

The Critical Mass Sunday Socialist

July 10th 2022

THIS CANNOT GO ON!

British politics is broken.

When a senior politician can include a flagrant lie in their resignation letter complaining about a lack of integrity in politics, it shows the depths we are plumbing.

Nadhim Zahawi had no reason to mention Jeremy Corbyn or to regurgitate the discredited anti-semitism charges, but telling a lie about your opponent to the serial liar you backed is a sign of a political system that is rapidly eating itself.

That nobody in the Labour Party even thought it worth mentioning that this outrageous slur had been used is a clear sign that any pretence that Starmer's pathetic bunch of would-be establishment lackies is as unfit for high office as those they intend to replace.

Interestingly, Question Time wheeled out Alistair Campbell to discuss honesty and integrity. This is a man who knowingly doctored a thesis to use it to advance the war aims of the then Prime Minister, largely you might recall against the wishes of the electorate. It is hard to believe that such a man can lecture anybody on ethics.

That the Tories hate the working class, except when they are voting for them, is not really a secret. The real scandal here is not what one Tory did to another, or even the number of lies that they have told, but rather that the public have no choice at all to replace one bunch of pro-establishment apologists with another.

So there is every reason why we must build a grassroots movement that sees Parliament for what it is - a rich person's plaything - and build it among the decent, honest, hard working people who remain the backbone of this country.

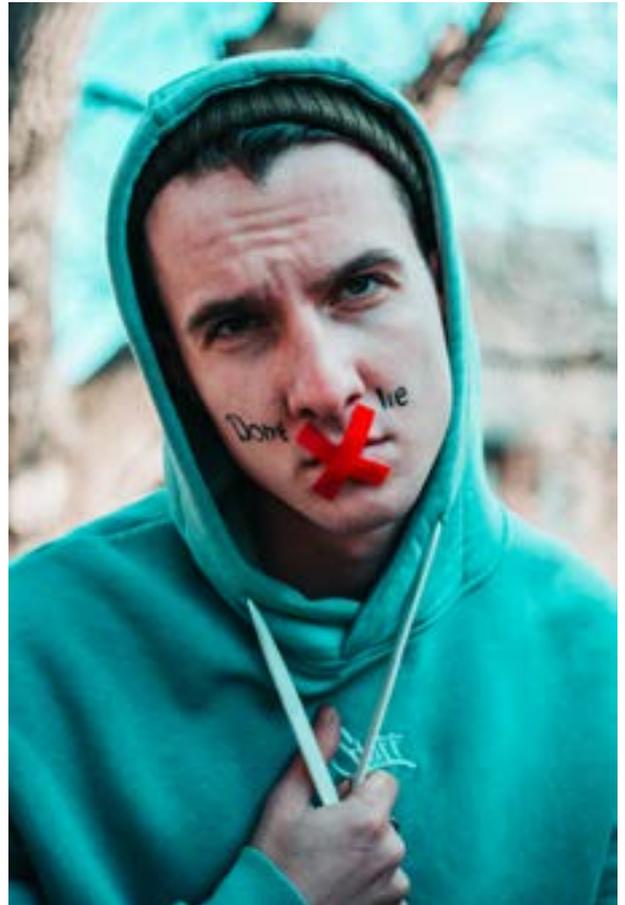


Photo by Taras Chernus on Unsplash

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Chaos at the heart of government • Kurdish oppression • Pensions being used to fund Israeli oppression
Plus Notes from the Edge featuring Alex Greene, Luke Andreski, Mike Stanton, Marilyn Tyzack, and Jo Buchanan. New contributor Richard Purdie and a book review from Adam Colclough
And, our shopping basket keeps getting more expensive.

LAME DUCK PM LIMPS ON AS TORIES REBEL



*Image by Marilyn Tyzack
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THE WEAK IN POLITICS

Sometimes the cover up causes more harm than the original crime. When Johnson was asked why he had approved the appointment of Chris Pincher to the whip's office despite his record of sexual harassment, he could have said, "I thought he had changed. I wanted to give him a second chance. I was wrong and I apologise." Pincher would have been further excoriated for this betrayal of trust. Johnson would have been chided for his misplaced compassion and might still be Prime Minister.

Instead, Johnson took the coward's way out and chose to lie himself out of trouble. It had worked in the past but this time his ever changing story in the light of each new revelation soured the public's opinion, which was already on the turn with the government's failure to address the cost-of-living crisis.

Monday

On Monday it was beginning to dawn on the party faithful that Johnson was becoming an electoral liability. If you are a winner the Tories will forgive almost anything. But losers are ruthlessly dispatched. There was talk of the 1922 committee of backbench MPs changing the rules to allow another no confidence vote.

Tuesday

By now disquiet had spread from the back benches to government ministers who had been quite content to go out and defend a

lie in media interviews so long as the lie was consistent. But being sent out to lie on his behalf and be caught out lying was too much. The killer blow came when Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid resigned on Tuesday evening, prompted by a letter from former senior civil servant, Lord McDonald saying that Johnson had been briefed on the outcome of an earlier enquiry into MP Chris Pincher's conduct and that the complaint had been upheld.

Javid made it clear that, following the vote of no confidence, he had expected Johnson to show, "humility, grip and new direction. I regret to say, however, that it is clear to me that this situation will not change under your leadership."

Sunak hinted at the policy rift between him and Johnson over fiscal policy. His reference to, "a low-tax, high-growth economy, and world class public services," was Treasury

speak for government cuts, a public sector wage freeze and more privatisations to save the economy from recession. Johnson puts his own popularity first and is only really comfortable when announcing good news. Sunak does not believe that Johnson has the stomach or the credibility to deliver what capitalism demands.

Wednesday

The departure of Javid and Sunak triggered a steady stream of resignations from junior ministers and party officials. When Johnson finally went on Thursday over fifty people had resigned, a record for a sitting prime minister. At PMQs even Starmer managed to land a few scripted blows on a visibly ruffled Johnson. Then Johnson was subject to a grilling by the Privileges Committee, where he admitted that he had 'probably' met the former KGB agent Alexander Lebedev whilst he was Foreign Secretary and without any officials present, thus confirming a story that had made headlines at the time.

By teatime senior cabinet ministers were gathered in 10 Downing St. to urge Johnson to resign. He still thought he could hang on

Thursday

With even his cabinet replacements resigning Johnson finally went. He delivered a speech that showed no contrition and blamed his own MPs for his demise. Even now he has refused to go, staying on as a caretaker PM until his successor has been chosen.

Friday

The leadership contenders are already talking about honour and decency and serving the nation. But they are all as self-serving as Johnson. Everyone who supported Johnson in the past did so knowing he was a bully and a liar, and unfit for high office. They were motivated by personal ambition, and that same ambition motivates

them to compete for his job.

Legacy

Even now they are trying to defend Johnson's legacy. But that too could backfire. Johnson's tactics have always been to ignore the past, brag about the present and make promises for the future. Trying to build a legacy will only remind people about the initial failure to lockdown, leading to one of the highest COVID death rates in the world, billions wasted on test and trace and PPE, and his disregard for the rules he imposed and that we obeyed which emerged during Partygate.

"But he got Brexit done," they bleat. This only reminds us of the lies he told during the Brexit campaign and how his 'oven ready deal' meant a border in the Irish Sea and a treaty he had no intention of honouring. Even the claim that he had to be supported to keep Corbyn out of office only serves to remind people of what they could have had.

Fightback

Johnson remains in office for now, but he has no power. The leadership election will further expose divisions in Tory ranks. The underlying reason why Johnson has gone is that capitalism is in crisis and the ruling class is divided over their next move. Seize the moment and step up trade union action over wages, jobs and conditions. Now is the time to strike.

This article was written on Friday evening to replace our news items on Johnson which have been overtaken by events. You can still read them at News Archives - Critical Mass (creatingsocialism.org)

Tomorrow is Saturday and you are reading this on Sunday. A week is a long time in politics. If anything else happens this weekend we will update you on Monday,



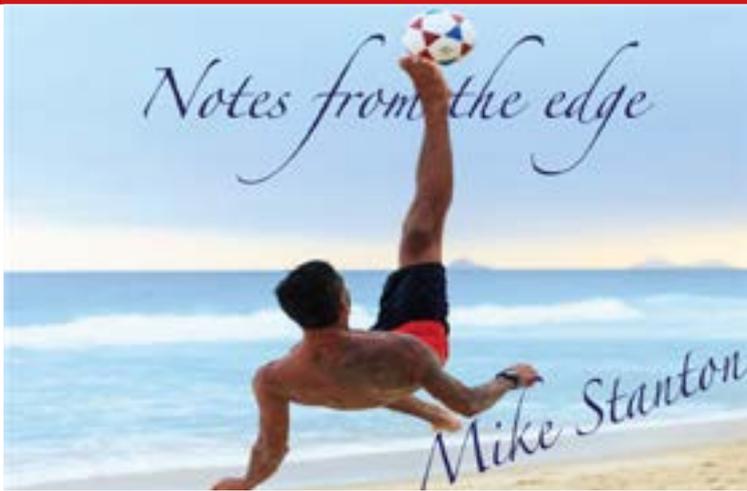
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WAR AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

Last week I wrote about the diverse political opinions within the 1st international. As long as the class struggle was confined to disputes between workers and bosses these divisions took second place to showing solidarity and preventing of strike breaking. But when workers challenged for control of the state the differences assumed a life or death importance.

Franco-Prussian War

In 1870 war broke out between France and Prussia. France was the dominant power in Europe but felt threatened by the rise of Prussia. The French were better armed but badly organised. They lost the war in a complete disaster for Emperor Napoleon III. He was deposed and France became a republic. The King of Prussia became Emperor of all Germany.

The only section of French society to come out of this with any credit were the working class. When France surrendered the workers of Paris took up arms and held out against the Prussians for 131 days before they surrendered with honour. The proletarian National Guard kept their weapons and Prussia agreed not to enter the city.

The Paris Commune

When the new Republican French government tried to disarm the National Guard they provoked a revolution in Paris, which declared itself a Commune on 28th March. The Commune abolished the standing army and the police. Rent arrears were cancelled. Officials were elected by universal suffrage and only paid a worker's wage.

Fear of revolution united the French and Prussian governments. Prussia released French

POWs and restored their arms. Thus strengthened, the French Army crushed the Commune on 28th May. 10 - 15 thousand Communards were killed, and a similar number were sentenced to prison or transportation.

Within days the International published Marx's classic account of the Commune, *The Civil War in France*. Its revolutionary tone caused the English trade union leaders to quit the International. The socialists and anarchists who remained argued over the lessons of the Commune.

Bakunin

As in 1848, Marx realised that the defeat of the Paris Commune was a defeat for revolutionaries everywhere. The followers of Mikhail Bakunin disagreed. Marx weighed the strength of socialist organisation against the strength of the state power. His opponents believed that revolutionary heroism could inspire the workers regardless of the actual balance of class forces.

Bakunin, a Russian revolutionary who had joined the International in 1868 was arguing for a suicidal policy of uprisings everywhere after the bloody defeat in Paris. He was expelled in 1872 and the International, a shadow of its former self, ended in 1876.

Workers Power

The most important lesson from the Commune was what workers power might look like. It was no longer enough to capture the old machinery of state. You had to replace it with an entirely new form of state power based on the supremacy of the working class. Marx said that if you wanted to know what the dictatorship of the proletariat meant in practice you should look no further than the Paris Commune.



Price Inflation

Price inflation is part of the bosses' offensive against our standard of living - along with job and wage insecurity created by fire and rehire, public sector outsourcing, pay freezes etc.

After the economic crash of 2008, governments injected £ billions of nominal money into the western economies by way of so-called 'quantitative easing'. Unless that 'money' was matched by a commensurate increase in economic activity and commodity production there could be only one outcome: the value of money was bound to fall, or in other words the price of goods and services was bound to rise. That is exactly what happened. Where did the money go? It was used to enhance the value of assets like housing and shares.

Wage Stagnation

In the 14 years since March 2008, the real value of the average wage has never recovered to pre-crash levels. And since this March, when inflation levels entered a steep upward curve (to 11.7% currently) workers have struggled constantly to catch up as real pay lagged behind. Not only that, but so far most have not succeeded. Most of us are becoming progressively worse off.

Yet led by Johnson and Sunak and abetted by the Bank of England boss Michael Bailey (paid £495,000 a year), today's chorus has it that inflation is being driven upwards by wages.

Let us be clear: on the evidence, this is a grotesque and outrageous lie.

The real effect of today's inflation levels is to produce a massively intensified shift of income and wealth from workers' wages to profits and to the bank balances

of the ruling class. We are receiving, in other words, a dwindling proportion of the value of what we produce.

Declining Profit Rates

And the true driver of inflation is not wages; it is the corporate drive to counter the long term decline in their rate of profit. In practice this means the wealthiest corporations are sitting on a cash mountain. They are not investing in jobs and production. They are using the money to buy back their own shares and to increase their monopoly by acquiring weaker competitors.

Hostile takeovers in the business world are mirrored by hostile takeovers in the geopolitical world. The same indicator of capitalist crisis that drives down our living standards also supplies the growing impetus for war and imperialism.

The need for clear, Marxist explanations of the crisis has never been greater, and that task falls to socialists, along with the rebuilding of our organisational strength on the ground.

'To tell the truth is a communist and a revolutionary act' (Antonio Gramsci).

Whereas their language is the language of lies; in fact, lies are as essential to them as oxygen.

Without the lies, deception and 'spin', the stench of putrefaction in their system would be offending the nostrils of everyone among the 99%.

Richard Purdie





Image courtesy of Shutterstock

IN ORDER to fund a pay rise above 3%, at a time when inflation is running at 11%, the National Health Service in England (NHSE) is saying that it will have to cut services. Whilst they are clearly lobbying for more resources, the fact is that this is life in Tory Britain and the result of years of the Tories' political vendetta against the public sector.

Those essential workers, remember how we clapped, have been offered a derisory real terms pay cut and, if they want to have more, health service managers are threatening to reduce the services those same essential workers put their lives on the line to defend throughout the pandemic.

It is a cynical ploy. When Tory leadership hopeful Rishi Sunak, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced an "inflation busting" 3.1% pay rise, in 2020, for public health workers, he mysteriously forgot to include nurses and care workers.

At the time Sunak said: "These past months have underlined what we always knew – that our public sector workers make a vital contribution to our country and that we can rely on them when we need them. It's right therefore that we follow the recommendations of the independent pay bodies with this set of real-terms pay rises."

Indeed, they make such a vital contribution that his pitch for leadership of the Tory Party, and thus of the country, is that we collectively kick them in the teeth by slashing public services in the interests of a low tax economy.

Make no mistake, this juxtaposition between workers needing more pay to keep up with inflation and the Tory obsession with hacking away at the public sector has nothing to do with managing the economy efficiently. It has everything to do with a political vendetta which the Tories have been running since the late 1970s. The current round of strikes, involving the railways, barristers, post office workers and many more, are the red rag to the bullish Tories who, having decapitated, metaphorically, their own leader will now seek to assert themselves by launching further attacks on ordinary workers.

And, be clear too, that when government ministers (and it matters little who is in the post as they seem to be interchangeable) say that it is a choice between better pay for health professionals or a better service for patients, it is a lie. They have already made that choice, except the choice was not a binary one, but one that said we do not reward health and social care professionals, not to invest in better patient services, but, rather, we allow the public sector health economy to fall into disrepair.

Why, you might ask, would they pursue such a policy? Tories do not believe in public provision except where it lines their own pockets. They are running down the NHS in a blatant attempt to force more and more people to move to private health insurance. In 2014, a report from Unite found that one fifth of the Government's MPs had a financial relationship with private health companies. They included Jeremy Hunt, then Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley, a future Health Secretary, and current leadership contender Nadhim Zahawi, a non-executive director of the recruitment company SThree, which had gained at least £2.6m from the new clinical commissioning groups created by the health act which he described as a brilliant piece of legislation.

Health workers deserve to be properly paid. And patients deserve a decent service. Don't allow the Tories and NHS Managers to fool you. It is not a choice between one or the other. It is a political choice and one which the Tories continue to pursue with vigour. If you want to defend the NHS, certainly don't vote Tory, but, if you really want a first class health system, you need to think about what kind of political system could possibly deliver it, and, here's a clue, it isn't capitalism.



Compiled by Mike Stanton

Food Crisis

The government's obsession with limiting immigration has led to a shortage of temporary workers to harvest crops. So at a time of rising food prices, government policy has led to crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuces and asparagus being left to rot, threatening farmers with bankruptcy. Meanwhile prices continue to rise because of a supposed shortage. The only shortage is of labour, thanks to Johnson's hard Brexit.

Brexit

After undermining Labour's hopes in 2019 by supporting a second referendum on Brexit, Starmer has decided the time is right to announce a new Labour policy. Now, in order to 'Get Brexit Right' he has ruled out Freedom of Movement, the Single Market and a Customs Union. In other words he is endorsing Johnson's hard Brexit after sabotaging Corbyn's soft Brexit, which would have kept us in a customs union and not undermined the Northern Ireland peace agreement.

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's boss, Simon Roberts was promoting his supermarket's efforts to tackle the cost-of-living crisis by investing millions to reduce prices this week. And now we know where the money is coming from. On Thursday shareholders voted against paying the real living wage to contract workers. They have had to agree to pay it to directly employed staff. So cleaners and security guards are paying the price of Sainsbury's cost reductions, not

the shareholders.

Covid

Johnson's dwindling band of supporters have been claiming that he got the big decisions right, like Covid. Never mind that the UK has the highest mortality rate of any developed nation. Next week the UK is set to experience 350,000 infections a day for the first time since the pandemic began. The NHS is no longer being overwhelmed by acute cases, but the rate of infection means that chronic infection, aka 'long Covid' is over a million and set to double. The other dire prospect is that inside the giant petri dish of infection that we have become, a more serious variant may evolve with all the devastation we experienced during the first wave.

Gove – Snake or Hero?

When Gove was sacked for telling Johnson to go, the day before he did go, a Downing Street spokesperson referred to Gove as 'a snake.' This venomous response makes sense when you remember that a quarter of all Tory MPs, including Johnson (90) are landlords who declare at least £10,000 a year from rental income, and a fifth of party income (£60 million) has come from property tycoons over the last ten years.

So it is no surprise that Gove has made himself unpopular by proposing new laws to protect tenants and to force builders and landlords to cover the cost of remedying the cladding crisis that is still with us five years after Grenfell. Housing activists are now worried that now Johnson has sacked Gove as Housing Secretary his proposals will be watered down, and landlords will once more evade their responsibilities.

Only 18 Labour MPs are landlords. But, you guessed it, they include Shadow Housing Secretary, Lucy Powell.



RESearch conducted by the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) has revealed that £4.6 billion of funds from Local Government Pension Funds (LGPFs) are being used to support companies complicit in the demolition of houses in illegally occupied territories.

At the last count 63 LGPFs were investing in companies complicit in human rights abuses. These include:

Avon Pension Fund, which, despite its ethical investment policy, has £18,869,636 invested in companies which are aiding the Israeli government to ethnically cleanse parts of the West Bank. These include £3.5 million in US-based arms manufacturer Northrop Grumman, which has supplied the Israeli navy with Sa'ar V missile gunships. They enforce the siege of the Gaza Strip. Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund – despite its professed commitment to ethical investment – has £97,825,380 invested in companies that directly aid the Israeli war on Gaza. These include £13 million in BAE Systems, the world's fourth largest arms producer. BAE owns a subsidiary called Rokar which provides systems for combat aircraft and helicopters used by the Israeli military in violence against Palestinians in Gaza.

Camden Pension Fund is another fund which professes to have an ethical investment policy. However, this has not prevented it from investing £35 million in travel website Booking.com which was included in the United Nations OHCHR's (Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner) list of businesses active in illegal Israeli settlements based on stolen Palestinian land. Properties in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are listed as located either in Israel or in

“Palestinian Territory, Israeli settlement”.

There have been numerous United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. The last was in December 2020 when the UN General Assembly passed five resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and to end violence and seek a peaceful resolution.

Since that resolution Israeli security forces have killed 373 Palestinians, including 86 minors. The latest minor killed was 17-year-old Kamal Alawna, killed on Sunday from bullet wounds sustained during a raid by Israeli forces on a town near Jenin the previous night.

The death toll, not to mention the illegal seizing of Palestinian homes, shows that the Israeli government has no intention of complying with any resolutions passed by the United Nations. In this it is supported by the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and Brazil, countries which were very quick to condemn acts of aggression elsewhere, countries which claim to support the rule of law.

In order to bring this violence to an end, Critical Mass supports the Palestinian struggle for independence and would encourage readers to check out the PSC database of LGPFs.

This article originally appeared online:

<https://creatingsocialism.org/british-pension-funds-used-to-pay-for-israeli-oppression/>



DOES TRUTH MATTER IN POLITICS?

At the time of writing, the government is in chaos. The resignations are flooding in, but Boris Johnson is clinging on. After a premiership littered with lies on a grand scale, the letter by John McDonald, the former Foreign Office Permanent Secretary, contradicting Johnson's version of what he knew about Chris Pincher's reputation, looks like being the final nail in the coffin of his leadership ambitions.

What is surprising, though, is how his chaotic and reckless time in office has lasted so long, or even how he was elected in the first place. This is particularly the case when the Conservative party members who voted for him as leader come from a section of British society not known for their tolerance. The British electorate would also have been aware of his reputation in 2019, when they supported him, in large numbers against the dignified and scandal free Jeremy Corbyn.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, he was seen by many as a loveable rogue. I recall a Conservative voting acquaintance excusing one disastrous mistake as "just Boris with his silly hat on."

Max Hastings the editor of The Telegraph during Boris' time as its Brussels correspondent was not so forgiving. He said at the time that "*He would not recognise the truth, whether about his private or political life, if confronted by it in an identity parade.*" He concluded "*We can't predict what a Johnson government will do...but his premiership will almost certainly reveal a contempt for rules, precedent, order and stability.*"

Never have truer words been spoken. His time in office has lurched from one crisis to another, most underpinned by accusations of lying or a basic lack of integrity. Yet his colleagues and large swathes of the electorate have chosen to ignore, forgive or make excuses for his

behaviour. Dominic Cummings is of the view that people know that he lies, but just don't care.

Peter Osborne, in his book, "*The Assault on Truth. Boris Johnson, Donald Trump and the Emergence of a new Moral Barbarism,*" drew a distinction between how people holding public office in the past were treated compared to today. As recently as the 1990s, public accusations of lying, dishonesty and unfitness for office, were seen as shameful. The "L" word terrified the lawyers advising any would-be publisher.

Osborne has no concerns. He calls Boris Johnson a liar on almost every page, and in the most brutal terms.

IS TRUTH NO LONGER A PRE-REQUISITE OF LEADERSHIP?

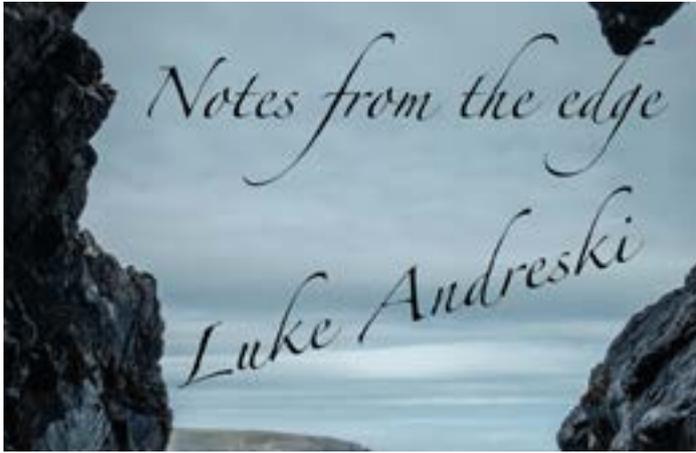
Does this mean that truth is no longer considered a prerequisite of leadership? That lying, as Hannah Arendt's, the American political scientist, in her 1963 essays on "Lying in Politics" "*has always been instrumental to gaining political advantage and favor.*"

There have, of course been cries of frustration, sometimes from the most unusual sources, none more so than the tweet that emerged from the official Twitter account of the civil service in 2020 "*Can you imagine having to work with these truth twisters.*" And, of course, it was a retired civil servant, who has hit the final nail in Johnson's corrupt premiership.

It is doubtful, though, that the expressions of concern over the lack of integrity and honesty from former colleagues are nothing more than opportunistic game playing. They stayed silent for too long.

We also cannot be complacent. Johnson's demise is not necessarily something to celebrate. At least we got what was on the tin. We knew what we were dealing with.

We now need to be prepared for an even worse tax, service, regulation cutting replacement who may have an even bigger impact on all our lives than the shambolic, lying Johnson. We will need to be ever more watchful. Lying may be the least of our worries.



Hospices under pressure

Sophie Olszowski wrote in *The Guardian*, ‘people dying in the UK with multiple and complex conditions is projected to increase by 42% by 2040, and about half of all who need palliative care now are not getting it.’

Hospices provide multidisciplinary support, mainly in people’s homes, with practical, emotional, social and spiritual support for the ill. When the government says the NHS will take care of you from cradle to grave, this is only partially true.

The hospice movement is a voluntary movement which deals with end-of-life care. It is 80% funded from donations. These donations are reducing as household incomes come under pressure. At the same time, costs of running hospices have increased by more than inflation. £100m extra is needed to fund rises in energy, food costs and (matched) NHS pay increases. Hospices are currently spending more than their income and using up reserves to cover the deficit. This is unsustainable.

As part of the ‘levelling up’ strategy, wealthy areas are better served than poor, with some poorer areas having no specialist service. Incredibly, the government refers to palliative care as ‘after-care’, leaving hospices to curtail services, only providing them to those in the most desperate need. Increasingly hospices are likely to lose their independence as they work in collaboration with other services. Many of these community services have been contracted out of the NHS.

School meals under pressure

School caterers are facing a perfect storm of rising prices (up by 20% in some instances), shortages of supplies including tinned food, oil and pasta, and difficulty in recruiting staff. There is also a sharp rise in demand for free school meals with 1.9m

children eligible. We should also mention privatisation. Not only are caterers being asked to provide meals at lower cost, the fact that profit is also being taken out of the available resources, means that it is almost impossible to provide adequate meals. Some parents, who can no longer afford school meals, are finding it difficult to meet the criteria. The most vulnerable children will miss out on their only hot meal of the day. The National Food Strategy recently recommended that the eligibility threshold rises to parents’ income of £20k p.a. from the current £7.4k.

As ever, the government does nothing until the intervention of celebrities, such as Marcus Rashford and Jamie Oliver. Rashford exposed the problem of children not getting fed properly during school breaks and got the government to extend free school meals into the holidays. Oliver’s campaigning over the past decade has led to improved quality of school meals.

Caterers are finding it increasingly difficult to meet mandatory food standards. They’re switching to cheaper meats such as gammon and turkey. Others are switching to imported cheaper meat where abattoir standards are worse. Caterers should use their imagination to reduce the consumption of meat by using nutritional alternatives, making meals healthier at the same time. The advantage of this approach is that it’s consistent with climate change targets and shows pupils that there are alternatives to the traditional meat and two veg diet with its associated cruelty to animals.

Tennis balls

Wimbledon – Anyone notice how the ‘plebs’ on the hill are an entirely different species to the suits with seats? A metaphor for our times?

Sunday Socialist is produced by the Creating Socialism Collective. In addition to the writers featured here a number of people deserve thanks for helping in the production process. They include: Susie Granic, Jo Buchanan, Ann Marcial, Lynne Edwards, Andy Mackenzie, Mel Cakey, Mike Stanton, Marilyn Tyzack, Maggie Maloney.

CAMPAINING



If you are struggling to survive on a minimum wage it is possible that rather than being obsessed with which authoritarian, lying Tory is about to become PM, you are more concerned about the fact that your living standards are falling.

Only one item went up this week in our basket of 14, and whilst that is worth celebrating, it is but a temporary respite for people who have already seen their shopping basket increase by over 8% in just 7 weeks.

And there is more to come. This week Putin warned that sanctions against Russia would push fuel prices up for consumers in Europe. Whilst blaming Russia might be a useful get out clause for British and European politicians when was the last time you heard any of them trying to achieve a peaceful negotiated settlement in Ukraine?

Some people will think if they don't have a car that fuel increases don't matter too much. But all the food we eat has to get to the stores one way or another. If petrol and diesel are more expensive, who do you think will have to

pay?

Prices are in a spiral at the moment. Everything is primed to ensure that prices for consumers will rise. In large part this is because the economy is dependent upon oil. But it is also the simple fact that companies think that every price rise for them should be accompanied by a price rise to their customers - you.

What this means is that despite having made huge profits in recent years a number of companies refuse point blank to take the rough with the smooth. In most cases it is not that they have been rewarding their workers with huge wage increases. There are very few sectors where pay has kept pace with inflation. In other words, there are few workers who are not having real time pay cuts as the wages they receive simply cannot buy as much as they did a year ago.

Some people probably think this is just greed on the part of their employers. And perhaps it is. But it is also the logic of a system that relies on confidence to ensure the well-being of a company. Your pay rise is their loss of profit, which in turn is a loss for shareholders. Losses for shareholders, the last thing on your mind when you do your weekly shop, are what is driving this recession. A dissatisfied shareholder will sell

their shares, and this can begin a knock-on effect which can result in companies going to the wall.

It is therefore in everybody's interest to keep those shareholders happy. Except it is not. Because no individual company can control the system. What matters is not your well-being but the profits that can be creamed off for shareholders. And, that is why we are having a recession. Not wage increases. Not workers greed. Not immigrants. Not over generous benefits payments. Just the imperative for companies to survive even if the rest of us are thrown into poverty for them to do so.

Our Basket	Cost May 15th	Cost last week	Cost this week
Cornflakes	0.55	0.55	0.55
Cheese	1.89	1.99	1.99
Bread	0.55	0.65	0.65
Milk	0.95	0.99	0.99
Pizza	0.99	0.99	0.99
Tomato soup	0.45	0.45	0.45
Tea bags	0.95	0.95	0.95
Margarine	1.09	1.19	1.19
Baked beans	0.13	0.16	0.16
Crisps	2.79	2.89	2.99
Digestives	0.39	0.39	0.39
Apples	0.99	1.39	1.39
Pasta	1.19	1.39	1.39
TOTAL	13.43	14.52	14.62

Items in red have risen since May 15th., blue this week, green no change

CAMPAINING



“
What is the purpose of journalism if you can't expose war crimes safely?
”

Investigative journalist Stelania Maurizi

#FreeAssange  MULTI-AWARD WINNING JOURNALIST  REVEALED U.S. WAR CRIMES  9 YEARS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Free Julian Assange, before it's too late. Sign to STOP the USA Extradition



719,671 have signed. Let's get to 1,000,000!



 Diane Krause signed 20 minutes ago

 Ann Rees signed 22 minutes ago

Thanks to your support this petition has a chance at winning! We only need 280,329 more signatures to reach the next goal - can you help?

Take the next step!

 Phillip Adams started this petition to Anthony Albanese (Prime Minister of Australia) and 3 others

This is a 700,000+ global petition to Free Julian Assange and to stop the legal precedent being established of a USA Extradition for a non USA journalist that exposed USA war crimes. Everyone from any nation can sign this petition, the legal precedent outcome of this case will directly affect every citizen of the world.

This case is no longer in the courts and now will be detetmied 100% by politically motivated decision making.

You can sign the petition by following this link: <https://www.change.org/p/free-julian-assange-before-it-s-too-late-stop-usa-extradition>



The Special Patrol Group (SPG) was a separate unit in London's Metropolitan Police Force. It was much criticised for its violence and abusive use of stop and search. It was SPG officers who were found to have been responsible for the death of Blair Peach, at an anti-Nazi League protest in Southall, in 1979. It was not until 2010 that it was concluded that a blow by a police officer had killed Peach and that there had been a cover-up. The SPG was disbanded in 1987 but was replaced by a similar, larger unit, the Territorial Support Group.

Many criticisms have been levelled at the Met over the years and a recent inspection revealed systemic concerns. The report stated that the force had a "fundamentally flawed" approach to tackling corruption and was "not fit for purpose". The Tories have cut the number of police officers, and there are claims the failures have been exacerbated because many young inexperienced recruits were appointed to fill the thousands of vacancies. Other criticisms included poor performance, poor handling of both emergency and non-emergency calls, inadequate crime recording, poor supervision, improper recording of grounds for stop and search, insufficient capacity to meet demand and a backlog of online child abuse referrals.

Several high-profile cases have caused outrage among some sections of the public and confidence in the Met has been systematically undermined. We now know that there were, for example, racist, misogynistic and homophobic messages exchanged at Charing Cross police station; officers were found to have taken selfies of the bodies

of murdered sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, referring to them as "dead birds"; the stop and search of athlete Bianca Williams; children being strip searched and shocking failures in the investigation of serial killer Stephen Port. Few of us will ever forget the premeditated abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, carried out by a serving police officer - Wayne Couzens. Previous reports of his misconduct were simply overlooked.

The temporary replacement of Cressida Dick by Steven House could hardly have made a difference. This is the man who defended police officers who had let the force down and House said that the disproportionate stop and search of Black people would continue as they were concentrated in areas with "real problems with violence". And now another establishment figure, Sir Mark Rowley, has been appointed as the new Commissioner. His track record is not promising, certainly he is not a reformer, and many Londoners will remember his comment in 2019, blaming the rise of the far right in the UK on the apparent "lack of integration" by ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, he feels like more of the same.

London's police service is unfit for its role. It will take much more than the replacement of Dick by Rowley to take the force out of 'special measures', create radical reform, reinvigorate the service, root out corruption and all its prejudices and transform it into a force that will serve the capital well and gain some respect from the public.



Photo by Sven Brandsma on Unsplash

Six Words

By Alex Greene

Welcome to my weekly column about finding and having a very real, practical faith that we need every day, just to get up in the morning.

Out Of Control

Four times, I had to rewrite this post. The news kept changing so much over 24 hours that possibly everything I write here will be obsolete before you see it; or even before I have submitted it.

Siege Mentality

The hashtag is #Clownfall.

Johnson is a malignant narcissist. He is in a position where, theoretically, nobody is above him. Nobody can tell him what to do. He takes orders from no-one.

However, he is keenly aware that, if he is at the top of the food chain, there is nobody with higher responsibility, nobody to bail him out of his messes.

He is caught in an impossible position – one where he cannot escape blame for his arrogance and incompetence, but where he desperately needs somebody else above him to accept those responsibilities, while at the same time remaining subordinate to him – an impossibility.

This week, as the public and his own cabinet called for him to resign, Johnson's ego has burst open like a torn paper bag of custard, leading to his angry outbursts, such as sacking Michael Gove (which was hilarious).

As of 7th July 2022, he had gone from crowing that blood would have to be spilled before he leaves to meekly declaring his resignation. Then came the realisation that the fraudulent pusbag hasn't really left.

A post on tumblr recently described how, the day before Johnson quit, someone sat in a stone circle, sacrificing meat pies to the gods. I believe someone is sending them a lorry load of pies tonight; and quiches.

And perhaps we can help by paraphrasing the six little words the Doctor once used to bring down a government in Doctor Who "*Don't you think he's looking fired?*" Say those words to your MP. That is, if your MP hasn't quit yet.

I'm voting for Larry the Number 10 cat to replace him.

Have a good week, everybody*

*except Johnson, his Cabinet, the Tories, and the media.



Image by Levi Meir
Clancy Unsplash

NATO has abandoned the Kurds in order to keep Turkey inside over the Ukraine/Russia war and the expansion of NATO. Two million Kurds in Northern Syria are threatened with ethnic cleansing by Turkish forces under the pretext of removing terrorists. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds have already been forced to flee by Turkish-led attacks across the Turkish-Syrian border.

Ethnic Cleansing

This will be the third Turkish invasion in five years. Many Kurds are preparing to flee yet again, but they are running out of places to go. And the war in Syria has added to the danger. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons fleeing into the Kurdish region have provided a happy hunting ground for criminal gangs and militias to ramp up crimes like theft, looting, kidnapping, murder and the abduction of children, whose organs are harvested for the lucrative transplant business.

Groups loyal to Turkey are rewarded with the seizure of Kurdish homes and businesses. They do not discriminate. Men, women and children, civilians and soldiers: if you do not flee you face massacres. This is not a policing operation against insurgents or terrorists. It is a land grab and forced exile of a people who have lived here for centuries.

Islamic State

Then there is the question of the Islamic State prisoners still in camps supervised by the Kurds. As many as 12,000 Islamic State fighters and 90,000 family members are being held. When Turkey launched its second assault on the Kurds in 2019, they redeployed troops guarding these camps to resist the Turkish offensive, with a Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) senior commander saying:

We are currently subject to a genocidal attack. There is a project to make a demographic change and eradicate Kurds. Therefore, our first duty is the protection of our people, border and soil.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali

Earlier this year the SDF managed to repulse an Islamic State assault on the al-Sina'a prison in the north-eastern Syrian city of Hasaka. If Turkey has its way with the Kurds, there will be more assaults and nobody to stop the release of Islamic State fighters on the world.

NATO Betrayal

Remember when the Kurds were the heroes who lost 11,000 soldiers fighting with the USA to defeat Islamic State in Syria? Then they were abandoned to their fate and denied their own state by US treachery and cowardice. Ukraine would do well to look to the Kurds to learn how the West treats its allies when they are no longer needed.

And when our leaders point to the crimes committed by the Russian invaders in Ukraine, we should challenge them on the similar crimes being visited on the Syrian Kurds by Turkey, NATO member and supposed upholder of Western values.

This article originally appeared online:

<https://creatingsocialism.org/nato-abandons-kurds-to-ethnic-cleansing-by-turkey/>



BOOK REVIEW

It's Not OK How Capitalism Has Made Us Not OK

Adam Colclough

James Davies, *Sedated: How Modern Capitalism Created Our Mental Health Crisis* (Atlantic, 2022)

Attitudes towards mental illness have undergone a transformation in recent years. From being something people never spoke about, it has become a favourite topic of everyone from politicians to online influencers. In many ways that is a good thing — stigma and prejudice are being replaced with honesty and understanding.

At least that's what we'd like to think. The reality is more complicated and compromised, as this comprehensively argued and — for those of us who have been involved with supporting people with mental illness — to some extent shaming book shows.

Since the seventies, our collective mental health has got dramatically worse, a fact attested to by rising prescriptions for medication to treat anxiety and depression and by the growing role for mental health interventions in the workplace, schools and elsewhere in our everyday lives. James Davies musters an effective argument for the case that much of the angst associated with modern life isn't in fact mental illness — it is a consequence of the political and economic system that has dominated the West for the past half century.

Mental illness has been used, wrongly, as a term to describe the stresses caused by the drive to be endlessly productive and to prove your status by conspicuously consuming, and the fear inherent in living at the whim of the market. Anyone who struggles isn't a victim of a system that puts profit before people; they are weak and to be blamed for their own misfortunes.

Davies shows with forensic detail how the market has monetised mental illness, selling to governments and companies the need to address an 'epidemic' of depression and anxiety through ever more coercive measures. These include Mental Health First Aid programmes designed to make anyone who falls into their clutches feel worse and disempower them from pointing the finger of blame at corporate exploitation. This is aided by the mass overprescription of

antidepressants, many of which cause needless and sometimes painful side effects for the people who are given them.

The sorry situation Davies describes is all too familiar from the eight years I spent volunteering with a charity that provided mutual support groups for people struggling with mental health issues. At the time I and my fellow volunteers felt we were genuinely helping; now it feels like we were unwilling agents of a deeply suspect system.

We were actively encouraged to talk people out of coming off medication. If one drug wasn't working all they needed to do was try another — sooner or later they would find the right one. Now I find it hard not to feel that what most members of our groups needed wasn't drugs or CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) so much as a decent union rep to stand up to their impossible boss or contact with a benefits system that wasn't set up to suspect fraud by everyone caught in its coils.

The 'diagnosis' that had brought many of them to seek help was, if you follow the line taken by Davies, suspect at best and maybe entirely wrong. This is due to a wilful manipulation of the tools put into the hands of professionals and volunteers alike.

The most pernicious of these are the GAD/PHQ (Generalised Anxiety Disorder/Patient Health Questionnaire) forms that service users are required to fill out every month, often multiple times if they are in contact with more than one agency, as most are. These are designed to be so general that they diagnose everyone as having a problem needing treatment — useful for creating a limitless customer base for the 'mental health industry', but often harmful for individuals.

Davies fights shy of taking an explicitly party-political position, understandably so since academics who hitch their careers to that bandwagon sacrifice a large share of their integrity. His arguments are, by his own admission, firmly rooted in a Marxist understanding of economics and the importance of species being to

maintaining our humanity.

Some of his conclusions are hard to agree with: for example, for every middle-class academic who experienced lockdown as a chance to downshift and reassess their priorities there were hundreds of key workers for whom it was another twist of the screw making their lives difficult. The economic upheaval that has followed in its wake is already presenting an opportunity for neoliberal economics to reassert its status by presenting itself as our only protection against a return to the bad old days of strikes and inflation.

His broad point though, that we would be happier and healthier if we worked and consumed less and instead concentrated on personal relationships and building strong, supportive communities, is hard to dispute. To put assessing potential harm at the heart of policymaking would be no bad idea either.

This book is a cogent and passionately argued account of how we ended up where we are. It should be required reading for anyone engaged in the fight to build a better and fairer society.



**STAND UP
TO RACISM**

Refugees welcome here

- **No to Islamophobia and antisemitism**
- **Stop scapegoating migrants**

 @StandUTR  @AntiRacismDay



Photo by Marilyn Tyzack
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EVERYBODY has heard of ‘aspiration’. It’s the word we hear on politicians’ lips. It is a favourite of both the Tories and Blairites. So, every political party in the UK must appeal to ‘aspirational voters’, otherwise it is doomed to permanent opposition. That is a fact – isn’t it? At least it is what we are frequently [told](#). The problem is that we first need to understand what aspiration is before we can determine how important it is as a measure of how people intend to vote.

For the political class who have swallowed the idea that appealing to aspiration is essential to win elections, aspiration means ‘getting on’ – or that is how my parents’ generation would have described it. It means you want to earn more, live in a bigger house in a more desirable area, have more foreign holidays and generally get richer and richer. In a conference speech in 2012, David Cameron sought to present himself as the leader of the ‘aspiration nation’. Here is a quote from [The Guardian](#):

“In a sometimes defensive speech to his party conference in Birmingham, he sought to fend off the image of his party as a defender of the rich, saying: “We are the party of the want to be better off,” and insisted his goal was to spread, not defend, privilege.”

Be a striver not a skiver

But there is a problem with all this. For a start, how many people don’t want to be better off? Not many by my reckoning, and that applies right across the spectrum of people in society, from rich to poor. So you

could argue that saying you are the party of people who want to be better off is stating the obvious, or not saying anything much at all. But this is politics and, of course, there is an agenda here. People who ‘want to be better off’ are a particular group – they are, in Tory and Blairite terms, the ‘strivers’ and, as we know, in Tory Britain, if you are not a ‘striver’, you must be a [skiver](#), and, if you are on benefits, you must be demonised.

So the word ‘aspiration’ has become a particular neoliberal framing of those who ‘aspire’. It divides the nation into those who are worth something and those who are worthless; the ‘hardworking families’ on the one hand and the ‘benefit scroungers’ on the other. And ‘hardworking families’ are those who share Tory and New Labour values of ‘getting on’, even if it means trampling on others to be ‘better off’. The poor, the low-paid and the unemployed, public sector workers – who are of course just a bunch of jobsworths – can be written off.

Unfinished Revolution?

During the years of the Blair/Brown New

Labour governments, aspiration was at the top of the agenda. New Labour must appeal to those who want to ‘get on’ at all costs, ignoring the rest. Blairite guru, the now-forgotten Philip Gould, wrote a book about how Labour could achieve and maintain power called ‘The Unfinished Revolution’. I’ve read it and I wouldn’t recommend it. It says largely what I have already covered – vote for us and you can have an even bigger flat-screen TV and three foreign holidays instead of two. Because that’s really what people want, isn’t it? That’s what life is all about. A political party’s focus must be on wealth creation and entrepreneurs and sod anyone else.

A perfect example of an ‘aspirational’ person trampling on others to ‘get on’ would be someone who took advantage of the right-to-buy council

profit, and when they do it will almost certainly be bought by a landlord who rents out the property at an exorbitant rent. And that is exactly what has happened with many thousands of council houses sold as a result of this Tory policy, and the outcome is a [housing crisis](#). So much for the ‘aspirations’ of these Tory voters.

Socialist Aspiration

Aspiration means a lot more to me, and many others in the UK, than simply ‘getting on’ and personal gain, because my aspiration is to live in a better society, one which has genuine equality and one in which we don’t live beyond our means environmentally; a society in which everyone has access to decent housing and healthcare, has meaningful and rewarding work and is able to live in a wholesome, thriving environment. That kind of society will make everyone better off, and that’s what aspiration ought to be about, something which reflects the right values rather than the narrow, materialistic and selfish values of the Tory Party – and Blairite Labour. It’s not the kind of society that can be built by making a few more people ‘better off’ through policies like right-to-buy. What’s more, it’s the kind of society that lots of people would like to vote for if they were given the chance, as Corbyn’s successful 2017 manifesto showed.

We need to reject the neoliberal framing of ‘aspiration’ and replace it with one which reflects the values of social, economic and environmental justice, and this is what any decent political party would focus on. At a time of climate crisis and a cost of living crisis, it’s more important than ever that parties of the left promote and support the right values. That is the only way out of the mess we are in.

This article originally appeared online: <https://creatingsocialism.org/what-is-aspiration/>



It is possible to aspire to success without needing to be better, but by being able to collaborate.

Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

house scheme. They get a public asset at a knock-down price and, by doing so, they deny the right to live in that house to others who need social housing. They can then go on to sell the house at a handsome





Watching the Tories rip themselves apart this week the one thing that struck me was that nobody was asking: “who’s governing?”

I can’t think of another job where you would get away with being so self-indulgent. As we pointed out on Wednesday this was simply Tories positioning themselves for their next move up the career ladder.

Of course, this caused great excitement, not least among the Labour Party who see themselves as the main beneficiaries of this. This is not to say, of course, that Boris Johnson is not a lying toe rag. Clearly he is. He lacks integrity and the intellectual depth to be Prime Minister.

But, think about it, even if he called a General Election tomorrow, does anybody seriously think that much would change immediately afterwards. We might take some temporary pleasure at a string of high profile Tories losing their seats on election night, but the next morning your chances of a decent life would remain exactly where they are today.

If you are born working class, or poor, your chances of being anything but working class or poor for the rest of your life are limited. And, that is not just my opinion, study after study confirms that the best indicator of where you end up in life is where you start.

The emphasis on Parliament plays straight into the hands of those unelected ‘captains of industry’ who really control things. No government - left, right or centre - can control an economy which is largely in the hands of a few billionaires. What they can control is the public sector. But, that only accounts for about 20% of total employment in the UK. And, the public sector is shrinking, as the government desperately try to control a world recession over which they have virtually no control.

In a way the answer to my question as to who is governing, simply doesn’t matter. If this or that Tory who you had previously never heard of resigns, it will make no difference in real terms to, for example, pharmaceutical company Astra-Zeneca which has a market value of £160 billion, or telecommunications giant Vodafone (worth £35 billion).

Of course, government policy can affect companies, but if you are as big as Astra-Zeneca, Shell or Vodafone it is more likely you affect government policy than the other way round.

It is that control which ensures that our parliamentary democracy is a sideshow. It may well be one that takes up endless column inches and hours of news coverage, but all that ensures that you do not ask questions about where real power lies.

Parliament is, and always has been, a means to ensure that all our energy is expended on maintaining the very system that is responsible for our oppression. Democracy, as practised in the capitalist state, is a mirage. We believe we can control our destinies because we all like to be in control. The reality is that almost all the decisions we make are outside of our control. It really is time we saw through this charade.

Dave Middleton