Network hopes to help energise the left

The left in Britain, whether the trade unions or the broader left, has so far failed either to repulse the neo-liberal onslaught of the ConDems, or to pull the Labour leadership to the left. On 7th September 2011 over 50 activists gathered at Birkbeck College to hear and debate proposals by John McDonnell MP (Labour Representation Committee). All participants were clear that the objective was not to create a new political party or even a new political think-tank, but rather to build a dynamic and creative network of socialists.

The Haldane Society Executive had already decided to give full support to the Socialist Policy Network, and Haldane comrades present included John Hendy QC, Nick Toms. Nick Wrack and Gordon Nardell QC. John McDonnell outlined two ‘shouldn’ts’ – no new formal organisation and no democratic centralism. Two ‘shoulds’ were a network with no fetishism concerning membership, and the emphasis on participation; and approaches to network people.

The blogger Dave Ostler spoke on how to use the new media, while Peter Tatchell called for propagating simple ideas on economic democracy. Helen Shaw of Inquest gave her own example of a small organisation with big

Legislators in Europe and US could learn a lot from Ecuador

During the evening of 28th September 2011 a large audience pulled themselves away from enjoying London’s Indian summer to listen to a compelling seminar delivered by Dr Fander Falconí at the Ecuadorian Consulate by Trafalgar Square. Amongst the audience members were most of the ambassadors from the respective Latin American embassies in London, which is testament to the high regard with which Dr Falconí is held.

Dr Falconí obtained both his masters degree and doctorate in Ecological Economics at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. He occupied ministerial posts in the Government of Rafael Correa in Ecuador between 2007 to 2009 including as Foreign Secretary.

The talk was billed as an exploration of Ecuador’s inclusive policies, progress achieved in the expansion of democracy and poverty eradication, Ecuador’s green model of development and its role in Latin American regional integration.

True to the billing Dr Falconí engagingly covered a wide range of topics from an Ecuadorian and Latin American perspective. He spoke of post-neoliberal economic models developing across many of the now left-leaning countries in Latin America and of Ecuador’s constitutional commitment to the environment. Dr Falconí cited as a leading example of Ecuador’s environmental policy the nation’s approach to the Yasuni national

July

13: Julian Assange’s appeal hearing against extradition to Sweden concludes in the High Court. The Swedish authorities want him to face accusations of rape, sexual molestation and unlawful coercion following complaints by two women.

18: Sir Christopher Rose, a former appeal court judge, is appointed to lead an inquiry into claims the CPS suppressed evidence relating to the undercover police officer Mark Kennedy. The inquiry will consider whether prosecutors in the Kennedy case met the fundamental obligation of disclosure, to give lawyers for the accused any evidence that could assist their defence.

‘I greatly appreciated and enjoyed our wide-ranging conversation’

Tony Blair, in 2008 to Libyan dictator Colonel Gaddafr

‘Yours ever, Tony’

How Blair signed off his secret letters to Gaddafi

20: Goran Hadzic, a leader of the Serbian insurgency in Croatia during the Yugoslavian wars, is arrested by Serbian authorities. Hadzic is the last of 161 suspects wanted for alleged war crimes during the 1990s. The arrest followed two months after that of genocide suspect General Ratko Mladic.
News & Comment

A chance to buy some modern Cuban art – and support the Miami Five

With the exception of Socialist Lawyer and information from the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the British media has been silent on the case of the five Cubans who were imprisoned for monitoring terrorist acts against Cuba. For 12 years these five Cubans have been held in US confined spaces with minimal opportunities for contact with the outside world. To challenge this media silence, London and Glasgow will host a ground-breaking exhibition, showcasing the work of up to 30 of Cuba’s most established artists. Beyond the Frame: Contemporary Cuban Art is set for 23rd to 28th April 2012, at Gallery 27, Cork Street, London. It will draw together a wealth of styles which reflect the richness of cultural life in Cuba today and will also include work by eminent British artists. The exhibition will move to Glasgow in May 2012.

Produced in collaboration with the Visual Arts Council of Havana and co-ordinated by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Beyond the Frame will be a dynamic addition to the cultural calendar. It will be the most encompassing exhibition of Cuban art to be displayed in the UK to date. It will furthermore be a campaigning tool, intended to foster awareness and active support on the issue of the Miami Five. Central to the event will be the sale of the art so that proceeds can go to their defence.

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It is hoped that legal firms and individuals who work in law will be inspired to attend and support. Funding of the exhibition is a priority and can be done in the following ways: sponsorship by companies, organisations and individuals; and the purchasing of art works.

There will be access to a preview on 24th April 2012. For all those who are interested donations will be gratefully received at www.cubabeyondtheframe.com or via the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. If you are interested email dodie.beyondtheframe@gmail.com

Bill Bowring

August

21: Four Kenyans win the right to sue the British Government for compensation over their alleged torture by colonial officials and soldiers during the Mau Mau insurgency in the 1950s. The UK Government had argued that it should not be answerable for abuses from that time and that the responsibility now lay with the current Kenyan Government.

4: The Guardian reports that it has seen a top-secret document which reveals that MI5 and MI6 officers were encouraged to use information from prisoners being tortured overseas. The policy instructed senior intelligence officers to weigh the importance of the information being sought against the amount of pain a prisoner should suffer.

4: The Gibson Inquiry suffers a blow after lawyers and human rights group announce they will boycott its hearings. The move came after the Government said key sessions would be held in secret and that the cabinet secretary would have the power of veto over information available to the public.

12: The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) admits it may have inadvertently misled journalists into believing that Mark Duggan had fired at police. Duggan was killed by police in Tottenham on 4th August 2011 which sparked several nights of disturbances in London and other cities.