



# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## JUNIOR DOCTORS FIGHT ON RENATIONALISE THE NHS!

As we goes to press we await the announcement of further industrial action by junior doctors.

Throughout the last year they have at the forefront of exposing the Government's desire to asset-strip the NHS. Now leaked documents from the Department of Health have vindicated their fight; these documents show how disastrous the government's plans for the NHS really are.

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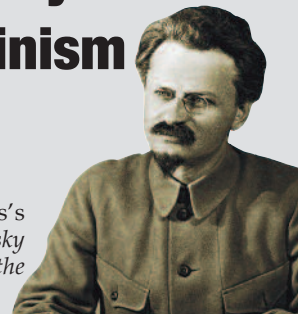


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# France and the burkini bans

By Theodora Polenta

**On 26 August the Supreme Court of France ruled against bans on the “burkini” by some south-of-France municipalities.**

The ruling was greeted with relief by women, by Muslims (including those opposed to religiously-imposed dress rules for women), and for the millions of women and men outraged by seeing four armed policemen on the beach of Nice publicly humiliate a Muslim woman in a burkini.

The Court concluded that the ban is a “serious and illegal violation of basic freedoms”, and that local authorities may take such measures only if the burkini is a “proven risk to public order”.

The “burkini” is a swimsuit invented in 2004 by the Australian-Lebanese designer Aheda Zanetti. The big fashion houses saw the potential of a new “market”, and took it up. It is a swimsuit that covers the entire body except the face (unlike the burqa, which covers the face), and is compulsorily loose-fitting), and is similar to diving suits and other garments for watersports.

While the diving suits have never bothered anyone, and the burkini has bothered few in Australia, where many wearers are non-Muslims concerned about skin cancer risks, some French politicians have



branded the burkini as a major threat to the morals and values of French society.

For readers of *Solidarity*, the burkini will seem reminiscent of periods we want to leave behind, when women were forced to remain invisible and silent to demonstrate that they were modest and humble. Personally I find abhorrent any suggestion that there is something inherently wrong with the body and hair of any woman or any human being, or that anyone should be condemned never to feel the sun and the air on their body in order to be considered a “woman”. Or that to cover our bodies is the answer to the voyeuristic culture that objectifies women’s bodies and imposes elusive and sometimes cruel beauty standards.

However, the burkini bans bring

to mind the French army operation in Algeria in May 1958. In order to add pressure for the coup in France which would bring De Gaulle to power and block what the army saw as a drift to conceding Algerian inde-

pendence, the army organised a demonstration by some Muslim Algerian women to remove their veils and burn them.

Moreover, the right-wing politicians pushing the bans are instrumentalising women’s bodies and rights as a diversion and a pretext for divisive policies. Banning the burkini as “associated with terrorism” is an invention based on Islamophobia, racism and sexism.

The bans are part of the official response to the murderous attacks by Daesh in Paris in 2015 and in Nice this summer. In the name of anti-terrorism, instead of promoting more equality and democracy, the government is fortifying a permanent state of emergency and targeting and stigmatising sections of the already most oppressed parts of the population.

Several mayors have said they will appeal. According to Marine Le Pen, leader of the fascistic National Front, “the soul of France itself is at stake,” because “France does not imprison a woman’s body nor hides half the population under the pretext that the other half will be tempted.”

Socialist Party Prime Minister Valls has written on Facebook that “the decision of the Supreme Court did not close the debate”. “Denouncing the burkini is not calling into question individual freedom... It is denouncing deadly, backward Islamism”.

Women’s rights minister Laurence Rossignol has declared that the bans help fight against “restriction of the female body”. However, education minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem has stated that “there is absolutely no connection between terrorism and what a woman wears on the beach.”

The National Front and Marine Le Pen expect to make gains in the upcoming presidential elections. Ultra-rightists are feeling daring and are behind the proliferation of attacks against Muslims, who are 7.5% of France’s population.

Among Muslims in France, who generally follow religious dress codes much less than Muslims in Britain, the ban was considered as a camouflaged attack not only on how Muslim women dress but also on how they self-identify.

While opposing the ban on the burkini, we should not slide into supporting the burkini and burqa under some postmodernist reasoning. For a large number of women in the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa, and sometimes in the Western world, religious dress codes are not their free choice, but a brutal coercion. They are an extreme symbol of obscurantism and repression of by hardcore Muslim obscurantists.

But the defence of right against religious compulsions is not served by such bans. The hypocrites who want to ban the burkini have no problem with the French State financing private Catholic schools. Or with the fact that in adjacent Belgium, much of the education is Catholic! Or with the mandatory religion classes, Morning School Prayers, and so on, in Greece.

The bans on burkinis has caused a 200% surge in sales. And such prohibitions can drive people into the open arms of fanatical Islamist organizations, which appears as the only defenders of their rights...

**To gain the trust of these women and engage them in the struggle for decent jobs and wages, against cuts, for a socialist society, we must defend their freedoms of choice of dressing, of religious self-identification and of freedom of religious expression and exercise of religious beliefs.**

## £1000 rent rise

**70,000 households will face a rent rise of over £1000 a year from next April, imposed by the government.**

The Housing Act, passed into law last year, forces councils to levy 15p extra rent for every £1 a household’s income is above £31,000, or £40,000 in London. It defines every household with two earners on £15,500, or £20,000 in London, as “high income”.

That affects 9.3% of all council households in the south-east.

According to research commissioned by the local authorities’ umbrella group, the LGA, average monthly rent rises will be £72 outside London and £132 inside.

Councils are already banned from subsidising council housing, and, though the increased rents will hit many households hard, councils expect only slight extra income on top of the extra admin costs of the new system. In some areas, the admin costs will exceed the extra rent collected.

**This Act is another step in the efforts of successive governments since Thatcher to reduce council housing to a marginal pauper tenure, and then abolish it, leaving the housing market as a free-fire zone for profiteering landlords and property developers.**

## Big-power jockeying over Syria

By Simon Nelson

**Chemical weapons have been used by both Daesh and (on a much bigger scale) the Assad government in the Syrian civil war.**

The verdict is from a final report by the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) of the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Syrian government promised in 2013 to give up its chemical weapons under a deal negotiated by the Russian government, but has continued to use them.

The committee recorded four uses of VX nerve gas, 13 uses of sarin, 12 of mustard gas, 41 of chlorine and 61 of other chemical agents, and named Daesh as having used mustard gas.

However, Syria’s civil war remains overlaid, not by any consistent drive to apply international law, which bans the use of chemical weapons, but by delicate politicking between the USA, Russia, and Turkey, all of them with aims at odds with the others.

Russia will almost certainly block action against Assad over chemical weapons.

The Kurdish led drive to expel Daesh from the city of Manbij in northern Syria has met a severe backlash from Turkey. Turkish forces have begun incursions into



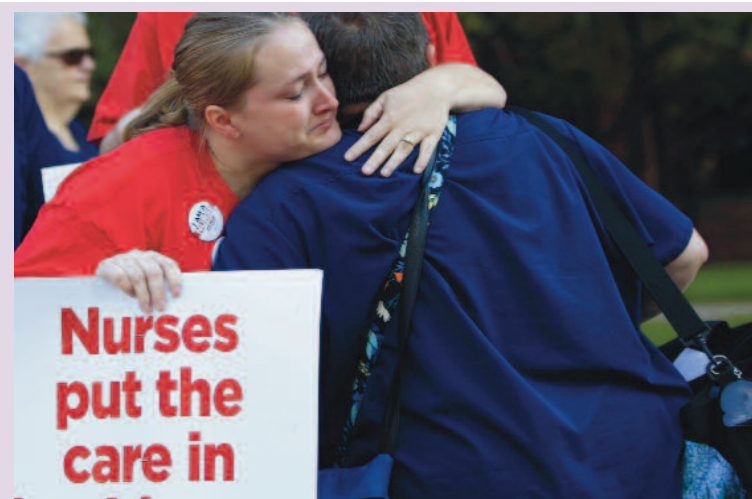
**Russia will block action against Assad’s use of chemical weapons**

Kurdish-held territory in Syria, with a promise to “deal with” the Kurdish forces as they would with Daesh.

The Kurdish YPG, with the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition, have successfully driven Daesh from large swathes of Northern Syria.

The US has called on Turkey to stop attacks on the SDF and YPG, whilst reassuring Turkey that the SDF have largely withdrawn from the east of the Euphrates River and do not intend to go closer to the Turkish border. The US has continued to provide air support to the YPG and SDF.

**Once that stops, it is likely that Russian planes will enter the airspace with the aim of stopping Syrian opposition forces from attacking government-held areas.**



## Allina nurses to take all-out action

By Charlotte Zalens

**Nurses at five Allina Health hospitals in Minnesota, USA, will start an indefinite strike on Wednesday 31 August in a dispute over a new contract.**

After nurses struck for a week in June Allina made a new offer, but nurses rejected it saying that Allina “wanted steep concessions on health benefits before addressing the nurses’ requests to improve staffing and workplace safety.”

Allina is asking nurses to sacrifice their own health for the health of patients.

The dispute is becoming a

question of “who runs the workplace”. Allina wants to want an automated system to determine staffing, based on patients’ electronic records. This would stop “charge nurses” deciding staffing ratios based on an evaluation of patient need which could take into account family and psychosocial issues, the intensity of nursing required, the experience and skill of particular nurses.

Nurses are fighting to be in control of the pace of work and what work is done, for their benefit and the benefit of their patients, they also fear an attack on the union.

**Other hospital workers have pledged to support the nurses.**



# Renationalise the NHS!

**By Pete Campbell, British Medical Association Junior Doctors' Committee (personal capacity)**

As we go to press we await the announcement of further industrial action by junior doctors.

Throughout the last year they have at the forefront of exposing the Government's desire to asset strip the NHS. Now leaked documents from the Department of Health have vindicated their fight; these documents show how disastrous the government's plans for the NHS really are.

During a year long campaign and eight days of industrial action junior doctors shouted loudly that the plan for a seven-day NHS was not safe or even unachievable.

These Department of Health documents say there has been lack of detailed costings, a lack of risk assessment, and a lack of evidence and data to support the seven-day policy. Crucially, they also say it is doubtful enough skilled staff can be found to deliver the new service.

Already the NHS is warning of serious gaps in hospital rotas, that thousands of operations and appointments may have to be cancelled to stop the NHS grinding to



a halt this winter.

Jeremy Hunt was the main driving force for pushing through a

new contract for junior doctors linked to the seven-day service.

Meanwhile, unfortunately "Sus-

tainability and Transformation Plans" for the NHS are being drawn up behind closed doors. The plans are being prompted by growing deficits in local NHS Trusts. Research by the *Guardian* and 38 Degrees projects a financial shortfall of about £20 billion by 2020-21 if no action is taken.

The stated object, of the plans — to "modernise" the NHS — is but a cover for massive cuts. These plans threaten every hospital, GP practice and community service across the country.

Similar to the attacks on councils undertaken by the last government NHS organisations have been given a directive: if you do not make huge cuts we will make you bankrupt.

Even the centre-right health think tanks are up in arms. The King's Fund points to the fact that reorganisations of acute hospital services rarely save money. The Nuffield Trust argues that even with service reorganisation there will still be sick people, and they still need to go somewhere for treatment. That costs money.

The upshot is that more and more treatment will be provided by the private sector. If the NHS starts to fail, contracts for NHS business ("looking after sick people") will go to private health care companies. The privatisation foreshadowed by the Health and Social Care Act (2012) is now here.

Junior doctors will almost certainly be on strike this autumn, still fighting to save their terms and conditions from the government's drive for uncoded, unplanned and unsafe changes.

In that campaign Jeremy Corbyn's pledge for a future Labour government to "renationalise" the health service is very welcome. Corbyn proposes to make the NHS fully publicly funded, to bring services provided privately "back into public hands", to end PFI contracts in the NHS and restore publicly-funded bursaries for nurses. That's what we need.

**Junior doctors need our full support, because it is clear the Conservatives do not want to stop at just the junior doctors. But we need to go further and fast. We need to build support for the politics outlined by Corbyn on the NHS.**

## For a labour movement campaign to save the NHS

**By Jill Mountford and Sacha Ismail**

**Momentum NHS will hold a rally in the evening of Monday 26 September at the World Transformed event being held by Momentum at Labour Party conference in Liverpool.**

Speakers include Shadow Health Secretary Diane Abbott, BMA junior doctors' leader Yannis Gourtsoyannis, renowned fighter for the health service Harry Leslie Smith and a representative from the campaign to save Liverpool Women's Hospital.

One purpose of the rally (and of other activities Momentum NHS will be organising in Liverpool) is to mobilise support for the strong policy to fight for and rebuild the NHS which socialist health activists are seeking to get onto the

conference agenda.

Another is to launch Momentum's national campaign for the NHS, mobilising groups and activists across the country.

The opportunity to strengthen Labour's stance and mobilise wide layers of labour movement activists to defend the NHS comes at a crucial time, when the health service is suffering blow after blow — but also when the coup against Corbyn has freed the Labour leadership's hands to radicalise their message and when the junior doctors are about to launch a new wave of strikes.

**What you can do**

- Get your CLP to submit the model resolution to Labour Party conference (the deadline to submit is 15 September) — see [bit.ly/nh-res](http://bit.ly/nh-res)

- Come to the rally and events and help out at Labour Party conference

- Raise the campaign in your local Momentum group and invite a speaker: email [momentumnhs@gmail.com](mailto:momentumnhs@gmail.com)

- If you're a health or care worker or NHS campaigner, add your name to the statement to re-elect Jeremy Corbyn, already signed by almost 750 people: [bit.ly/nh-700](http://bit.ly/nh-700)

- Mobilise your local Labour Party, Momentum, etc, in support of the junior doctors' strikes, visit picket lines, etc.

With the Labour right attempting to pose as the champions of the NHS, this is a crucial battle field not only in its own right, but in terms of the political future of the labour movement.

**Let's create the mass movement which can save the NHS.**

## Graduates back home and in debt

**By Colin Foster**

**47% of 2015 graduates were, by February-March 2016, back living with their parents.**

A survey by the National Union of Students of the first generation of students to pay £9000 fees showed that only 52% were in full-

time jobs. Of those who had jobs, full or part time, only 58% were on permanent contracts. 3% were working as unpaid interns or volunteers.

Students in medicine and education almost all had jobs, but among creative-arts graduates, only 42% had full-time jobs.

Three times as many full-time

working men as women graduates were earning over £30,000 and twice as many women as men were earning less than £15,000.

52% of all graduates, and 63% of arts graduates, thought their degree "not worth" the fees they paid.

And yet the relative economic advantage from having a degree remains large. A survey of those of

the same age who didn't get to university would show worse results.

**The cuts since 2010 have hit younger people much worse than older, probably in large part because older people are still more politically mobilised and likely to vote than younger.**

• [bit.ly/bh-47](http://bit.ly/bh-47)

## GCSEs: a pointless misery

**By a teacher**

**Every year, the media report on GCSE and A-level results and how they compare to previous years. Then they forget about until the next August.**

For students and school workers, however, GCSEs are a constant source of bewildering misery.

This year, GCSE results have dropped by 2.1%: the biggest fall since the qualifications were introduced.

One reason may be changes in exam format and the overloading of content that have happened in some subjects. Another could be the pressure put on school workers and pupils by the amount of funding per pupil dropping, teacher shortages, and accountability regimes.

Next year, we are entering further uncharted territory as it will be the first year in which students are subject to a numbered grading system in English and Maths. Other subjects will follow in the next year.

The "cut-off point" for what is counted as a "good grade" will no longer be a "C", but a "5", which teachers and headteachers estimate is equivalent to a high C or low B.

Even more students will be cut out of learning by the new systems and will be treated like failures, probably leading to further declines in young people's mental health (when children's and adolescent mental health services are dealing with brutal cuts).

Also affecting results is the introduction in England of compulsory education or training up to 18, with young people who failed to gain a C or above in English or Maths being made re-take these exams for the two years post-year 11. How exactly the government intends to find enough Maths and English teachers in a teacher recruitment crisis is unclear.

Government measures and league-tables also mean there is less and less take-up of subjects like technology, art and design, music, and Humanities subjects outside of History and Geography, shutting off opportunities for working-class people to get into the arts.

Education specialists should be trusted far more to provide assessments of students' learning, rather than the system relying on an inaccurate "snapshot" in the form of standardised tests.

**The exam regime acts only as a filter to sift out working class youngsters and has virtually nothing to do with what is best for young people or providing them with socially useful skills.**



# Stop the purge, transform Labour

A letter to John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn

Dear Jeremy and John

**Comrades: There now seem to be scores of Party officials trawling through Labour members' and supporters' social media accounts, going back for years, looking for "evidence" to prevent Corbyn supporters from voting in the leadership election.**

Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, have been barred.

Most ridiculous appears to be the case of Catherine Starr, who has been prevented from voting for Corbyn with the excuse that the fact that she wrote, "I fucking love the Foo Fighters" on Facebook, was "inappropriate".

The most prominent of the suspended Corbyn supporters is Ronnie Draper, secretary of the Bakers' Union, a Party member for over 40 years. It seems that Draper allegedly used "abuse" — years ago, in a social media posting — and this was denouncing Blairites as "traitors." Which of course they are — traitors to the working-class.

We hope the Party machine has picked on the wrong person in Ronnie Draper, and the unions will now assert themselves to stamp out this purge.

Draper's case has provoked John to write to the Party's General Secretary, Ian McNicol, demanding that those suspended be told why they have been suspended (Draper was not formally told) and be given the opportunity to challenge the rulings against them.

This is just a matter of natural justice, which is currently being denied.

John is also right about the double standards of the Labour bureaucrats. No action has been taken against Michael Foster, who, writing in the *Daily Mail*, called Corbyn supporters "Nazi stormtroopers."

This purge is being directed by former GMB bureaucrat Iain McNicol and the Compliance Unit. The Labour machine is waging a factional war against Corbyn and the movement around him. Those officials responsible for directing this witchhunt should be sacked.

And, John and Jeremy, we also need a clear commitment that the expulsions of socialists from the Labour Party should end. Supporters and members of Workers' Liberty, and some from Socialist Appeal, have been expelled for political reasons. Our members are not accused of abuse, but simply of advocating the wrong sort of socialism.

Obviously the Party has the right to defend itself from hostile interventions. And the Party is right to discipline those — for example — found guilty of serious cases of sexual harassment, racism or anti-semitism.

But the AWL is not guilty of such things. AWL members back the Labour Party in elections, and fight to build and transform Labour, and that should be an adequate to allow membership of Labour.

AWL and Socialist Appeal members should be readmitted. We regard a commitment to allow socialist tendencies to openly form and organise in the Party as one benchmark of a healthy labour movement party.

What else do we need?

Jeremy and John, we suspect that you have calculated that Jeremy will win this election and some of these problems can be sorted out quietly, later.

That's a dangerous game, and leaves the pro-Corbyn movement vulnerable.

Clearly this election is extremely important, and the margin of victory is important, too. If the left wins, the possibility of radically transforming the Party is opened up; lose, and we will be victimised and purged and the very diffuse Corbyn movement will be in danger of becoming demoralised and of dispersing.

A big Corbyn victory will, on the other hand, demoralise the right.

If we win all sorts of other questions will be immediately posed: what do we do about the anti-Corbyn MPs? How can Labour win the next election? What should the next Labour government do?

We must face the fact that unless the anti-Corbyn MPs are replaced they will be a barrier to radical policies; if they do not split away they will regroup and fight Corbyn again; they will be an obstacle to winning the next election — complaining and briefing against the Party leadership; they will undermine a future Labour government which aims to implement a radical programme.

The right wing Labour MPs must go and be replaced by people who have a record of struggle, of fighting for the working class. There are not a few people currently gathered around Momentum who come from a narrow demographic — young graduates, union

officials, professionals from think tanks and NGOs. Many fancy a job in Parliament. Generally we want more MPs from more working-class backgrounds, with experience of grassroots campaigning etc.

The Party needs renovating, from bottom to top. To secure a radical leadership we need to reach out to the union rank and file, the students and youth. Open up the Party to these groups and the left and we will find — quickly — hundreds of thousands of new supporters.

The Party needs to debate the policy detail. Jeremy's 10 point programme is a start. And let's say clearly what we mean: "Peace and justice at the heart of foreign policy" must include abolishing Trident. "Progressive restoration of free education" must mean abolishing fees and reinstating a living student grant. "Stronger employment rights" must mean the abolition of the anti-union laws.

And, if the railways can be nationalised, why not the privatised public utilities? If it makes sense to plan health care, putting human need before private profit, why not do so for the provision of water, gas and electricity?

And if rail can be nationalised, why not the banks?

**It is time to be bold and clear. It is time for the working class to openly fight the class struggle against the Tories and the capitalist class they represent.**

**Comradely,  
Solidarity editorial team**

## Objective not moral case

### LETTERS

**I really enjoyed reading Laura Rogers' presentation on Trident (*Solidarity* 412) which powerfully and evocatively set out the class based case against nuclear weapons. Despite or perhaps because growing up in the Cold War, I was never an instinctive unilateralist or a moral disarmer.**

Probably I was naïve, but I never felt I was living in constant fear of a nuclear holocaust. I never believed the Russians ever had any intention of invading Western Europe.

My argument against nuclear weapons was and is more objective. The most common scenario was the initial limited use of nuclear by NATO in response to their conventional forces being overwhelmed by Warsaw Pact tank divisions. That would inevitably be seen as a major escalation by the Warsaw Pact, requiring a nuclear retaliation, even if limited. NATO would have felt duty bound to retaliate even harder, and we would inevitably escalate into a total strategic nuclear exchange, leaving the majority of us dead, badly injured or living in a dying world.

The second main scenario was of a massive strategic nuclear attack by the Warsaw Pact. For me, ordering an equally massive nuclear retaliation would seem to be the most pointless and anti-human act of history. Whilst the domestic population would be faced with nuclear annihilation, just what would be the point of taking down tens of



millions of Russians and East Europeans with us?

The knowledge that almost any military clash directly involving NATO and Warsaw Treaty forces could well have led to nuclear Armageddon did result in some sort of "peace" in Europe and between the two super powers, although as Laura said "a very precarious peace, involving a huge amount of war (elsewhere), and built on the threat of unimaginable destruction."

Trident renewal means the UK explicitly ruling out nuclear disarmament by the UK for at least the next 50 years.

Laura was spot on to argue this is a question which can only really be settled by the labour and working class movement taking state, political and economic power out of the hands of the minority, decadent, useless but dangerous capitalist class.

**We have a million times more in common with our working sisters and brothers around the globe than we have with our own capitalist class.**

Andrew Northall, Northamptonshire

## Not a cunning calibration

**Todd Hamer (*Solidarity* 411, replying to my letter in 409) construes Brexiters' agitation against immigration as a cunning capitalist plan to "micro-manage" labour supply.**

Yet most capitalists want looser immigration, or at least no more restrictions than now. The advocacy of the Norway model for Brexit by the Adam Smith Institute and TheCityUK shows that.

The push to block migrants comes more from the plebeian base of the Brexit campaign. Many Brexit Tories are happy to go along with it, because they are confident of a big-enough "reserve army of labour" even with reduced immigration, or because they share the plebeian prejudices. But I see no evidence of a finely-tuned plan to micro-manage labour supply via calibrated immigration controls.

Sadly, the history of White Australia, which I mentioned in *Solidarity* 409, is an extreme example of a common pattern.

On most democratic and "liberal" issues, most of the time, even staid labour movements tend to be to the left of bourgeois opinion. On immigration controls, that isn't true.

Even militant labour movements which thought of themselves as socialist have often been anti-immigration — seeing migrant workers as undercutting competitors, not as an enriching addition — while capitalists have been happy to range wide for their labour supply.

The best revolutionary socialists have always seen the working class as an international class, and so supported open-border policies. But generally labour-movement ma-

jorities can be won to solidarity, not just with migrant workers already arrived, but with those yet to arrive, only at high points. Illogically, but in fact, it is much easier to get mass working-class support against deportations than to get it for general opposition to immigration controls. It is one of our hardest arguments.

The argument cannot be finessed by claiming that "immigration controls necessarily involve overwhelming state violence", and therefore, whatever the merits of those controls, their overhead costs are so great that they must be opposed. In eras where long-distance travel was more difficult, those controls usually required no such great violence. Even today, restrictions on immigration from Bangladesh to Britain are imposed not by barbed-wire fences or detention camps, but by legal formulas and administrative obstruction.

What if immigrants are not an "economic and cultural boon"? If they generally are a boon, then plainly it is better to have individual freedom than to have the bourgeois state "test" each migrant individually.

If you have a whole group of migrants which is not a boon — white racists fleeing South Africa on the fall of apartheid, Nazis fleeing Germany at the end of World War Two, Russian oligarchs wanting a base safe from Putin's caprice — then I see no socialist obligation specially to champion that group.

**We might reckon that any move to block that group would in reality only help those who want to block migrants more generally, but that's all.**

Martin Thomas, north London



# Labour's leadership contest and after

The political movement around Jeremy Corbyn is part of a global context which also includes the Sanders movement in America, the rise of Syriza and Podemos in Greece and Spain, and, in earlier and more ephemeral forms, the Spanish Indignados movement and the Occupy movements across the world.

On the right, the Trump movement, the rise of Ukip, and "Brexit", are also expressions of some of the same phenomena: the effects of capitalist globalisation, long-term neo-liberal economic policy, and specifically the 2007/8 crash.

The Corbyn movement represents an opportunity to transform our labour movement, but only if the hundreds of thousands activated by it are persuaded to consciously commit themselves to that task — that is, to become dedicated militant and socialist activists who see the reinvigoration and transformation of both the trade unions and the Labour Party as their aim.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty sees its role in the surge as that of "permanent persuaders". Our job is to convince those new to labour-movement politics, and those returning to it, through discussion, debate, political education, and common work in campaigning, to take conscious ownership over socialist ideas, and to become themselves persuaders and educators for them.

## PLATFORM

**Corbyn's platform is fairly mainstream-social-democratic, but policies such as the "renationalisation of the NHS", and public ownership of the railways, can be given a "transitional" dynamic by incorporating them into a "workers' plan"-type programme.**

That is to say, such demands can express a link between immediate struggles and the struggle for a society where the interests of human need, rather than those of profit, predominate. Local campaigning activity — street stalls, meetings, demonstrations, etc. — around these policies, linked wherever possible to workers' struggles, can shift the leadership debate onto the terrain of politics and policy.

For example, local Momentum groups could approach local branch of rail unions around current disputes (on Southern, Virgin Trains East Coast, and other companies) with proposals for joint campaigning for renationalisation.

The prospect of renewed junior doctors' strikes also presents an opportunity for campaigning, developing the work we have already done to build Momentum NHS.

It seems likely that Corbyn will win the current leadership election. A renewed mandate for a left-wing leader will pose two questions immediately: what kind of Labour Party do we want, and what kind of future Labour government?

In the Labour Party we fight for a top-to-bottom structural and political transformation, radically democratising the party, restoring sovereignty to the membership via party conference. Politically we advocate working-class socialist policies, with the aim of winning a workers' government.

The central argument of the Labour right, that radical left-wing policies are "unelectable", relies on a conception of "the electorate" as a fixed, unchanging entity — something akin to a hurricane, a natural phenomenon whose behaviour can perhaps be predicted and adapted to, but which can

never be changed. We disagree: we believe that people's ideas can change in struggle, and that confident, assertive labour-movement campaigns around socialist policies could rapidly shift the parameters of "electability", especially if accompanied by an upsurge in industrial struggle.

Even without a much higher tide of industrial struggle, ideas can shift. Local parties properly embedded in local communities and, through unions, in workplaces, can mobilise and make gains. Our experiences in Wallasey, recounted in our pamphlet *How To Fight Elections*, can be a model.

The role of the press since Corbyn's election has had a significant impact on many activists — both positively and negatively. Better press work, media training, etc., are desirable but they do not amount to a political strategy. Genuinely radical left-wing politicians and policies will never get a "fair hearing" in a capitalist media. Our movement can best counteract press attacks by holding firm to its principles and campaigning in a positive and consistent way for our policies and demands. We should raise in the movement discussions about the labour movement developing its own press and wider media.

The next steps for the right in the PLP are unclear. An SDP-style break to the right seems unlikely, but other iterations are possible: for example, a semi-split, involving the right organising a distinct Parliamentary caucus. We do not advocate a split; however, we do advocate a political campaign inside the party against the right in the PLP, calling for and moving motions of censure or no-confidence in their CLPs wherever possible. They cannot be allowed to perpetually sabotage and undermine the democratic wishes of party members.

Workers' Liberty members and supporters in Labour promote, in the first place through Momentum, the policy of "workers' representatives on workers' wages" — the idea that Labour politicians at every level are not technocratic functionaries accountable to their office, but representatives accountable to the labour movement, who will act in politics to further the movement's interests. We want local parties to have open selection processes, and a wave of new, better MPs with direct, recent experience of struggle and labour-movement activism.

We think the party needs to be transformed every level, street by street, from ward parties up. We think ward organisation need to be democratic and active. A political line should be drawn in every ward between those who want to see an active, open, democratic party fighting hard for working-class interests and socialist policies and those who oppose that perspective. Momentum groups should become a hub for organising the left in the party



at a local level.

To the extent that the attacks on us by figures on the Labour right, such as Tom Watson, Luke Akehurst, and others, have any substance, it is around the question of "democratic" versus "revolutionary" socialism (quite how Watson, a cadre of the Blair/Brown tradition, expects anyone to take him seriously as a defender of democratic-reformist socialism, is another matter).

But contrary to their claims, our perspective is not to surreptitiously hijack a parliamentary-reformist party for revolutionary aims; we are in the Labour Party because we believe in the working class developing itself politically through every channel available, including the party organically developed from and linked to our unions.

## MOMENTUM

**Momentum has the potential to become the serious, organised, mass left campaign group of the Labour Party.**

It could play a lead role in pursuing change in the rules, structures, policies, and campaigns of the party, as well as the class composition of the Parliamentary party, and the party's attitude and orientation to workers in struggle: in other words, transforming the Labour Party. But this potential will only be realised if Momentum itself is transformed into an open, democratic, and accountable organisation, based on socialist ideas and politics, with a consistent orientation to the labour movement.

Since the attempted coup and leadership election, previously dissipating Momentum groups have been revived and become more clearly focused on organising inside Labour. This is positive; Momentum should have a fundamental orientation to the Labour Party; all Momentum members must be active, in a coordinated way, in their local parties.

But this is not counterposed to grassroots campaigning around policies under Momentum's own banner, and indeed, part of Momentum's "Labour Party orientation" should be focused on turning the party itself out towards campaigning and activism, including in support of workers' struggles.

Momentum is planning a national conference around February 2017. That conference should be policy-making, made up of large

delegations from local groups (and not from the rarely-convened regional structures), and established at the sovereign body of Momentum at which its national leadership is elected.

We will argue for Momentum to take up socialist policies such as, public ownership of the banks and for Labour Party-led councils to refuse to pass on cuts.

As well as the attacks on "Trotskyists", Workers' Liberty specifically, there has been a renewed purge of left-wing Labour Party members, including high-profile comrades such as Bakers' union general secretary Ronnie Draper. A revived campaign to "Stop the Purge" is required, fighting for the reinstatement of expelled comrades, against a culture of bans and proscriptions, and for the abolition of the Compliance Unit (or, removing any powers it has over membership issues).

Part of the role of socialist activists in the Labour Party is to persuade new, young activists who are not already active at workplace and union level to become so, to build the same project of democratic and political renewal and transformation in the unions as the Corbyn surge represents within the Labour Party.

An essential element of what Workers' Liberty fights for in Labour is for the party to become, explicitly and unashamedly, the party of strikes and workers' struggles. Labour should see it as its role to support and encourage workers to organise and fight back at workplace level; it should officially support and throw its weight behind campaigns like BFAWU's "Hungry for Justice" and Unite's hotel workers' campaign (where possible, taking them on and resourcing them as official party campaigns), the BECTU strike at Picturehouse Cinemas, and as attempts by independent unions to unionise workers in the so-called "gig economy".

Such an opportunity to reshape and reinvigorate our movement may not come again for a generation or more. We should seize it. Our aim is to challenge the power of capital.

**The prize is not merely a more democratic and left-wing Labour Party, but a radically transformed labour movement and thereby a working class that is not only fit to fight, but to rule.**



# How do we get socialism?



With more and more people calling themselves socialists, in a time when socialism is the most searched word on the Merriam-Webster dictionary website, and a self-confessed socialist is leader of the Labour Party, Workers' Liberty's new books aim to answer the what, why, and how of socialism.

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**Can Socialism Make Sense?** is a socialists' handbook. The debates

and texts in the book will not only convince you to become a socialist activist, they will give you the tools to convince other people of the same.

**Democracy, direct action and socialism** is a debate between Michael Foot, a key figure of the Labour left during the 80s, and Sean Matgamna. In the context of the miners' battle against the state the debate discusses issues such as extra-parliamentary action, the role of the Labour Party and Labour left, the use of direct action, the role of the police and the state, and the real meaning of democracy.



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# Labour at a cross

Labour activists (all in a personal capacity) spoke to *Solidarity* about prospects when Corbyn wins the leadership election

## “The idea that Jeremy is unelectable is a myth.”

**Christine Shawcroft, recently re-elected to Labour's National Executive Committee**

What difference will the victory for the left slate for Labour's National Executive make?

When we won the decision to put Jeremy Corbyn on the leadership ballot paper the left won by four votes. The election makes a difference of two votes, and so some decisions will now not be so tight.

**What are your priorities on the NEC?**

We need to take a good look at the Party's democratic structures — candidate selection procedures, the political vetting that has taken place, and the functioning of Policy Forums.

**Should the Policy Forums be abolished?**

Well, certainly, they have not covered themselves in glory. They could work if we held proper votes and were used in the way we were originally told they would be used. Certainly they could fulfil the function of having very detailed policy discussions and looking closely at text.

**Weren't the Forums a mechanism to take power away from party conference, where power should really rest?**

Motions from Policy Forums should all go through conference. Motions should be clear and precise and subject to amendments.

At conference the priorities motions ballot should be abolished and items should be put on the agenda according to how many resolutions have been submitted.

**Reselection of Labour MPs is a live issue. How do you think the Corbyn movement should react to those MPs that have opposed Corbyn?**

Jeremy has had little support in the Parliamentary Party. When he was first elected he proceeded cautiously. It is reasonable not to want to panic Labour MPs.

The fact is that there will be selection meetings in most areas, given that boundary changes are coming in. We need to make sure that the process is democratised. In particular the practice of parachuting picked candidates should stop — the most notorious example is



Angela Eagle in Wallasey after Lol Duffy did all that good work against the sitting Tory MP, Linda Chalker.

And the trade unions have got to have a good look at who they are backing. Some of the unions' lists include right wingers. These lists need looking at.

**We (Workers' Liberty) have a particular issue. Tom Watson started a silly witch-hunt against us in order to get at Corbyn. The attacks on us in the press have dried up, but on the ground the witchhunt seems to be getting worse. Should Workers' Liberty members be able to join the Labour Party?**

Yes, we need to have a look at the rule book. Pete Willsman and I have raised this on Labour Party committees, together with the expulsions of Socialist Appeal supporters.

We don't have a proscribed list in the Labour Party, and we don't need one either.

Green Party members, Liberals, even UKIP members have joined recently. If they sign up to our principles and support Labour candidates in elections they should be eligible to be Party members. Even if people supported another party a few years ago, they should be eligible to join now if they support Labour — people should be able to change their minds!

**Can Labour win the next general election? How?**

The idea that Jeremy is unelectable is a myth. Of course, after the coup attempt, his poll ratings are low — but that is not his fault.

I'm a teacher and my partner's an analyst. We're "middle class," and also convinced socialists. If labour campaigns on the NHS and housing we can win. These issues affect both working class people and the middle classes.

**There is 58% support for rail nationalisation. It is a popular policy. Of course we can win!**



# sroads: the activist view

## “I will not stop campaigning politically”

**Ronnie Draper, General Secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, was recently suspended from the Labour Party.**

**Do you think the Labour Party machine might have bitten off more than it can chew by suspending you?**

Well I'm not looking to be treated any better, or any differently to anyone else. But I have been a Labour Party member for more than 40 years and when I discovered that I have been suspended, yesterday (25 August), I was amazed. I still haven't been told why I have been suspended. I've been told I can't attend conference or meetings – but the Bakers' Union is affiliated to Labour!

When the news broke I received thousands — literally thousands — of messages of support. I have also had backing from other trade union leaders.

**Do you think the Party bureaucrats are out of control?**

Well, certainly, the rules do not appear to be applied consistently. The supporters of Jeremy Corbyn are being disproportionately targeted.

I suspect there are people who are trawling social media looking for opportunities to stop people voting for Corbyn in the leadership election.

It also seems that rules are being applied retrospectively. It is like me going into my local, discovering that there is a new ban on swearing in force, and that I've been barred from the pub because I swore in 1978.

### Ronnie Draper's official statement

**On Tuesday 23 August, I received an email from the Labour Party informing me that I have been suspended from membership. I am now blocked from attending Labour Party meetings, Annual Conference and, above all, voting in the leadership election.**

The only explanation I have been given is that this is something to do with an unidentified tweet I have posted [apparently calling Blairites “traitors”]. I have not been given the opportunity to refute any allegations, or a date for any hearing.

I believe this flies in the face of natural justice. I intend to challenge my suspension robustly and am currently taking legal advice.



I do not seek any personal privilege based on my trade union position. I passionately believe that all members should be allowed to be heard, and be given the opportunity to vote for the candidate of their choice.

I am extremely concerned that suspensions and bans are being imposed in an arbitrary or politically motivated way in this election, and I will be raising the issue with the General Secretary.

**This suspension will not stop me or the Bakers Food & Allied Workers Union from campaigning politically for workers' rights, including the £10 per hour rate and abolition of zero hour contracts.**

## “The right fear Corbyn is electable”

**Ian Hodson, President of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union**

**The press and media are in full flow, backing the right-wing Labour MPs telling us Jeremy Corbyn is unelectable. And yet Corbyn's core support in the Party turns out in thousands to cheer him on. Why is Corbyn so popular?**

Labour is a growing force — thousands are joining — because Corbyn's message appeals to a broad section of society, people who have been excluded from the system, people who feel disenfranchised. Corbyn seems to be speaking out for us.

We want an economy that works for all of us. We have agency work, zero hours contracts and low pay. We need a Labour government which will right these wrongs.

**The Labour right say Corbyn can't win.**

Yes, they've said that before each by-election. But he won. Three out of four with big increases in Labour's share of the vote.

Scotland's a different matter, and is not Jeremy Corbyn's fault. And I think Corbyn's politics is the only politics that can begin to rebuild for Labour in Scotland.

In fact I don't think the fear of the Labour right is really that he is unelectable. They actually fear he is electable. And they fear their



cosy relations, with donors and the press will be under threat. They don't agree with what a Labour government led by Corbyn will do.

**So what should be done with those right-wing Labour MPs?**

Some of these MPs have been in Parliament for years and years. They were happy to support legislation imposing elections on union leaders. That was done in the name of democratising the trade unions.

I don't see why Labour MPs shouldn't be subjected to the same idea. If they want to represent their local Party, the local Party should agree, every five years. If they don't like that, they could run as independents.

**Shouldn't we try to deselect the Labour right MPs?**

Labour needs a clear policy and strategy to change the country in the interests of the big majority. Then we need the MPs to sign up to it. The MPs then have a choice. If they don't like Labour's vision, then they can sign up to someone else's vision.

**How does the Parliamentary Labour Party need to change?**

The PLP is dominated by barristers, solicitors, doctors. These people are from a very narrow, exclusive layer of society. We need more working-class MPs. We've lifted some of the barriers on disability, ethnicity – and that's quite right – so it is amazing that we haven't taken more steps to make sure there are more working-class Labour MPs.

**Recently Tom Watson staged a witchhunt against Workers' Liberty in the press. That witchhunt is continuing at local level. What do you think about this issue?**

I'm often accused of being “hard left”. I readily admit to it — yes, I fight hard for those left behind by this society.

The expulsions of socialists are wrong. We shouldn't be an exclusive party, but an inclusive one. We are a Party with lots of different strands and views.

**Labour was set up for working-class people from different political backgrounds. That's a strength.**

## “Expelled for being a socialist”

Daniel Randall responds to his expulsion from Labour

**I first joined the party in 2006, and was a member continuously until almost exactly a year ago when I was summarily expelled. I was formally reinstated a few months later, and have been an active member ever since. Until now.**

Like the last time, I wasn't directly informed of my expulsion. I only found out when, beginning to wonder (again) about the whereabouts of my ballot papers for the leadership election, I rang the party and was informed that my membership had been “cancelled”, and that a letter explaining why would be on its way to me at some point.

As I haven't received any official communication from the party, I can only speculate as to why I've been expelled. I assume that, like last time, my “crime” is association with the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, a revolutionary socialist organisation I joined in 2002. I do not deny the charge; I do deny that it should be an expellable offence.

I don't want to see any more summary expulsions, even of people on the right, but it is somewhat galling that Lord David Sainsbury, who funds the Lib Dems to the tune of £2 million; Michael Foster, who uses the pages of the *Daily Mail* to denounce Corbyn supporters as “Nazi Stormtroopers”; and John McTernan, who uses the pages of the *Daily Telegraph* to call on the Tories to “crush the rail unions” (I am a member of one of those unions) are all unchallenged in their membership of the party.

I will obviously be appealing my expulsion and I'm trying not to be too disheartened about this. There are many other comrades — such as Ronnie Draper, lifelong Labour supporter and General Secretary of the Bakers' Union — in a similar position.

The way I see it, there are two Labour Parties: there is the decaying zombie of New Labour, the party of Blair and Brown, committed to neo-liberal economics and market rule; and there is the embryo of a different Labour Party, a radical socialist party that acts in politics to express the interests of the working class and which is directly accountable to the broad labour movement. I've been expelled by the former because they know they're losing power to the latter, and it terrifies them.

No-one should be disheartened about this; we should be angry. We should use expulsions like mine as motivation to redouble our efforts to transform the party. We need a campaign to radically democratise the party and reinstate those expelled, as just one part of a top-to-bottom process of democratic reform and renewal.

**The first step in that process is ensuring we re-elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader.**



# Connolly and the First World War

Part 11 of Michael Johnson's series on the life and politics of James Connolly. The rest of the series can be found at [bit.ly/connollyseries](http://bit.ly/connollyseries)

In March 1914, Asquith made his "new and final" proposal on Home Rule, putting forward a scheme whereby the Ulster counties could exclude themselves from the new Irish constitution. It was supposed to be a temporary exclusion, for six years, but a general election in the interim delivering a Tory majority could make it permanent.

It was clear that Ulster was holding out for permanent exclusion — partition — if could not prevent Home Rule from passing. Adding to the atmosphere of crisis was the "Curragh mutiny" on 20 March 1914, when a group of officers threatened to resign if asked to enforce Home Rule on the Protestants.

Connolly set himself against any form of partition, arguing that it would lead to a "carnival of reaction" on both sides of any new border. Connolly was prophetic. He wrote:

"Such a scheme would destroy the Labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make the division more intense and confusion of ideas and parties more confounded."

Unionist intransigence and the outbreak of the War in August 1914 delayed the implementation of Home Rule.

The outbreak of the war, which the socialist movement had pledged in solemn resolutions to oppose, came as a huge blow to Connolly.

The Second International's position, agreed at Stuttgart in 1907 and subsequently re-affirmed at its Copenhagen and Basel conferences in 1910 and 1912, was to work to "exert all their efforts to prevent the war by means of co-ordinated strike action" and, failing that, "to work for its speedy termination, and to exploit with all their might the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the population and to hasten the overthrow of capitalist rule."

When it came to it, the resolutions proved worthless, as the parties of the Second International — with the exception of Ireland, Russia, Serbia and Italy plus the Tesnyaki in Bulgaria and a few other groups — backed "their own" governments' war efforts.

In Britain, as Connolly wrote: "With the honourable exception of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), the organised and unorganised Labour advocates of Peace in Britain swallowed the bait and are now beating the war drum."

The Irish TUC and Labour Party, however, released a statement opposing the war on 10 August 1914: "A European war for the aggrandisement of the capitalist class has been declared. Great Britain is involved. The working-class will, as usual, supply the victims that the crowned heads may stalk in all their panoply of state..."

For Connolly, the war changed everything. He was gripped both by despair at the failure of the socialist movement, and by a burning sense of urgency.

When the war started, he lamented that "civilisation is being destroyed before our eyes; the results of generations of propa-

ganda and patient heroic plodding and self-sacrifice are being blown into annihilation from a hundred cannon mouths."

Abandoning his earlier Second International-type critique of the "unfortunate insurrectionism of the early Socialists", Connolly thought that amidst the carnage and slaughter, "even an unsuccessful attempt at socialist revolution by force of arms, following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers."

Connolly's hope was that "starting thus, Ireland may yet set a torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord."

To those socialists who looked forward to the war ending so that the business as usual of gradual progress could continue, Connolly rebuked that "we cannot draw upon the future for a draft to pay our present duties. There is no moratorium to postpone the payment of the debt the socialists now owe to the cause; it can only be paid now. Paid it might be in martyrdom, but a few hundred such martyrdoms would be but a small price to pay to avert the slaughter of hundreds of thousands."

## INSURRECTION

**Larkin's departure to America in October 1914 put Connolly and his allies, such as Helena Moloney and Michael Mallin, in an increasingly influential position in both the ITGWU and the Irish Citizens' Army (ICA).**

According to Ann Matthews, around the end of 1915, Connolly began to tighten up the membership of the ICA "to ascertain its numerical strength and the membership's commitment."

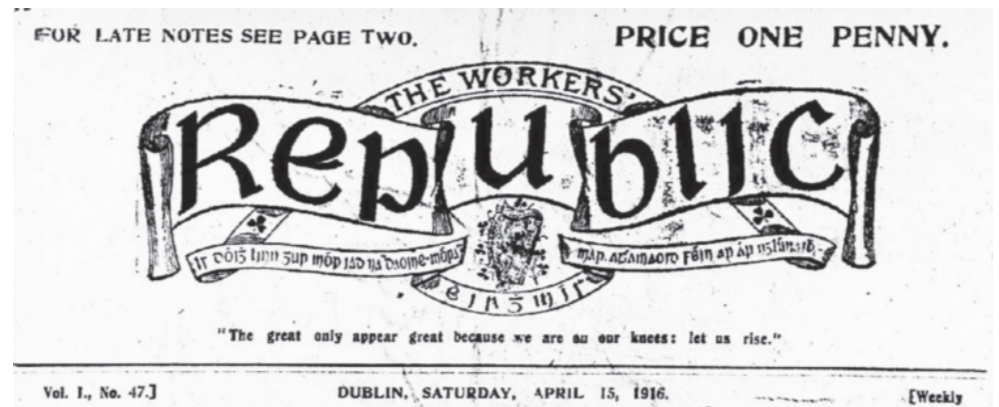
William O'Brien later recalled that Connolly told him that he "did not desire any man to remain in it who was not prepared to respond to the call to arms which might come any day, and any man who was not so prepared should now drop out and there would be no hard feelings about it. He then had a fresh register made out of all who remained in and this register had been preserved."

For Connolly, this insurrectionary urgency was only heightened by the repressive logic of Britain's wartime regime. The sweeping powers granted to the authorities by the Defence of the Realm act, including the suspension of jury trials, a harsh regime of censorship, and the 1915 Munitions of War act which suspended trade union rights, were from Connolly's perspective an existential threat to both the Irish labour movement and the Irish Volunteers.

He therefore increasingly drew a distinction between normal periods of capitalist rule and war-time conditions, with the latter ushering in an "era of ruthless brute force, of blood and iron" in which open democratic agitation had little grip in the face of ruling-class violence.

In December 1914 the *Irish Worker* newspaper published by the ITGWU was suppressed, prompting Connolly to relaunch *The Workers' Republic* on 29 May 1915 and campaign relentlessly for an insurrection.

When, in late 1915, it looked like conscription might be imposed on Ireland, he began arguing for a striking a pre-emptive blow, warning that those "who now would oppose conscription must not delude themselves into the belief that they are simply embarking upon a new form of political agitation." If the



The Workers Republic 1916

government decided that conscription in Ireland was necessary "it will enforce conscription though every river in Ireland ran red with blood."

From his earliest years as a socialist in Edinburgh he had been deeply suspicious of the Irish parliamentary nationalists, and in 1910 he had published his seminal *Labour in Irish History*, analysing the failure of the Irish middle-class in history to fight consistently for Irish freedom. "Only the Irish working class," he wrote, "remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

Yet the working-class in Dublin had been weakened by the defeats of 1913 and were in a minority in mainly rural Ireland. More fatally still, where the working-class was strongest — in Ulster — they were hostile to Irish independence.

Connolly was haunted by the past memory of the "comic opera" brand of "revolutionists who shrink from giving the blow until the great day has arrived".

Having drawn the conclusion that a wartime insurrection was necessary, it was the disparity between the forces at his disposal and the enormity of the task at hand which led Connolly to look for potential allies.

He found them in the rejuvenated revolutionary nationalist movement. Here, too, the war was a powerful catalyst for political change. Irish separatism, represented by the diffuse Sinn Féin movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, was by 1910 both politically marginal and organisationally moribund; and within this movement, the outright revolutionists were isolated further.

The prospect of Home Rule seemed to vindicate the Redmondites. When Redmond announced his support for the war effort in September 1914, the Irish Volunteers split. The vast majority went off with Redmond's National Volunteers, leaving the minority with the Irish Volunteers.

Yet, as the war dragged on and the casualties mounted, with Home Rule suspended and the Unionists' treason rewarded by Cabinet seats, support began to ebb from the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP).

At the same time, the Irish Republic Brotherhood (IRB) was given a new lease of life by the veteran Fenian Tom Clarke and the younger Seán Mac Diarmada, who served as treasurer and secretary of the organisation.

The dead wood was purged, as Belfast-based President of the IRB Denis McCullough bluntly recalled: "I cleared out most of the older men (including my father), most of whom I considered of no further use to us."

The conflict between Britain and Germany, and the existence of a sizeable minority of Volunteers opposing the war effort, presented an opportunity that, to the rebels,

seemed unlikely to come again. In this light, as historian Fearghal McGarry wrote, a "wartime insurrection, even one likely to fail, was not only rational but a moral and historical imperative if Fenianism was to retain any credibility or future."

In September 1914 Clarke and Mac Diarmada persuaded the IRB's supreme council of their logic and of the necessity to rise before the war's end.

The republicans were worried that Connolly and his ICA would go it alone and stage an uprising, on account of Connolly's unceasing campaign for an insurrection in the pages of the new *Workers' Republic*.

It declared (October 1915) that the: "Irish Citizen Army will only co-operate in a forward movement. The moment that forward movement ceases it reserves to itself the right to step out of the alignment, and advance by itself if needs be, in an effort to plant the banner of freedom one reach further towards its goal."

Patrick Pearse said of Connolly in Christmas 1915 that he "will never be satisfied until he goads us into action and then he will think most us too moderate, and want to guillotine half of us."

## ALLIANCE

**So the IRB co-opted Connolly, after some convincing, into their latest plans in early 1916. Due to the disparity of forces between the ICA and the Volunteers, the alliance would be on Fenian, not socialist, terms.**

With the failure of the European socialists to stop the war, with the Irish workers' movement still reeling from the 1913 Lock-Out, and with the Irish Labour Party only in its infancy and the socialist forces in Ireland weak, Connolly decided to go along with the plans of the IRB, despite his reservations.

In *What is Our Programme?* published in January 1916, Connolly makes clear that he would have preferred a different road, all things being equal:

"Had we not been attacked and betrayed by many of our fervent advanced patriots, had they not been so anxious to destroy us, so willing to applaud even the British Government when it attacked us, had they stood by us and pushed our organisation all over Ireland, it would now be in our power at a word to crumple up and demoralise every offensive move of the enemy against the champions of Irish freedom."

**"Had we been able to carry out all our plans, as such an Irish organisation of Labour alone could carry them out, we could at a word have created all the conditions necessary to the striking of a successful blow whenever the military arm of Ireland wished to move."**



# Trotsky's criteria for a workers' state

Martin Thomas reviews Thomas M Twiss, *Trotsky and the problem of Soviet bureaucracy*, Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2015. \$36/ £25.99

In a thorough study of Trotsky's writings about bureaucracy and bureaucracy in Russia from 1917 to 1936, US socialist Thomas Twiss has shown that Trotsky's conceptions changed as he grappled with the unexpected evolutions of the state.

At first Trotsky, focused on his task of leading the Red Army, saw as "bureaucratism" only buck-passing, routinist formalism, departmentalism, sluggishness, especially in economic affairs.

In 1922-3, however, Trotsky was gradually won over to Lenin's concern with "bureaucracy" in the sense of the state apparatus raising itself above the working class, outside the control of the working class, and beginning to serve other interests. As Lenin put it in March 1922: "If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth they are not directing, they are being directed".

In late 1923, Trotsky began an open struggle against the "bureaucratic machine". At first his concern was less that the bureaucracy would serve its own immediate corporate interests than that it would act as a vehicle for the interests of the merchants and richer peasants who had begun to flourish under NEP. It could be a bridge to the restoration of capitalism.

Bit by bit, and especially in what Twiss calls a "theoretical revolution" between 1933 and 1936, Trotsky moved towards seeing the bureaucracy as a weighty autonomous force, rising above the social classes — worker, peasant, and petty-bourgeois alike.

Unfortunately, Twiss's study ends in 1936; even more unfortunately, Twiss rationalises this by claiming that the book *The Revolution Betrayed*, written between summer 1935 and August 1936, represented Trotsky's "final theory", "the one he would continue to uphold until his death in 1940", "the essential completion in the development of his thinking on... Soviet bureaucracy".

However, Twiss's careful documentation sheds light on the mystery, which has puzzled Trotskyists for over 75 years, of Trotsky's changing "criteria" for considering the Stalinist USSR as still a sort of workers' state.

By 1928, it was clear that in day-to-day terms a privileged bureaucracy, and not the working class, ruled the USSR. The question for debate, as Trotsky put it, was "whether the factual dictatorship of the bureaucracy may be called the dictatorship of the proletariat" in some broader, less-visible, historical sense. Twiss shows that Trotsky started, in 1928-9, with three criteria for answering yes, and between then and 1935 narrowed that down to one criterion.

In 1928-9: (1) "The proletariat still possesses powers to exert pressure"; when the working class regained confidence, it could reform the party and state machine. (2) The USSR could cease to be a workers' state only through a civil war; to think otherwise was "inverted reformism". (3) Although the "shell" was damaged, the "socio-economic kernel of the Soviet republic" remained: the nationalisation of the economy (p.246-7).

In 1933 Trotsky dropped the "reformability" criterion, but "two of his previous criteria were still intact". There had been no civil war. Industry remained nationalised (p.343).

By 1935, Trotsky was conceding that a "number of minor civil wars [had been] waged by the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard", so "Trotsky's sole remaining argument was that the 'social content of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy is determined by those productive relations that were created by the proletarian revolution'" (p.377).

The slippage from "nationalised economy" to "productive relations" was unsound, since Trotsky's detailed analyses would show that "productive relations" such as relations between boss and worker in the workplace, or the flow of the surplus product, were more like those of a brutal and backward capitalism. But Trotsky's "economic" criterion remained fairly constant to the end.

In an article of 1943, included in *The Fate of the Russian Revolution* volume 1, and mentioned by Twiss, Max Shachtman argued that in the 1930s Trotsky "alter[ed] his criterion radically from what it had previously been". Earlier his criterion was whether "the working class [was]... still capable of bringing a straying and dangerous bureaucracy under its control by means of reform measures". Then Trotsky's argument became "so long as nationalised property remained more or less intact, Russia still remained a workers' state".

Shachtman argued, rightly I think, for a plain criterion: empirically-observable working-class political power (even if muffled, distorted, skewed). He censured Trotsky's shift. No wonder: to "win" an argument about the class nature of the state by changing criteria midway is no better than "winning" a football match by suddenly declaring that only balls in a particular part of the net count as goals for the other side. And Shachtman could have cited a dozen Marxist classics to deny that a nationalised economy was necessarily socialistic or worker-ruled.

## NARROWING

**Twiss's picture of a narrowing-down from three criteria to one is gentler, but still seems to damn Trotsky.**

Had Trotsky really forgotten the pre-1914 Marxist classics? If the last criterion, of nationalised economy, was sufficient, why mention the other two in earlier arguments? When Trotsky cited three criteria, did he mean that a state must meet all three to be a "workers' state"? If not, why mention the inessential criteria?

The shift of criteria, I think, was subtler. In the 1935 text, Trotsky wrote that when an aberrant bureaucracy rules in a capitalist market economy, still "bourgeois relations develop automatically", so to some degree the bureaucracy serves them willy-nilly. There is no such economic compulsion in a socialistic economy. "In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously. Progress towards socialism is inseparable from *that state power which is desirous of socialism or that is constrained to desire it*" (emphasis added).

For Trotsky, what defined the USSR as a workers' state (of sorts) was not nationalised economy in abstraction, but the fact that "the state power" (so he argued) had been "constrained to desire socialism" at least to the extent of retaining, against the pressures of world capitalism and incipient bourgeois forces within Russia, the nationalised economy created from the workers' revolution.



Leon Trotsky

"The social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses". He was making a judgement about "the state power" on evidence supplied by economic relations, not deducing the character of the state power automatically from economic relations.

In 1928, Trotsky had argued for reformability. But what did he mean by it? And what evidence could he cite for it?

The Bolshevik oppositionists had all been exiled by Stalin and denied vote or say. Trotsky cannot have meant "reform" in the commonplace sense of working established political channels for piecemeal changes which eventually add up to the desired transformation. For a while he interpreted Stalin's "left turn" of 1928-9 as reflecting pressure from the working class and the Opposition, and thus showing fluidity; but he was always clear that "turn" was far from the "reform" he wanted. Essentially, he foresaw a crisis in which the top bureaucrats would panic in the face of capitalist-restoration danger and would be forced to bring the oppositionists back from exile and concede them influence. It would be a "revolutionary" sort of reform.

"Reformability" of that sort was not a direct empirical observation. The claim of "reformability" depended on a theory about future crises which, in turn, depended on a claim about limits to the consolidation of the bureaucracy.

That there had been no civil war was an argument to support the claim about limits. And the *immediate evidence* of the limits (for Trotsky) was the continuation of nationalised economy. The oppositionists of the 1920s assumed that the first wish of the bulk of the bureaucracy, would be private capitalist restoration. The continuation of a basic economic framework from the revolutionary years was evidence for the continuation of a sort of "passive workers' power".

After 1933, thinking about the series of "political revolutions" and counter-revolutions in France which followed the great social revolution of 1789-94, Trotsky modified "reformable" to "capable of being redressed by only *political* revolution" not full *social* revolution. At first, but less and less as time went on, he also claimed that "the interrelations between the bureaucracy and the class are really much more complex than they appear to be to the frothy 'democrats'... So long as [there is no revolution in Western Europe] the proletariat with clenched teeth... 'tolerates' the bureaucracy... When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in mid-air... [required against it will be] not the measures of civil war but rather measures of a police char-

acter".

There was a common thread in all Trotsky's shifting criteria: that the bureaucracy's rule was not cohesive and consolidated, that its counter-revolutionary work was still limited, that the system had not "jelled". In some sense the apparatus had been "constrained to desire" socialism.

As Trotsky's analyses developed over the later 1930s, the distinction between "political" and "social" revolution became increasingly notional. The argument about nationalised economy became increasingly a circular one, in which the "workers'" character of the nationalised economy was supposed to be defined by the redressable ("workers'") character of the state, and the "workers'" character of the state by the nationalised economy.

The argument about the bureaucracy being not a coherent class, but a awkward coalition of bourgeois-restorationist tendencies and groups still residually connected to the working class, became more and more a tenuous supplement to a baseline picture of it as a cohesive and independent "oligarchy".

In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky described the bureaucracy as the "sole privileged and commanding stratum", using "totalitarian" methods against the people with "a deadly similarity to fascism". But then he declared again that the USSR remained a workers' state not from an "automatism of the economy" but because the bureaucracy "continues to preserve state property... to the extent that it fears the proletariat".

As late as May 1940, Trotsky wrote of the Stalinist nationalisations (of only scanty industry, and with the aim only of securing the revenues to the Kremlin) after invading eastern Poland as "the strangled and desecrated October Revolution serv[ing] notice that it was still alive".

Trotsky overstated both the economic impasse of capitalism and the economic successes of Stalin in the 1930s. He feared that recognising the bureaucracy as a fully-formed new ruling class would compel recognising Stalinism as a viable and more-or-less stable successor to capitalism and thus pushing aside socialist perspectives. Contorted but temporary hypotheses seemed preferable.

The contortions became more contorted as the Stalinist terror escalated. By the time of Trotsky's death, they had become unsustainable. Trotskyism broke into two distinct strands, each continuing a different thread of Trotsky's thinking.

**Twiss's book is a clear and well-documented guide to the first stages of Trotsky's reasoning about the nature of Stalinism. It is a pity that he stops in 1936.**



# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
  - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
  - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
  - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
  - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
  - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
  - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
  - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
  - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

## Events

### Saturday 3 September

Make Oxfordshire affordable march  
11am, Manzil Way, Oxford OX4 1DJ  
[bit.ly/2c2niSx](http://bit.ly/2c2niSx)

### 4-10 September

DPAC "rights not games" week of action  
Various locations  
[bit.ly/2bXG0MB](http://bit.ly/2bXG0MB)

### Monday 5 September

Keep Corbyn rally in Cardiff  
7pm, Tramshed, Clare Road, Cardiff, CF11 6QP  
[bit.ly/2bTkNC0](http://bit.ly/2bTkNC0)

### Monday 5 September

Lewisham rally: Keep Corbyn, take the fight to the Tories!  
7pm, 283/5 New Cross Road, SE14 6AS: [bit.ly/2c2nW23](http://bit.ly/2c2nW23)

### Saturday 10 September

Shut down Yarl's Wood protest  
10-5, Yarl's Wood Immigration removal centre  
[bit.ly/2bXGFH1](http://bit.ly/2bXGFH1)

### Sunday 11 September

Keep Corbyn rally in Manchester  
7pm, Dancehouse Theatre, 10 Oxford Road, M1 5QA  
[bit.ly/2coOzlo](http://bit.ly/2coOzlo)

### Sunday 17 September

Refugees welcome here national demonstration  
12.30pm, Park Lane, London  
[bit.ly/2c5KdLk](http://bit.ly/2c5KdLk)

Got an event you want listing?  
[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)



Workers' Liberty



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# Not-so-liberal commentariat

By John Cunningham

**Although I've never had warm feelings towards the media, I also dislike the tendency to blame the media for every ill or woe in the world; it just doesn't work like that. The media isn't all bad all the time.**

Personally, I have regularly turned to the journalism of people like Andrew Rawnsley, Nick Cohen, Polly Toynbee, John Harris and others, not because I agree with them (this rarely happens) but because of a desire to read some occasionally intelligent — or moderately intelligent — viewpoints put forward in a clear and articulate manner.

However, within the last year or so, the commentaries and analysis coming out of even the middle-ground "liberal" press has descended to unprecedented levels of odious bile which has little, if any, connection with reality. They have descended in a very short time to "a superficial and dismal swamp" (to paraphrase Frederick Engels).

At times the abuse has been astonishing. Increasingly it is directed not just at Corbyn but also at his supporters, often referred to, in the most childish manner, as "Corbynistas" or "Corbynites" as if somehow, those supporting Corbyn were the followers of a boy band or, as alluded to on occasion, attendees at a Nuremberg rally. A list of these abuses, insults and smears would make lengthy — and dismal — reading; so here are just a few examples from a variety of sources:

Polly Toynbee (*Guardian* 18 July) claimed that the "incomers" [to the Labour Party] are "fronted by a small handful of wreckers armed with political knuckledusters." Also from Toynbee we have her meas-

ured description of Corbyn as "dismal, lifeless, spineless..." (*Guardian* 25 June)

Carole Malone (*Daily Mirror* 16 July): Corbyn supporters are "Lenin style bully boys who'd send women to the Gulag."

Dan Hodges (former advisor to Blair, *Telegraph*, 15 June): CLPs are swarming with "... dozens of proto-Trotskyists... demanding a People's Revolution and shouting down anyone who disagrees with taunts of 'Red Tory'."

Tony Blair (*Telegraph*, 22 March) "If your heart is with Corbyn get a transplant".

John Harris (*Guardian* 12 August) deserves a "special mention" for his article. "If Trotsky is back at the centre of things, there's chaos ahead", which not only raises infantilism to an art form but contains an "explanation" of Trotsky's notion of transitional demands which is so laughable that it wouldn't pass muster in a third rate pub quiz.

## WORST

**Probably the worst example, so far, that I have come across is worth quoting at more length:**

Nick Cohen (*Observer*, 31 July) "...after the killing of Jo Cox by an alleged right wing extremist, Angela Eagle and Jess Phillips and all the other anti-Corbyn MPs who are speaking out know that the death and rape threats from left-wing extremists may not just be bluster."

There you have it — if you are a Corbyn supporter you are a) automatically a "left-wing extremist" and b) a potential rapist and/or murderer! I wrote to the Readers' Editor of the *Observer* pointing out this slander. Initially, he did not respond but after a second e-mail merely drew my attention to an article by Cohen in the *Spectator* and remarked that he obviously wasn't

talking about people like me! While I am mightily relieved that the *Observer's* Readers' Editor thinks I am a decent sort, what, might I ask about all the other thousands of Labour members who will be voting for Corbyn, murdering and raping all the way to the ballot box? A third e-mail from me calling for an apology drew no response at all (surprise, surprise).

What is it that drives journalists

like Cohen and Toynbee, who are by no means stupid people, to descend into this gutter? After all, life for the Cohens and Toynbees of this world will not be drastically altered by the continuance of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, nor would life be suddenly rosier if, by some Potterish intervention, Owen Smith were to win.

Toynbee has already shown her propensity for jumping ship if things don't go her way. My guess is that for the educated snobs of this liberal and not-so-liberal commentariat the thread that binds them together is a sense of elitism, a dislike, a repugnance of ordinary people doing things for themselves. It is, more-or-less, the same elitism, the same distrust of the masses, that drove some of the early socialists like Charles Fourier and Saint Simon to condemn the emerging trade unions, while slightly later the Webbs and the Fabians were to embrace similar ideas about the untrustworthiness of ordinary workers.

This trend dominated the Parliamentary Labour Party for years and it manifests itself, for example, in the way that routinely, throughout the history of the Party, conference resolutions have been ignored if the Party leadership didn't agree with them. Whether we are talking about Tony Blair, Ramsey MacDonald, Hugh Gaitskell, Polly Toynbee, Anne Perkins, Nick Cohen or ex-Eurocoms such as the *Times* journalist David Aaronovitch, the approach is top-down, "we know best and if you don't agree with us shut up or bugger-off".

Clearly, the wisdom of these sages is being ignored, sometimes by the very people who would normally listen to them... and they don't like it one bit; hence a peevish and prolonged bout of name-calling and the sneering dismissal of thousands of ordinary people who are making their voices heard and trying to shape a new political agenda. In short they sound like nothing but spoilt schoolchildren who have had their ball taken away.

In any other place in the world the massive increase in Labour Party membership would be shouted from the rooftops. No Social Democratic party in history, with the possible exception of the pre-First World War German Social Democratic party, has seen such exceptional growth. Yet the newcomers are cast in the role of the biblical Gadarene swine, rushing headlong to a certain death while the comfy, smug, complacent ladies and gentlemen of the press tut-tut their displeasure.

As a certain London-based political exile of Jewish origin once remarked, "...they confess they are striving to replace the old aristocracy with a new one. To counter the existing oligarchy they would like to speak in the name of the people, but at the same time avoid having the people appear in their own person when their name is called."

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# Support Ritzy cinema workers

By a Picturehouse BECTU rep

**Two years after a prominent series of 13 one day strikes at the Ritzy Picturehouse Cinema in Brixton, the Ritzy workers are talking about striking again.**

As Solidarity went to press on 30 August, a ballot of Bectu members was closing and workers' were considering their next steps.

The previous strikes garnered national press attention, and won a large pay rise to £9.10 per hour, in return for a two year no strike agreement, which has now expired.

Now the Ritzy workers are coming back, demanding what they didn't quite win the first time around. They are demanding the living wage, which is now £9.40 per hour; sick pay; compassionate leave; and maternity pay, all as part of a 12 point list that most low paid precarious worker in London desperately need.

The Ritzy BECTU branch is not only demanding the living wage and these 12 points for themselves. They are demanding it for each of the 21 cinemas in the Picturehouse

chain, many of which pay drastically less than the Ritzy. They are calling on other cinemas to join them and have been working hard on outreach.

The Ritzy workers' previous strike struck a deeply resonant chord for many low paid precarious workers who are not usually organised in unions. Their demands received very broad levels of support. Their pay demands of the living wage and sick pay seemed reasonable and modest to most. Especially so when levelled against a company like Cineworld, which is making record profits year on year. It has been a very good few years for the cinema industry, with increasingly successful blockbuster franchises pulling up the box office receipts.

Cineworld is 90% co-owned by two multi-millionaires with hundreds of millions in the bank. Sometimes in these cases firms like to create dubious moral ambiguities around the ethics of pay rises, claiming that they are just acting in the "best interests" of shareholders. Shareholders who, they claim, really represent "just the money of ordinary people like the pension



fund investor". Such a picture cannot be painted here. This is simply not the case here. It is two owners trying to pay as little as possible to each worker to squeeze out the maximum profit and dividend. It is the needs of the many versus the needs of two.

A key difference this time around for the workers could be the seismic changes in the Labour Party. The labour movement via groups like Momentum (if they get organised enough) and the Corbyn leadership team are in a great position

to provide support to the Ritzy strikers from Labour. Support which they badly needed but lacked last time.

There are three things which the labour movement can provide and which the dispute will depend.

1. How much public support and press the workers can gain against the highly brand conscious Cineworld group. Statements by the Labour leadership and Momentum could really help.

2. Can the dispute spread to other cinemas in the Picture-

house/Cineworld chain? Nothing would frighten the bosses more than the prospect of not one but many walking out on strike. It would also frighten them to hear of Momentum activists going to Picturehouse branches across the country to talk to workers.

3. How large a strike fund can be raised? The larger this fund, the more strike days and longer the strikers can hold out for.

But the Ritzy workers' struggle will also benefit the trade union and Labour movement. Young people have become increasing radicalised and economically marginalised over the last 15 years. However they have not yet in large numbers taken up the most effective tools of struggle. They have not yet piled in droves into their trade unions as previous generations did.

**The Ritzy workers represent a key demographic that the labour movement should want to unionise. Their success will surely inspire others to follow in their example.**

• Follow updates and donate to the strike fund:  
[www.facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage](http://www.facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage)

## We won't work ourselves sick

By a Lambeth council worker

**A recent survey of workers at Lambeth Council, south London, conducted by the Unison union uncovered high levels of overwork, stress and anxiety among staff, following years of job cuts.**

The survey found that 56% of staff do not feel that they can continue at the council unless workloads improve.

Unison is launching an indicative ballot asking members if they'd be

willing to take industrial action around workload and job losses. Ruth Cashman, Unison branch secretary explained;

"Lambeth Council has lost thousands of jobs but people still need our services so we are left with workers doing two maybe three people's jobs.

"We are working ourselves sick and at the same time being told we might not have a job in a few months because savings have to be made. Enough is enough. We have to stand together and say we de-



Library workers on strike in April

mand a decent work-life balance and we demand job security."

The indicative ballot is due to close on 8 September.

## Strikes on Southern Rail restart

By Off the rails

**RMT has announced further strikes on Southern, on 7-8 September, involving both guards, who are resisting the introduction of Driver Only Operation, and station staff, who are fighting against ticket office closures and the de-skilling of their role.**

The last set of strikes on Southern was suspended half way through, leaving members concerned. Things need to escalate quickly to put the pressure back on the bosses; further dates should be announced quickly.

There's also the possibility of co-ordination with disputes on other train companies, such as Hammer-



London Underground. This might add some industrial impact (disruption on the Tube will certainly affect Southern's London terminals), but can also be a symbol for possible further unity and coordination.

Rail activists writing for *Solidarity* recently called for a na-

tional rail strike, coordinating ongoing disputes across different TOCs, and with strikes on Southern back on that prospect should be re-explored.

• Follow reports from our rail activists at:  
[www.workersliberty.org/rails](http://www.workersliberty.org/rails)

## Tube drivers strike

By Tubeworker

**RMT drivers at the Edgware Road and Hammersmith depots on the Hammersmith and City Line on London Underground have voted by big majorities for strikes.**

The timing opens up the possibility for H&C drivers to take action on the same day as the next strike days on Southern, on 7-8 September, which would be an ex-

cellent symbol of unity.

The dispute on the H&C is over train side management abusing procedures and policies to arbitrarily discipline staff, and acting in an authoritarian manner.

It's a pattern we're seeing across depots, with similar issues on the Piccadilly Line and elsewhere, as well as on stations.

• More reports at:  
[www.workersliberty.org/twblog](http://www.workersliberty.org/twblog)

## London bus workers strike

By Gemma Short

**London bus workers on services operated by Tower Transit struck on Friday 26 August over changes to rosters which would disrupt work-life balance, non-payment of overtime, and high levels of rest-day working.**

The workers, members of Unite, called off a planned strike for the bank holiday Monday as a "gesture of goodwill" intended to encourage the company to engage in talks.

Such a tactic was used on the London-wide bus strikes in 2015 to no avail. Strike action was not reinstated despite there being no concession from bus companies.

Unite regional officer said "There is now breathing space for Tower Transit to do the right thing and make the commitments members need.

"If however, the company chooses to squander this opportunity, there will be further strikes and further damage to industrial relations."

**More industrial reports:  
action in BA; oil rig strikes  
see [bit.ly/2bPKSTv](http://bit.ly/2bPKSTv)**





# Solidarity

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## COURIER STRIKES DEFEAT LOW PAY BOSSES

By Ollie Moore

**Strikes by couriers working for Deliveroo, an app that offers food delivery services from restaurants, have forced bosses to back off from imposing a new pay structure that would have seen the couriers earn just £3.75 per delivery.**

Their existing scheme guarantees a £7 hourly payment plus an additional £1 per delivery, plus a petrol allowance and tips.

The strike lasted a week, and saw couriers, who were threatened with the sack, hold protests outside the company's head office.

The settlement reached allows couriers to opt out of the trial of the new pay structure, providing they move to a new "zone". Since the agreement, the Couriers and Logistics branch of the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB), which organises Deliveroo riders, has said that riders who have agreed to participate in the trial are "working faster and harder, travelling longer distances, and taking more risks than when they were on the £7+£1 scheme. Two drivers have already had road accidents."

Couriers working for UberEats, the food-delivery arm of taxi app Uber, have also struck, in response to a sharp pay cut by the company which has seen their

rates, before Uber takes its 25% share, fall to £3.30 per delivery or less during off-peak hours and around £6.30 to £7.30 per delivery during peak hours.

The IWGB, along with the United Voices of the World union, is involved in supporting the UberEats couriers.

These strikes are great examples of how to organise precarious workers.

**Imran Siddiqui, an UberEats courier and leader of the strike, has been sacked by the company. Supporters are petitioning to demand his reinstatement.**

• Sign the petition online at [bit.ly/reinstate-imran](http://bit.ly/reinstate-imran).

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