

Searching for Socialism - A history of the Labour Party Reading List

Week 1: From the spirit of 1945 to new forms of public ownership

After a decade of economic depression and total war, Clement Atlee's Labour government laid the foundations for today's welfare state with a program of nationalizations and mass public investment. What seems commonplace now-- universal healthcare or widespread council housing, was radical then. How was post-war Labour able to push through collective ownership and control? And what lessons can we learn from its limits for our own democratic ownership agenda?

Readings:

1: Rozworski and Philips, "The NHS Against the Market",

Available at <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2019/12/the-nhs-against-the-market> (short reading)

2: "Nationalization is not enough", chapter on NHS in Phillips & Rozworski, People's Republic of Walmart

Discount available at <https://bit.ly/2SCt0Af>

3: How the British National Health Service was formed (video)

Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pL6Jc0LA0g

4. Ken Loach, Spirit of 1945 (film)

Available at <https://vimeo.com/180890958>

Week 2: Labour's New Left: Democracy and socialism

In the 1970s, an emboldened "new" left tried to radicalise the labour party in response to the failure of the previous modernisation program. But the long campaign to democratise power in Britain had to begin, as Tony Benn warned, in the movement itself. How did Benn, new activists



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and unions envisage the alternative economic strategy? And what came of their attempts to democratise the party?

Readings:

1: Panitch & Leys, Tony Benn at 95

Available at <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2020/04/tony-benn-at-95; Blackburn> (short reading)

2: The Labour Left Didn't Start With Jeremy Corbyn's Leadership, And It Won't End There Either,

Available at

www.jacobinmag.com/2020/04/labour-left-jeremy-corbyn-leo-panitch-colin-leys-searching-socialism

3: Panitch & Leys, Searching for Socialism, chs. 1-4

Discount available at <https://bit.ly/2SCt0Af> (Long read) until May 6th, otherwise available here <https://bit.ly/3bRseqx>

4: Ralph Miliband and the state in capitalist society - [Politics Theory Other](#) (podcast)

Available at:

<https://soundcloud.com/poltheoryother/51-ralph-miliband-and-the-state-in-capitalist-society-w-leo-panitch>

Week 3: The left versus New Labour: In and Against the Party

Labour's 1983 election campaign was notoriously dubbed 'the longest suicide note in history'. It opened the way not only for a decade of Thatcher's brutal policies, but also for a sharp turn to the right in the Labour party itself. The idea that a left-wing program could never win an election became sacrosanct with the 1997 'New Labour' landslide. What was new Labour's path to power, within the party and the country? How did the left respond and organise in and against the party during this time?



Readings

1: Panitch, Miliband's Masterpiece

Available at <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2019/06/milibands-masterpiece> (short reading)

2: Panitch & Leys, Searching for Socialism, chs. 5-8

Discount available at <https://bit.ly/2SCt0Af> (Long read) until May 6th, otherwise available here <https://bit.ly/3bRseqx>

Week 4: From protest to politics: Corbyn, Sanders and Syriza

From Syriza's confrontation with the EU to Bernie Sanders's open struggle with Democratic Party elites, the past five years have witnessed an improbable rebirth of mass left-wing politics in Europe and North America. Against the mantra of "there is no alternative" and disillusion with political parties, activists have returned to party politics in droves. How does Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party fit into this move "from protest to politics"? What can we learn from the left's nascent, so far truncated, attempts to take state power in the 21st century?

Readings:

1: Panitch & Gindin, In and against the state,

Available at www.redpepper.org.uk/state-of-change/ (short reading)

2: Panitch & Gindin: Socialist Challenge Today: Sanders, Syriza, Corbyn;

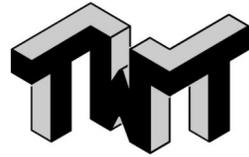
Available at <https://bit.ly/3aPuuNH>

3: Panitch & Leys, Searching for Socialism, chs 9-11

Discount available at <https://bit.ly/2SCt0Af> (Long read) until May 6th, otherwise available here <https://bit.ly/3bRseqx>

3: Leo Panitch on TRNN:

Available at <https://therealnews.com/bios/leo-panitch> (short reads)



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Week 5: Coronavirus and the crisis this time

COVID-19 has reshaped the global economy in a matter of weeks: millions out of work, unprecedented bailouts from governments and central banks and a radically uncertain future. This unprecedented crisis also creates opportunities for radical change. But we can't rely on

external circumstances alone to get the sort of change we desperately need. It means developing the collective understandings, capacities, practices, strategic insights and democratic organizational institutions that can bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in wealth and power-- in the UK and everywhere else.

Readings:

1: Sam Gindin, The Coronavirus and the Crisis This Time,

Available at: <https://socialistproject.ca/2020/04/coronavirus-and-the-crisis-this-time/> (short read)

2: Leo Panitch, The Left Reflects on the Global Pandemic,

Available at:

https://www.transform-network.net/webinars-talks/detail/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=9054&chash=d477b28f708907def85f952ec35bd55a