect people in all countries. Not only does armed conflict have a devastating human life cost, it also has an environmental cost meaning that, in a time of “forever wars”, the climate crisis is not being averted but exacerbated.

- *A neoliberal capitalist economy aim is to maximise profit whatever the social costs and fossil fuel and armaments industry are two of the*

most profitable industries available for shareholders to benefit from. Only the establishment of an economy which operates on a use value rather than exchange value will working class people and the environment benefit.

The following gives an indication of the priority given to defence spending rather than tackling the climate crisis.

- The worlds wealthier nations are spending 30 times more on military power than on tackling the Climate Crisis.(Transnational Institute)
- Total global military expenditure increased by 3.7% in 2022 to reach \$2240(£1764)bn with the U.S. being the biggest spender at \$877(£691)bn.(Stockholm International Peace Research Institution)
- While the U.K. average annual spending between 2021/5 on reducing carbon emissions will remain static at £2.8bn, the military budget of £6bn in 2022 rose to an estimated £6.5bn in 2024.(Scientists for Global Responsibility)

- The U.S. is the world's biggest weapons exporter accounting for 40% of the total volume of world sales in the years 2018/22. The U.K. was the 7th biggest with 3% of the total volume.
- The U.K. arms exports nearly doubled in 2022 to £8.5bn, the biggest rise since records began. The highest levels of arms exports went to Qatar (£2.7bn), Saudi Arabia (£1.1bn) and Turkey (£434m) all countries with poor human rights records. (Campaign Against Arms Trade)
- Between 2015 and 2024 the Tory Government licenced over £472mn worth of arms to Israel including components for aircraft, drones, bombs, missiles and tanks. (Declassified UK) In 2024 the Labour Government reduced this amount by only 10% despite the ever increasing death rate in Gaza; 70% of which are women and children
- Next to the U.S. the U.K. is the second largest donor to Ukraine by committing to pay them £4.6bn in military assistance in the years 2022/23. (HMGov) Following the Labour Government being elected in 2024, Kier Starmer

has promised an annual amount of £2.5bn to Ukraine “as long as it takes”

- Between 2012 and 2022 the U.K. exported £30m of military equipment to Russia, including components for military helicopters, warships and ammunition. (Action on Armed Violence)
- The U.K. budget for all military spending in 2022 was \$68.5(£53.9bn) compared to the U.S. budget of \$877(£691bn) Six of the ten top arms manufacturers are U.S. based. Five of them made profits of \$196(£154bn) in 2022.(Defence News)
- The estimated U.S. costs of war in Iraq and Syria between 2003 and 2023 are \$1,793(£1412bn) while the Iraq human life costs, amount to between 550,000 and 580,000 civilians and combatants.(Watson Institute International & Public Affairs)
- *Neoliberal Capitalism enables the market-led economy to function unfettered by regulatory forces.It’s aim is to maximise profit without taking account of the social costs to working class people and the environment. Fossil fuel*

and the armament industries are two of the most profitable available for shareholders to benefit from, whatever the social cost. Only the establishment of an economy which operates on a use value rather than exchange value will working class people and the environment benefit.

While capitalism cannot function without the everyday commitment of working class people; working class people, the communities where they live and the overall environment would be better served by an economy that was based on its social usefulness rather than the existing capitalist, solely for profit, economy.

42.6 Democratic Reform

During the period between 2019 and 2024 the Tory Government made political decisions that resulted in devastating cuts to working class living standards, failed to take the necessary steps to tackle climate change, made little effort to control the escalating costs of energy, promoted the active encouragement of “forever wars” and provided armaments to Israel despite the escalating

genocide taking place of the indigenous Palestinian people. All took place despite public opinion indicating opposition to many of these policies actively pursued by a Tory Government, led by an unelected Prime Minister. This lack of accountability and the ignoring of public opinion gives every indication of the inadequacy of the U.K. democracy. Labour since being elected are following the same pattern.

- *The electorate are subject to a limited choice of parliamentary representation given that M.P.'s are elected by virtue of being first past the post and not by the more democratic proportional representation method.*

Given the Tory Government's abysmal record, it was no surprise that their vote collapsed by 20% (based on 2019 GE result) enabling Labour to be elected in 2024. Although Labour made huge seat gains at the expense of the Tory's, their large overall majority came about as a result of the "first past the post" electoral system and the abandonment of Tory support. Labour's overall vote decreased from 10.3 million in 2019 to 9.7

million in 2024 was indicative of the UK voter's lack of enthusiasm for what Labour were offering. Working class people were faced with a choice between the two major political parties which offered little or no change from the neoliberal status quo.

On being elected, Labour confirmed their adherence to the status quo by maintaining the two child benefit cap. They followed this up by removing the Winter Fuel Payment from the majority of pensioners, cut overseas aid and announced their intention of reducing Personal Independent Payments to the disabled. At the same time they gave notice of their intention to increase Defence spending at the expense of . overseas aid.

These decisions give every indication of the Labour Government's direction of travel. Labour have stated that fiscal discipline will determine future policy decisions and their first budget in October 2024, which missed the opportunity of introducing a wealth tax, confirmed that approach. Since being elected the Labour Government have

shown no inclination to represent the interests of working class people and their opinions. Despite the electorate's total rejection of the 2019/2024 Tory Government policies, Labour have by and large maintained a similar direction of travel. Their approach to the problems faced by the country's working class people will not be significantly different to that of the previous government on both domestic and foreign policy issues. By stating their intentions to increase "defence" spending at the expense of resolving social issues, the Labour Government are, quite rightly, being accused of pursuing warfare aims instead of answering welfare needs.

This despite opinion polls, the results of which are shown below, indicating that the government policies don't reflect public opinion on the issues that affect working class people's everyday lives.

A failure to reflect public opinion could have a devastating effect on Labour's future electoral prospects and this is reflected in opinion polls undertaken soon after they outlined policies at odds with working class people's interests.

Opinion polls are showing that support for Labour has plummeted with Reform UK benefitting from the government's unpopularity.

Unless the Labour Government brings about meaningful change in favour of working class people, between 2024 and 2029, the electorate, based upon current predictions, will more likely turn to the Farage led Reform Party, following in the footsteps of the US electorate's decision to elect Trump.

To give some understanding of the effect of 14 years of policies pursued by the Tory Government has had, the following guide shows the deterioration in working class people's living standards and the corresponding increase in the wealth of the richest in the UK.

In 2010 there were 35 Foodbanks

In 2024 there were 3,572 Foodbanks

In 2010 the combined wealth of the richest 1000 was £248bn

In 2024 the combined wealth of the richest was over £1trillion.

Unless the Labour Government implements policies to redistribute the wealth which is available in the UK, then their 2024 electoral slogan of Change will not materialise and the 2029 electorate will turn their backs on them.

As an indication of the Labour Government's disregard for public opinion

- A YouGov poll showed that 73% of people supported the introduction of a wealth tax of 2% on wealth of over £5 million. This proposal attracted support from people of all political parties.
- In January 2021 the United Nations Development Programme reported results of The Peoples Climate Vote which involved responses from 1.2 million people in 50 countries. 64% of respondents considered climate change to be an emergency. The results presented “a clear and convincing call for decision makers to step up their ambition”

- Survation polled 4300 people on the question “do you think the following services should be run in the private sector or the public sector” The response showed that 66% wanted to see energy, water and other essential services returned to public ownership.
- According to a YouGov poll carried out in October 2023, 76% of the 2,685 U.K. people approached were in support of a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian resistance in Gaza.
- *The Labour Governments policies are at odds with public opinion, highlighting a lack of accountability and the inadequacies of our democratic system. Decentralising power and finance away from parliament is a necessary step if working class people are to be provided with the opportunity to participate in national and community decision making.*
- *Working people create the profits yet have no say in company decision making. In line with other advanced economies Industrial*

Democracy should also be introduced into the U.K. workplace.

42.7 Alliance for Social Progress

Cuts in living standards, failure to tackle the man made climate crisis, escalating energy costs and “forever wars” are all occurring at a time when the neoliberal market led economy predominates.

- To begin the process of tackling these problems, transitional steps should be taken towards a more participatory democracy and socially useful economy; shifting the power in decision making and funding away from the centre and into the community to better serve the interests of working class people.

Failure of the politicians to respond to popular opinion means that only ongoing “bottom up” organised resistance to neoliberalism and the

pursuance of alternative policies that represents the interest of people and in tune with the environment is the way forward.

History shows that effective political change originates from grass roots direct action and pressure. Abolition of the slave trade, trade unionism, the right to vote and race equality are among some of the rights fought for by activists that proved to be successful and which led to supportive legislation.

- *It's in these circumstances that only organised coordinated resistance, action and a fight for an alternative to neoliberalism will succeed. The current approach by campaign groups on the cost of living, climate, energy prices and peace seeking are laudable but have largely not achieved success. While the argument they put forward is good, the individual fragmented approach weakens their effectiveness; only a combined approach, linking all of the issues, will stand a chance*

of proving successful. Free market neoliberalism is the underlying reason for the identified problems: necessitating coordinated resistance and the development of a progressive alternative pursued.

The narrative expressed by the Tory's, the current Labour Government and their media friends is that "there's no alternative". Only pressure from the "bottom up" will change the narrative, given that the electorate are faced with no feasible political alternative. A non-parliamentary progressive alliance needs to show that an alternative is possible and could be adopted - given that the political will exists to carry it out.

- The Alliance would consist of activists involved in campaigns covering peace, environment, energy and cost of living issues; trade unionists and academics would also play an important role in such an Alliance. Those involved would

recognise that their individual campaigns are interrelated and the importance of combining their efforts to resist collectively all attempts to prevent their individual campaigns from not being successful. The Alliance would also need to develop a viable alternative taking account of public opinion and fight for it's implementation.

- To assist the process of combining a "progressive alliance" the establishment of a centre should be pursued as the catalyst of a research/academic network and to enable trade unionists to draw up workers plans
- The emphasis should be on bringing about change from the "bottom up" with the overall aim being the construction of an Alternative Plan for the UK which would not only counter the Tory/Labour neoliberal status quo but face up to the

*emerging far right narrative of Reform
UK - prior to the 2029 General Election.*

42.8 An Alternative Plan for the U.K.

The Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards tactic of developing The Lucas Plan, which argued for job retention making socially useful products, as an alternative to their management's policy of rationalisation and redundancy, was an effective means of putting the pressure back on management to defend their "need for redundancy" argument. The philosophy of answering social needs rather than putting skilled workers on the dole attracted universal support and is relevant today as it was back in 1976; when the Lucas Plan was launched.

The Lucas Plan is a good example of the importance of opposing unpopular decision making by not only resisting those decisions but also by illustrating there is a viable alternative available which answers social needs.

The "progressive alliance" should therefore develop and promote an alternative set of policies in keeping

with working class people's interest and that are environmentally sound.

The following policies are examples which based on informed public opinion should appeal to a majority of the electorate:

- Introduce a wealth tax and use funds to alleviate poverty and restore public services.
- Take essential services such as energy, water, rail and post into Public Ownership.
- Encourage and subsidise individual and community based renewable self-generating energy needs.
- Put more effort and resources into tackling the climate crisis; making the immediate switch from fossil fuel to renewable energy generation.
- Devolve power away from Parliament into the regions, to create a more participating democracy in the community and workplace.
- Have an independent non-aligned Foreign Policy that promotes peace and equality.

- Defence policy should be determined by UK needs rather than global reach. Arms sales to other countries should be halted.
- Tackle the climate crisis by pursuing a policy of industrial demilitarisation ensuring that support is given to workers make the transition to jobs that create a green economy .
- Workers to undertake socially useful work within their own workplaces, as and when the market-led economy fails to provide ongoing employment opportunities.
- Enable Councils to undertake building programmes that answer affordable social housing needs.
- Remove the two child benefit cap to enable 250,000 children being lifted out of poverty
- Restore the Winter Fuel Allowance to all pensioners thus saving up to 4000 early deaths.

- While the above policies would be a suitable “alternative” to those put forward by the Tory’s and Labour in a future General Election, the Alliance should also have long term aims, as modern day Chartists, pursuing, for example, extensive top to bottom democratic reform and an economic model that has social value rather than exchange value as core elements.
- Capitalism and our so called democracy work against the interests of working class people and the long term survival of the Planet.
- Let us start the process of bringing about change from the "bottom up" before it's too late!!

Prologue






“That concludes “My View from the Sidelines”.

Although I was fully involved as a Lucas Aerospace Combine shop steward in the development of The Lucas Plan and the fight to get it implemented, the views expressed in this report are mine and mine alone; with the help of the sources I have identified.

Like painting the Forth Bridge, by the time I had finished it was necessary for me to go back to the beginning and bring it up to date because many of the events referred to are constantly evolving; however now is the time when I am “putting the paint brush down” and finishing it off.

To the best of my knowledge it's error proof, however if not I apologise - it's not intentional! Hopefully, those that read this report will get a better understanding of how this country ended up in its current state and involve themselves in campaigns, demonstrations and/or petition signing to improve matters; history shows that only pressure from the





To	brian.salisbury1935@gmail.com  Person  Person  Person
Cc	 Person
Bcc	 Person
Subject	A view from the sidelines

To	 Person  Person  Person
Cc	 Person
Bcc	 Person
Subject	

"bottom up" will bring about meaningful change".

This analysis is dedicated to John Routley who's sudden death in September 2024 was a shock to us all. John was a friend, comrade and fellow former Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Steward. All his life he fought for improved living standards for working class people and a more peaceful world. John's friendship and his contribution to the struggle for social justice will be sorely missed.

Brian Salisbury February 2025

To	 Person  Person  Person
Cc	 Person
Bcc	Brian Salisbury
Subject	

To	👤 Person 👤 Person 👤 Person
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