



# identity politics and the transgender trend

where is lgbt ideology taking us?



# **identity politics and the transgender trend: where is lgbt ideology taking us?**

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— *Edward Renyard*

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— *Joti Brar*

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## **Transgenderism, class society and material reality**

*Does sex exist, or is it a 'social construct'? What is the 'gender-fluid' paradigm of 'transgenderism', and how does it relate to materialist philosophy and the class struggle of the proletariat?<sup>1</sup>*

### **1. Equality in a class society**

The notion of equality within a class society is inherently limited and flawed. In a world where six multibillionaires possess more wealth than the population of half of the planet's inhabitants, formal equality before the law is little more than an elaborate charade. 'Democracy' and 'democratic rights' are equally available to all – in proportion to your wealth and power.

And thus in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, we are living in the most divided and unequal society and world that has existed in all of humanity's history, all our social ills being derivative and ultimately stemming from this one great central inequality in wealth, which looms over all, but is excluded from the mainstream political and media discourse, like the proverbial elephant in the room.

The finance capitalists have long found the mechanisms to dominate the US, European Union (EU) and British political ruling class, parliamentary and ruling institutions, and the state apparatus of entire nations.

By subjecting the 'democratic' systems and states of the great imperialist nations, the multibillionaire financial magnates have seized upon the military, diplomatic and political means to dominate not only their own nations, but also, through their armies and capital investments, the exploited nations of the entire capitalist world – the so-called 'third-world' nations of Asia, Africa, Latin America and post-counter-revolution eastern Europe.

## **2. Unity and division in the ranks of the working-class movement for emancipation**

But the proletariat, the economically revolutionary section of the working class, in its struggle against this order, must strive for the *greatest possible degree of unity* if its struggles are to meet with any chance of success.

This has been an axiom of the working-class movement since the dawn of trade unionism – since the peasant clearances and the industrial revolution concentrated workers in towns and enterprises, and they found themselves in need of collective strength to bargain collectively to win wages and conditions that might allow them to be anything more than slaves chained to the machine of industry by their poverty.

These truths were held to be self-evident by a confident and advancing revolutionary movement, following the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 and the apparently unstoppable advance of revolutionary socialism for the next half-century.

The construction of socialism and the rise in the anti-colonial movements after the first world war, the vanquishing of the Nazi



fascist war machine by the red armies of the USSR and China in the second world war, and the spread of revolutionary democracy and working-class and peasant emancipation across eastern Europe, China, Korea, Vietnam and Laos in the post-WW2 years, led all to believe that working-class solidarity and unity in action was leading to inevitable victory over the parasitic and moribund imperialist order. Clearly, capitalism was a decadent and dying system.

It must be said that revisionism in the USSR achieved what the mightiest armies of the reactionary imperialists could not. The Sino-Soviet split; the moral and political decay of the revolutionary leadership of the world's working class and oppressed, the once great Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), the great emancipating party of Lenin and Stalin; misguidance and disarray in the camp of the national-liberation struggles; concessions to imperialism that allowed the latter to continue to exploit, and to gain strength; and the ultimate anticommunist counter-revolution in Europe and the USSR being the end results of these disastrous capitalist-roading 'market socialist' policies.

All this has left a triumphalist 'neoliberal' imperialist capitalism in almost unchallenged power – politically, militarily and ideologically. The result in Britain (as well as in the US and other imperialist countries) is that the moral and political strength of the socialist movement, long misled by Labour party social democracy, and of the working class in general has been sapped.

### **3. The importance of ideology – divide and rule**

By far the dominant ideology exerting its influence on the working class in Britain and the US today is that of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Where bourgeois ideology is funded and manifests, it must serve the interest of the exploiter. And the watchword for a parasitic class in economic and political crisis and decay is *divide et impera*

– divide and rule!

The examples and roots of this notion are as old as class society itself. The phrase quoted is in Latin and was certainly overtly espoused by the Caesars of Rome, but it can equally well be attributed to Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great), to the medieval civilisations of Europe and Asia, to Sun Tsu or Machiavelli, or to any of the great nineteenth-century empires.

The tsars of Russia, and the capitalist imperialists of Britain, France and Germany, were masters of the tactics of dividing their colonial subjects along lines of religion (hindu-muslim-sikh-christian in India; christian, jew and muslim in tsarist Russia; catholic-protestant in Ireland). Nationality, ethnicity and language, perceived race or skin colour (throughout their colonial empires and in particular to differentiate the workers of their home nations from those of the subject nations), etc, have all served as the basis for privilege or discrimination in order to buttress the rule of an oppressing minority class.

Spanish coloniser ruling castes were encouraged by the so-called 'científicos' of Mexico to consider themselves superior to the indigenous and mestizo population on the grounds of their 'scientifically-proven' superior diet. (In fact, modern scientific and dietary research have shown the opposite – that processed simple carbohydrate has severe negative health effects. So even the premise of the argument is totally unfounded, leaving aside the faulty logic that 'justified' the racist violence of colonialism on a dietary basis.)

Where no apparent differentiation among a colonised people existed, one could be conveniently manufactured and entrenched by the granting or denial of very real material privileges – between Hutu and Tutsi in the Belgian Congo, for example.

A key part of the national-liberation struggle and socialist liberation struggles of all nations has been to overcome this colonial mindset and unite the oppressed on the basis of common class and national interests.

Hindu-muslim unity in the 1919 uprisings in the Punjab and across India was considered the most ominous phenomenon for the ongoing interests of the British empire by its colonial overlords – and great efforts were made to foment discord and even to instigate communal pogroms in order to paralyse the liberation struggle.

**4. Identity politics and the ‘competition of oppressions’.  
The oppressed are encouraged to embrace their  
difference, and wallow in self-pity and isolation.**

Identity politics may be defined as a tendency of people sharing a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity to form exclusive political alliances, instead of engaging in traditional broad-based party politics, or to promote their particular interests without regard for the interests of a larger political group.

We will accept this limited definition, and state further that, in our estimation, the label of ‘identity politics’ applies to those who consider that the only or chief struggle to be fought or emphasised is *their own particular manifestation of oppression*, disconnected from the general oppression of the vast mass of humanity – the working masses – at the hands of capital.

Those who fall into this trap, wittingly or unwittingly, have fallen prey to the capitalists’ aim of dividing and weakening the working class. We consider identity politics to be the final and most absurd result of the general tendency of imperialism to divide and subjugate the mass of the working people ideologically and organisationally.

Among the category of ‘identity politics’, we would place communal and sectarian identity politics; religious bigotry and fundamentalism of all hues; and racism, be it simple racial bigotry, ‘white supremacist’ ideology or ‘black nationalist’ ideology. The legendary *anti-Irish racism of the English* was long highlighted by Marx and Engels as the internal division of the British working class that kept

them subject to the British capitalists.

Bourgeois feminism, which seeks to separate the oppression of women from the class struggle and class oppression, singling out men in general as the enemy and organising women separately and exclusively, also falls into the politics of identity.

Those who seek to subordinate the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle to their own feelings of anger and perceptions about their individual personal oppression (whether they formulate the content and meaning of their actions precisely, are only dimly aware of them, or do not understand the meaning of their beliefs and actions at all), and in particular those who seek to disorganise and divide the working class on that basis – all are objectively serving not their own cause of liberation, but that of the ruling class, and further entrenching their own isolation and subjection.

## **5. The growing nightmare of 'gender fluidity' – form and content**

For the last five to ten years there has been a new note of dissonance; a new battleground upon which these tired ideas are being revamped and fought out. That growing note of discord in society, reflected in sections of the working-class movement in Britain, has surrounded questions of gender identity and their relation to political representation, legal definitions of gender, individual rights and the struggle for equality.

A few preliminary remarks must be made, before dealing with the substance of this 'disagreement'. First, we must say that we are not afraid of debate. For the purposes of clarity, we published in full the letters that a few of our own supporters addressed to the party's central committee – circulating them amongst our membership with their consent and at their request.

This was done to allow each of our members to evaluate and judge

their reasoning for themselves; the real questions at issue, and the positions our correspondents had adopted; as well as the scientific, philosophical and political implications of those positions.

Those debates and arguments within our ranks, limited as the support for such ideas has been, however, show us something important. It seems that certain ideas, straying from the core topics upon which we as a party – but by no means the whole of our society, or our class, and certainly not the British or US ‘left’ – agree (our analysis of wage labour and capital, of imperialism, of social democracy and the Labour party, of reformism and revolution, of Trotskyism, Korea, Cuba, the USSR, Stalin, immigration, Palestine and Syria), are capable of triggering great outbursts of anger and resentment in some comrades.

Certain peripheral ideas – the ideas, in this author’s estimation, of liberal academia, useful to and sponsored by neoliberal imperialism – have become over-valued and enmeshed with some comrades’ perceptions of their own individual ‘identity’, to the extent that when those ideas are challenged, they feel almost *personally* threatened. This *ultra-individualism* is certainly the desired end result of identity politics in its many guises, and demonstrates precisely why it is capable of playing such a *disorganising and reactionary role*.

Unnecessary distractions from our central tasks, of course, are to be regretted, when we *urgently need to get on with the practical task of awakening more workers to class-consciousness* (this in itself being only the preliminary step to achieving our goals), and yet this debate has now become unavoidable.

Life forces itself upon us, and the hostile class and its retinue are unceasing in their efforts to frustrate our aims; to disunite or lull the workers into tacit acceptance of their wage-slavery.

We have a rich literature and history to draw upon, and it is good to see that comrades are embarking on this task. But the eclectic and shallow style of research and quotation (on both ‘scientific’ and ‘political’ questions) utilised by our correspondents is concerning.

There are not ready-made formulations and quotations that can be conjured from our 'bible' to suit every occasion – and certainly not to support the concepts of 'gender fluidity'. Eclecticism is the enemy of dialectics, which demands a thorough grounding in the specifics of a topic in order to reach well-founded conclusions. No doubt this can seem pedantic at times, but there is no science that can do away with the hard graft of mastering theoretical ideas and methods of applying them to nature.

We must inevitably discuss and come to a position on new events and new topics. That which is old is perpetually new; as new situations arise, new applications and tactical formulations become necessary – and, of course, new comrades come into our ranks.

These are problems of life and growth, and on the whole to be welcomed. Marxism cannot and must not become a lifeless dogma, but it must be studied, not simply read ("in the manner of Gogol's *Petrushka*", to use a phrase beloved of our great comrade and teacher VI Lenin), and thoroughly understood in conjunction with revolutionary practice if it is to be creatively and successfully applied.

There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.\*

## **6. Debate in general, and with comrades within the movement and party in particular**

Debate is the process by which we must arrive at a correct class standpoint. It is the way we decide which are erroneous tactics,

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\* Karl Marx, Preface to the French edition of *Capital*, 1872.

strategies and ideas; and, crucially, which ideas circulating in society are in the interest of the enemy class – and shedding them.

The ability to disagree, to hold a minority position with discipline, to respect the party and follow its programme, to attempt to correct perceived errors while listening to comrades with respect, to *criticise and self-criticise* – these are not just phrases to us, but the touchstone of a truly Marxist party, which must be adhered to if we are to be capable of navigating the complex course of great social events. This inevitably means learning how to change our ideas, when incorrect, both individually and collectively.

A few (a tiny minority, in fact) of our newer and less experienced supporters and comrades have felt the greatest anxiety about the latest issues raised – Twitter-based accusations of ‘transphobia’, of being ‘Terfs’ (so-called ‘trans-exclusionary radical feminists’), of not understanding ‘material reality’, dialectics, biology or politics, of being bourgeois, and even of being ‘eugenicists’ and ‘fascists’.

Some have felt so dejected – embarrassed? – by these accusations (which they evidently feel to be correct, as is shown by their correspondence) that they “no longer bear the party flag with pride” and have de facto withdrawn from party work.

This otherwise farcical series of accusations – once again emanating primarily from a marginal fringe of the US ‘left’, and in particular from a rather amorphous online community loosely associated with the PSL (Party for ‘Socialism and Liberation’) – tells us more about the degenerate state of the USA and its ‘left’ wing than anything else. But the false consciousness that these self-identifying US ‘communists’ display and peddle with great pride and bombast has apparently crept its way into the thinking not only of some amongst the marginalised British youth, but even of some who would consider themselves ‘Marxist’ – including a few party adherents.

Comrades who corresponded with the central committee rather than taking to social media to vent their spleen against their own party comrades are to be congratulated on this advance in their

attitude and discipline. They have moved a step closer to accepting the discipline of the party – the highest form of discipline, which of course is an entirely self-imposed and self-enforced, *voluntary* discipline.

Mensheviks and social democrats, petty-bourgeois anarchists and opportunist ‘socialists’ of all stripes, obsessed by the rights of the individual and the importance of their own ego, have never accepted this Bolshevik concept of real party discipline – when it applies to them. But it is of crucial importance to building an effective revolutionary organisation.

What a farce to imagine that there are people who will put themselves in the line of fire in a real revolutionary class war, yet who cannot bear the shame of being called names (by whom?), and instead would seek to ‘absolve themselves’ by dissociating themselves from their own revolutionary party (which they joined only yesterday, proclaiming their undying loyalty and everlasting commitment) *via the internet and social media* – to all and sundry; to people whom they don’t know, have never met, who are for the most part not even workers living in their own country, and many of whom cannot be confirmed as genuine actors (real and sincere people) at all. It’s simply embarrassing.

This is a *style of work* that befits online shoppers, not vanguard revolutionaries. How many of these Twitter-centred comrades engage in regular real-world activity, attending strikes, pickets and demonstrations? How many distribute our literature or sell even a paltry ten papers a month to spread revolutionary enlightenment to workers? How many have recruited actively and brought the party some credit and profile? How many have helped to create party circles and branches, and to spread revolutionary consciousness among the working people? How many are instead often too ‘busy’ to participate in the work?

Those who quit are apt to find ‘theoretical’ justification for their inadequacies. Those who endure must grapple with reality and their



own understanding, help attract the best elements of our class to form a real vanguard worthy of the name, and struggle *to make our work effective and appealing to ordinary working-class people and relevant to their struggle against capitalist exploitation*.

So, then, to the point issue. Until now we have had no congress-adopted party line on the subject<sup>1</sup> – it being so marginal an issue at all previous congresses that party members did not feel it warranted public comment. But, as a growing trend in society, in educational theory, in neoliberal politics, and in the law books of our ruling class, we can evidently maintain this silence no longer.

## 7. 'Transgenderism' and identity politics

An article came to our attention – from a self-proclaimed online 'Marxist group' (which in reality is no more than a blog, which we note in passing requires rather less effort, organisation and discipline than the creation of an actual organisation) – promoting the concept that sex/gender is not real.

We are aware that a branch of sexual-political 'academia' has attempted to redefine the word 'gender' so that *to them* it doesn't mean the same thing as 'sex'. Gender, they say, is a 'social construct'. By this they *imply* that they mean 'gender stereotypes' – things, behaviours, personality traits, occupations, that men and women, boys and girls are 'supposed' to follow or display), which are indeed neither *absolutely* fixed nor inherent, and change with the evolution of society.

Friedrich Engels' epic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* should be read and studied by all who wish to understand the subordinate position of women within class society, and the way this subordination grew up alongside the patriarchal domination of private property, the family and state institutions. We do not intend to recapitulate that work here.

The real capacity, creative abilities and rightful claim to equality of working-class women has been well demonstrated on a global scale by working women within capitalism, especially since the industrial revolution, as women have increasingly entered the work place, struggling for their rights and for socialism; and, of course, most notably by *Soviet* society, in which women became revolutionary politicians and fighters, builders, train drivers, doctors, engineers, teachers, tractor and combine operators, agronomists, scientists, Red Army soldiers and cosmonauts, among a host of other things, proving themselves capable of mastering the heights of knowledge and technique, and the equal in society and production of their male comrades and workers.

## 8. What is 'gender'?

In fact, the word 'gender' (male, female, neuter or neutral) originates in linguistics and corresponds to the grammatical concept of male, female or neutral *nouns and pronouns* encountered in languages throughout the world.

The fact that some objects are considered male or female is a reflection of the deep significance of the biological and social differences that have actually existed between men and women throughout human history. And this itself is a reflection of the *material reality* experienced by all people and all cultures.

In essence, however, 'gender' remains a synonym for 'sex'.

The article referred to earlier, entitled 'Red Fightback's stance on LGBT oppression in Britain', stated that its 'hope' (!) was to 'outline a basic understanding of our stance on the forces at play in the LGBTQ+ community's battle for equality'. Let us see how they proceeded:

If the LGBT community rejects *binarism* by rejecting gender-normativity, and rejects *compulsory heterosexuality* with non-heter-

onormativity, then the community is positioned as the antagonists of the capitalist stance on gender roles.\*

## 9. What is 'binarism'?

Leaving aside the terrible sin of 'heteronormativity' (which was the scheming capitalist who *compelled* the majority of humanity into heterosexuality, we wonder in passing, and where has he hidden his time machine?), this entire argument, like much of the published transgender correspondence in the party's internal bulletin, brings to mind the old adage that *one fool can ask ten times more questions than ten wise men can answer*.

The word 'binary' means 'relating to, composed of, or involving two things'. In terms of sex, it is clear to all what this means; clear to all of us because it coincides with our almost universal everyday experience. *There are male and female sexes within all species that reproduce sexually*.

Humanity consists of men and women. As Marxists, we have striven for the social, economic and political equality of the sexes. Socialist societies have made great leaps forward in the field of women's equality and our comrades have written extensively on the issues involved, which we will not recapitulate here.†

The demand for equality presupposes differences – or else it would be an absurd demand. It is a very old bourgeois ruse to state: 'You communists want everyone to be equal – *but in reality we are all different!*' The Marxist reply may be read in the *Communist Manifesto*. Socialists want a society in which workers hold power, contribute according to their ability and receive according to their work, and

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\* 'Red Fightback's stance on LGBT oppression in Britain' by JC, *RedFightback.org*, 26 February 2018.

† See E Rule (Ed), *Marxism and the Emancipation of Women*, 2000.

later according to their need. We want to abolish exploitation of man by man [human by human!] and nation by nation. That, surely, is as clear as day.

## 10. Women's equality

When we fight for the equality of sexes, we do not fight for the right of 'everyone to be the same' – which in equality of the sexes would mean everyone should be 'equally androgynous', or for men to have the *right to have babies* (this whole question is reminiscent of a Monty Python farce, is it not?), or for the right of women to take testosterone injections, *we fight instead for the right of men and women workers to achieve their emancipation from wage-slavery* – to achieve their potential without the limitations of poverty, unemployment, etc, that capitalist economic relations impose upon them in the first place.

And, secondly, we fight to remove the extra economic, political and social oppression that is placed on oppressed nations, national, ethnic and religious minorities within dominant nations, and women – who do indeed face further and derivative forms of oppression within the framework of class society, to varying degrees.

We pursue these aims as part of our basic programme, and seek the maximum unity of workers and the oppressed (men and women) in the struggle against exploitation – while appreciating that for as long as oppressive and exploitative capitalist society remains in place, we cannot solve these questions *within the framework of capitalism*.

We have always rejected the bourgeois-feminist line that the key to the emancipation of women lies in a *struggle against men*, per se. 'Kick the oppressor out of your bed' was a line put forward by 'radical' bourgeois feminists of the Germaine Greer type, some of whom went on to advocate lesbianism or licentious sexuality as the

answer to a sexist, male-dominated, patriarchal society.

Their emphasis was not grounded in an understanding of the economic essence of exploitation, and never centred upon the problems of working-class women. The fact that they did not challenge capitalist exploitation has resulted in them being accepted and promoted as the acceptable bourgeois face of 'feminism'. They have achieved only individual self-promotion and careerism for a small group of petty-bourgeois women.

The Marxist approach to ending the problems of working women is to advocate a joint struggle, on equal footing, of *men and women workers against capitalism* – the source of the oppression of both, which will entail a remoulding of consciousness, discarding bourgeois and advancing proletarian norms of behaviour, morals, ethics and values.

Women's position in society in western countries has already advanced to a degree under the influence of the pioneering Soviet examples, which cannot be erased, but equality between men and women remains illusory in a society as riven with economic inequality and exploitation as is the imperialist world in which we live.

In our struggle for the equality of women, communists have never sought to equate the sexes, to deny them, or to proclaim their 'biological equality' or 'identity' (sameness, equivalence). Humanity is now and will ever be composed of two sexes, men and women, or it will cease to be humanity. What is *anti-capitalist* in rejecting the basis of *human* procreation?

Yet the cited article, unabashed, continues:

To be *transgender* in the climate of a binary, capitalist system [but not binary feudalism, binary slavery, binary primitive communism, binary socialism or communism? Where is this 'non-binary' society to be found?], is to cross over the gender normative divisive barrier necessary within capitalist society [only *capitalist* society?], as trans are not defined by the gender-role that was assigned to them at birth. As such, *if one is assigned the gender-division of 'male'*

*at birth, and is treated this way within a patriarchal system, their rejection of the role thrust upon them by the patriarchal society is a blow at the dividing line of gender itself [!], and if one is assigned the female gender role at birth, but rejects it, within a gender-normative society, the patriarchy and rates of profit are weakened [!]. (Our emphasis)*

Untangle and defend this if you can.

## **11. Reproduction of the species and reproduction of labour-power**

If women pretend to be men ('identify' as men if you prefer), capitalist's profits will fall. Really? Having pointed to the 'double oppression' of a 'double reproduction' imposed upon women (reproduction of the species and reproduction of male – only male? – labour-power; ie, giving birth and being a stay-at-home mother-housekeeper-cook, so confusing biology and 'traditional' or feudal conceptions of women's place being in the home, or genuinely sexist stereotypes unpardonably) we can only infer that the 'basic understanding of [Red Fightback's] stance' assumes that our goal is to decrease capitalists' profitability (is that not the inherent tendency of capitalist production itself, which brings periodic crises of capitalism?) by ending this 'reproduction' (having children) and to *strike against our own families*.

The latter concept also is not new, and has long been championed by such bourgeois-feminist organisations as 'Wages for Housework', among others.

## 12. Social v individual labour

We cannot refrain from mentioning that as *socialists* we feel that most, but of course not all of these roles – childcare, education, catering, cleaning, procuring and maintaining housing itself, like production of food and clothing and other necessities, all of which *must be performed if humanity is to continue existence* – can be moved from the sphere of individual drudgery into the sphere of social labour.

This socialisation of labour makes it more efficient, and gives such labour a higher social status, like medicine and nursing, being a chef or a builder, thus freeing workers from much isolating toil and removing many of their individual burdens.

This is true irrespective of which ‘family members’, *men or women*, perform each socially-necessary task. In this way, women are not only freed of the ‘gender-stereotyped role’ (*but not ‘freed’ of their sex; not of their gender!*) of enforced drudgery in the home, but also enabled to play their full and rightful part in production and the administration and government of society.

Until that situation comes about, it would be folly to imagine that ‘freedom’ lies in some government stipend for keeping women in the home (wages for housework), or women ‘self-identifying’ as men (in which the vast majority of women have displayed no interest whatsoever).

## 13. Which class cherishes and which class destroys the family?

Is it not, in fact, *capitalism*, which, through impoverishing and immiserating *billions* of workers, stops our families from functioning

as we would wish, brings unbearable financial and psychological pressures to bear on working-class intra, inter and extra-familial relationships, and prevents us from raising our children in peace, security, health and dignity?

Is it not the role of socialism to free families of these pressures, and, in this sense, to remake the family? Not to 'smash the family' as the petty-bourgeois ideologues crudely imagine, along with the anticommunist propagandists.

#### **14. Freedom stems from the recognition of necessity**

The central and generally accepted Marxist thesis of Georgi Plekhanov's beautiful pamphlet, *On the Role of the Individual in History* (1898), is that *freedom stems from the recognition of necessity*. It is a notion that becomes more profound the more one ponders it.

Life itself exists only within certain limits. To recognise these limits and understand them fully is to give maximum play to the exercise of 'free will' – within the limitations of what is essential and unavoidable.

This is true for economics. Mankind must secure his subsistence and recreate the means for doing so, and this involves a certain amount of work. Work is therefore a condition of mankind's existence. Liberation for *all* workers therefore, cannot be liberation *from* work.

Indeed, work must become life's joy, *life's prime want* – but can become so only when the exploitative, antagonistic relations existing between those who *operate* and those who *own* the means of production is eliminated.

It is true also for health. If one has diabetes, there are certain limitations that this imposes in terms of diet, lifestyle, medication, and so on. To comply rigorously with those conditions – rather than to



'rebel' against them – is to give oneself the best quality of life, living with (or even reversing) that chronic medical condition.

And, of course, it is true for many aspects of our biology. In this instance, there is no point pretending that humanity is *not* composed of men and women, or that imagining yourself to be the opposite sex is a form of liberation from either one's *really existing biological sex*, or societal sexual-relations and politics that are not changed one bit by your individual action in so doing. The result can only be further marginalisation and self-isolation.

It is so self-evident as to be painful to have to point out that to *imagine* oneself to be the opposite sex (self-identify if you prefer) is simply to 'switch camps'. If a man [biological male] identifies as a woman and wants to be a woman, is it not obvious that he has not done away with the material reality or concept of sex, even if he pursues his goal so far as to carry out hormonal and surgical manipulation of his own body.

He just prefers the idea of what he considers (*identifies*, apparently, along with the society he is allegedly 'rebelling' against) are modes of behaviour and appearance that are 'womanly'. Womanly apart from, of course, the biological traits of women that allow them to give birth – that universally acclaimed miracle of human creation and life.

As such, he can only ever be a parody of woman; a pale imitation. Can this give rise to the satisfaction he apparently craves? This 'self-identification' and false 'womanhood'?

## **15. Gender is not the enemy – exploitation is the enemy**

It is not *gender* that alienates men from women, it is our social relations. In changing our social relations, we remake the relationships between family members – but we do not seek to abolish them.

Nor can we know in advance the exact form the socialist family will

take, although the Soviet Union gave great insights into the fact that families will indeed continue to exist around the pre-existing form of a more-or-less stable sexual partnering of a man and woman worker, coming together to share life and raise children.

In particular, Marx spoke of the *removal of coercion* in family and sexual relations, and the abolition of prostitution, which will be possible only when truly equal relations exist between men and women, and poverty has been done away with.

This future relationship is presaged by proletarian wage-workers, as being the only class in capitalist society whose members are free to love whom they choose because no property relations are involved in their relationship decisions, being 'free' of property and therefore all considerations except those of mutual attraction. Of course, this embryonic social form is corrupted in capitalist society by extremes of poverty and inequality, and by the all-pervasive bourgeois, money-oriented, individualistic culture.

Extreme poverty and superexploitation of workers, as well as of the dependent countries (neo-colonies), and their political and economic subjection and domination by imperialism, forces many of those broken workers and nations into a most subordinate position, and their women (and also men) very often bear the brunt of sexual exploitation at the hands of the oppressor class, nation or nations.

Millions of Korean and Chinese women were kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery as 'comfort women' by Japan; millions of Thai and south Vietnamese women were forced into sexual slavery at the hands of the US army of occupation while it was fighting the national-liberation and socialist aspirations of the heroic Vietnamese people (or, as the US simply terms it, 'the Vietnam war').

These disgusting and mutually degrading habits and relationships are perpetuated by US and European 'sex tourists' to this day, perverting the relationship between nations and between sexes.

The collapse of the USSR and the poverty that ensued, the British, EU and US interference and war on Yugoslavia, and the political im-

munity granted to such gangster outfits as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA); and the depths of poverty endemic throughout many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America have forced huge numbers of workers (some previously living in security and socialist dignity) into the extreme destitution of subsistence and below-subsistence wage-slavery, with women throughout the oppressed world vulnerable to the ever-present 'economic freedom' of poverty-enforced prostitution.

Meanwhile, the appalling mish-mash of ahistorical, short-sighted, petty-bourgeois academic ultra-subjectivism in the Red Fightback article, suggests that *sex itself is the problem*, and one, moreover, that has been 'created by capitalism'. This is a position that negates materialism, objectivity, scientific understanding and, in fact, the whole of human history.

Our party's Twitter account posted a link to the article in question for the information (amusement? wonder? bewilderment?) of comrades, and prefaced it with a small, rather innocuous comment:

Under the influence of liberal academia, there is a growing band of 'socialists' who wish to rebel not against injustice, but against reality itself; 'if one is assigned the gender-division of "male" at birth' (you are biologically male).\*

## 16. Marxism or petty-bourgeois liberalism?

It seemed self-evident to us that this was a bizarre concept to be pushing in the guise of 'Marxism', and that it was being pushed more-over by a group of students who had broken with the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) anarcho-Trotskyites over claims that they (the RCG) were all rapists (or rape apologists, or that one of their

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\* *Twitter.com/cpgbml*, 4 June 2018.

members was a rapist – of which we know *nothing* in terms of *factual details*, other than an ambiguously-worded statement, and have never commented upon, but which we noted to be the result of another vociferous Twitter-based campaign).

The response our comment generated, however, revealed the extent to which these anti-materialist positions are held by the US 'left', and certain 'left' twitterati, and helps us to understand their weakness, division and total inability to understand, analyse, approach, mobilise or enlighten the US working class.

## **17. 'Sex is not about chromosomes or genitalia – nor should it be'**

Sex isn't solely determined by chromosomes or genitalia nor should it be, and neither of those things fit into two neat categories anyway. You'd know that if you had done the slightest bit of research but you choose to be an ignorant chauvinist.\*

Sex – male and female – is precisely about chromosomes and genitalia. Sex means different processes depending on the level at which it is studied, but genetics, biology, medicine, endocrinology, etc all share an objective and quite concrete view about what is involved in being a woman or a man; there is really no room for dispute here.

And it is true that what were great secrets and discoveries, mused over by intellectual giants and considered the property of an initiated and learned scientific community in one era, have become the common property of high-school students in the next – provided, of course, that they are correct.

Such was also the case for such concepts as gravity, the electron, electromagnetic radiation, thermodynamics and other great break-

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\* *Twitter.com/knifecoyote*, 5 June 2018; this account has since been deleted.

throughs in physics, each discovery and advance giving way in turn to further questions, investigations and increased understanding and applications.

Such was the case for the great concepts of economics. Such were many of the secrets of life and the living cell, up to and including the revelation of the structure function of the nucleus, and of its darkly staining 'chromatin', which constitutes the chromosomes (chromatin-containing bodies) whose structure and subsequently much of its function was ultimately unravelled as 5'-deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) – the blueprint of protein transcription that plays such a key role in the chemistry of life, metabolism, heritability, and evolution.

All life consists of cellular organisms (with the possible exception of viruses, which are not truly independent lifeforms, but strands of RNA and DNA in protein coats, capable of hijacking the cellular apparatus of other organisms). At the risk of accusations of 'fascism', we can briefly outline some of the key concepts illustrating the understood history of cellular life and evolution.

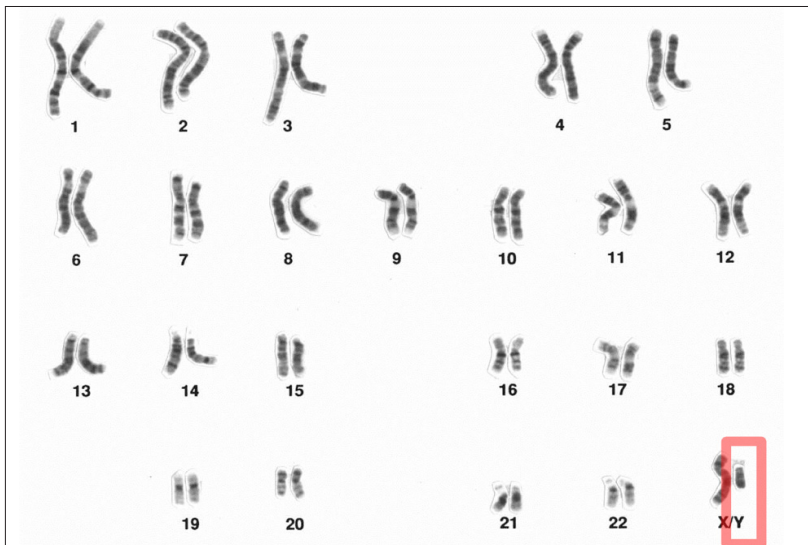
Starting as primitive prokaryotes, without well-defined nuclei and specialist organelles, the more complex or higher lifeforms have developed from eukaryotic cells, having evolved distinct organelles responsible for the basic functions of life – mitochondria for respiration or energy production, a nucleus for the storage and transcription of the DNA 'blueprint' of life, regulating phenotypic form and metabolic function, the Golgi apparatus for protein production and glycosylation, a complex bi-layer phospholipid membrane for separating the intracellular and extracellular environment and allowing interaction and signalling across that membrane, ingestion, and so on. Complex multicellular organisms have specialist organs (lungs for respiration, skin to separate internal and external environment, etc) that mirror the functions of the underlying cellular organelles.

Moreover, the evolutionary process from single-celled to multicellular organisms is a natural wonder, the evidence of which can be witnessed in the embryonic development of every living organism.

In this sense, the biologist Ernst Haeckel noted that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” (or, as we would more accurately picture the concept, the evolutionary development of species is *reflected* in the embryonic development of the individual).

## 18. Sex and chromosomes

Humans have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes (one of each pair comes from each parent). All are the same, except that the last ‘pair’, the sex chromosomes (the clue is in the name), are different. Women have two X chromosomes, and a man inherits a Y chromosome from his father and an X from his mother (see below).

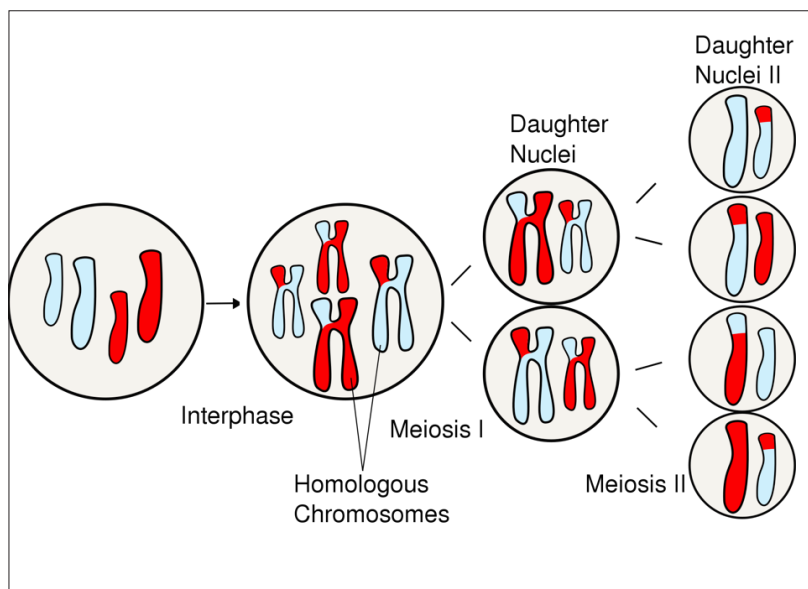


The particular gene that switches on testosterone production in the womb, giving rise to male differentiation of certain tissues and organs, has been identified. In mammals, the Y chromosome contains a gene, SRY, which triggers embryonic development as

a male. The Y chromosomes of humans and other mammals also contain other genes needed for normal sperm production.

For the growth and maintenance of tissues, cells must reproduce. In this division (mitosis), they first double their chromosomes – creating copies. The nucleus and cell then split, allowing an exact copy of the chromosome to be placed in each cell.

Sexual reproduction is a variation on this theme. Gametes are produced by the doubling of genetic material (chromosomes) such that four of each (two copies of each pair of chromosomes) exist, the cell then divides (meiosis) into two and then each divides once more to produce four 'gametes', each containing a single copy of each of the twenty-three chromosomes, or half the normal number of a somatic (non-reproductive) cell.



For this gametic division, at the point of division, each chromosome aligns along the nuclear division membrane, and one of each

chromosome pair (or chromatid) moves into opposite poles to be separated into the gametes (see above).

This process, termed *disjunction* is characterised by 'random assortment', meaning that the alignment of chromosome pairs on the division membrane is random – each gamete has a random mix of chromosomes (and therefore genes) from the two parents (mother and father). In terms of chromosomes, this generates  $2^{23}$  possible combinations: that is, more than eight million (8,324,608) genetically-distinct patterns of 'haploid' sperm or egg.

This incredible diversity is further compounded by the fact that portions of chromosomes, containing series of genes, can splice between chromosomes, creating completely new genetic units, during the assortment process. These unique gametes may then combine to form a new fertilised egg, developing into a new and unique organism. In the case of man, into a new human being.

This remarkable genetic variety, itself coming atop the diversity offered by the total gene pool of humanity, gives rise to extraordinary phenotypic diversity; to organisms subtly different in form and capabilities. Charles Darwin's groundbreaking *On the Origin of Species* (1859) noted that those best suited to their environment are more likely to survive and reproduce, leading to the adaptation of species to their environment.

Thus the organism – or gene combination – best adapted to its environment has tended more often to perpetuate its 'successful' genes and gene combinations through successive generations. Over time, quantitative changes (longer legs, larger eyes, gills developing the ability to breathe air, and so on) accumulate and lead to qualitatively different organisms and species emerging.

Thus sexual reproduction, and the production of gametes that must be exchanged by male and female subsets of a species, far from being foisted upon humanity by some scheming capitalist, is a biological strategy that evolved long before mankind came into being – *billions* of years ago, in fact – after which a veritable explosion



in successful lifeforms evolved.

In this sense, sexual reproduction led to *genetic superiority*, and is as much a part of life on Earth and humanity itself as the air we breathe and the water we drink. We are all the products of this successful evolutionary process, whether we approve of the concept or not.

### **19. Intersex variation, or disorders of sexual development – as a ‘proof’ that sex is not real**

The very reference to ‘intersex individuals whose sex cannot be neatly defined into a “male” or “female” category’ makes sense only in terms of clear biological (genotypic, phenotypic) differentiation between men and women. It is an admittance of the material reality of sex (male and female) being the *universal model* of human comparison – as if this admission needed to be made. This is the meaning of the often misunderstood phrase ‘the exception that proves the rule’.

Do disorders of sexual development prove that sex is not a real material concept, but a ‘social construct’?

### **20. Development of an organism is a complex biological process**

The majority of genetic material within our chromosomes’ nuclear material (DNA), whose function is to encode and regulate the production of structural and metabolic proteins, is *not* expressed in adult humans, or other organisms.

A great many genes are involved in the normal process of foetal development and differentiation, cellular growth and destruction, and all of these processes are complex and subject to error. Many

of those errors are not compatible with life. Others are compatible with life but not with normal function.

## **21. Disorders of sexual development (DSD)**

Disorders in chromosomal assortment, hormonal signalling or cellular response to that signalling can all cause disorders of sexual development, and lead to people being born who have ambiguous primary or secondary sexual characteristics.

These are not new discoveries of medical science, but have been known throughout human history – to the extent they were understood and described by societies at different stages of development. They are rare, but may be devastating to the individual, and often preclude those individuals affected having children. They are not disorders that are perpetuated directly, but may be passed as regressive genetic traits or recur as spontaneous genetic mutations, transcription errors, etc.

The human endocrine system is complex. Hormones are chemical messengers, produced in an organ or cell, released into the bloodstream and producing effects – often widespread and on a variety of tissues – at a remote site in the body.

The pituitary gland, often described as the ‘conductor of the endocrine orchestra’, has a central controlling role over the thyroid and adrenal glands, the body’s control of salt and water regulation, the process of lactation and giving birth, and, of course, on sexual differentiation, both in utero and during childhood and adult life.

The gonad – ovary or testis – is key to the hormonal milieu in utero, and affects development (or regression) of the male Wolffian or female Mullerian genito-urinary tract.

Hormonal levels exist on a spectrum, and although males clearly have higher levels of testosterone than females, and females have higher levels of oestrogen, both hormones are naturally present in

both sexes.

The key role of these hormones is highlighted by such disorders as congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), which causes high levels of testosterone due to defects in mineralocorticoid synthesis in the adrenal gland, resulting in (among other problems) early puberty in males and ambiguous genitalia and masculinisation in females.

We cannot go into exhaustive descriptions of all such disorders here, except to note that comrades have quoted misleading figures for the incidence of such conditions, which in total probably occur in around 1:15,000 (not 1:100) of the population.

The 1:100 figure, upon reading the source, includes such conditions as 'early menopause' and 'mild hypospadias', which can by no means be considered 'intersex' conditions. We note this only as it is typical of a manner of evidence 'selection' that sets out to bolster preconceived conclusions, rather than to objectively weigh evidence and draw conclusions impartially that really can be said to rest upon that evidence.

At the entrance to science, as at the entrance to hell, the demand must be made: *Qui si convien lasciare ogni sospetto. Ogni viltà convien che qui sia morta*, which directly translates as 'Here you should set aside all hesitation; here all fear should cease', and is more often summarised as: Here lies all prejudice.

Do disorders of sexual development prove that sex is *not* a material concept?

Do disorders of the material process of production of gametes (eg, non-disjunction and trisomy, resulting in such conditions as Down's syndrome, or Turners syndrome), of cellular development and differentiation, or hormonal milieu (congenital adrenal hyperplasia, etc) prove that *sex is not a material reality, but rather a social construct*?

Or rather, do they show it to be a very real and complex biological achievement that long predates conscious man's capability of comprehending, understanding and reflecting on the process, let alone imposing his will on it and making it a 'construct' of a particular

order of civilised (ie, class) society; of capitalist society?

All complex systems have the ability to malfunction; biological systems frequently do. Does this show that they are not part of material reality? Or does it rather show that material reality in these systems exists outside and apart from our consciousness and manifests itself in spite of our imperfect understanding?

Generally, there is no dispute that the 'natural' or 'normal' human form is to have two ears, two eyes, a nose, a mouth, two arms and two legs. Yet disorders of formation of all these tissues can occur in the womb.

Do disorders of limb bud development prove that arms and legs are a social construct? We are yet to be berated for our outmoded understanding of limb binarism. Yet has the reader fully considered that with 'genetic surgery', manipulation of hormonal and cellular signalling and tissue differentiation, the administration of certain medicines and drugs, or simple amputation alone (truly an ancient medical procedure), it is possible for those who feel 'limb-fluid' to free themselves from the oppression of a limb-binary world and have four legs – or none?

Do disorders of gut development (imperforate anus, exomphalos, gastroschisis) prove that the human intestine residing inside the abdominal cavity is a 'social construct'? Do disorders of neural crest development prove that an intact spine is a 'social construct'?

Should all people who can thus walk normally by dint of their neuro-normative neurological and skeletal anatomy be made to feel the direct oppression they exert upon the population who have spina-bifida? Are they aware of the *material reality* of the *oppression* that such conditions impose upon the sufferer?

Would it be wrong to try and treat any of these conditions? Should not we recognise that it is the so-called 'bio-normative' population (no doubt Red Fightback and the transgender brigade also consider these norms to be *imposed* by capitalism) who should adopt the wheelchair and undergo procedures so that they might approximate

the bio-fluid population, thus 'reducing the profitability' of capitalism and resisting the 'double oppression of reproduction'?

This preposterous *reductio ad absurdum* (reduction to absurdity) seeks to illustrate the point, we hope, that while *no-one* among our ranks has advocated discrimination against the sufferers of any physical or psychological condition, *no communist* has denied their right to life, right to treatment, right to help; assistance to lead normal and useful, meaningful lives and play a role in society, *it would be absurd to elevate these disorders of development into a general theory of 'human fluidity'*, or to assert that they had led to a higher form of understanding or being.

They are disorders; illnesses. Disorders of sexual development are indeed exceptions *that prove the rule*: humanity is composed of men and women.

Each physical ailment comes with a host of practical, physical and psychological difficulties. That is as true for breast cancer as it is for diabetes or schizophrenia. The fact of the increased rates of self-harm and isolation caused by gender dysphoria is no doubt a sign of disenfranchisement, isolation and confusion, but it is by no means proof that sex does not exist (is a social construct), or that by adopting such a confused and debilitating outlook we are striking a blow against capital.

To be a worker, to be poor and disenfranchised, increases the likelihood of a host of diseases, including mental diseases and depression, an increase in suicide rates, etc.

We know and often point out that a staggering forty million working people die of malnutrition and related diseases each year – thirteen million of them children under the age of five. This is not the sum total of the harm caused by capitalist relations of production, it is but one indicative and most disgusting feature of a grotesque and parasitic system long past its sell-by date.

It is instructive to note the positively reactionary neoconservative arguments that comrades have resorted to in their reasoning, al-

legedly in the name of 'smashing gender stereotypes' (nay, gender itself). The idea that a 'transgendered' woman, for example, is a male body born with a female brain is frankly preposterous (as well as being internally logically incongruent).

It is quite clear that at a genetic level, the presence of XX or XY chromosomes would characterise a brain as belonging to either a man or woman. Outside of this, it is equally clear that 'male and female' brainwaves, thought patterns, mental characteristics, activity or anatomy\* do not exist, any more than the 'gay gene'.† These really *are* stereotypes, and ones which our bold gender-smashers are *perpetuating*, rather than combatting. It is only genetic determinists who reason in this way.

Time, space, energy and interest preclude answering every point raised within this confused correspondence, but on the levels of history, politics, the state, social development and the family, the remarkable feature of 'transgender' reasoning is its reactionary and incoherent nature.

We will have to leave it to other comrades and future work to explore the relationship between this liberal-intellectual movement and its promotion by imperialism, the funding streams that have led to its explosion onto the political scene, and the disorganising role that this and other identity politics are playing.

It is instructive to note this most debilitating and wrongheaded concept is being forced into employment and human rights law, and that our schools, universities, and other institutions are being bullied into accepting these metaphysical and erroneous, not to say harmful concepts.

Suffice it to say that it is imperative that – while defending all workers from discrimination and promoting the maximum unity

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\* 'Scans prove there's no such thing as a "male" or "female" brain' by Jessica Hamzelou, *NewScientist.com*, 30 November 2015.

† 'The life of the gay gene: from hypothetical genetic marker to social reality' by Kate O'Riordan, *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol 49, Issue 4, 21 June 2012.

to achieve our aims – we as a party consciously reject the crude metaphysical reasoning that leads some well-meaning workers to confuse fighting against discrimination with promotion of individualist isolationism, and even some potential comrades to *fight reality rather than the material causes of their exploitation and oppression*.

**Ranjeet Brar**

London, March 2019

## Identity politics: a liberal ideology

*What does the modern obsession with 'identity' really represent? And what is the true path to the greatest possible individual liberty for all?*<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Faking 'progressive': the petty-bourgeois mindset

It has become clear since our recent congress and the passing of motion eight<sup>3</sup> by an overwhelming majority, that some of our rank-and-file membership, candidates and supporters have been confused about the exact nature of identity politics and why it is that we are opposed to it in all its forms.

The use of terms such as 'LGBT ideology' has added further confusion: what exactly is it? In this article, I wish to address the content of identity politics.

First of all I shall deal with the bare bones of the ideology we are pitted against.

In *Anarchism or Socialism?*,\* Comrade Stalin pointed out the petty-bourgeois nature of anarchism, owing to its being founded on

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\* JV Stalin, *Anarchism or Socialism?*, 1906.



the principle condition that the *individual* must first be emancipated in order to then emancipate the masses. By contrast, we Marxist-Leninists hold that the *masses* must be emancipated before it will be possible to emancipate the individual.

This core tenet of anarchism highlights its petty-bourgeois character, and we can see an identical vein of thought running through identity politics. Much like anarchism, the various strands of identity politics claim a mantle of progressive politics for the oppressed; and much like anarchism, they divide workers along lines determined by the bourgeoisie.

## 2. Black separatism

As an example, let us look at the case of black separatism. Black separatism, like all strains of identity politics, deems only its audience – in this case, black people in imperialist countries – as being capable of understanding or even of being *entitled* to talk about their oppression.

Being the *immediate* victims of racism, however, does not make them the only victims. Marx stated in *Capital*:

Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.\*

*All* workers, *all* victims of capital, are capable, with the help of scientific socialism, of understanding and uniting behind the necessary theory, as well as of implementing the strategy and tactics, of class struggle and class war.

Black separatism does not represent proletarian interests at large, or even at all; it represents a minority who hope to do well under the present exploitative conditions. Not only does black separatism

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\* K Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, 1867, Chapter 10.

deem that only black people are capable of talking about their oppression, it also declares the *whole* of the white majority to be the exploiters and oppressors of black people.

This is clearly anti-proletarian, and devoid of class analysis. Instead, it falls into a dualistic dead end, a common current in identity politics, setting black and white proletarians against one another.

Seen in this distorted light, the issue of racism becomes the sole affair of black people. The fact that the fight against racism and oppression is the common cause of *all* proletarians is forgotten.

This dualistic dead end is a painfully common theme amongst the proponents of identity politics, and the approach is strongly endorsed by bourgeois academia because it serves bourgeois interests and keeps the debate about inequality confined to the limits of the present system, under which the problem can, of course, never be solved.

Comrades might well be asking why this has become a problem for our party *now*? Black separatism has, after all, been around for decades. Our founding members dealt with the issue of black sections in the Socialist Labour Party, and with black separatism in the working-class movement for decades before that.

*Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?* by Comrade Harpal Brar\* quite rightly rails against the black separatism that was infecting the working-class movement back in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

### 3. Feminism

In much the same vein, our late comrade Iris Cremer said in a speech given in 1972:

The oppression of women under capitalism is due to the minority

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\* H Brar, *Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?*, 1996.

## IDENTITY POLITICS: A LIBERAL IDEOLOGY

capitalist class owning and controlling all the means of social production.

Various feminism theories, on the other hand, pose:

1. men as the enemy;
2. women's biological function as the enemy;
3. the family as the enemy; and
4. patriarchal society as the enemy.

These theories have in common the fact that they pose men as the enemy and not the capitalist class, and so can never truly liberate women. Worse than this, they leave the real enemy of women unscathed and even enabled to consolidate its position.

Since women taking up the demands of the feminists can *both* lead to the alienation of the movement from working-class women, who must be the main driving force in a truly revolutionary women's movement, *and* they also lead to the setting of women against men, instead of uniting men and women in the struggle against the ruling class which oppresses the majority of both men and women.\*

We can see the same issues with feminism that we have explored with black separatism – namely, the division of workers by setting one group against another in typical dualistic fashion under a supposedly 'progressive' banner. And we can see how this is still being used as a tactic to divide workers.

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\* 'Feminism – a reactionary ideology', speech given by I Cremer on behalf of the Union of Women for Liberation (UWL) to a meeting organised by the Women's National Coordinating Committee, 22 April 1972, reproduced in *Marxism and the Emancipation of Women*, Ed E Rule, 2000, Chapter 9.

#### 4. Anything but class

The current we face today, owing to its recent rebranding, and to its being firmly entrenched in academia, may seem superficially to be a different breed, but it faces us with the same fundamental issues.

It is no coincidence that identity politics have come to dominance in an era of reaction after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the proletarian movement in Britain has been at its lowest ebb – and, furthermore, is rearing its head in a time of protracted economic crisis.

It is no accident that against this backdrop our bourgeois academics are pushing an ideology that encompasses a list of oppressions longer than my 6ft-self which somehow misses class exploitation entirely off the list – or, if our oh-so-wise academics are witty, it might be included in the small print at the very end of said list, reduced to the dualistic form of ‘workerism’.

This ideology, like a cuckoo, has filled a void that once nested class struggle and scientific socialism. Unfortunately, the academic endorsement of identity politics has created similar issues for our movement as did the previous state sanctioning of Trotskyism or the ‘New Left’, with whom they share many similarities.

However, unlike these predecessors they need not pay even lip service to the class struggle. They have nevertheless imbued a new generation of university-going ‘radicals’ with a faux progressive ideology quite alien to, and extremely chauvinistic against, the lower strata of workers.

And thus, the grandiloquent self-professed ‘intellectuals’, who find themselves in ever smaller lefty circles, are greeted with open arms by all those Trots, revisionists and ‘left’ social democrats who no longer have the taste for class struggle. After all, what better distraction and division for proletarians could the bourgeoisie find for

them than an ideology with all the aesthetic of revolutionary politics, but no class content, and which is often downright hostile to the proletariat in its rhetoric?

So, sadly, and inevitably, identity politics have been brought into our midst once more. The marriage of this bourgeois-academic socio-analytical framework with a seemingly 'progressive' aesthetic is a huge handicap to the development of our movement.

### **5. Academic 'intersectionalism' v class analysis**

It is quite understandable that many students who join us will bring with them such bourgeois prejudices, but equally understandable that we must root out the rot, for identity politics (or their indistinguishable variants such as 'intersectionalism') are incompatible with dialectical and historical materialism – lacking in dialectics, materialism, or historical understanding, and thus in scientific method.

This was evidenced at congress when one former comrade listed various figures to prove that LGBT people suffer a special and entrenched oppression under capitalism. One such figure stated that a high proportion of homeless people happen to be LGBT.

Aside from the fact that the parameters of this study were not given (where did the figures come from?; were these young people made homeless specifically because they are LGBT?), what conclusion does such a statistic lead us to? Does there need to be a demand for special laws to be put in place protecting LGBT people from being made homeless?

Of course not. The answer to the problem is the same as for all homeless people; all workers – secure housing, jobs, education and healthcare should be a right, and are in the common interest of the entire proletariat.

This small example highlights the problem with trying to understand an obviously proletarian issue through the fog of identity poli-

tics.

The same can be said for 'ableism'. As far as Marxists are concerned, rights and dignity for the disabled is a proletarian issue. Of course we do not decry the struggle of the disabled to improve their material conditions; to fight for greater accessibility to public places and public health, or for access to improved communication and meaningful work.

But we cannot help but point out that this is a *class* issue. A proletarian cannot afford to be afflicted or born with a disability without risk of falling into wretched conditions. By contrast, a member of the bourgeois class may be afflicted with paraplegia as a result of polio and win a record four presidential elections, as did Franklin D Roosevelt in the USA.

By contrast, our 'intersectionalist' opponents would have us believe, in their typical dualistic fashion, that all able-bodied and able-minded people are somehow the 'oppressors' of those who suffer with either a physical or a mental disability. Once more, their fake solutions pit workers against one other and leave the capitalists and their system unscathed.

## **6. LGBT ideology: another diversionary division**

Now we come to the question of LGBT ideology, which has so confused some comrades within and without the party. 'LGBT ideology' is a term we have created, in the absence of a universally recognised name, to apply to those who endorse and proselytise the ideology of identity politics, as elaborated above, to LGBT people, separating their material interests from those of the proletariat at large.

It is our view that LGBT people in Britain suffer from *prejudice* (a contradiction amongst the masses) as opposed to *oppression* by the bourgeois state. Once again, the peddlers of identity politics raise this question from one of fighting against such prejudice to

an overarching dualism: lesbians, gays and bisexuals, they assert, must be 'emancipated' from the 'oppression' of heterosexuals, while transsexuals must be emancipated from 'cis'-gendered people.

This approach enlightens no-one, and is a million miles away from imbuing gay workers with an understanding of their duty to unite with the rest of the proletariat.

These examples encapsulate the misleading sophistry of identity politics, their divisive character, and their bourgeois class content. Their forms are legion. Fundamentally, their greatest flaw is that they refuse to analyse social and economic life through the paradigm of class struggle.

Devoid of the context of class exploitation, which is the primary contradiction in capitalist society, and thus failing to frame all other contradictions within this context, identity politics are impotent to offer any real solutions to the issues at hand, merely dividing those who should be uniting. They thus stand in complete contradiction with Marxism Leninism.

### **7. What is the real road to individual liberty?**

Many a self-professed Marxist-Leninist will try to marry Marxism Leninism with intersectionalism (the current brand name of identity politics, as endorsed by bourgeois academia). Many of these comrades are subjectively invested in their identities; many have been exposed to identity politics at university before coming to Marxism Leninism, and have brought this liberalism with them.

It is understandable, therefore, that some individuals may perceive the subordination of their cherished identities to the class struggle (the fundamental contradiction) as being somehow repellent. Further confusion arises, as mentioned above, because these various contradictions do not appear to be equal.

This is an unfortunate and typical case of language being used un-

scientifically. The concept of 'oppression' is pasted onto every contradiction in our society by identity politics, whilst Marxism Leninism uses such terminology with precise and scientific intent. In this way, many a fresh-faced applicant is alarmed to learn that they suffer not from oppression but from prejudice – a contradiction amongst the masses – or (as with ableism) from a class issue, and these comrades cannot help but feel offended by the apparent 'downgrading' of their personal and subjective experience.

To find themselves subject to demands common to the entire proletariat seems a let-down after having had their separate struggles elevated to the pinnacle of importance. Such comrades allow their personal prejudices to lead them into the role of modern-day Bundists,<sup>4</sup> with their Marxism clutched in one hand, and their liberalism clutched in the other.

Our message to these comrades is clear: bourgeois society and the bourgeois state have in the imperialist nations afforded the greatest extent of personal freedoms and liberties for the individual that is possible in economic and social life within the system of capitalism – at the expense of and off the backs of the great toiling masses of the globe. We are quite clear that the collective emancipation of the masses is a prerequisite for the true emancipation of the individual; it is now for us to organise the proletarian masses of all strata and sections under the flag of socialism, under the banner of proletarian internationalism, in the common interest of all working peoples.

**Edward Renyard**

Birmingham, December 2018



## Identity politics or class politics?

*Where is the obsession with 'identity' leading us and why is it so inimical to the class struggle?*<sup>5</sup>

### 1. Quick definitions

*Identity politics*: a political approach based on prioritising issues perceived as most relevant to a restricted racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, social, cultural or other *identity*, and forming political alliances with others on this basis and irrespective of social class.

*Class politics*: the politics of working people, based on a recognition of the individual's underlying social relationship with the means of production<sup>6</sup> irrespective of their racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, social, cultural or other *identity*.

### 2. Gay 'liberation': a deliberate confusion

For decades, serious Marxists have simply kept away from the academic debates around gay rights, seeing the issue as a distraction

and an irrelevance to the struggle for socialist revolution. Those self-identifying Marxists who have taken a position have done so out of fear; jostled by the petty-bourgeois left and the bourgeois media into agreeing with the precepts of identity politics in order to try to appear 'acceptable' to 'modern' eyes.

But the simple fact is that whom a person has sex with – assuming it is between consenting adults and no money changes hands – *is not a class issue* (by which we mean that it is not a central programmatic issue for workers struggling for socialism).

Socialists are, of course, opposed to the criminalisation and persecution of homosexual activity that was carried out under the hypocritical pretext of upholding bourgeois morality, but such legislation and persecution are no longer in question in Britain. Even when they existed, they never justified the now prevailing idea that a person's sexual preferences are the defining point of his or her 'identity'.

As a recent column on the *Spectator* website put it:

Gay people should be as free and equal as straight people. And today they are. That's wonderful. But the fact you are gay is the least interesting thing about you. Tell me something else.\*

What real interest is there in knowing who people are sleeping with, beyond prurient gossip? What does it say about the abysmal level of our class consciousness that workers have been brought genuinely to believe that there is something inherently *progressive* (ie, that it is something that advances history) about marching up and down to publicly proclaim their sexual preferences, while politicians, policemen and Nato officers join in with rainbow flags?

This confusion of sexual questions with class issues is not new. It began among bourgeois proponents of women's equality in the nineteenth century, and was transferred wholesale into the 'gay liberation' movement of the late 1960s.

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\* 'Why I'm sick of Pride' by Brendan O'Neill, *The Spectator*, 6 July 2019.

Of course, it is perfectly correct to point out that the oppressive and hypocritical sexual morality of class society is a fetter on human relationships. Workers have long looked forward to a future in which love and sex are no longer mixed up with questions of class and property.

But to move from this understanding – that the coming social revolution will also revolutionise *all* our relationships with one another (not only sexual ones) – to the idea that we must make sexual matters an object of primary concern *before* the revolution is putting the cart well before the horse, and simply offers yet another distraction from the real task that faces us – the task of organising the working class for socialist revolution.

That, of course, is why the capitalists have been so very keen to promote the idea. Since the living example of Soviet socialism started to undermine the foundations of the rigidly enforced moral code of bourgeois society, our rulers, while helpless to stop the mass rejection of this hypocritical and repressive morality, have been quick to take the opportunity to divert workers from class questions into pursuing a chimerical idea of *individual* liberation that can supposedly be achieved through giving full rein to their sexual appetites – even as the hypocritical ‘moral’ commentary continues side-by-side with the promotion of this ‘sex as liberation’ *lifestyle* ideology.

A century ago, discussing the demands and activities of the international socialist women’s movement, Lenin warned the German communist and working-class women’s leader Clara Zetkin of the dangers of getting distracted by discussions around sex and sexuality:

I have been told that at the evenings arranged for reading and discussion with working women, sex and marriage problems come first. They are said to be the main objects of interest in your political instruction and educational work.

I could not believe my ears when I heard that. The first state of

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proletarian dictatorship is battling with the counter-revolutionaries of the whole world. The situation in Germany itself calls for the greatest unity of all proletarian revolutionary forces, so that they can repel the counter-revolution which is pushing on. But active communist women are busy discussing sex problems and the forms of marriage 'past, present and future'.

They consider it their most important task to enlighten working women on these questions. It is said that a pamphlet on the sex question written by a communist authoress from Vienna enjoys the greatest popularity.

What rot that booklet is! The workers read what is right in it long ago in Bebel. Only not in the tedious, cut-and-dried form found in the pamphlet but in the form of gripping agitation that strikes out at bourgeois society.

The mention of Freud's hypotheses is designed to give the pamphlet a scientific veneer, but it is so much bungling by an amateur. Freud's theory has now become a fad.

I mistrust sex theories expounded in articles, treatises, pamphlets, etc. In short, the theories dealt with in that specific literature which sprouts so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always absorbed in the sex problems, the way an Indian saint is absorbed in the contemplation of his navel . . .

No matter how rebellious and revolutionary it may be made to appear, it is in the final analysis thoroughly bourgeois. Intellectuals and others like them are particularly keen on this. There is no room for it in the party, among the class-conscious, fighting proletariat . . .

Why is the approach to this problem inadequate and un-Marxist? Because sex and marriage problems are not treated as only part of the main social problem. Conversely, the main social problem is presented as a part, an appendage to the sex problem.

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The important point recedes into the background. Thus not only is this question obscured, but also thought, and the class-consciousness of working women in general, is dulled.\*

This point of Lenin's is key: there is nothing to be gained for the revolution by focusing serious attention on trying to solve class-society-induced problems of sex and relationships *before* the revolution. These are questions workers will solve for themselves as socialism develops into communism and all remaining traces of class society disappear from their lives, their minds and their culture.

Our preferences and partnerships *are bound to be shaped by the society into which we are born and the circumstances of our upbringing*, but to what extent this is so we are unlikely to find out to the full until such time as class society is a distant memory and human relations have been allowed to develop free from the constraints of class and money, and free also from the hypocritical and prurient attitudes created by bourgeois life and bourgeois morality.

What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear.

But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love, or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences.

When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their

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\* 'Lenin on the women's question', interview by Clara Zetkin, 1920.

own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual – and that will be the end of it.\*

As far as the class struggle to overthrow capitalism is concerned, we can only state again that freely undertaken sexual activity is an aspect of workers' personal lives; it has no bearing on capitalist exploitation or on the struggle for socialism.

Socialists are opposed to any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, but we are equally opposed to the propagation of such misleading phrases as 'the LGBT community', which do nothing to enlighten anybody and only spread confusion.

Since when did having a particular sexual preference make one part of a 'community'? Such a use of the term (endlessly employed by all the proponents of identity politics to give credence to the drivel they spout) simply renders it meaningless.

To the extent that the bourgeoisie uses the word 'community', it acts *not to unite but to divide* workers – encouraging them to identify with other 'gay people', no matter what their class, and to think that the path to 'freedom' is to be found in living in gay ghettos and buying into corporate-driven 'identities' that dictate their taste in clothes, music, decor . . . even how they walk and talk – which are all supposed somehow to be tied to their sexual preferences.

As with bourgeois solutions to racism and sexism, the bourgeois solution to homophobia is to *increase* ghettoization in the name of fighting it.

The truth is that the fight for 'gay rights' has been promoted as part of the campaign to demote and divert the women's struggle and the fight against racism, both of which can only be solved by socialist revolution, into a harmless 'rights'-driven agenda – ie, one that promotes *legal recognition of equality* as the 'solution' to problems that are built into the capitalist state machine and which no amount of legislation by that same state will ever remedy.

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\* Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884.

As far as the working class is concerned, prejudice within our ranks cannot be solved by bourgeois state interference but by working and struggling together for socialism. Exposure to those against whom we are prejudiced is always the best remedy for solving what Mao termed 'contradictions among the people', which can be resolved by the working people themselves through dialogue and discussion (as opposed to contradictions with the enemy, which cannot but be antagonistic).

As far as capitalist society is concerned, removing barriers of prejudice that prevent better-off gay people 'getting on' in their careers, getting married or adopting children does absolutely nothing to change the exploitative relations in society, which remain the real bar to workers being able to live meaningful and civilised lives. Gay workers may cease to be excluded from some activities on account of their sexual preferences, but that won't change what type of work, education, housing or healthcare they have access to, which are based on their class background and not their sexuality.

We state again: *we are opposed to discrimination*, but it will not truly be ended without ending capitalism, which rations access to the resources needed to really 'level the playing field' and allow *everyone* to develop and express their potential to the full.

Sexism stems from the oppression of women that is built into all class societies. The capitalists cannot afford to socialise the work that women presently do privately and for nothing; they can neither afford to provide the facilities that will free women from the burdens placed upon them, nor provide meaningful work for them all in the capitalist labour market. Nor can they allow women to be freed en masse to take part in political life.

Thus, no matter how many better-off working women find a way to carve out careers for themselves under capitalism, the masses of working-class women will still be trained from birth to accept their lot and carry out their domestic duties.

Racism stems from the oppression of the colonies and from im-

perialist war, as well as from the need to keep workers divided at home. The imperialist ruling class can no more stop fighting wars for domination and plunder than it can stop the anarchy of private production.

Thus, no matter how many better-off black and ethnic minority workers find a way to carve out careers for themselves under capitalism, the masses of working-class black people (or Irish, or muslims, or whoever best fits the agenda of the day) will still be treated unfairly by the state and routinely harassed and criminalised in order to perpetuate whatever stereotypes the ruling class needs to help it justify wars abroad and keep workers divided at home.

We have seen the *primary targets* of state-sponsored racism change over time (from Irish and blacks to muslims and east Europeans, for example), but the need for such racism to exist has in no way diminished.

This is not the case with the other rights lobbies, however, which is why they are so assiduously promoted by the bourgeoisie and its left-liberal hangers-on. Meeting all the demands of the gay rights lobby is perfectly possible without undermining the basis of capitalist exploitation, and has the added bonus of helping to confuse workers about what the fight for social justice really looks like.

Moreover, it gives the exploiting ruling class the opportunity to take onto itself the mantle of 'defender of workers' liberties' while castigating those self-same workers for their backward attitudes.

Win-win, in fact.

Not only do the capitalists get to whitewash their endemic racism and sexism by allowing a black or openly gay president or a woman prime minister to be elected to preside over the perpetration of aggressive wars and the deepening of poverty for the masses worldwide, but they get to lecture the victims of their aggression about 'equality'.

What could be more obscene than the 'pink-washing' of the fascistic, zionist state of Israel as it carries out its slow genocide of



Palestinians side by side with the shedding of crocodile imperialist tears over the 'rights' of women and gay people in anti-imperialist Iran?

US president Barack Obama presided over an increase in shootings of black people at home and waged criminal wars against Libya, Afghanistan and Syria, but he was still awarded 'progressive points' by left liberals for a. having black skin, and b. passing legislation that allowed gay men to join the criminal US imperialist army.

US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton proudly took personal credit for the criminal devastation of Libya and the foul murder of its loved and respected leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, yet she was vigorously promoted by left liberals as their choice to become the US's first female president.

It is a sad day indeed that sees people who claim to be champions of the working class celebrating such 'achievements'.

The weaponisation of identity politics has been noticed and criticised by a small but vocal section of conservative bourgeois commentators, who often do a very good job of exposing their ridiculous and hypocritical essence. In the *Spectator* article cited earlier, Brendan O'Neill points out:

It's no longer enough to leave homosexuals alone to live however they choose and to inflict on them no persecution or discrimination or any ill-will whatsoever on the basis of their sexuality, which is absolutely the right thing for a civilised liberal society to do. No, now you have to validate their identity and cheer their life choices. You must doff your cap to that omnipresent bloody rainbow. *Today it isn't homosexuals who are persecuted; it's their critics . . .*

The new moral majority is pro-gay rather than anti-gay. It consists of the political class, the capitalist class, the media class and the celebrity class. Its flag is the Pride flag. Its branding and messaging are inescapable. If you're a truly virtuous person, you'll even wear the new moral majority's political paraphernalia, in the form of a

Pride badge, a Pride t-shirt, or Pride socks on the actual TV news (Mr Snow). Doing so is a way of letting everyone know you're a good person. You're on the right side of virtue and the right side of history. You are an insider.

But there are many reasons why it might be a good idea to dissent from the orgy of Pride conformism and to refuse to bow and scrape before the rainbow flag. That flag sums up everything that is wrong with our era. Its message is that you should be proud of yourself simply for what you are – for having been 'born this way', as Lady Gaga puts it – rather than for what you have achieved.

As a symbol, it's a celebration of the self, of an accident of birth, of something as mundane as who one sleeps with. It's an invitation to narcissism and, as such, *it further corrodes the social solidarity and sense of community so many of us long for today*. Pride, the institution, is anti-social.\*

Sadly, Mr O'Neill's suggested antidote to the divisive individualist navel-gazing of identity politics is the divisive tribal politics of bourgeois nationalism.

Nevertheless, his plea that people should be encouraged to 'feel part of something bigger than themselves' can only be endorsed by communists, who are able not only to help workers *feel* that they can be part of something bigger than themselves (by selling them an illusion of cross-class 'national unity'), but actually show them *in reality* what that something is (the international proletariat; the class struggle for socialism), why it matters, and why workers with any real shred of pride in themselves and their class should be prepared to make every kind of sacrifice to ensure its growth and success.

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\* 'Why I'm sick of Pride' by Brendan O'Neill, *The Spectator*, 6 July 2019, our emphasis.

### 3. Equal rights and the hierarchy of pain

After October 1917, the imperialists lost the moral high ground. When Soviet policy proved in practice the fallacy of bourgeois justifications for racism and national oppression (that colonised peoples were unfit to rule themselves) and for sexism (that women were physically and mentally incapable of doing 'men's work'), the popular sentiment turned against imperialism for good.

The fact that modern-day imperialists are forced to pay lip-service to 'equality' and 'human rights' . . . is a telling legacy of October.\*

Having been forced onto the back foot by the advances of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp; having lost the moral high ground in terms of its ideological dominance of workers' minds, the ruling class has worked hard to turn the new reality – where it has been forced to accept *in words*, if not in deeds, that there is no moral justification for sexism, racism or colonial oppression – to its advantage.

Just as the bourgeoisie has used the concession of free secondary education for all children to poison as many workers' minds as possible and turn them against the very concept of 'learning'; just as it has used the concession of free healthcare to provide a guaranteed market at astronomical prices to the monopoly drugs cartels; so it has used the forced concessions in the direction of equal rights for women and ethnic minorities to manipulate the struggle around these vital issues away from alignment with the class struggle and into harmless dead ends of debate over 'rights' and 'privilege'.

To cement this diversion away from class politics, any number of

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\* 'October Revolution: The future belongs to communism', resolution passed by the CPGB-ML's eighth congress, September 2018.

other minority groups against whom there has been prejudice in society have been brought forward to join the 'equal rights' agenda: those stigmatised or sidelined as a result of mental or physical disability, ill health or old age, for example.

Once again, for the benefit of those who are determined to misrepresent our views, we repeat that *communists are in favour of workers being treated equally*.

In our organisation, we certainly put that principle into practice as far as we are able, without, however, bowing to the kind of militant political correctness which dictates that our comrades should not hold a public meeting if they don't have access to a sign language interpreter, or that they should never allow a man to speak on the question of women's oppression.

The need to carry out our work and make the best of whatever resources we have available to us – to do our duty to the working class and to the revolution – takes precedence over all our needs and preferences as individuals. It is a sign of how muddied our waters have become by individualism and the politics of identity that this should even need to be stated.

The point for workers to understand is that *equality of opportunity will never be granted to poor workers under capitalism*, no matter how much advance against limiting prejudice is made by the better-off. The demand for equality is useful *in so far as it helps to reveal this basic truth and recruit forces for the revolution*; if it is not being used to illustrate the need for socialism, it is a dangerous illusion that leads only to confusion.

The point is not that communists are opposed to equal opportunities or equal rights, but that we understand that these will not come while capitalist exploitation and the drive for profit continue to divide humanity into exploited and exploiters; continue to concentrate society's wealth into fewer and fewer hands while impoverishing the vast masses of humanity.

Taking advantage of the confusion already created in this area, the

proponents of identity politics (particularly those working in bourgeois academia) are increasingly encouraging *all* workers to find a special minority with which to identify, and to imagine that the real or imagined difficulties associated with living as part of that minority give them some kind of precedence over others.

Moreover, the question of racism, having been neatly transformed into a simple dichotomy of white versus black, has been minutely subdivided into *grades of oppression* related solely to darkness of skin. In this hierarchy of suffering, to be perceived as 'more oppressed' is also to be recognised not only as being worthy of more sympathy (and the object of more guilt), but also as being *inherently more progressive* – a travesty of the concept that makes a mockery and a farce out of working-class politics, but which is all too often put forward in the name of 'Marxism'.

The effect of all this is particularly noticeable among the student population, exposed to what seem to them to be universally-accepted truths for years and from all sides, and expected to repeat them in essays if their studies have any connection with art, politics, history or social life. It is therefore only to be expected that identity-driven agendas should be introduced wholesale into the working-class movement by these thoroughly-indoctrinated student 'activists' and their academic mentors.

This is the situation that has produced the disgusting spectacle of better-off and patently *privileged* workers vying with one another to claim a place in the officially-recognised and constantly evolving hierarchy of pain and oppression; a ridiculous exhibition of *competitive 'suffering'* that is mainly indulged in by those who are, in point of fact, suffering significantly *less* than the mass of poor workers at home, and exponentially less than the mass of impoverished workers globally, many of whom really *do* have trouble finding a 'safe space' – a roof, sanitation, running water, electricity, free from the threat of water, land or air pollution and Nato bombs – in which to try to feed, clothe and house their children.

#### **4. Hating the haters: the self-identifying 'left' in the service of imperialism**

Not only have we reached the absurd situation where identity politics have created excuses for privileged workers to complain to less privileged ones about the pain of their oppression, but this has been further developed into a real weapon against the poorer mass of workers in the form of the militant policing of everything deemed by the self-appointed identity politics police as 'racist', 'sexist', 'homophobic', 'transphobic', etc.

With the passing of the Equalities Act in 2010, the proposed updates to the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (updates that seem to be being widely implemented even before being officially written into law), and the gradual adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association's (IHRA) Zionist definition of 'antisemitism' by public bodies across the country, these fundamentalists increasingly have the force of British law and public institutions to back them up.

Such simple and anodyne statements as 'It's alright to be white', 'Women don't have penises', and 'Zionism is racist' are liable to call down not only the hysterical opprobrium of the left-liberal cognoscenti, but also the vitriol of the capitalist media, the retribution of state institutions (from creches to schools and universities; from local council offices to social workers; from doctors' surgeries to clinics and hospitals), and even the full force of employers and the law in the form of sackings and prosecutions.

While we do not subscribe to the pessimistic hypothesis that everything that happens has been precisely planned by our Machiavellian and all-powerful ruling class, it is equally clear to us that our rulers are not to be underestimated. They are infinitely adaptable. When they suffer defeats they are quick to use whatever is to hand to try

to turn their remaining power and influence to good account.

In the case of Marxism – the ruling class's most dangerous enemy – a century and a half of paying good money for endless distortions of Marxist science, and a century of paying good money for countless corruptions of Leninist revolutionary theory, have brought huge dividends.

Nearly a century ago, the ruling class was sinking into the greatest crisis it had ever faced, and its system was teetering on the brink of collapse, even as the new Soviet Union was going from strength to strength, and the working classes all over the capitalist world had militant, revolutionary organisations that looked to the USSR for inspiration and gave class-conscious leadership. These organisations popularised the demands that fascism and racism should be fought, that women should be emancipated, that colonialism should be ended, and that socialism should be every working-class organisation's ultimate aim.

Today, the imperialists are enmeshed in an even worse crisis, but they have – for the time being, at least – no well-organised working-class army to take advantage of their weakness in their own heartlands. Indeed, so successful have they been in spreading confusion that those whose alienation should lead them to fight the system are instead fighting each other.

As has begun to be noticed by the more thoughtful of conservative bourgeois commentators, in former times, an antisemite was someone who hated jews; today, an (alleged) 'antisemite' is someone who is hated *by* (militant zionist) 'jews'. Previously, a homophobe was someone who hated gays; today, an (alleged) 'homophobe' is someone who is hated *by* (militantly ideological) homosexuals.

What is equally clear is that while in former times, the righteous anger of the masses was being harnessed against the iniquities of the system, in today's topsy-turvy bastardisation of these real struggles, it is the oppressors and the privileged who unite to attack and denigrate the poorer workers, or those who in any way threat-

en the system of capitalist imperialist exploitation – whether poor white workers who voted for Donald Trump, poor white workers who voted for Brexit, or Jeremy Corbyn for failing to be a militant zionist while heading up her majesty’s loyal opposition.

Indeed, the identity-driven approach to politics has so saturated the mindset of privileged workers that their idea of the class struggle today is not of uniting workers under the banner of scientific socialism; not of building an organisation capable of leading the workers to challenge capitalist state power, but of *adopting an identity* and joining a social club. What matters to these ‘activists’ is that their adherents should wear the right clothes and badges, design their materials using the right colours and fonts, and, of course, keep themselves pure by refusing to associate with anyone who isn’t a signed-up member of their particular club.

Like followers of rival bands on an obscure music scene, these self-identifying ‘socialists’ are so engrossed in the petty rivalries (usually online) between their various sects that they are completely oblivious to the fact that the mass of workers have no idea they even exist, never mind any awareness of (or interest in) their manufactured controversies. The understanding that their role should be first to understand Marxist theory and then *to do everything in their power to connect that theory with the masses*, who will be able to put the theory into action, is entirely missing from these cultists’ conception of ‘socialist activism’.

## 5. Transgenderism: identity politics squared

REG:            Furthermore, it is the birthright of every man –

STAN:           Or woman.

REG:           Why don’t you shut up about women,  
Stan. You’re putting us off.



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- STAN: Women have a perfect right to play a part in our movement, Reg.
- FRANCIS: Why are you always on about women, Stan?
- STAN: I want to be one.
- REG: What?
- STAN: I want to be a woman. From now on, I want you all to call me 'Loretta'.
- REG: What?!
- LORETTA: It's my right as a man.
- JUDITH: Well, why do you want to be Loretta, Stan?
- LORETTA: I want to have babies.
- REG: You want to have babies?!
- LORETTA: It's every man's right to have babies if he wants them.
- REG: But . . . you can't have babies.
- LORETTA: Don't you oppress me.
- REG: I'm not oppressing you, Stan. You haven't got a womb! Where's the foetus going to gestate?! You going to keep it in a box?!
- LORETTA: *crying*
- JUDITH: Here! I – I've got an idea. Suppose you agree that he can't actually have babies, not having a womb, which is nobody's fault, not even the Romans', but that he can have the *right* to have babies.
- FRANCIS: Good idea, Judith. We shall fight the oppressors for your right to have babies, brother. Sister. Sorry.

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REG: What's the point?

FRANCIS: What?

REG: What's the point of fighting for his  
right to have babies when he can't have babies?!

FRANCIS: It is symbolic of our struggle against oppression.

REG: Symbolic of his struggle against reality.

— Monty Python's *Life of Brian*\*

With the transgender movement, identity politics has reached its absurd apotheosis. Ironically, its arrival has upset no-one more than the leading proponents of bourgeois feminism and black nationalism.

After all, how can militant feminists protect their sphere from evil men if a man can now proclaim himself a woman at the drop of a hat? And where will the fashion for self-identifying lead us once the principle has been ceded? What if white people start identifying as black? What if gentiles start identifying as jews? What if young women who might have grown up to be lesbians have a sex change instead and identify as straight men?

The sight of feminist campaigners arguing vehemently that 'women don't have dicks' would be funny if it weren't so tragic. And the fact that this simple fact is up for dispute and is attacked as 'hate speech' should send a shiver down every worker's spine.

What kind of Orwellian world is being created before our eyes when a 40-year-old comedy sketch written to lampoon the sectarian nuttiness of the ultra-left of the time and show it reaching absurd and (at the time) unimaginable heights should have turned out to be a simple prediction of the future?

Could the bourgeoisie make it any clearer that it has reached the

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\* *The Life of Brian* film script by Monty Python, 1979.

point of utter degeneracy – that it has nothing at all to offer workers and seeks merely to distract them from the plunge in their living standards – than to whip up a controversy out of a simple statement of biological fact? It seems we are indeed reaching a point where even geometrical axioms are up for debate.<sup>7</sup>

The bourgeoisie creates confusion in all spheres of life in order to retard the movement for socialism. It is the job of socialists, therefore, to speak the *truth*, no matter how unpopular or unpalatable some truths may be to some sections of the population.

A good example of a mass delusion that is heavily propagated by the ruling class is religion. In its revolutionary youth, the bourgeoisie allowed science to smash the dogmas of the Church. Bourgeois science has provided ample evidence for the material basis of life and the universe, so that humankind no longer has need of supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. And yet, as capitalist rule has matured and reached its senile years, it has encouraged every kind of superstition and backwardness in order to a. console exploited workers and encourage them to accept their place in the social hierarchy; and b. justify their rule as being ordained by God.

Socialists are materialists, and the communist party is guided by Marxist science and philosophy; by dialectical and historical materialism, which leaves no room for religious belief. Nevertheless, we do not refuse religious workers (of whom there are many) admittance into the ranks of the party. Rather, we tell them: the contradiction is for you to resolve as best you can. If you wish to join the struggle for socialism in Britain; if you are prepared to accept the party's programme and discipline, then your personal religious beliefs are your private affair – only don't proselytise for converts amongst the membership or amongst the wider masses.

These are the terms on which we accept religious workers into membership. We do not give up our right to propagate materialism out of sensitivity to those members' feelings – to do so would be a dereliction of our duty to tell the truth to the workers. But neither

do we deny the opportunity to such workers to play their part in the struggle. In that, most *meaningful*, sense, we are tolerant and promote unity.

We do not promote unity of the kind demanded by the left-liberal ideologues: the 'unity' of never saying anything that might possibly offend or upset any other worker. Given the extent to which wrong ideas have hold of the minds of the masses, to promise never to say anything that might offend people's prejudices is to promise never to try to make revolution.

The revolutionary movement has the potential to grow as external conditions develop, but whether or not it does so depends entirely on how successful the communists are in persuading workers to lay aside the prejudices pushed onto them by a hostile class and accept the truths that Marxism has to offer.

It is not possible for socialists, out of consideration for the feelings of those who have been fooled by such lies, to tell workers that gender dysphoria is a condition that requires lifelong and expensive medical treatment. The tiny minority of people who are born with abnormal genitalia or chromosomes should of course be supported and offered the best possible chances in life, including medical treatment where necessary. *But they do not account for the growing number of young people turning up at the doors of transgender clinics in the imperialist countries.*

The 21st-century growth in gender dysphoria is a result of the remorseless promotion and enforcement of gender stereotypes on our children, especially by the capitalist media and retail giants; of the promotion of identity politics and the breakdown of community, of class organisation and class solidarity; of the rise of the processed food industry and social media, the fall in living standards and diminishing life prospects (education, housing, healthcare, work, access to nature, sport, culture, and everything else that makes live interesting and worthwhile).

So many people in today's decaying capitalist society are isolat-

ed, alienated and unhealthy; gender dysphoria is just one of many manifestations of the unhappiness and ill health that this crumbling system is generating on a mass scale.

The transgender movement seeks to tell such people that *they* are the problem that must be fixed; that the solution is to *accept* the bourgeois propaganda about what it means to be a girl or woman and what it means to be a boy or man and to change their bodies to try to fit in with those entirely artificial and damaging constructs.

But a lifetime of personal striving for the perfect body will not bring relief for these sufferers from problems that have been caused by capitalism. The solution can only be a *social* one: to refuse collectively to accept the roles assigned to us and to join the struggle for a society in which people are enabled to be healthy, to have a meaningful work and social life, and to be valued for their contribution first and foremost.

Socialists are motivated by a great love of humanity and a desire to help move forward to a world in which people are actually treated as human beings and not as mere consumers of commodities. It pains them greatly to see so many people, especially young people, having their mental and physical health destroyed by life in the capitalist system; to see so many young workers turning their alienation in on themselves, so desperate to escape the pain that any mutilation seems acceptable if it might offer some relief.

But the charlatans who push this insidious ideology onto young children – promoting the idea that any unwillingness to conform to arbitrary and totally unscientific gender roles is an indicator that they are ‘in the wrong body’ and should seek medical help – are guilty of child abuse. They are amply funded by big business interests that have spotted a market – an opportunity to make huge profits from selling hormone-manipulating drugs and expensive operations to workers who are too young to understand the ramifications of their actions, all of which are irreversible and will render them drug-dependent and infertile.

According to an investigation into transgenderism's financial backers and their motivations:

With the medical infrastructure being built, doctors being trained for various surgeries, clinics opening at warp speed, and the media celebrating it, transgenderism is poised for growth. The LGB, a once-tiny group of people trying to love those of the same sex openly and be treated equally within society, has likely already been subsumed by capitalism and is now infiltrated by the medical industrial complex via transgenderism.\*

No amount of hysterical screaming from the liberal left should stop us from acknowledging these simple facts. Anyone who doubts them would do well to consider just why it is that the bourgeois state is so keen to update laws such as the Gender Recognition Act and the Equalities Act in a way that will brand even the *discussion* of the scientific and biological basis of ideas being pushed by the transgender movement as a 'hate crime'.

Why is it there such a need for everyone to promote and accept this pseudo-science that is being forced through our legislature so precipitately? Why is the duty to police it being imposed onto all those who are in any way employed by the state, whether civil servants, council workers, health workers or teachers?

Under the cover of 'opposing prejudice' and 'protecting workers' rights', the bourgeoisie is legalising the mass abuse of children and normalising this pinnacle achievement of identity politics, which has slowly but surely shifted its ground (under the loving guidance of bourgeois academia) from 'Racism must be opposed' to 'Only a black man can oppose racism' to 'Only someone with exactly the same skin-tone as mine can appreciate my level of oppression' to 'No-one

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\* 'Who are the rich, white men institutionalising transgender ideology?' by Jennifer Bilek, *The Federalist*, 20 February 2018.

else can understand my personal pain' to 'No-one can question my identity: I am whatever I say I am'.

And so now we have arrived at the farcical moment where it is proposed to enshrine in law that a person may *choose* their gender – something that was decided by material biological forces at the moment of conception, when the sperm first fertilised the egg in their mother's fallopian tube.

The insanity of 'self-identifying' men and women is not lost on most workers. Indeed, there are many commentators even amongst the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois classes who are decidedly unhappy with the promotion of the transgender movement, and their voices are not silent.

The real danger to the *socialist* movement comes from the misidentification of *left liberals* as socialists or progressives, so that the unquestioning acceptance of the corporate-backed transgender movement by these same left liberals causes workers to believe that this is the only progressive way to think. In which case, say many workers, give me the un-PC brigade any day!

This is fertile ground on which populism everywhere is breeding, while the self-identifying socialists rush around trying to bend their distorted brand of 'Marxism' to the demands of left-liberal individualism.

Once more, identity politics, and the hysterical policing of the politically-correct vocabulary and discourse that accompanies them, are pushing a wedge between the mass of workers and would-be 'progressives', and sending the masses into the arms of right-wing populist demagogues.

While the capitalists seek to confuse workers by asserting that these liberals speak for the working-class movement, true communists must make it most emphatically clear that *they do not*.

**Joti Brar**

Bristol, July 2019

## **Appendix: Identity politics resolution**

*The following resolution was passed overwhelmingly at the party's eighth congress in September 2018, following a six-month inner-party debate.*

### **Identity politics are anti-Marxian and a harmful diversion from the class struggle**

While being totally opposed to discrimination on grounds of race, sex or sexual proclivity, this congress declares that obsession with identity politics, including sexual politics, is anti-Marxian.

Congress therefore resolves that the propagation of identity politics, including LGBT ideology, being reactionary and anti-working class and a harmful distraction and diversion from the class struggle of the proletariat for its social emancipation, is incompatible with membership of the party, rendering those involved in its promotion liable to expulsion.



## NOTES

1. The majority of this article was sent to the party bulletin as part of a debate on identity politics, LGBT ideology and transgenderism in the run-up to the CPGB-ML's eighth congress in September 2018. At that congress, a motion condemning LGBT ideology as un-Marxist and incompatible with membership of the party was passed overwhelmingly. See Appendix 1 for the motion's text.
2. This original version of this article was written for the party bulletin following the eighth congress in September 2018. It was revised for publication on the Red Youth website in December of the same year.
3. See Appendix 1.
4. The Bund was a jewish workers' organisation in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. It was founded in tsarist Russia 1897 and affiliated to the Russian Social-Democratic Labour party (RSDLP, the forerunner of the Communist party) from 1898 to 1903, and again from 1906, when it sided with Lenin's opponents, the Mensheviks. Its reactionary nationalism led it to oppose the October Revolution, after which its left wing split to form the Communist Bund in 1919, with most joining the Russian (later Soviet) Communist party in 1920.

Lenin wrote extensively against the Bund's jewish nationalism throughout the period of 1903-17, particularly on its insistence that jewish workers needed to be organised *separately, as jews*, and that the jewish workers' organisation should be federated to the party rather than allowing its members to be absorbed into a single organisation alongside non-jewish workers.

5. The text presented here is an excerpt from a longer article that is available as a separate pamphlet.
6. Workers, at the mercy of their employers, have a common class interest, and struggle for better conditions of life and employment within the capitalist system. They also struggle to end exploitative class society altogether and replace

it with socialism, which will abolish private ownership of the means of production, thereby doing away with class antagonisms and exploitation.

Hence the Marxist slogan: 'Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win!'

7. 'There is a well-known saying that if geometrical axioms affected human interests attempts would certainly be made to refute them.'

— 'Marxism and revisionism' by VI Lenin, April 1908.

Contact the CPGB-ML for further copies and a list of publications.

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Alongside a push to legislate for unquestioning acceptance of the concept of 'gender fluidity', we are witnessing a drive by the state to police not only actions, but words, and to criminalise as 'hate speech' all attempts to discuss the most basic facts of the matter.

Can you be born in the 'wrong body'? Is sex something real or just an imaginary social construct?

Does who you sleep with define who you are? Why is there such growing and persistent abuse of the word 'community'?

And how have we arrived at a moment where the exploiters are able to appoint themselves the judges of all matters relating to the struggle for freedom of the exploited?

These are essential questions that workers must have the right to ask.

Under attack is not only our freedom of speech and thought, but our very understanding of the world we live in and the way we organise our struggle for socialism.

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