

March 30, 2024

Why are so many left-wing people losers?



Ben Ughetti discusses the factors behind the left's repellent image.



Picture *The Activist Loser*– a person who dedicates their entire personality to 'the cause'. The political stripe of said person is usually meaningless albeit almost entirely predictable. They all look a certain way with unkempt or alternative haircuts, clothes that might not look or fit right and of course hundreds of badges on their lapels– proclaiming to the world everything from their trade union membership, vegan leanings, and the minority identity they've adopted. Try to have any form of conversation with these people and you quickly find they have none of the same interests and ambitions that most other people have. They live in a microcosm of their own sense of moral superiority. This person is a walking cliché from a *Citizen Smith* episode. It would be tempting to just point and laugh at *The Activist Loser*, however their association with our movement has resulted in reputational damage beyond belief.

We know that on the Labour Party left there seems to be an endemic problem of 'losers', for want of a better term. The regular spectacle of Jeremy Corbyn being attacked, denounced and mocked in many critical interactions during his election campaigns was cringeworthy. Ultimately, you had a situation where a man who looked like an aged *Activist Loser*– some lefty allotment owner who couldn't wear a tie properly– was being humiliated in the national media week after week. The optical issues that the Corbyn campaign faced are issues almost every section of the left has to deal with today. Left wing people in this country are not seen as normal people but almost a subculture of society, and as a result, are routinely rejected by the ordinary people that they portend to speak for.

The obvious question here is *why?* Why does the left attract such a high proportion of these *Activist Losers* who exist on the fringes of society? The socialist cause is undeniably a noble one. To stand up against oppression, fight for equality and to build a better world. With this the left has always traditionally attracted a 'softer' type of person.

In his post-capitalist desire [lectures](#), Mark Fisher makes the observation that the left in many ways holds a position that they are the "wounded" and therefore cannot imagine themselves in a form of power against their enemies. This wounded mentality becomes an easier position to hold. It takes a certain type of person to make being wounded a status signifier, never mind a political position. We must imagine our *Activist Loser* as a wounded person.

The best example of what is meant by this is when the left is directly attacked. Assessing the response of them for example in debate with a conservative on culture, the response is often to retreat into decrying bigotry. Or when facing state repression, to hysterically bemoan how badly the capitalist government is treating them. To the outside observer, this becomes very demoralising to watch, and any potential for sympathy from the masses is outweighed by the repulsion such plaintive trilling generates. We should be able to look at these responses and disagree. We know the nature of the capitalist class and need to be able to match and defeat them.

The constant insistence amongst the left that we need to be fighting a cause of one-hundred different fronts in the never-ending identity wars, is emblematic of wounded victim mentality. For vast sections of the left the possibility of taking

power is unimaginable. For these people however, this is actually preferable. They see politics as an extended personality trait or hobby, not as something transformative for our class.

In the 1960's with the rise of postmodernism, the left began to redirect the struggle not in the purpose for fighting class war, but for control of a moral authority afforded by fighting an identity war. Philosophers like Michel Foucault made the case that any and all societal norms had to be challenged on all fronts whether it be norms around prisons, hospitals or sexuality.

As a result we saw a rise of new individualistic leftists who now didn't see the cause of the left as the cause of class struggle but the cause of thousands of fractured 'struggles'. Where political movements historically found success in getting as many disparate groups to unite on a single issue, the socialist movement now seems determined to produce more division among those who already support them. This is succinctly illustrated by the complete false assertion that *'you can't be a socialist if you don't support feminism, open borders, trans rights, environmentalism etc'*. Where Activist Losers use politics as a badge collection to show off how many correct stances they personally take. In a self-capitulating sense, this variety of individualistic leftist becomes a capitalist's anti-capitalist: they have been able to digest the anti-capitalist theory and education to a degree where they are able to use its linguistics to redefine revolutionary ideas to be about the self.

Using the tools provided to us by materialism we know that even the concept of societal norms is no concrete thing but rather for the usage of communists. A way to engage contemporary political discourse. Rejection of any and all norms for contrarian's sake is clearly a fool's errand that if popularised any further in the left will result in becoming divorced from the very idea of popular movement itself.

What separates left and right individualists? The right individualists see themselves in a way of personal improvement to gain more capital, maintain certain moral structures and to reduce the capacity of the state. By contrast, the left individualists see themselves in a fight for the boundaries which they wish to keep pushing. These people frequently appear as downtrodden, but in reality are very focused on achieving dominion of moral authority with which they can pressure and influence the rest of the left and to an extent, wider society. With the rise of these individualists the traditional left's fight for our class was pushed aside in favour of more identity politics based issues.

Ultimately these people are the ones who see themselves as righteous victims of the most ugly parts of contemporary society instead of the class exploited by our economic system. These people will identify themselves in a variety of shades whether it be postmodernist, anarchist, intersectionalist or anything else. In their rejection of not only the norms of society but working-class culture they become increasingly abstracted from normality.

All of this of course is not a rejection of subculture entirely, or to say that subculture is inherently a bad thing. In some ways, we could harness subculture to our advantage in support of class struggle. However, that is for a competent communist movement to decide, and until then, we should be able to have rational and meaningful conversations with the public without putting them off.

The current optics of the left are not sustainable and will never earn the respect of the working people of Britain. The current stereotype of the left being easily offended, privately educated, *Guardian*-reading moralists who seek to sit in front of traffic or pontificating to people about fad nonsense such as *'fatphobia'* or *'cultural appropriation'* cannot continue.

"It is very significant that it is not the embittered failures, not the careerists and reckless political adventurers, but the flower of the youth who turn to communism and who make the best communists." – **Harry Pollitt**

So, how do we respond to this? The Soviet Union explored what the ideal Soviet citizen would look like. A lot of this was firstly about being a functioning member of society and contributing to the growth of the Soviet Union. The intent and basis for this should be instructive for us. Not only in our political lives should we seek to be the best communists that we can be in order to sculpt the societal view of who we actually are. While I might not currently be able to answer what the perfect communist looks like it is very easy to deduct what doesn't make a good communist and answering this question is a worthwhile endeavour.

One of the most useful things we could do is cast-off this baggage of being part of 'the left'. We are communists and our demand is Marxism-Leninism. We don't fit ourselves in boxes to join people who we fundamentally disagree with. Our image also is our own, to set apart from the Activist Losers.

The second and most immediate thing for us to do is to consider how we as individuals fit ourselves in society. This is something that needs a high degree of self-criticism. When thinking about your political work ask yourself: *am I just sitting on Discord servers debating who I would have sided with in the Sino-Soviet split? Is this actually a good use of my time or am I throwing myself deeper into the echo chamber?*

You should have friends and relationships beyond your cadres, from work or from school, with other interests outside of politics, whether it be films, music, books, art or sports: the basic ingredients for both a healthy life and a tolerable personality. As **Marx writes** in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* the less you do these things the further alienated you become from life itself. Communists are not some sort of caricature where we are all too serious to

celebrate Christmas or go out with our friends. Life is meant to be enjoyed and communists in their fight should know this more than anyone else.

We should be able to look at ourselves in the mirror aspirationally and ask: *am I as physically fit as I could be? Could the way I dress and my haircut potentially put people off talking to me in public?* Of course, we shouldn't be prescribing universal looks and mandated haircuts but we shouldn't look like a fringe group either. It's a fine and tricky line but one we should be striving to get right. As extreme as our beliefs may be perceived by some in our communities, we can at least attempt to act and look as relatable as possible.

The struggle for communism is ultimately a struggle for a popular movement. The sight of Activist Losers is disheartening and a sign of loss to the movement. However, when we use such slogans as "the only war is class war" or "smash capitalism" we should be self-reflective to how we can better ourselves to fulfil the essential tasks. If we are to build our movements of popular struggle and mass unity it requires us to be able to use the framework of dialectical materialism to dissect what will actually speak to working people on a level they can relate to. It's for these reasons that it would be more beneficial for us to not think of ourselves as being "on the broad left" or apart of some sort of left wing super alliance but as the communist movement. We are serious people and as a result should treat our optics as such. So next time before you leave the house, perhaps reconsider the spiked leather jacket or the Che Guevara beret. It might just be worth leaving at home. Or better still, the dustbin.

***Ben Ughetti** is a member of the Young Communist League's South Yorkshire Branch*